Conducting Sensitive Interviews Online

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We explore the role of embodied messages for the interaction order when conducting sensitive biographical research online. Our analysis indicates that mediated situations take shape continuously and are extremely open to different kinds of interaction orderings, including disruptions. Interaction in online interviews is influenced by increased fluidity and intensity caused by the synthetic situation. For the researcher, this results in extra effort in restructuring the main activity and re-establishing the expressive order. Moreover, the inability to be physically present in affective interview situations created virtual private mental spaces where interaction of intense emotions was partly restricted.
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INTRODUCTION

Researchers have noted the benefits of internet technologies for reaching geographically dispersed populations (Creswell and Creswell Báez 2021; Deakin and Wakefield 2014; Gray et al. 2020; Melis Cin et al. 2021; Opara et al. 2021; Salmons 2015). P. Hanna (2012:241) notes that remote interviews can be conducted in a "safe location," as the interviewee and the researcher can remain in their own personal spaces. Jenner and Myers (2019) suggest that privately conducted interviews, whether face-to-face or online, result in the sharing of highly personal experiences and that there is barely any difference between face-to-face and online interviews in disclosure, interview duration, or rapport building. However,

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as Weller (2017) indicates, conducting interviews online requires researchers to implement additional strategies, compared to conducting face-to-face interviews, regarding rapport building, for example. The sensitive qualitative research benefits from online interviewing when the interviewee can choose the most suitable method of interviewing (as in case of Jenner and Myers 2019). In the context of the current study, conducting interviews online was the only way to continue with our research, a situation shared by many other researchers during the COVID-19 pandemic (see, e.g., Engward et al. 2022; Howlett 2021; Lawrence 2020; Moran and Caetano 2022; 't Hart 2021).

Some researchers consider online interviews beneficial for the discussion of sensitive issues as it gives more privacy and room for the interviewee (Gray et al. 2020; Khan and MacEachen 2022). On the one hand, it has been suggested that communication mediated with technology supports the equalization of status of interaction parties, where the views are expressed more openly than in face-to-face interactions (Siegel et al. 1986; Sproull and Kiesler 1986). This might contribute to the rapport-building when conducting online interviews (O'Connor and Madge 2017). Moreover, in line with technological advancements, computer-based interactions start to resemble face-to-face interactions, along with their abilities to be multisensory (Carr 2020). On the other hand, technology-mediated communication might lead to "self-absorption" (Sproull and Kiesler 1986:1492) where interaction parties focus more on themselves than on the other participants. Although researchers emphasize the resourcefulness of online communication that increasingly resembles the face-to-face interactions which might support learning (e.g., see González-Lloret 2011), it can also cause exhaustion, especially in its long-term use (Nadler 2020).

When conducting online interviews, researchers need to consider the additional aspects of technology-mediated communication as well, such as the visibility of physical spaces of the interviewees (Engward et al. 2022; Howlett 2021) along with the possible distractions by other elements occurring in interviewees' immediate surroundings (Gray et al. 2020:1296; Meherali and Louie-Poon 2021). Moreover, the visibility of nonverbal cues (Jenner and Myers 2019) and body language that are typically restricted in online interviews are essential for establishing close connection with the interviewee (see Creswell and Creswell Báez 2021). Thus, the present study suggests that even though a mediated space like Zoom is, generally speaking, a "synchronous" online medium, it is not totally synchronous at all. Therefore, we argue that conducting online interviews is an interactionally demanding situation for the researcher. In the online situation, the researcher's role as a conversation facilitator is emphasized. This is specifically the case in sensitive research, such as in our study, where the interviewees had traumatic family pasts, including war-related family memories as well as intergenerational memories of transnational persecution and discrimination. We noticed that specifically in the sensitive online research concerning emotionally triggering topics, turn-taking may take place in highly unpredictable situations. The interaction order can be difficult for the researcher to

control due to restricted embodied messages and the partial invisibility of offline surroundings.

In our analysis, we illustrate how the interviewee has more power to define the interaction order in the online situation than in the face-to-face situation. This can also lead to breaking the conventional rules of interaction, creating the need for the researcher to reorganize the interaction situation and re-establish the interaction order.

The present study fills the gap in knowledge in Goffman-based research on online interaction in the context of sensitive biographical research by exploring how and why the exchange of embodied messages becomes relevant for the interaction order. This article is based on our experience conducting sensitive biographical interviews for the research project *Postmemory of Family Separation: An Intergenerational Perspective*,[1] which considers how family memories of forced migration are transmitted over generations. The original design of the research project called for face-to-face biographical interviews in Finland, Sweden, and Estonia with individuals whose family histories include traumatic pasts. However, due to the social distancing caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the project's biographical interviews were conducted via Zoom as a secure research medium[2] for establishing synchronous visual interaction between the interviewee and the researcher.

The main argument of our study is that the mediated environment is extremely open for relational re-orderings and disruptions. Thus, in the context of sensitive biographical research, the researcher is particularly responsible for restructuring main activity, re-establishing social order (cf. Danby 2021), and ending the interview. Furthermore, as mediated interaction shapes "the sense of copresence" (Zhao 2003), we suggest that in the online interview situations, which involve deep emotions, the full exchange of embodied messages remains unmediated, and becomes fully embodied only after leaving the interview situation.

From our perspective as researchers, conducting sensitive biographical interviews online significantly changed the interaction compared to face-to-face interviews. We noticed a higher level of cognitive and emotional intensity, for example, when sustaining the established connection with the interviewee and transferring empathy. At the same time, the visibility of the "face" was highlighted in the virtual space, capturing the full attention of the interacting parties. The study indicates that the facial expressions become a more central part of the impression management in the mediated environment than in face-to-face encounters. To understand the changes in interaction that occur in online interviews, we took the microsociological approach as a source of inspiration for studying interaction.

Recently, several studies have addressed the digital change in qualitative research (see Adams-Hutcheson and Longhurst 2017; Howlett 2021; Lawrence 2020; Marzi 2021; Paechter 2013; Seitz 2016; 't Hart 2021) and the emotional significance of qualitative research (see Carroll 2012; Dickson-Swift et al. 2009; Hanna 2019; Shaw et al. 2020), but to analyze online qualitative research in the framework of Goffman's interaction theories has been rarely considered (for one exception, see Weller 2017).

One of the reasons for such a research gap is that studies on online qualitative research, which have focused on the experiences of conducting mediated interviews, are often methodological (Engward et al. 2022; Gray et al. 2020; Hanna 2012; Jenner and Myers 2019; Khan and MacEachen 2022; Marzi 2021; Moran and Caetano 2022; Seitz 2016; 't Hart 2021). However, during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers with various theoretical and methodological backgrounds were in a situation similar to ours, relying on online tools as the only means to continue the research. Therefore, it might be expected that more theoretically oriented discussions are yet to come. Our study contributes to the discussion which points out to the importance of focusing on "the process, role, and effects of mediation" that are shaped by technologies instead of focusing solely on the technologies as an object of study (Carr 2020:9, see also Flanagin 2020; Yao and Ling 2020).

INTERACTION ORDER AND SYNTHETIC SITUATIONS

As a theoretical basis for our paper, we use Goffman's (1964, 1966, 1983) and Goffman and Best (1967/2005) theory of interaction order, that has been refined further in the context of technology-mediated interactions (e.g., Cetina 2009; Reichmann 2019). Moreover, we utilize the theory of the interaction order and disruption developed by Tavory and Fine (2020) by focusing on the practical ways in which actors negotiate breach and rupture in interaction. In this study, we concentrate on relational disruptions typical in the mediated environment instead of discussing how technology disrupts the expressive order of an encounter (cf. Ictech 2018; Walsh and Clark 2018). Tavory and Fine (2020:374) have pointed out that many disruptions result in (1) temporary breaches which disrupt the "alignment of actors" but may improve the social relationship and (2) relational ruptures which have a long-term negative impact on the social situation. In the latter, the interaction order remains, but the affective connectedness between actors is damaged and the relationship changes (Tavory and Fine 2020:374).

In his conception of social interaction, Goffman (1983:2) emphasizes that the routines of daily life and human interactions occur in physical environments where "two or more individuals are physically in one another's response presence." In social interactions, which are full of "shared cognitive presuppositions" and "self-sustained restraints" (Goffman 1983:5), the rules that coordinate the interaction are understood by the participants because of the social values and norms shared in a society (Goffman 1966, 1983). In everyday life, individuals are engaged in different kinds of activities with others but the interaction order, which Goffman analyzes in detail, is treated as its own domain that can be only partly understood as an expression of social structures in a traditional sense (Goffman 1983:2). By using microsociological methods, one of Goffman's interests is embodied interaction, in which the transmission of information involves the whole body and occurs only when the "body is present to sustain this activity" (Goffman 1966:14). The embodied message is experienced with "naked senses" requiring physical copresence and face-to-face interaction

with the involvement of all the senses (Goffman 1966:15). This face-to-face interaction is a two-way process, in which "each giver is himself a receiver, and each receiver is a giver" (Goffman 1966:15–16). As Goffman (1983:3) emphasizes, in addition to our visual appearance that is part of the embodied message, "the intensity of our involvement and the shape of our initial actions" contribute to the understanding of intentions and purposes of interaction parties. Individuals enter to the social situation carrying previously established expectations, which derive from one's biographical experience and with "cultural assumptions presumed to be shared" (Goffman 1983:4) with other participants who are part of that social situation. It is expected that individuals, when in each other's physical presence, are mutually focused to the interaction and "perceive that they do so, and perceive this perceiving" (Goffman 1983:3). By managing impression, individuals tend to control the ways in which they are perceived by others. In everyday encounters, specifically, the impression given first is crucial (Goffman 1959:11). The performer should act with the expressive accountability because even small unintentional acts may appear as impressions which can also be unconventional when they occur (Goffman 1959:208).

In social encounters, individuals tend to "act out what is sometimes called a *line*—that is, a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses his view of situation and through this evaluation of the participants, especially himself" (Goffman and Best 1967/2005:5). The expectation for the social situation could be approached also from another angle, namely, concentrating on the situation that these individuals encounter in interaction instead of concentrating on the individuals (Collins 2004). Collins (2004) argues that each situation follows specific rituals, such as starting the interaction with a small talk. Thus, it depends on the situation how open it is for individuals' interventions for shaping these rituals. The latter is important to consider in the mediated interaction in online interviews as these situations take shape continuously, as we will show in our analysis, with the potential of adjusting with situations where nonverbal cues are not absent (cf. Walther 1996:10) but they are hard to fully mediate.

As technology broadens the opportunities for interaction, physical presence is no longer a premise for the creation of social situations (Reichmann 2019:238). Many social situations have been informationalized, where data and information from multiple places are part of the coordination of these situations, causing qualitative changes in the interaction order (Reichmann 2019:238–239). In contrast to the traditional social situations, Cetina (2009) derives the notion of synthetic situations based on electronically operated trade markets, offering the possibility to study interactions mediated by digital technology. In synthetic interactions, the situation is expanded by the lens of digital technology and articulated as "entirely informational" and "ontologically fluid," meaning that the synthetic situation is a continuous project, specifically created and reliably delivered, and therefore not taken for granted, as face-to-face situations might be (Cetina 2009:69–70). The physical presence that is essential for Goffman's theory of interaction is abandoned in Cetina's theory of synthetic situations.

Our main theoretical interest, related to the empirical study we present in this article, revolves around three essential elements of synthetic situations; that these situations are fluid, intense, and embodied (Cetina 2009). In addition to the participants and their expectations, which they bring into the interaction, in the synthetic situation the interaction develops "between participants and screens" (Cetina 2009:70) and therefore the response presence of participants is crucial. For Goffman, the response presence means "cobodily presence" (Cetina 2009:85 on Goffman 1983) as well as the "immediate presence" of others (Goffman 1983:3); for Cetina (2009:74), it means that the interacting party "is accountable for responding without inappropriate delay to an incoming attention or interaction request." However, considering that online interviews in the current study are synchronous interactions, the meaning of response presence needs to be elaborated further. Zhao (2003:445) offers one possibility of thinking about response presence in online interaction through "copresence" which involves two dimensions: "copresence as a mode of being with others, and copresence as a sense of being with others." Although, technology enables the "mode" when we are connected with others, "sense" is more of a personal perception (Zhao 2003) of interaction that cannot be guaranteed merely by establishing technologically connected, synchronous or asynchronous interaction. The monitoring of information flows and bodily involvement of interacting parties in synthetic situations (Cetina 2009) contribute into the "sense of copresence" (Zhao 2003:450) where all the changes that are occurring are also bodily experienced (Cetina 2009:75). This "mode of affectivity" that response presence entails in synthetic situation is understood as intensity (Cetina 2009:74).

However, in the synthetic situations, something that Goffman and Best (1967/2005) conceptualizes as "face-work" is extremely essential in the embodiment of the interaction as well as regulating the expressive order, because the "face-to-screen arrangement," in a way, absorbs the interaction into the technological system (Cetina 2009). By face-work Goffman means designating

> "the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face. Face-work serves to counteract "incidents" — that is, events whose effective symbolic implications threaten face. Thus poise is one important type of face-work, for through poise the person controls his embarrassment and hence the embarrassment that he and others might have over his embarrassment." (Goffman and Best 1967/2005:12–13)

According to Goffman and Best (1967/2005:9), the expressive order is "an order that regulates the flow of events, large or small, so that anything that appears to be expressed by them will be consistent with his face."

Based on our experience with conducting biographical interviews online, we understand online interview situations to be fluid, as these situations were specifically created and needed continuous update, where we could not be sure beforehand whether we would manage to establish and sustain audiovisual contact, in both technical and social terms. Because the synthetic situation changes its shape continuously (Cetina 2009), participants can be actively involved in how the interaction is

established and unfolds in the context of online interviews. This affected our ability to sustain the established interaction order, as we will show in our analysis. The fluid nature, as described above, is characteristic for synthetic situations as they are changing through "reassembly" where the information that is constantly updated by the participants ensures that the synthetic situation is never "finished nor stable, and it never stands still" (Reichmann 2019:241). For this reason, we use the concept of disruption, recently re-theorized by Tavory and Fine (2020), who argue that infractions in interaction may serve as disruptions-of relations and disruptions-for them. According to Tavory and Fine, disruption in interaction may be "a perceived misalignment of the dramaturgical structure of interaction in coordinating expected lines of action" which refers to disruption-of (Tavory and Fine 2020:373). However, instead of understanding disruption just as a trouble, a failure of the social (cf. Goffman 1959), we see that disruptions may be important to any interactional order giving also rise to "deeper modes of intersubjectivity and social coordination" (Tavory and Fine 2020:366–367).

Reichmann (2019:242) argues that synthetic situations are often mixed with elements from offline, unmediated, and naked situations, as "pure" synthetic situations occur rarely. Similarly, we understand the online interview situation to be a mix of online and offline elements, influenced by one's physical environment as well as potentially by bystanders, whom Goffman (1966:91) defines as officially excluded from the encounter but who may change the interaction situation from fully focused to partly focused, which is significant because in the interaction order, "the engrossment and involvement of the participants" is crucial (Goffman 1983:3).

In this paper, we take our previous face-to-face qualitative interviewing experiences as a point of reference for analyzing our online qualitative interviewing experiences, based on observations where the content of the interaction is interpreted through the senses. In our analysis, our main interest is how online interview situations, shape interactions when conducting biographical interviews on sensitive issues. As we found that such interactions take shape continuously, we pay specific attention to the way the interaction order is established and sustained in online interviews. We provide a microsociological approach based on interaction theory for analyzing how and why the exchange of embodied messages is relevant for the interaction order when conducting sensitive biographical research online.

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

In the project *Postmemory of Family Separation: An Intergenerational Perspective*, we study to what extent memories of family separation, persecution, and forced migration have been transmitted across generations, what becomes hidden over time, and how these traumatic experiences reflect on the lives of the second and third generations. The primary qualitative data consists of biographical interviews of adult persons living in Finland, Sweden, and Estonia whose Ingrian family members experienced forced migration after the Russian Revolution, in the Stalin era, or

during World War II. Most of the interviewees had parents or grandparents who migrated to Finland, Sweden, or Estonia during or after World War II. Due to the sensitive nature of the research, the project was reviewed and accepted by the Ethics Committee for Human Sciences at the University of Turku, which is registered with the United States Office for Human Research Protections (IORG number 0011195). Data were collected from 29 interviewees, with whom we conducted 64 interviews, 56 of which were remote. All the interviews were recorded by the audio recorder and transcribed. On average, the online interviews lasted approximately two hours. This was also the amount of time scheduled for remote interviews because we noticed as soon as we began collecting data that online interaction tended to be more exhausting for the researcher than face-to-face interaction due to the changes in fluidity and intensity of the synthetic situation. We implemented ethical strategies to ensure that the psychological well-being of interviewees was not threatened by the biographical interview, including asking how the interviewees felt after the interview and by making follow-up calls and sending e-mails 7–14 days after the interview. The main reason we ended up contacting the research participants after the biographical interview was that we were concerned about our interviewee's psychological well-being after discussing traumatic family memories or family events they themselves had experienced. These "strategies of care" increased our understanding of "the impacts of the encounter" (Pascoe Leahy 2021:12). We were touched by the family memories and other personal experiences of the interviewees, but also felt need to search for information for those who work with the victims of trauma.

In order to make sense of our online interviewing experiences, we started to record them in our research diaries. In this paper, we use our research diaries from February 2020 to April 2021, written during the fieldwork. In the beginning of the project, our main objective in writing a research diary was to reflect on the empiric research process in general and make some preliminary analytical remarks to use when reading the data later. However, when reporting on the online interviewing process, many of our research diary entries involved reflections on the mediated interaction and how this online situation was rather different from what we had encountered in previous studies in face-to-face interview situations. When analyzing our diaries, we also noticed that our emotional responses evolved in the course of the research (see also Carroll 2012; Hanna 2019). In line with the "thick descriptions" we might think about our experience of conducting online interviews as an additional or complementary way to "rework the pattern of social relationships" (Geertz 1973:322), shaping the experience of conducting a sensitive qualitative research.

Although, qualitative research is typically focused on "cognitively articulated aspects of the interview" (Ezzy 2010:163), there has been a growing awareness of qualitative research as an embodied and sensory experience (see, e.g., Carroll 2012; Dickson-Swift et al. 2009; Emerald and Carpenter 2015; Ezzy 2010; Hanna 2019; Hiitola 2021; Sampson et al. 2008; White 2021). Recognizing that researchers may be emotionally involved in the work they do is part of that awareness.

Diaries have previously been theorized in terms of their methodological use in understanding multiple layers of data generation and collection (e.g., Alaszewski 2006; Elliot 1997; see also White 2021). The use of researchers' diaries as a reflexive practice (Nadin and Cassell 2006) has been quite rare until recently (e.g., White 2021) compared to studying interviewees' diaries as a starting point for an analysis. The analysis of our research diaries is based on what Elliot (1997) categorizes as a research-driven study on a particular topic, which in this case is the interaction between the researcher and the interviewee in the synthetic situation. In our analysis, we concentrated on the themes of uncertainty and change in the synthetic interactions. Based on the analysis of our research diaries, we identified four key experiences that characterize our online interview situations: (1) uncertainty of focused gatherings, (2) uncertainty about communication rules, (3) changes in spatial conventions, and (4) changes in interacting and monitoring bodily orientation and emotions. The categories were partly mixed but they, however, helped us to understand the social phenomena relating to mediated interaction in our data. In our experience, each category seemed to affect the synthetic encounter more than a face-to-face encounter, as we next show in our analysis.[3] The first two categories encompass our experiences of the fluidity of the synthetic interaction situation, and the last two our experiences of the intensity of the synthetic interaction situation. We see fluidity as referring to constant changes in the interaction through reassembly, affecting primarily the researcher's mental processes of perception and reasoning of verbal messages. In turn, intensity is related to monitoring the emotions of the interviewee by paying constant attention to his or her bodily orientation and facial reactions. This relates more to the mode of affectivity, where the whole body is involved in sustaining the established connection. The embodiment of the interaction is intertwined in both of these thematic aspects of the study.

In addition to our research diaries as primary data, we present some extracts of transcribed texts to better illustrate how the interactional settings were disrupted and turned. We examined the extracts closely together with the analysis of research diaries by using the basic conversation analysis techniques. We focused only on the sequences which were essential in practices of the interaction (Drew and Heritage 2006) regarding the analysis based on our research diaries. We combined the sequences to the analysis in a rather general manner, not by transcripts that show all the detailed elements of the interaction (David et al. 2018:10). However, evidently meaningful pauses of seven seconds or more and other essential elements of talk in particular contexts, such as strong emotions, have been transcribed in the extracts.

EXPERIENCED FLUIDITY: UNCERTAINTY OF FOCUSED GATHERINGS AND COMMUNICATION RULES

Our analysis indicates that the fluidity of the synthetic situation influences interaction in online interviews, where the rules of interaction are not clear but rather take

shape continuously. The fluidity is influenced by the immediate physical space of both interaction parties, as well as how much of the participants' settings can be observed. As the offline elements of one's immediate physical space are only partly mediated by the screen, it can be hard to anticipate external factors that may shape the interaction situation. When we conducted the interviews, most of the interviewees were at home, which supported the establishment of more relaxed interview situations but at the same time surroundings of home spaces had the potential to disturb the online interaction. Due to the intimate nature of the biographical interview, as well as sensitive research topic, we instructed the interviewees beforehand to establish a quiet environment for the interview. However, in some cases, family members were present during the interview. They provided technical support,[4] and even became informally active in the interview discussion. In these cases involving disruptions, the online interview situation changed from fully focused to partly focused. When the presence of the other family member became evident during the interview, we felt that we were unable to ask the interviewee to move to another room without the risk of being impolite, which would have affected the trust we had established with the interviewee. In one case,

> The interviewee's wife was present at the beginning of the interview, providing technical help establishing the online connection via Zoom; she stayed in the same room for the whole interview. When I asked about the nature of their marriage, I was constantly thinking about the partner being in the same room. It made me feel uncomfortable asking such personal questions and did not allow me to focus entirely on the interview. (Author B, 7 July 2020, research diary)

In this way, the synthetic situation was "something of a hybrid" (Cetina 2009:67) or a mix of online and offline situations, as described by Reichmann (2019:242) and it occasionally became uncomfortable for the researcher to discuss interviewees' personal relationships more in depth (see also Meherali and Louie-Poon 2021). We perceived that the presence of the spouse posed a challenge for us to maintain the mutual focus of attention, and these situations caused some sort of inconvenience for the interviewees as well. However, some interviewees seemed to be more relaxed in the partly focused situations when we had a discussion of their partnership relations as illustrated in the following extract. The following extract also demonstrates how the presence of the spouse provided additional information about the dynamics of their partnership relations which enriched the collected data.

> Interviewee #10 Extract #1
> Interviewee: … I am like this. Now I am decent, because I used to be such a leaf-tail, so I had to run around, it's something inherited from my father, that I had to run around and find myself another partner again, that's how things have gone. Now we live-. For how long we have been living together? ≪asking from the partner≫
> Interviewees' partner: Twenty years.
> Interviewee: Yes, 20 years! Now I am decent.
> ≪the partner laughs≫.

Interviewee: Quiet! Give me water. ≪laughs and turns to the partner≫ Yes. I talk so much, my mouth gets dry.

Intervjueeritav: … mina olen selline. Nüüd ma olen korralik, kuna ma olin selline lehtsaba, siis mul oli vaja ringi joosta, et see on mul isalt päritud selline asi, et oli vaja ringi joosta ja jälle endale uus leida, et siis on need asjad niimoodi läinud. Nüüd me elame, kaua me koos elame? ≪küsib elukaaslaselt≫
Intervjueeritava elukaaslane: Kakskümmen aastat.
Intervjueeritav: Kakskümmend aastat jah. Nüüd ma olen korralik.
≪elukaaslane naerab≫
Intervjueeritav: Tasa! Anna mulle vett ≪naerab ja pöördub elukaaslase poole≫
Jah. Ma niipalju räägin, suu kuivab ära.[5]

Therefore, the mix of online and offline situations shaped our ability to maintain focused gatherings and to fully concentrate our attentions to the ongoing social event which, here, was the biographical interview. While conducting online interviews, it was not always certain whether the other family members, who could be seen as "bystanders" (Goffman 1966), were part of the interaction situation or not in the mediated encounter. On the one hand, the bystanders (in most cases the spouse of the interviewee) may offer resources and directions for the narrative. On the other hand, bystanders may verbally or affectively control the stories of the narrator (Gubrium and Holstein 2008) by their mere or expected presence. What makes the online interview situation different from the face-to-face situation is the lack of information about the presence of bystanders due to the restricted visibility of offline surroundings.

Although online interviews, mediated via audio and video, limited what we were able to observe of the interview situation, what was visible was also highlighted in a way. This "augmented visibility" captures the full attention of the interacting parties. When some parts of the body were more visible than others, the interaction rules that govern face-to-face interviews became more flexible. For example, the interviewees commented on aspects of our appearance visible on the screen, such as our eyewear or hairstyles, more likely in face-to-screen interaction than in face-to-face interaction.

In the beginning of the second interview, the interviewee commented on my eyewear. She analyzed in detail both pairs of my glasses (including the others I had on in the first interview). I doubt that this would have happened in a face-to-face interaction situation. I began to reflect on the materially emphasized video interview situation where the visuality is highlighted as a part of the research interaction.[6] (Author A, 19 August 2020, research diary)

Here, it seemed that the other participant in the interaction did not necessarily see that for the researcher the interview was an occasion for work because both interaction parties were in their own private intimate spaces. However, according to Goffman (1966:20), "too much relativity" is not typically justified in social occasions. This means also that there are certain verbal patters, lines, that are expected to occur at work, although the interaction parties were physically at home. We found

it as a breach in the interview situation, when some interviewees took a stand on our "personal front," in Goffman's terms, breaking the conventional rules that influence the interaction order and creating a need to reorganize the interaction situation and re-establish order. The author A found herself in an "established state of ritual disequilibrium" (Goffman and Best 1967/2005:19) and tried to re-establish a conventional ritual state for the interview. In turn, re-establishing the order increased the level of intensity of the synthetic situation. However, such comments on the researcher's appearance may be explainable by the fact that participants in the face-to-screen situation are "oriented to monitors" (Cetina 2009:72). The face-to-screen arrangement was sometimes perceived as a more relaxed interaction situation, compared to face-to-face gatherings. Participants in the interaction may also have the need to both present themselves and interpret each other actively and intensively in the synthetic situation, where the other interaction party is only partly visible.

In full conditions of copresence, people have to sense that they are close enough to perceive and sense each other in whatever they are doing (Goffman 1966). We had restricted conditions of copresence, lacking sometimes the "sense of copresence" (Zhao 2003) because, as researchers, we could not sense the interviewee beyond the screen and could not always perceive the embodied information. We became aware that we were extremely dependent on the screen in order to follow the interaction. In one interview, the interviewee left the computer screen after discussing his traumatic experiences, which provoked deep emotions in both interaction parties. This happened in the second biographical interview with the interviewee in question.

> The interviewee had some kind of panic reaction [when describing] this situation in which he wanted to protect his father. […] The interviewee burst out crying and walked away from the interview situation. He disappeared from the screen and went to cry somewhere. In this context, I felt so helpless and worried about the interviewee. I did not know how serious the situation was. I did not know if the interviewee was going to come back to the screen or not. However, about 30 seconds later, the interviewee returned to the screen and wiped the tears from his face. I asked him if he was okay. I also told him that the digital interview situation was to some extent difficult because I could not be there to support the interviewee as in a face-to-face interview. The interviewee told me that he was feeling okay, and we returned to the interview mode. (Author A, 2 November 2020, research diary)

Leaving the situation is a risky interaction threat in the mediated environment. Both interaction parties were obligated to figure out innovate means that could remedy the situation full of uncertainty and unpredictability that disrupted the expressive order. The disruption was largely involved with the conversation topics, that is, traumatic family memories related to transnational persecution and fear experienced by the interviewees' father, who even had already passed away, as represented in the extract.

> Interviewee #12 Extract #2
> Interviewee: Why should he [a person outside from the family] know more about [my father], it's enough, it's enough now, stop … He [the father] should rest in peace. ≪cries≫ [pause 7 sec.]
> Interviewer: Oh no … ≪empathically≫
> Interviewee: ≪cries heavily 20 sec.≫ Sometimes it's hard to control your feelings.
>
> Den intervjuade: Varför ska han [en person som hör inte till familjen] veta mer [om pappa], det räcker, det får räcka nu, stopp … Han [pappa] måste få ligga där ifred. ≪gråter≫
> [paus 7 s]
> Intervjuare: Oj nej … ≪empatiskt≫
> Den intervjuade: ≪gråter 20 s≫ Ibland går det inte å styra känslor.[7]

Crying with a person who you never met face-to-face must have caused discomfort. Leaving the situation seemed to be a sign of emotional disturbance referring to embarrassment (Goffman and Best 1967/2005:97). However, as Weller (2017:623) suggests, online interview context reduces "the risk of exposure or embarrassment." Also, here, it seemed that the online interview context caused some easiness for the interviewee to return to the mediated situation. Despite of the online encounter, the strong emotional reaction of the interviewee had a remarkable impact on the researcher, as she was intersubjectively involved in the breach by asking questions concerning the topics that caused the interviewee's emotional reaction. In a sense, the emotional reaction of the interviewee was created by both interaction parties. The researcher was a part of the emotional reaction, although the interviewee's reaction was not completely shared in the face-to-screen environment as he left the screen. Thus, as our own emotional reactions "were left in the screen," we noticed the need for work on our emotions, such as sadness concerning the narrated events, after the interview. We experienced that the emotions felt in the interview became fully embodied only after leaving the interaction situation.

Due to the fluid nature of the mediated interaction, leaving from the interaction situation seemed to be easy for the interviewee but resulted in extra effort for the researcher in re-establishing the mediated expressive order and restructuring the main activity. It was impossible for the researcher to get emotional in the mediated situation where communication rules were "lost." The uncertainty of the focused gathering caused confusion for the researcher who was responsible for sustaining the interaction order in the interview. This was also reflected in the transcribed texts. The following extract illustrates well how stressed the Author A was about both the condition of the interviewee but also the extreme fluidity of the synthetic situation. The moment of "losing face" in the face-to-screen situation can be an overwhelming threat to the interaction order online. The restriction of mediated communication made the situation both affectively and cognitively heavy for the researcher because she was in another physical place and could not support or comfort the interviewee in any way.

Interviewee #12 Extract #3
Interviewee: It just bubbles. Yeah, but it's alright with me. In contrast to my father,
for me, it is very easy to cry. Yeah. [pause 7 sec.] That's the way it is.
Interviewer: Oh no … ≪empathically≫ [pause 10 sec.] [Name], are you okay?
Interviewee: Yeah, I just relieved some pressure.
Interviewer: Yes, well … I just wonder should we continue or should we-
Interviewee: Yeah, yeah. I would like to continue. No problem.
Interviewer: Are you sure?
Interviewee: Yeah ≪laughs≫ It is, yes. It is … yeah … It was only a kind of spon-
taneous experience to bubble out.
Interviewer: It is also a bit difficult to me because it is hard to comfort you due to
the online conversation-
Interviewee: No, no, you do not have to.
Interviewer: -in these situations.

Den intervjuade: Det bara bubblar. Å ja, nä men det går bra med mej. Det är bara
att jag har alltid hemskt lätt å gråta till skillnad från min far. Ja … [paus 7 s] Så är
det.
Intervjuare: Oj nej … [paus 10 s] [Namn], är du okej?
Den intervjuade: Ja. O ja. Jag bara släppte på trycket.
Intervjuare: Jo, öh … Jag bara undrar om, skulle vi fortsätta eller borde vi-
Den intervjuade: Ja ja. Jag fortsätter gärna. Det är inga problem.
Intervjuare: Är du säker på det?
Den intervjuade: Ja ≪skrattar≫. Det är, jo då. Det är … ja … Det var bara en
sån där, spontan upplevelse och då, bubbla det upp.
Intervjuare: Det är lite svårt också för mej eftersom det här är videosamtalet så
det är inte så lätt att stöda dej på-
Den intervjude: Nej nej, du behöver inte.
Intervjuare: -de här situationerna.[8]

When the interviewee went off screen, we lost the synthetic — but the very
important — eye contact, which made it difficult to sustain the socially focused
interaction situation. The mediated environment made the breach operate as a
moment of disintegration including a risk of social breakdown, meaning the end
of social interaction. However, leaving the response presence here was perhaps
just a temporary move typical to situational breaches. The interviewee presumably
signaled that he would return to the interview. Otherwise, he would have turned off
the camera and left the Zoom meeting. However, it was the uncertainty of the state
of mind of the interviewee and his indecisive return which made Author A confused
in the fluid interaction. Without any physical signs or the bodily presence of the
interviewee during the emotionally intense situation, we were unable to interact
with the interviewee. Therefore, maintaining the balance between supporting the
participant's narrative and seeing the risks of delving too deep into the suffering of
the past was challenged during the synthetic interaction. It is usual in a biograph-
ical narration that the narrator will sometimes interact more with memories than
with the researcher (Rosenthal 2003:922) when being inside the "narrative flow"
(Eichsteller and Davis 2022:55), but in our online interviews, the narrators were in a
way disconnected from interacting with the researcher. As researchers, we could not

be fully aware of the context of the synthetic interview or sure of how difficult the context was for the interviewee.

In the situation, Author A made a strong emotional effort to establish something that Goffman and Best (1967/2005:19) conceptualizes as a "corrective process" concerning the situational breach. The deepening of intersubjectivity through the interaction of disruption was a highly emotional (Tavory and Fine 2020:378) event specifically in the mediated situation. Moreover, in some cases, the discussed topic concerning traumatic family stories dramatically intensified the emotionality of the mediated disruptions. Re-ordering the interaction by recreating a comfortable and safe virtual space by the empathic face-work and comforting words was crucial in re-establishing the interaction order and maintaining interpersonal trust. For example, Author A asked how the interviewee felt after he returned to the screen. Moreover, the corrective process applied to both parties: the researcher "repaired" the disrupted situation by mitigating the emotional discomfort through showing empathy here, and the researcher also provided the chance for the interviewee to "correct" himself and take the initiative to recover from the breach faced during the interaction. This highlights the meaning of rapport-building and trust as an allegiance to shared practices of interaction (David et al. 2018:5). It was highly important in remaining and strengthening the reciprocal relationship which was threatened during and after the breach. The synthetic situation might also have been secure for the interviewee as he was free to take his own privacy and liberate himself from sharing all his feelings with the "stranger." Our study indicates that interactional breaches which can be unchaining in the interactional frame (Tavory and Fine 2020:373) can function quite similarly in the face-to-face and face-to-screen interaction despite of the interactional challenges online. Later in the third biographical interview, Author A understood that the re-establishment of the interaction order followed by the breach in the context of the entire interviewing process, had a positive impact on the relationship of the interviewee and the researcher.

> We had the third interview today. [Before the meeting,] I was concerned about the condition of the interviewee because the previous interview was the most emotional. It [the interview] was discomforting for me because the interviewee left the interview for a while. Thus, I was so happy to meet the interviewee doing well. He seemed to be relieved on the screen. (Author A, 6 November 2020, research diary)

In contrast to the Author A's fears, the interviewee was relieved, and his well-being seemed to be at a higher level compared to the last interview. Typically, the nature of disruption can be retrospectively defined and interpreted (Tavory and Fine 2020). Thus, we argue that the emotionally demanding situational breach experienced by Author A in the second interview, became disruption-for from the point of view of the interviewee. This was also reflected in the interviewees' experiences concerning his participation in the project he presented in the end of the interview which had a positive impact on the researcher, too.

> Interviewee #12 Extract #4
> Interviewer: And what kind of experience was the biographical interview, or these three interviews to you?
> Interviewee: It has been interesting. It has been rewarding to me. I have been enthusiastic to tell about history and a bit about comtemporary things, too, and so on.
>
> Intervjuare: Och hur har du upplevt den här forskningsintervjun, eller de här tre intervjun?
> Den intervjuade: Den har varit intressant. Den har varit givande för mej. Jag har känt det angeläget att få berätta, historian och lite grann om nutid och så.[9]

The corrective process after the moment of the breach full of emotions in the mediated interaction was regarded as successful as the interviewee was later confident and trusting again, even relaxed, and liberated. The interpersonal affective trust was refined and re-established between the interviewee and the researcher reflecting the rebalanced interaction order after the relational insecurities and difficulties in focused gatherings during the online research process.

EXPERIENCED INTENSITY: CHANGES IN SPATIAL CONVENTIONS AND INTERACTING AND MONITORING BODILY ORIENTATION AND EMOTIONS

The fluidity of the online interview situation increased the intensity of the mediated encounter. Moreover, bodily and emotionally involved aspects of mediated interaction had also a significant impact on the intensity of the synthetic interview situation. The synthetic situation seemed to increase the feeling of privacy for the interviewee when discussing sensitive issues (see also Jenner and Myers 2019; Paechter 2013; Weller 2017).

The mediated space can be understood as a Goffmanian stage which should be managed by the interaction parties. According to Goffman (1966:98), "engagements of the conversational kind appear to have, at least in our society, some spatial conventions" as well, which are typically influenced by cultural and social factors. Although there is no shared physical space in a synthetic interaction, the virtual space nonetheless brings the faces of the participants close, making the interaction situation extremely intense. We noticed that the interaction parties had some opportunities to compensate for the virtual closeness in the mediated space.

> The interviewee used her phone to establish an online connection for the interview. She placed her phone on the table at a distance. […] Because the interviewee was far from the screen, I unconsciously moved closer to my own computer screen in order to adapt to the rules of virtual distance created by the interviewee. However, when I noticed during the interview that I had moved closer to the screen, I moved back to my initial position, though I was still closer to the screen than the interviewee. (Author B, 26 March 2021, research diary)

Goffman (1966:161) has highlighted that participants in a situation have tendency to space, to "distribute themselves cooperatively in the available space so as physically to facilitate conventional closure." This tendency held in the described mediated interview situation, where the interviewee distanced herself from the screen and Author B moved closer to the screen to compensate for the interviewee's distance. We could call this virtual spacing, a way of distance-making in the synthetic situation, as spatial conventions seem to be important in mediated environments that are visible during the online encounter. Virtual spacing seemed to support interaction parties' impression management. However, in general, interaction parties may be even more aware of the common techniques, as well as protective and defensive practices, for how to control and secure the impression in view of the other (Goffman 1959:14–15) in virtual spaces. Virtual spacing helped the interaction parties to seek the socially recreated emotional balance. Thus, face-work, aiming to remain poised, provided an opportunity for balancing between the ways the emotions were shown in the online interaction.

Having modern technology as a mediator supports the balancing act where the interviewee has the power to decide how close to the researcher he/she is willing to be. This situation depends on the capacities and types of the technology used for online interaction, whether it is a computer (desktop or laptop) or a smartphone. Moreover, the interviewee's familiarity of using various digital communication platforms, such as Zoom, impacts the power to decide on the distance of both interaction parties in the online encounter. However, if the distance from the screen chosen by the interviewee is long, it creates another barrier for the researcher in the face-to-screen arrangement, causing extra effort in monitoring the interviewee's bodily orientation and emotional cues, which may also hinder the establishment of the deeper connection with the interviewee.

In some interviews, the interaction could change from a dialog into a monologue. As noted previously, in technology mediated interaction, participants tend to concentrate more on themselves than on others (Sproull and Kiesler 1986) who are part of the interaction, dropping the social expectation of reciprocity. We understand this kind of relational breach, affecting the interaction order between places and spaces, as a return to a private mental space. When the monologue occurs in face-to-face interaction, as it often happens in a biographical interview, the role of nonverbal interaction becomes essential (see also Deakin and Wakefield 2014; Ezzy 2010; Weller 2017). Based on our experience of face-to-screen interaction, the opportunities for non-verbal communication were limited as our embodied messages were only partly transmitted via screen (see also Seitz 2016). This may be the reason why the researchers experienced the interaction of sad or other difficult emotions, expressed via nonverbal communication through the whole body, as insufficient in sensitive online interviews.

> I experienced a lack of reciprocity in the interaction what becomes to sharing of affects and emotions in the mediated situation. This concerned specifically traumatic or extremely negatively charged topics (see also notes 260620; 100820).

> Although face-to-face interviews can be sometimes laborious, I never encoun-
> tered this kind of one-way transmission of traumatic experiences from the
> interviewee to the interviewer via a monologue.[10] (Author A, 21 October 2020,
> research diary)

We got the impression that some nonverbal lines of interaction were lack-
ing. However, we, as interaction parties, were still affectively responding to the
interviewees' experiences, which made the synthetic situation extremely intense.
When lacking reciprocity of the mediated interaction, we only partially bodily
understood the face-to-screen situation, as the boundaries posed by the screen hin-
dered the full understanding of the interaction processes with all our naked senses
(cf. Cetina 2009).

During these lonely moments of synthetic situations, when we interpreted the
interviewee's behavior to mean that he or she had entered a private mental space,
we had difficulties in asking questions and transferring empathy. Still, we tried to
"be there" for the interviewee to an even greater extent, expressing empathically
our response presence with gestures experienced with the whole body, which made
the interview situation even more intense. Moreover, when another interviewee
expressed intense sad feelings with Author A, she felt that the lack of a traditionally
shared space was challenging, leading again to a loss of emotional connection and an
inability to "be there" for the interviewee. Our desire to be physically present in the
mediated situation and empathize with interviewees caused us repetitive distress as
in another case presented earlier in this study.

> While talking about his mother […], the interviewee burst out crying. He told me
> that his mother's father had died in an accident, so the mother became an orphan.
> This was the hardest part of the video interview because I could not affectively
> express empathy in a situation in which words seemed to be extremely clumsy and
> intrusive. (Author A, 11 June 2020, research diary)

According to Goffman and Best (1967/2005:23), "emotions function as moves, and
fit precisely into the logic of the ritual game that it would be difficult to understand
them without it." In the mediated environment, specifically sad emotions seemed
to function as stagnants in the virtual space, although our feelings became attached
to the face monitored in the screen. We argue that our embodied reactions were
not transferred through the screen due to the restricted view to our body, although
they were presented through the whole body. The awkwardness of exchanging
emotions may have caused some difficulties in the reciprocally understood logic of
interaction, too. Author A's difficulties expressing empathy and condolences when
suddenly hearing something extremely sad in the mediated situation indicates, in
Seitz's (2016) terms, a "loss of intimacy" when the interaction parties do not have
a physical response presence in a traditional sense. The fact that the interaction
parties encountered one another in time rather than in a place increased the affec-
tive distance, causing privacy or lonely moments when discussing highly emotional
topics. Thus, it seemed that in the synthetic situation, the expression of emotions

was not managed and constructed collaboratively by the interaction parties in the same manner as in the face-to-face encounter (cf. Sorjonen and Peräkylä 2012:4). We experience that so-called "nonvocal resources of the body" such as gestures, postures, facial expressions (Sorjonen and Peräkylä 2012:8), and other bodily moves are expressed and sensed *in detail* only in face-to-face encounters. These expressions and sensations were somewhat lacking in the face-to-screen situations. We noticed that the mediated interaction really changed the sense of copresence (Zhao 2003) specifically during the moments that involved strong emotions such as extreme sadness. However, on the individual level, we experienced that our response presence required continuous monitoring, which Cetina (2009:74) understands as a mode of affectivity circumscribed as intensity. The nonverbal communication of interviewees was full of other affective cues, expressed by material hints or facial gestures, and continuous monitoring of those cues had a high impact on the interaction and its high emotionality.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have illustrated how and why the exchange of the embodied messages is relevant for the interaction order when conducting sensitive biographical research online. Based on our analysis, we found that the (re-)structuring of the social context, the main activity and the expressive order was more challenging in the face-to-screen than in face-to-face interactions. The interaction order seemed to be "less ordered" and open to different kinds of interaction orderings made by both interaction parties.

The online interview situation is not a pure synthetic situation but appears as mixed with an offline situation where the other aspects of the interaction parties' immediate physical surroundings start to influence the interaction. For example, the third parties can easily make the intimate online encounter partly focused. This increases the fluidity of the established interaction order, as the mediated situation is highly difficult for the researcher to control. The fluidity did not concern only one's offline surrounding but also mutual understanding of the communication rules which were continuously taking shape during online interviews. According to Tavory and Fine (2020:377), we should pay attention to the question of "who can disrupt what situation and when they can do so." We experienced that the mediated environment was "open to disruptions" because the interaction parties had more possibilities to an interactional change due to the fluid nature of the encounter. In the mediated interaction, interaction parties have more capacity for disruptions due to the more equal power relationships (cf. O'Connor and Madge 2017).

As we showed in our analysis, the disruptions we experienced in the mediated space were not equivalent to an interactional breakdown (cf. Tavory and Fine 2020:373). The infractions in the interactional frame were often "liberating" (Tavory and Fine 2020:373) and created trust after the corrective processes. Typically,

people actively strive to re-create shared lines of action in order to retain their identities as competent actors as well as their social relations (Tavory and Fine 2020:368). The meaning of corrective acts enabled us to refine and re-establish trust with the interviewee. These corrective processes rebalanced the relational order and evoked the poise after the relational insecurities. In this regard, our interactional vulnerabilities recreated our interactional resources (Goffman 1983:4; Tavory and Fine 2020:373), although these vulnerabilities were somewhat confusing at moment they occurred. Openly discussing relational insecurities caused by the mediated environment deepened the relationships between the researcher and the interviewee.

Moreover, we experienced some barriers in transferring empathy through the screen. Specifically, sad emotions functioned as "stagnants" in the virtual space because communicating strong affective responses through the whole body was limited (cf. Sorjonen and Peräkylä 2012). We also noticed that the interviewees had the possibility "restrict themselves" in the interaction by concentrating on the place they were physically located. The synthetic situations decreased the feeling of reciprocity in response presence. The relational disruptions affected the interaction order because of the feeling of privacy for the interaction parties when discussing sensitive issues. In the interview situation, we were extremely intensively oriented to the face-to-screen arrangement. The exchange of embodied messages seemed to involve the whole body more effectively than in the face-to-face interaction, bringing more intensity to the online interview situation. However, the exchange of the embodied messages was still limited and restricted by the screen, as we could not give and receive them with all of our senses. Difficulties in communicating sad emotions and trying to interpret limited embodied messages and affective cues through continuous monitoring brought us emotional pressure during the interview, which afterwards led to a higher level of exhaustion compared to the face-to-face interviews. Thus, due to the lack of reciprocity concerning the sharing of emotions in the mediated situation, our emotions became fully understood and embodied only after processing the content of the interview.

The interaction situation in the context of sensitive biographical research requires focused empathic presence, which makes the online interviewing intense. Cetina (2009:72) has stated that the screen reality is "processual in the sense of an infinite succession of nonidentical matter projecting itself forward as a changing situation." We noticed that this fluidity was mirrored in the ambiguous nature of communication in sensitive online interviews. The fluid process of screen reality was also reflected on the online situation's intensity experienced as the depth of the participation. The study illustrated that the fluid and intense mediated situation lacking physical copresence is more difficult for researchers to control and therefore the technology does not only mediate but also shapes and impacts the interaction (see also Carr 2020; Flanagin 2020; Yao and Ling 2020). In this regard, the interviewee has more power to define the interaction order in the face-to-screen situation than in the face-to-face situation. These situations and the moments concerning the

communication rhythm in sensitive online interviews should be explored in more detail in the future.

Being aware of the aspects presented in our paper could help researchers prepare for the fluidity and intensity of mediated, sensitive interviews. Online communication rules could be agreed in detail beforehand with the interviewee. In addition, chat box options in online communication platforms could be included to the strategy when conducting sensitive research online. Further research is needed to better understand how and why the synthetic environment shapes the biographical interviewing process. We also noticed that in some cases it was hard to find an appropriate moment for ending the interview. Weller (2017) suggests that ending the interview is part of the rapport and it is essential to pay attention to the "leavings," but it is one of the challenges in online interviews to find the appropriate moment. Therefore, we might assume that ending the interview in online situations needs specific "rituals" (Collins 2004) to be established by the research team prior the data collection phase. These aspects are worth analyzing further. In the future, another research strategy could utilize recorded video-interviews to analyze more systematically the mediated interaction in synthetic situation in the context of sensitive biographical research. Also, the role of technology in shaping synthetic situations deserves further consideration for observing and analyzing how the technological equipment and software used for conducting online interviews influence the establishment of interaction order in online encounters. The latter could support researchers who are considering using online interviews for sensitive qualitative research, helping them better prepare for such encounters.

Despite the challenges we faced in the synthetic interaction, compared to the face-to-face interaction, our research participants gave mostly positive feedback on the biographical interview process online. Many of them reflected on the therapeutic, rewarding, and curative effects of narrating their life stories in the mediated situation. Rosenthal (2003) describes the biographical-narrative interview as a psychological intervention for the narrator, which in our experience holds true for the synthetic environment as well. Telling a personal life story seemed to help the interviewee to experience self-understanding, continuity, and meaningfulness, which are effects that Rosenthal (2003:924–927) has identified to be typical for the biographical-narrative interviews. Thus, based to our experience we found that online biographical research can be a resourceful way of collecting sensitive data, too.

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NOTES

1. The project *Postmemory of Family Separation: An Intergenerational Perspective* is funded by the Academy of Finland and led by Dr. Johanna Leinonen.
2. The Zoom license provided by the University of Turku and the University of Oulu enabled us to create a safe interaction with research participants where security risks were minimal.
3. We understand the uncertainty of technology to also be part of the fluid nature of the synthetic online interview situation, but have excluded this topic from our analysis, as it has been discussed in many previous studies concerning online interviewing (e.g., Deakin and Wakefield 2014).
4. It should be noted that some of the interviewees had their first encounters with Zoom when being part of our study and therefore they needed help of their family members for establishing a Zoom connection.
5. The original extract transcribed in Estonian.
6. This happened during the informal part of the encounter before the recording.
7. The original extract transcribed in Swedish.
8. The original extract transcribed in Swedish.
9. The original extract transcribed in Swedish.
10. Both authors are experienced in conducting biographical interviews.

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