This study employed an innovative simulation of interview conditions using both face-to-face and online techniques that facilitated both emic and etic perspectives. This dissertation utilized both micro and macro levels of study. At the micro level, 10 Malaysian research participants interviewed 30 parent participants utilizing two different interview techniques: online face-to-face interviews via Skype, and traditional face-to-face interviews. The interviews focused on parental mediation on children’s television habits. At the macro level the researcher coordinated the study and conducted interviews with the Malaysian researcher participants, after they completed their own interviews in the simulation. Both online and face-to-face interviews were video recorded and were later coded and analyzed. Interviewed parents and the researchers—who conducted the interviews—prepared memos to record their reflections and experience during both traditional and online interviews.

Qualitative analyses of the data revealed seven broad themes and a long list of subthemes. Online interviews are not commonly used in Malaysia. Nevertheless, in the Malaysian context, computer-mediated communication (i.e., online interviews) generally made a positive impact on the amount and depth of information shared by informants. The
researchers were able to ask more questions and provide more follow-up prompts because there was less concern about restrictive societal norms related to dress, appearance, and human interactions. In general, both men and women expressed more freedom to interact online. This study uncovered a couple of surprising or unanticipated outcomes. Cultural and religious traditions in Malaysia restrict and govern interactions between men and women in closed settings. Female researchers reported that they prefer to conduct interviews online. Men interviewing men reported few differences between the traditional or online interviews. Women interviewing women tended to be more engaging and active during traditional interviews as opposed to online interviews. It was commonly reported and observed that online interviews allowed more freedom to interact with mixed gender interviews. Online interviewing was, at times, complicated by such things as disruptions in limited bandwidth and technical issues. While research continues to examine and evaluate new research methods and techniques, the findings from this study underline the critical interaction of culture and religion in interview methods.