



A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF REMOTE INTERVIEWS AND HIRING FOR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract:

In increasingly globalized societies, heavily dependent on online communication, it is crucial to provide children with exposure to various languages, cultural influences, and ideas linking people from all around the world. The choice to hire an au pair from outside the US not only allows families to broaden their intercultural horizons, but also provides unique opportunities for talented, specially trained childcare providers eager to experience life in America. Most families do not have the means to travel with their children internationally but can bring an authentic experience from another part of the world into their homes. People rely on online tools to ensure they have found the very best family-caregiver match. This study explores 123 host families' experiences of interviewing and selecting au pairs, based on survey responses about the technological tools they used for interviewing and their recommended selection modalities.

Keywords: au pair, intercultural interaction, globalization, communication technology, virtual candidate screening

1. Introduction

Individuals in the youngest generation are increasingly accustomed to more cultural influences than ever before, so living with a caregiver from another place and with another native language is accordingly beneficial. What an au pair does may vary in order to meet the unique needs of each individual family he or she serves. Selecting a candidate who can be flexible, dedicated, and can sufficiently fulfill each family's requirements is a sensitive and delicate endeavor. The interview process is critical for ensuring the best possible family-caregiver match and avoiding the costs and problems associated with match failure. Most prospective employers will not require an in-person meeting with their candidate for obvious logistical (geographic) reasons. Since the turn of the 21st century, a new way of making this choice has arisen: online communication. With the

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advent of an entirely new and basically instantaneous system of information gathering, parents/guardians who seek au pairs to care for their children can get much faster results than in earlier times.

1.1 Benefits of Hiring International Caregivers

1.1.1 Educational Experience

One of the main reasons people hire international Au Pair from none profit au pairs agency is to provide their children with exposure to another language and culture. The cultural tradition of the family, as well as their ethnic and linguistic origins, may influence their choice of au pair. Selecting an au pair who will fit in well with the family's specific regional/cultural needs and home environment is of key importance to the success of the au pair experience. Parents often request candidates from the following nations: Austria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine and Czech Republic. Many Americans have their origins in these and other countries in Central Europe and value a connection with the language of origin of their grandparents or even their great-grandparents. Cultural heritage motivates them to reconnect through employing an au pair from their original/ancestral home nation or region, wherever that may be in Central Europe. Additionally, in parts of the world where most homes have online connectivity and also a basic command of the English language, there is a further incentive for parents seeking au pair services to place candidates very high on their "short list" who come from the previously-mentioned countries, from which au pairs are frequently relied upon to have many of the desired qualities most families are looking for in a childcare professional.

The Spanish language is highly predominant in the population of the world as the planet's second most widely spoken language. Many host families from au pair agencies are looking especially for Spanish-speaking au pairs for the purpose of teaching their children the Spanish language. According to Barboza and Trejos (2010), "*Latin America and the Caribbean is [collectively] an economic region composed of about 34 countries with an estimated combined market size of 400 million people*" (pp. 93-122). This is an undeniably rich linguistic resource for parents seeking to make Spanish an acquired language for their children.

1.2 Economic Prudence

In addition to providing children with positive cultural experiences and exposure to another language, hiring an au pair can be economically prudent. In a burgeoning first-world collection of economically powerful nations with young married couples who have high-paying, high-time-demand occupations, the need for highly flexible childcare is ever increasing. Very few companies in the US have in-house childcare; most families have to pay a large percentage of their income for childcare. Yodanis and Lauer (2005) refer to this system as the third type of household, noting that "*the state in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia do not assume that family members provide all childcare needs and expect that additional needs are met through the market*" (pp. 41-64). Non-parental

childcare can be beneficial and workable. Burchinal et al. (2015) see this as the normalization of secondary childcare and said, *“Many [children] now experience nonparental care. About half of the infants and toddlers and over 75% of preschoolers in the United States receive regular early education and care by individuals other than their parents”* (pp. 1–45). Unlike traditional childcare, the cost of using the services of an au pair is equivalent, regardless of the number of children. For families with more than one child, this presents significant savings. Employing an au pair also provides a greater degree of flexibility for working parents. While daycare centers operate during fixed hours and expect children to be picked up within a narrow window of time, an au pair can accommodate changing and flexible schedules without increasing the set price for childcare services.

1.3 Practical Assistance

Au pairs provide practical assistance to meet the needs of each individual family that they work for. An au pair’s job may include helping prepare children for school on a daily basis and transporting them to school by automobile; and driving them to and from appointments and activities (au pairs have an international driving license). They can assist with homework assignments; supervise daily necessities, like bathing, dressing, and putting children to bed; and assist with light child-related household duties, such as cooking meals and doing the laundry. All of these duties require a high degree of dependability and organizational skills. When busy working parents aim to minimize risk of problems with their au pair and they wish to reduce misunderstandings in advance of the experience, they are naturally compelled to select a childcare professional who will function optimally.

2. Motivations for Becoming an Au Pair

2.1 Experience of Cultural and Language Emersion

The drive for young people to travel and experience the world in a framework of independence and self-sufficiency has arisen incrementally for some time. Additionally, the desire to acquire knowledge of other languages and strive to become bilingual or even multilingual increases the employability of any young person seeking to strengthen her or his skill set. According to Yodanis and Lauer (2005), *“the number of young persons going abroad to improve their knowledge of languages has risen constantly since the end of the second world war. School and university exchanges, study grants, holiday visits arranged by schools or youth organisations no longer suffice, despite their continual expansion, to satisfy young people’s desire to widen their horizons, to know other countries or other ways of life”* (pp. 41-64). Without an expanded base of world facts, many young people will be left behind as the 21st century progresses into an ever more “globalistic” mindset, a view which pictures all of human civilization as one inextricable pool of direct access via electronic links.

Geserick (2012) discusses the motivation young people have for making the leap to becoming au pairs, *“For adolescents, to become au pairs in the United States is a popular, yet unique form of cultural exchange: For a limited time, young women and men aged 18–26 live with*

a host family while providing child-care,” (pp. 49-67). Not every young person is willing or able to take risks and travel abroad in order to experience something new, but for those who are, this opportunity can be life changing. Recognizing intercultural disparities is a key part of that experience. As we see in a study from Greenfield et al, *“Sometimes differences were accepted or even valued. Indeed, the overall impression of the interviews was of harmonious relations between nanny and mother. Sometimes culturally based differences led to cross-cultural learning. It is important to note that this cross-cultural learning went in both directions.”* (pp. 326-336)

2.1 Economic Opportunities

Foreign job experience and any investment of labor and/or capital aimed at encouraging young people in Central European countries to acquire that job experience, especially in a country where English is the native language, is inevitably going to be a plus for industry in the long-term in the au pairs’ countries of origin. *“Besides our variables of interest, as expected, foreign capital has a positive impact on growth in these countries, while domestic capital have a small and insignificant contribution in all of our specifications.”* (Pop et al., 2014, pp. 108-119). Domestic, in-country resources are de-emphasized as contributing to gainful economic growth in Central Europe, while outside the region there is a distinct advantage to placing investment money in the “human capital” of young citizens in their late teens and early twenties so they can gain experience living in foreign country.

US currency exchange rates hold more value for employees/workers from outside the US. Au pairs are taking the opportunity to accept childcare jobs for the purpose of exchanging earnings in US dollars for currency in their own country. Barboza (2019) states, *“Asymmetric information and lack of collateral creates a suboptimal allocation of financial resources to those in most need, especially from countries where the national currency is devalued against the US dollar or has undergone a recent drop in value against the American dollar”*. Currency arbitrage is not a primary motivation to become an au pair, but it is a fringe benefit which cannot be ignored.

2.2 Future Business Prospects

Some of the most valuable job opportunities early in a person’s career can come about through an intercultural experience such as working as an au pair. Living in a foreign culture and experiencing all the facets of life, language, and family in a place different from your own can provide strategic skills for the future. To expand their career prospects, young adults (from 18-26 years old) interact in the virtual world by default. International travel is on the rise, and the distances between people, nations, cultures, and societies are becoming shorter due in part to the ease of human communication via the internet. Generation Z is seeing the world through different eyes than any in history because they are the first to consider international boundaries not to be an obstacle.

The advantages for the future careers of those young professionals who have had direct, first-hand experience living abroad is hard to estimate, except to say that it is notable. Being able to apply for positions after graduating from college or university with

a degree of fluency in English, the global lingua franca, would impress any human resources manager when evaluating candidates for a host of positions in big business all over Central Europe. It is hard to compare real life experience with that which can be learned inside of a classroom and come away with an equally useful and practical language skillset.

In addition, the soft skills and intangibles acquired in country during the au pair experience, are invaluable. Depending on which career field a person enters into, a wide variety of advantages can be gleaned from the au pair years in the individual's repertoire of job experience. The understanding of and the resolution of interpersonal differences and misunderstandings in order to accomplish the main goal, caring for the children, is a skill set which can later be patched over to a multitude of industries in nearly every major company all across the primary nations from which so many au pairs come: Austria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, and the Czech Republic. *"Our ethnographic observations indicated that conflicting values/practices can produce discomfort/misunderstanding and other negative feelings between nanny, and mother-employer, when the differences were seen as flaws rather than as reflecting a contrasting cultural value system...cross cultural interaction can result in negativity at times, but it is always a learning opportunity for both parties involved."* (Greenfield et al., 2008, pp. 326-336). Through all the positive and negative moments in the au pair's and host family's time together, much knowledge can be acquired, and many lessons can be learned. This is an essential strategic skill set for future career challenges.

3. Selecting the Right Au Pair

3.1 Finding a Trustworthy Caregiver

As a parent, most know how crucial it is to select a childcare provider who can be trusted, who will compassionately provide your children with safe, high quality care. Parents/guardians must make certain that anyone who cares for their children is responsible, reliable, trained, and experienced, and many candidates from the nations of Europe are frequently considered by parents to exemplify these qualities. In the end, the vast majority of parents desire one thing above all else: the safety and well-being of their children. *"Parents want caregivers who love and treat their child as if they were their own and caregivers do often love the children for whom they care. Related to this, employers and childcare workers often describe their relationship as not that of market-based, employer and employee exchange. Instead, they are 'family'... First, those who provide care are defined as giving their care, not working. Caring is associated with mothering, doing for others altruistically"* (Yodanis & Lauer, 2005, pp. 41-64). Yodanis and Lauer relate in a very genuine sense exactly what the top priority is and must always be, and that is the children themselves. The selflessness of an excellent au pair is one of the very best of his or her qualities; without that essential nature of giving, caring and prioritizing above the self, the relationship and family dynamic cannot work.

3.1 Role of Au Pair Organizations/Agencies

Families rely on the au pair organization/agency to be responsible for providing the highly personalized attention and support needed to optimize the match between the au pair and the host family with respect to the aforementioned geo-cultural factors as they pertain to the origin of the family or the family's forbearers. Using the services of a dependable, experienced au pair program which offers careful screening and comprehensive training to ensure as well that every au pair placed is worthy of the family's trust is an absolute must. Making sure the au pair program a family chooses has a record of successful placements with host families over the years is another key requirement. Reputable au pair organizations will consistently have an international reach with a focus on and a traditional preference by families for au pairs from Central and Western Europe. They will have a dedication to assisting families nationwide in finding the best live-in childcare and a commitment to helping the au pairs they place to succeed. When a family finds a program that appears to have those qualities, they must check to make sure that every au pair their agency places is well-educated, speaks English proficiently, and has received intensive instruction on the various stages of child development, household safety, intercultural differences, safe driving training/experience, an adherence to proper planning/scheduling, know-how in cleaning the home, and hands-on CPR training. Total immersion language experience is intended for the au pair (English in the US) as well as for the children (the au pair's native language). Thorough preparation (with consideration for all factors mentioned here) for the experience of the au pair's work time in country while living with the host family is the key to a successful placement.

The local area director works with individual families in their geographic area, and that person is committed to providing sound advice about the criteria for selecting the ideal au pair for a particular family. The placement program advisor is available to provide every family with localization details and compatibility counsel in order to ensure that the family is selecting the best possible au pair for their particular set of circumstances. Every au pair has an area director assigned by the agency when she or he arrives in the US. Area directors meet with the au pair and the host family to discuss official regulations established by the au pair agency regarding working hours and childcare responsibilities. The area director facilitates a monthly meeting for all au pairs with social activities.

3.2 Use of Technology for Au Pair Selection

More and more often, technology plays an essential role, both by providing online matching and by allowing families to see and interact with the potential au pairs in a virtual environment before making a candidate selection. It also serves as a primary contact point among all three parties: the au pair, the host family, and the au pair organization/agency.

The au pair's expectation is to match very quickly with a compatible host family. The host family's expectation is to find an ideal au pair with desired skills as quickly as

possible. Farr (2004) rightly points out the fact that *"applications are not a job seeker's best friend"*. With traditional job applications, this would prove cumbersome to say the least. When a new host family visits an au pair website and decides to match with a specific au pair outside the US, the entire process takes from 6 to 8 weeks dependent on the country and visa regulations.

Families have the opportunity to interview au pairs via Skype or other video calling platforms/tools or via telephone before making a final decision. This research analysis focuses on the advantages of the video/audio interface over the more traditional audio-only style of communication, but it still calls into question whether or not there is still *"something missing"* even with the more advanced tools which are available today, which include live video. Online video interfacing tools can allow families to gauge the fluency of a native language speaker both in the target (i.e. Spanish) and source (English) languages for a given au pair match. The objections from managers to website-only interaction are based on the selecting managers need to have full confidence in the capabilities of au pair candidates, and without a face-to-face meeting in real life, relying on other means of communication such as audio calls and/or video calls, this is somewhat less certain.

3.4 Match Failure

The ultimate goal is creating the perfect match of family and au pair. As noted by Búriková (2013), *"We see this world from the eyes of the visitors, and their unique perspective on what lies at the heart of our family life"*. A harmonious and balanced home life is achievable with some effort. Au pair agencies who operate on any level of real merit genuinely strive to accomplish the best outcome for all parties involved. *"Many of the roughly 17,500 au pairs who live and work in the United States every year have positive experiences"* (Kopplin, 2017). However, the real is not always the ideal in these set-ups. Kopplin further elaborates, *"They relay horror stories of au pairs who are overworked, humiliated, refused meals, threatened with arrest and deportation — even victims of theft. Worst of all, they say, complaining about exploitative, unsafe working conditions rarely makes any difference. Sometimes, reporting abuse makes the situation worse"*. The chance to exploit foreign care workers often quite easily allows unscrupulous parents looking for cheap childcare to take too much advantage of the young visitors to the United States. Madrid (2018) gives us more insight, *"Unlike live-in nannies, however, au pairs have no guaranteed sick days or federal holidays. They earn a flat hourly wage after sponsor agencies deduct room and board from their pay, which lands them at flat rate per week for 45 hours of work. The au pair program has grown from a few child-care workers arriving from Europe in 1986 to more than 17,000 participants from six continents in 2015. But as the number of au pairs continues to surge, so does the number of complaints."* Allowing international workers on temporary visas to work for wages this low does tend to lead most analysts of the industry to question the ethics of the process. As the participation in au pair program continues to grow and parents continue to push the limits of current standards in place, the regulations on and government oversight of the system must inevitably follow suit.

Based on a comprehensive statistical analysis, 27% of au pairs return home due to an inability to find a family after their initial match resulted in an unworkable arrangement. This study reflects 4% of host families terminated their involvement in the program because the process of bringing au pair from abroad (outside the US) proved to be too protracted. The same rules apply to almost every au pair agency in the United States. If she or he does not have local family applying within the span of an ordinary au pair visa, a span of 2 weeks, the area director will ask the au pair to arrange and pay for transportation back to his or her home country.

Less than highly compatible matches can lead to a percentage of match failure, and a better, more thorough initial matching protocol can reduce this significantly. Additionally changes to the family status as they pertain to how ideal a particular match is proving to be, while engaging in daily family life, can be tracked; updating the website regularly creates more clarification about the specific reason that the au pair or family might be experiencing difficulty or requesting to change families/au pairs.

Obvious challenges have arisen over the past few decades, but online evaluations, initial candidate video interviews, and host family video interviews can be made more precise and thorough in order to decrease the risk of au pair-host family match failure. Match failure is the primary cause of wasted resources in the au pair industry. It causes losses in time, money, administrative work, human resources work, emotional cost, and losses in other key areas of the business.

The au pair industry cannot keep up with demand in many cases, and the constant rotation of candidates who find that they do not really match with their host families after all and need to be re-matched is a perpetual weight on the agencies who do this work. That, compounded with the 12-24-month au pair work visa times, creates even more for placement workers to monitor and do.

4. Data Collection/Analysis

4.1 Survey

The regional manager from an au pair agency conducted an anonymous survey which was taken by host families on November 5, 2019. A total of 150 surveys were sent by email to host families who were currently participating in the au pair program. Survey responses were received from 123 participants. Questions were based on determining how many au pairs host families had to interview, their interview process, and their overall history of employing au pairs. It also focused on methods of electronic communication that the participants used and they were asked to recommend an au pair interview method to their "friends" i.e. other parents who are potentially in need of au pair care.

4.2 Statistical Summation

Most host families (39, 31.7%) interviewed only 2 au pairs before hiring one to provide childcare for their children, followed by 26 (21.1 %) who interviewed 4 au pairs, then 22

(17.9 %) who interviewed 5 au pairs. Interestingly 56 host families (45.5%) hired only 1 au pair (29, 23.6%) or 2 (27, 22.0%) in the last 7 years. Perhaps their childcare needs were no longer required, or the family financial situation changed – no data is available to determine the reason for discontinuing childcare. Typically, an au pair is hired for a period of one year, although it can be extended up to a maximum of 2 years. 21 host families (17.1%) hired 4 au pairs, for periods of service which could have continued up to 7 years with extensions. In addition, 28 host families (22.8%) hired 6-8 au pairs in the last 7 years, or about one per year.

The most frequently used method of interviewing au pairs, conducted by 51 host families (41.5%), was Skype. This was followed by 24 (19.5 %) host families who conducted interviews using email & FaceTime (tied), 14 (11.4%) by phone, and 10 (8.1%) by text. Most host families (78, 63.4 %) did not prepare questions prior to interviewing au pairs, while 45 (36.6 %) did prepare.

Most of the host families (41, 33.3 %) recommend interviewing au pairs by meeting them in person, followed by 25 (20.3 %) via FaceTime, then 22 (17.9 %) via Skype, and then 21 (17.1%) via text. The least recommended method for interviewing au pairs was email (5, 4.5%), followed by phone (9, 7.3 %).

4.3 Discussion/Comparative Research

In this study, we focused on the use of technological tools in the selection and hiring of au pairs. Many au pair agencies use marketing tools to illustrate just how up-to-date their technology is so as to persuade host families to select their company to provide au pair services. A promotional article appeared in *Business Wire* magazine stating, “We are thrilled to now offer many more families the superior child care and global connections that have come to characterize the *Au Pair in America* program for the past 22 years,” said Ruth Ferry, senior vice president and director of *Au Pair in America*,” (Kannon & Gedarovich, 2009). Match failure is never mentioned, even though it is a common reality in the business; only the most idealized criteria-based matching methodologies are directed at potential customers in the marketing process. “...*Au Pair in America* offers a customer driven, Web-based matching process, extensive orientation program for au pairs and host families, several program options to meet the varied needs of American families and a Web community with a vast array of helpful information” (Kannon & Gedarovich, 2009).

It is clear that there is a certain intangible quality that a person is either looking for or wishes to avoid entirely when searching for the right au pair. A parent has to follow his or her instincts when going through the process of conducting an online interview. Cues like eye contact, body language, tone of voice, and vocal inflection must be considered among many other subtleties which are not necessarily easy to put into words. Real experience in life will never equal online interaction exactly, but the industry must continually optimize the protocols and processes of au pair selection using the most current online technology which is available.

4.4 Comparison of Interview Modalities

The results of this study can be viewed within the context of previous comparisons of technological tools used for interviews. McCoyd and Kerson (2006) provided an in-depth comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of email (pp. 397, 401), telephone (pp. 399, 402), and face-to-face interviews (pp. 400, 402). Lo Iacono et al. (2016) highlighted the advantages and disadvantages of using Skype and other similar ViiP technologies.

4.4.1 Phone, Email, and Text

Although participants in this study recommended email interviews the least, Deakin and Wakefield (2014) suggested that there were advantages to using email, such as *“the ease with which an audit trail is constructed and the opportunity to develop reflective questions throughout the interview process”* (p. 832). Perhaps text interviews were significantly preferred by the host families compared to emails because there is often more of an immediacy of response from texts, whereas emails tend to be more asynchronous. Phone interviews were preferred by the host more than email, but less than text interviews. This could be due to the fact that they have the more synchronous aspect of texts, but lack the written audit trail that emails and texts provide.

4.4.2 Skype and FaceTime

According to Lo Iacono et al. (2016), *“VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) technologies (such as Skype and FaceTime) provide us with the ability to interview research participants using voice and video across the internet via a synchronous (real-time) connection.”* (p. 103). In our study, Skype and FaceTime were both preferred above email, phone, and text interviews. Skype was used most often by the host families, but FaceTime was recommended slightly more. There was no indication as to why they would be more likely to recommend FaceTime over Skype, but that would make a good follow-up question for future research.

4.4.3 Face-to-Face

Although none of the host families in our study actually conducted face-to-face interviews, this was the method they said they would most likely recommend to their friends. This lines up with the advantages previous researchers have associated with in-person interviews, especially the ability to build rapport with participants. According to Seitz (2016), *“In-person interviews are particularly strong in this area. Sitting down with someone face-to-face can create a personal connection and allow the researcher to read important nonverbal cues”* (p. 229). Although video interviewing methods, such as Skype or FaceTime, allow for reading some nonverbal cues, which is an advantage they have over text or audio-only methods, you usually only see the face and may miss other physical cues.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Preferred Technology for Decreasing Match Failure

The method most recommended by the host families in our study for conducting au pair interviews was face-to-face, in-person interviews. However, as these are mainly too impractical and costly for most host families. The next most recommended method was video interviewing, such as with FaceTime or Skype, as it has the advantages of being able to see facial expressions, to tell if the person who is demonstrating fluency of language skills is the same person who will be serving as the au pair, and offers “*a synchronous visual interaction between the researcher and participant*” (Seitz, 2016, p. 230). Skype and similar technologies can also be beneficial from a financial and logistical perspective because “*interviews can easily be conducted from the comfort of one’s home, eliminating not only the need to travel but also the need to find a venue, a venue which can be unfamiliar for the participants and, in some cases, may cost money to hire*” (Lo Iacono et al., 2016, p. 107).

5.2 Suggested Improvements

One area of improvement suggested by this study is the need for a greater level of feedback and contextually useful information when it comes to the tools used to collect data and disseminate information to both the host families and the au pairs. “*Communities’ detection in the field of information systems and business process management systems helps to understand the organization and improvement [of]... organizational collaboration. Despite the importance and application of community detection methods based on the network structure, the organizational structure discovery has focused on traditional clustering methods*” (Esmaili & Golpayegani, 2020, pp. 93-121). In many countries of the world, personal details like first and last names, dates of birth, and other details are requested in forms online. Au pairs use social media to screen and gather data, reviews, and the feedback of au pairs with experience to decide with agency to go with, and they must disseminate this data. Additionally, the day, month, and year of arrival/departure on the au pair’s employment application are cataloged. Organizations outside the US must be more vigilant about making modifications, aimed at being user-friendly and flexible, to the data fields which are standard for American users, as well as focusing on the essential importance of social media and networking. Data analytics, both on personal and social levels, must play a key role in the decisions made in the au pair industry.

Match failure will also be reduced by making expectations for au pairs clearer, so that they know that it is a job that they are agreeing to, not a vacation. Reducing match failure through improved technological tools will benefit from soliciting feedback from key stakeholders, especially the host families and au pairs. In a study examining the benefits of increasing awareness of social and psychological factors in the design of technology through design thinking (DT), Liedka (2020) emphasized the importance of stakeholder feedback, noting that “*real-time conversation allowed new possibilities to emerge*

during the process. This kind of knowledge creation is both essential and challenging to achieve in the presence of stakeholder diversity” (p. 72).

5.3 Future Research

The information gained from this study brings up a wide variety of areas for future research. Although it gave the facts of the types of interview tools used by the host families and those they recommended, it did not delve into the reasons for those choices. Follow-up studies, especially those using qualitative research, could benefit from returning to the host families and asking more in-depth questions about why they chose the interview methods that they did, why they recommended the ones that they did, what types of questions they asked during the interviews, and how many times they interviewed or interacted with each au pair they ended up hiring.

Host families were also asked on the survey whether or not they used a casual Q&A style interview format or a list of questions prepared in advance, but it was not clear what impact that had on their experience of au pair selection. Future research could investigate whether they felt their choice to prepare or not to prepare questions in advance affected their experience with the interviews.

Another area of research that emerged from this study is an evaluation of whether the virtual experience of interviewing/screening a candidate ended up being a true predictor of the actual experience families had when their au pair began work. Did they feel that the online interactive technology accurately met their family’s childcare needs? Was meeting a chosen au pair candidate first via email and social media, and then subsequently via a video call an accurate predictor of the “IRL” (in real life) experience once the au pair arrived in the host country and connected with her/his employers to begin work?

This study focused on the perspective of the host families. However, future research could also be conducted with au pairs, to get their perspective on the use of technology and its impact on their experience. How real was the impression that online tools gave potential au pairs? How well was the au pair able to understand the requirements, traditional family culture, facial expressions, body language/posture, and nuances of personal communication styles of her or his potential employers from virtual meetings?

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Appendix

A: Survey tables, Charts, Statistical Summation

Table 1: Frequency Table

Interviewed					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Au Pair	18	14.6	14.6	14.6
	2 Au Pairs	39	31.7	31.7	46.3
	3 Au Pairs	18	14.6	14.6	61.0
	4 Au pairs	26	21.1	21.1	82.1
	5 Au Pairs	22	17.9	17.9	100.0
	Total	123	100.0	100.0	

Summary: Most host families (39, 31.7 %) interviewed 2 au pairs before hiring one, followed by 26 (21.1 %) who interviewed 4 au pairs, then 22 (17.9 %) who interviewed 5 au pairs.

Table 2: Hired

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Au Pair	29	23.6	23.6	23.6
	2 Au Pairs	27	22.0	22.0	45.5
	3 Au Pairs	4	3.3	3.3	48.8
	4 Au Pairs	21	17.1	17.1	65.9
	5 Au Pairs	6	4.9	4.9	70.7
	6 Au Pairs	10	8.1	8.1	78.9
	7 Au Pairs	9	7.3	7.3	86.2
	8 Au Pairs	9	7.3	7.3	93.5
	9 Au Pairs	2	1.6	1.6	95.1
	10 Au Pairs	1	.8	.8	95.9
	12 Au Pairs	3	2.4	2.4	98.4
	14 Au Pairs	1	.8	.8	99.2
	16 Au Pairs	1	.8	.8	100.0
	Total	123	100.0	100.0	

Summary: Most host families (29, 23.6 %) hired only 1 au pair in the last 7 years, followed by 27 (22.0 %) who hired 2 au pairs, then 21 (17.1 %) who hired 4 au pairs.

Table 3: Methods

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Skype	51	41.5	41.5	41.5
	Phone	14	11.4	11.4	52.8
	Text	10	8.1	8.1	61.0
	Email	24	19.5	19.5	80.5
	Face Time	24	19.5	19.5	100.0
	Total	123	100.0	100.0	

Summary: Most host families (51, 41.5 %) used Skype for interviews, followed by 24 (19.5 %) who conducted interviews using email & Face Time.

Table 4: Questions

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	YES	45	36.6	36.6	36.6
	NO	78	63.4	63.4	100.0
	Total	123	100.0	100.0	

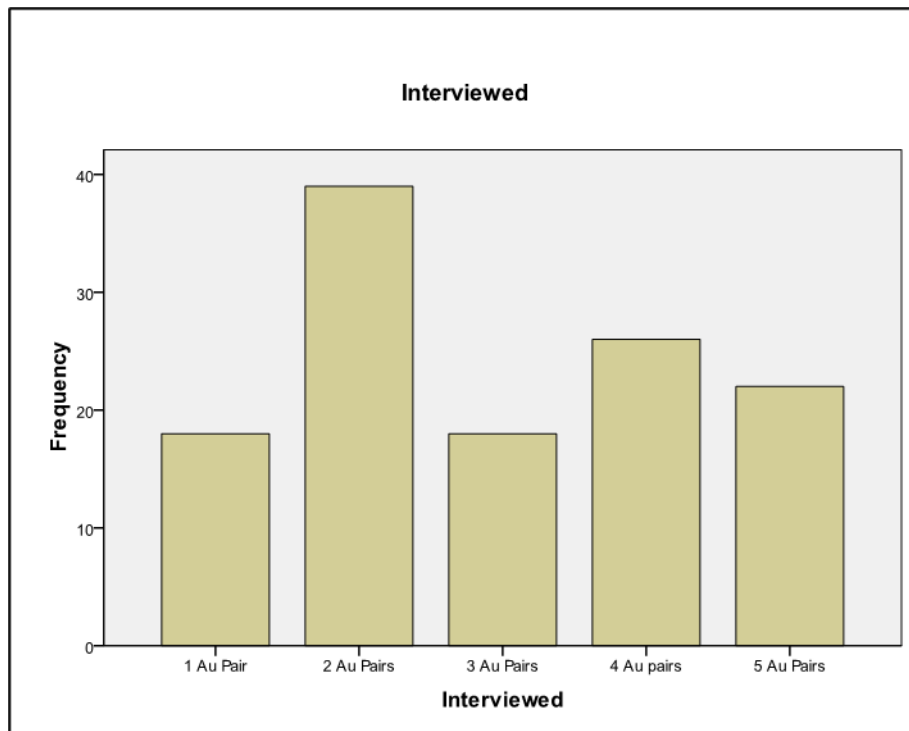
Summary: Most host families (78, 63.4 %) did not prepare questions prior to interviewing Au Pairs, while 45 (36.6 %) did prepare.

Table 5: Recommendations

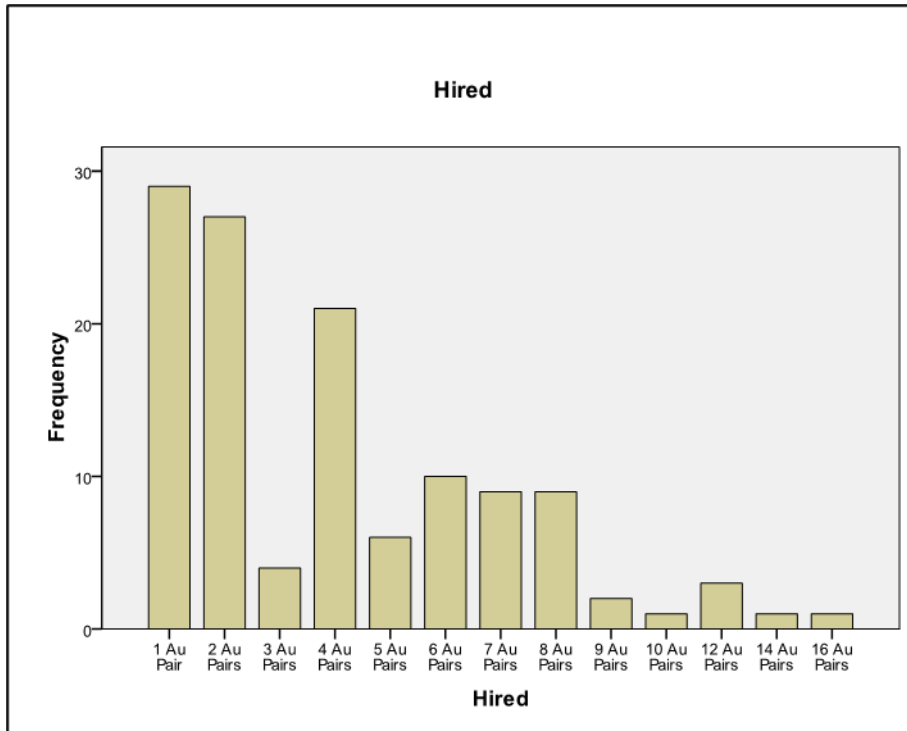
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Skype	22	17.9	17.9	17.9
	Phone	9	7.3	7.3	25.2
	Text	21	17.1	17.1	42.3
	Email	5	4.1	4.1	46.3
	Face Time	25	20.3	20.3	66.7
	Meeting In Person	41	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	123	100.0	100.0	

Summary: Most host families (41, 33.3 %) recommend interviewing Au Pairs by meeting them in person, followed by 25 (20.3 %) via Face Time, then 22 (17.9 %) via Skype.

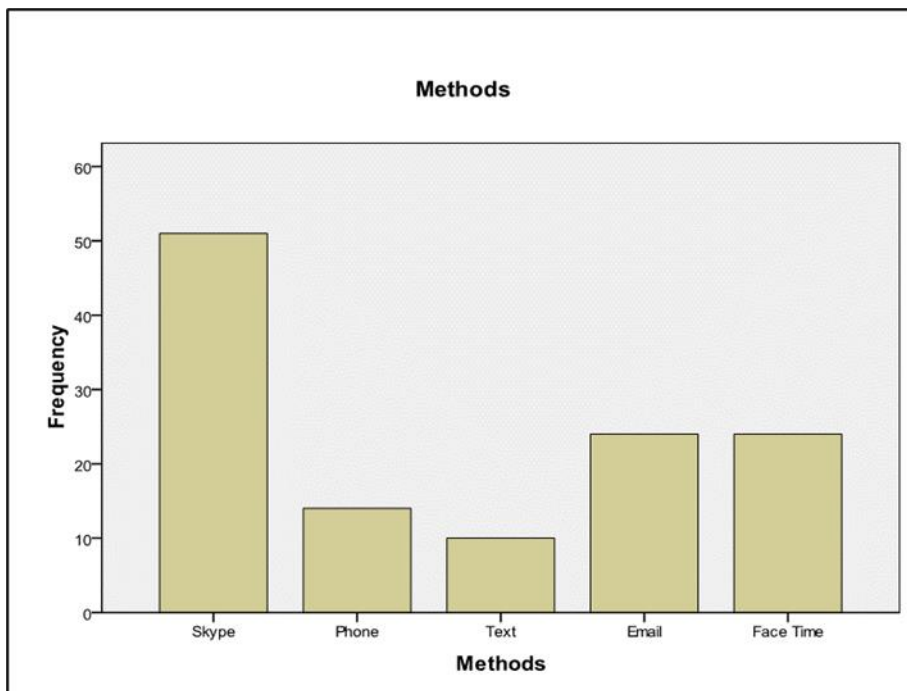
B. Bar Charts



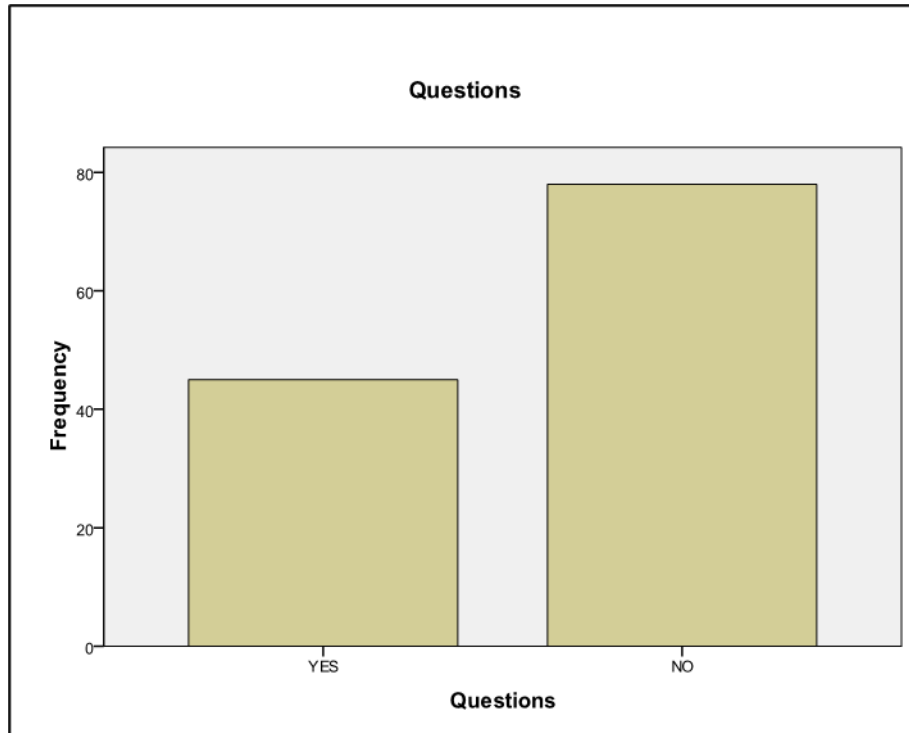
Summary: Most host families interviewed 2 au pairs before hiring one, followed by 4, then 5.



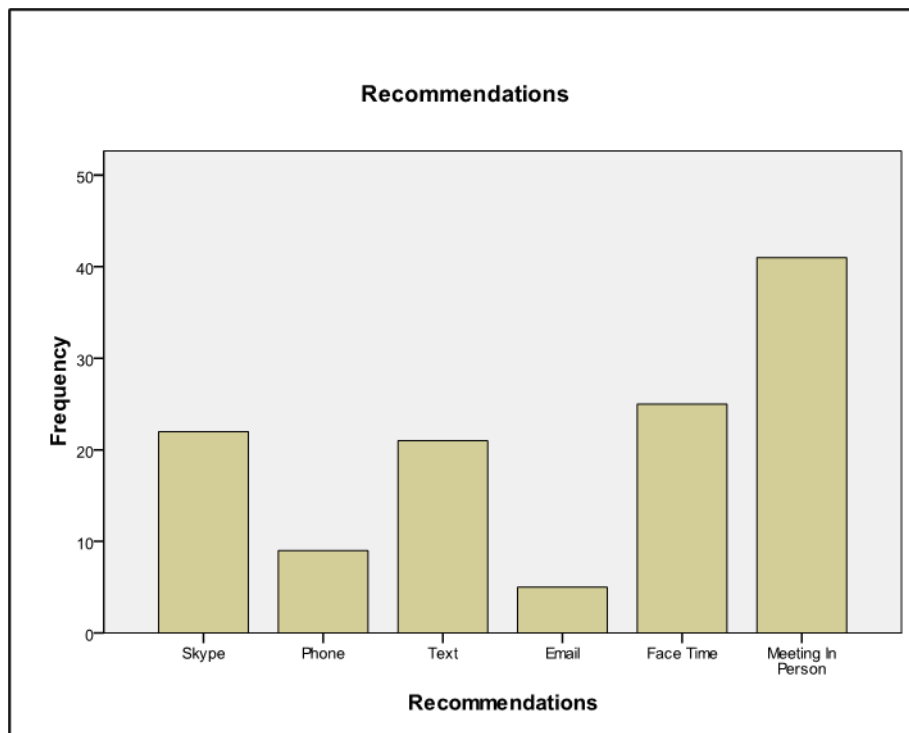
Summary: Most host families hired only 1 Au Pair in the last 7 years, followed by 2, then 4.



Summary: Most host families used Skype for interviews, followed equally by Email & Face Time.



Summary: Most host families did not prepare questions prior to interviewing Au Pairs.



Summary: Most host families recommended interviewing au pairs by meeting in person, followed by Face Time, then Skype.

Statistical Summation

Most host families (39, 31.7%) interviewed only 2 au pairs before hiring one to provide childcare for their children. 78 (63.4%) did not prepare questions prior to the interview. The most frequently used method of interviewing au pairs conducted by 51 host families

(41.5%) was Skype. Although the most highly recommend interview method by 41 host families (33.3%) was meeting au pairs in person, followed by Face Time (25, 20.3%). Interestingly 56 host families (45.5%) hired only 1 au pair (29, 23.6%) or 2 (27, 22.0%) in the last 7 years. Perhaps their childcare needs were no longer required, or the family financial situation changed, etc. – no data is available to determine the reason for discontinuing childcare. Typically, an au pair is hired for a period of one year, although it can be extended up to a maximum of 2 years. 21 host families (17.1%) hired 4 au pairs, for periods of service which could have continued up to 7 years with extensions. In addition, 28 host families (22.8%) hired 6-8 au pairs in the last 7 years or about one per year.

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