

AP2114 Research Methods in Psychology 2022-2023

The exploration of online friendships supported by thematic analysis

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#### STUDENT DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC HONESTY

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this study is to explore online friendships with the focus of the following research question, does social media impact friendships positively or negatively? The research will be guided by Braun and Clarkes' (2006) method of thematic analysis to further investigate the data received from semi-structured interviews that three interviewees will take part in. The study is based on university students and their experiences of online friendships, with focus around the research question. It was found that there are three main themes surrounding the impact of social media on online friendships, comfortable and safe, social pressure and maintained connection. Each theme has its own code derived from interview transcripts. There are both positive and negative impacts of social media on online friendships which is explored throughout this study. Both are as important as each other as it teaches us a lot about social media, online friendships and peoples experiences. There is generally a more positive response towards social media, and it is apparent that it is used as a tool to help maintain friendships which leads to satisfaction in peoples' lives. The recommendations for future research is to have a more diverse sample and a larger sample to have a better representation of the research question as the experiences can vary when there is a larger sample.

## **Introduction**

Many people go through life building friendships as well as disregarding them due to several reasons. One of these reasons could be that such morals or values did not align, and decisions were made to disband a friendship. A friendship includes a person who is attracted to someone who is attracted in return to them also, by having similar interests and many things in common, for example, liking the same music and going to concerts. Time will be spent nurturing a friendship and qualities such as emotional support, trust and loyalty will be offered to one another. (Hartup et al., 1997)

Friendship practices are normally built at a young age, but it is not until a person gets older that it starts to become increasingly difficult to maintain, as several factors may influence a friendship. These are social attraction, which is how attractive does a peer group seem and what can they offer, status, gender, age, and location. (Marmaros et al., 2006)

Loneliness can be linked with negative friend experiences such as rejection or withdrawal. With contrast to this, a lack of friendships or a large quantity of friendships and a lack of quality can also lead to low mood and loneliness as people can continually overthink their interactions. (Nangle et al., 2003) As said by Morahan-Martin et al. (2003) due to the nature of the internet, a lack of in person contact and anonymity, communication may decrease social anxiety which could enhance friendship quality. A study was done on undergraduate internet users to test their loneliness accessed by the UCLA Loneliness Scale; students who scored higher on the scale were then compared to the least lonely. The outcome was that lonely students found a higher satisfaction with their online friends and used the internet to control negative moods but found that internet use was causing disturbances in their daily life.

Earlier studies have also found that when people have high internet usage it is more so a sign to cover up loneliness and poor social skills and that time could be spent creating more in person friendships. In contrast to this, studies also found that using social media can increase social interaction as there is a better chance of control over such interactions, remaining anonymous and being able to find like-minded people across the world. (Hood et al., 2018)

A friendship can go through many trials and tribulations with the strongest of friendships surviving such challenges. There can be different physical aspects of a friendship such as online only and have never met, in person with the use of social media and long distance, a friend met in person but has moved to a different country. Due to an increase in the use of social media, online friendships have become extremely popular in recent years as it is used to maintain friendships and create new ones. It is said that people who create in person friendships are more likely to be a success due to being able to interact easily, have the same friend groups and have more time to provide information between one another. (Anthenuis et al., 2012) According to Sinanan et al. (2020) social media is a major factor in maintaining family relationships and friendships, it can be used as a tool in times of when support is needed. Online friendships can come with its own issues such as lack of trust within the internet or privacy concerns. Young adults and adults usually have more of a concern about this than children. (Tynes, 2007)

The purpose of this study is to explore online friendships by asking the following research question: does social media impact friendships either positively or negatively? This qualitative study will be explored through collected data taken from semi-structured interviews. After collecting the data from these interviews, they will be coded using a thematic analysis approach. The importance of using a qualitative study in this research is to be able to show sensitivity to the data, that is by not having any pre conceived ideas that may

influence the data. The idea is to listen and consider the meaningful conversations had with participants. Much reflection has to be made to generate a purposeful and meaningful study to give justice to the participants information. (Yardley, 2015) An opportunity to use thematic analysis within this research study provides a flexible approach in analysing the qualitative study. It is a method to report themes within the data and allows the researcher to become extremely familiar with said data so that the research is the best it can be. (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

The aim is to understand the mindset of an internet user and social media user, who uses the internet to build or maintain friendships and how that may affect the quality of those friendships, along with outcome themes such as social pressure, privacy and safety. Upon recent research and lack of content to be found, a gap has been identified within the literature. There are no studies focusing on Irish university students and there is a lack of content surrounding the emotional responses to having an online friendship or what the effects of having one could be, for example, feeling under pressure due to always being 'available' online.

## **Method**

### *Methodology*

This study is qualitative based on semi structured interviews with a thematic analysis approach. Throughout the interviews, open-ended questions were asked, building a rapport at the beginning and moving onto topics such as safety, privacy and the implications of using social media. It is a good idea to use semi structured interviews within this research as it gives more freedom to the interviewee to give more information about related topics and it gives the researcher a better understanding of the why rather than a set value such as how many. Semi structured interviews are flexible in their approach and can give a better understanding of the research question. (Fylan, 2005)

### *Design*

The design approach is bottom up and inductive. There were no pre-conceived ideas or data. In total there were three interviewees. The interview schedule involves open ended questions with the first couple being able to build rapport and get the minds of the interviewees thinking of the topic. The rationale was to gather if the interviewees are experienced in social media, and therefore able to give the researchers valuable and reliable information. Questions surrounding experiences such as safety, the impact of social media, what its uses are, and what types of conversations are had, were to understand the mindset of a person who uses social media and also how it would affect their online friendships.

### *Setting*

The study took place mid-September within University College Cork grounds in the Cork Enterprise Centre, Psychology building. A classroom was booked through the University College Cork website where enough time was allocated to do the interview.

## *Procedure*

An interview schedule was created following the research question between three interviewers. This can be seen in Appendix A. Before the interviews were carried out there was pilot work of practicing interviews with one another and changing of questions in order to fit the research question. The questions on the interview schedule were edited many times to enable the interviewee to have a good understanding of the questions asked. With the first few attempts of the schedule, the questions deemed to be not suitable for the research question and not clear enough for the interviewee. Once fixed, the interviewees received the consent and the information forms. All three interviews were then carried out by each of the interviewers and were recorded during this time. Each interviewer did one interview totalling three interviews to support the research question.

The first few questions on the interview schedule were to build rapport and get the interviewee thinking about the topic, as when asked further questions, they would be prepared. Once all the interviews were transcribed, the recordings were deleted. All three interview transcripts were then coded. This can be seen in Appendix D. The codes were then put into themes using the thematic analysis method. This can be seen in Appendix E. The usefulness of using thematic analysis is that it can summarize key parts of a large body of text and can highlight certain differences or similarities between them. It also allows for flexibility, which means that there can be a wide interpretation of a data set. (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

## *Ethics*

An information and consent sheet were given to the interviewee to fill in before the interview. Please see Appendix B. The interviewee was told that the interview would be confidential, that they could stop the interview at any time and that the transcripts would be

kept on University College Cork servers for ten years. Consent and permission were also needed before the interview went ahead. Fake names have been given to the three interviewees to protect their identity in this study. Friendships could be a sensitive topic for some people so support resources and services such as tutors were made available to each of the participants.

### *Analysis*

Once the interview was finished it was transcribed and coded using thematic analysis. Types of patterns or repetition was searched for which eventually were grouped into themes. These themes capture something important about the data which are related to the research question and return a patterned response and meaning within the data. (Braun & Clarke, 2006) These themes were then reviewed, defined and then named. An example of the relevant coding procedure with its relevant themes taken from the data can be found in the Table 1 below. To help decide on patterns arising and theme definition, a thematic map was used in this process which can be found in Appendix C. The analysis tended to focus on a mixture of latent, analytic and semantic, descriptive coding. Latent is a deeper analysis whereas semantic is surface level. (Terry et al., 2017) It changes depending on the stage of the process of thematic analysis.



**Table 1***Themes and coding*

Theme	Code	Data
Comfortable and Safe	• Positive Experiences	"I've made so many friends through social media"
	• Supportive Environment	"You're always able to have somebody there and have some support especially if you're going through a hard time."
	• Talk about feelings openly and freely because of the feelings of privacy	"I definitely think that it's a safe space to interact with my friends and I feel very safe using it [social media] like it feels like, you know conversations are private, it's a safe enclosed space to talk."
	• Previous knowledge of websites or applications	"I use social media honestly for basically everything, so it's just a huge part of my life."

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## **Analysis**

There has been much data collected but three apparent themes have been created from the coding process. These themes are comfortable and safe, maintained connection and social pressure.

### **Comfortable and safe**

Social media can be a place of safety and comfortability for people. This could be due to several reasons such as emotional support from family and friends that is quickly available and having a safe and private space to share feelings. It is shared from Willows interview that Jill expressed:

“I definitely feel like it’s a comfortable space, especially if there's a situation where ehm, you might feel uncomfortable, telling them something in person you know, you don’t exactly like have to look them in the eye if you’re telling them over social media, so it’s almost kind of like a safety barrier sometimes so it can make you feel very comfortable.

I feel very safe using it like it feels like, you know conversations are private, you know like there’s no like, it's not like we are uploading our conversations to the internet so everyone can see and compared to like in person. Like it's a safe enclosed space to talk.”

Jill felt more comfortable in an online environment as it felt safer in some social situations where conflict may arise, for example, where a person could be socially anxious to say something in person, they could say it more easily online to a friend. This is what seems to be the situation for Jill, not having the person there physically can change certain behaviours, that is, saying something to the person online that may cause conflict is easier to do online than in person. Jill is confident in the use of social media and uses it to help anxiety

around social situations. The fact that Jill finds social media and conversations with others to be private allows for more intimate and vulnerable conversations.

There were findings of the participants feeling very comfortable and safe with using social media as a tool in online friendships. This was for several reasons, familiarity with the people online, such as friends met in person already or being in contact with family members. people's positive experiences online due to the familiar aspect of friends they have met in person, family or previous knowledge and experience with an application.

To show that if you're not experienced or familiar with an application to chat with friends, it can bring uncomfortability and feelings of being unsafe. When Maddie was asked if she feels safe online, Maddie's response is as follows, shared from Rachels interview -

“Mostly so yeah, most social media platforms I think um if you were chatting with people with friends and stuff like on a Discord chat thing, I don't use Discord that much, but I think that there might be some problems there, like I don't know exactly how to use it so there wouldn't be much safety. I wouldn't feel like there would be as much privacy but in every other aspect of social media I think yeah, it's pretty safe, pretty private and pretty good because I know those platforms and I'm comfortable with using them.”

There was evidence that the interviewees felt comfortable and safer in conversations online once there was previous knowledge and experience of a particular application that was used as a method of communication. Not only this but once the people behind it were people that they knew, it made it easier to communicate and feel at ease.

## **Maintained connection**

It is apparent that all three participants used social media to maintain friendships and relationships with others. There are various types of relationships such as long-distance friendships or families, people from the same college course or people who the interviewees have met online and never in person. Friendships of old and new can be maintained through social media and are generally positive experiences. In fact, the participants almost seemed reliant on social media to stay in contact with others. In the majority of our interviewees, there was a big reference to long distance friendships or families who live in different countries. Taken from Malaikah's interview, Luke expresses that -

“Since I don't live at home, I would use WhatsApp to like call my family. We always do like face calls on the weekends and like do make stuff together on Fridays. So like, yeah, just to like be closer to them.”

It is apparent that family is important to Luke, and that a routine has been built upon contacting family and maintaining that bond and connection.

Not only family relations but friendships have also been expressed as a big part of Maddie's life, as stated, taken from Rachels interview –

“It's been helpful for me to maintain a lot of friendships 'cause especially I come from Brazil and a lot of my friends are over there, I wouldn't have been able to keep up with them half as much as I do, if it wasn't for social media. My friends also they're from different countries, they move away and they come back and it's like nothing ever changed”.

“It [social media] helped me a lot to keep things going with people and not lose the connection that we previously had”.

There is almost a gratefulness and thankfulness for social media in long distance relations, as without them, it would be extremely difficult to maintain the connection with important people in their life. Maddie and others within this study also value the connection with friends and families and have positive experiences with social media. It has become part of a daily or weekly routine to check in with loved ones. There is also a bit of fear that ones connection could be lost due to the distance between them and that online friendships may not compare to ones in person friendships.

### **Social pressure**

There is an interesting amount of social pressure expressed with all the participants combined. As with social media being so readily available in modern times, with phones, tablets, laptops, people technically seem always available and the pressure that comes with that. In an extract taken from Willows interview, Jill expresses the frustration of feeling the need to be always available –

“If you don't contact them enough, they might be oh you haven't texted me in a while or something like that cause the opportunity is there, but it wasn't taken”.

Jill is experiencing pressure from others to be always readily available for others and to be contacting people regularly. Jill seems to be anxious about possible conflict that can arise from this.

There are many applications and pressure to download all of them because the friendship group could find heavy interest in particular apps. An extract taken from Malaikah's interview, Luke expresses that there is pressure to keep up to date with the most recent applications –

“At the same time like oh yeah I'm missing out. Like, that's the price I pay for like. Not knowing the Tik T.O.K gossip. Like I do feel like I'm missing out.”

Luke feels a certain pressure to be as interested and to keep up to date with the latest apps their friend group are interested in. The fear of missing out and eventually leading to isolation seems to be dwelling in Luke's mind.

There is a tendency with people over sharing their lives online through social media which can reveal a lot about someone's personal life. People can easily view this and tend to compare their relationships with those online and negative feelings can arise. Luke from Malaikah's interview expressed that one could become jealous by viewing so much online –

“Depending on how much they share online, but you kind of know more with social media than without. And I feel like that could kind of be something that could lead like towards like becoming like jealous over something and like maybe also like. So there's gonna be like a confrontation with like. You say you're my friend but you're like, meeting up with XY all the time and you never meet up with me. And like, you know, something like that, that that could cause conflicts.”

There can be negative outcomes to online friendships by being able to see so much of one's personal life online. One can start to compare one's relationship to another and start to feel inferior and lonely. There seems to be an anxiety about creating conflicts over something that one doesn't have control over, that is, someone else's life. This can create doubt of the level of friendship one thinks they have with another.

The quality of in person relationships seem to be important to the interviewees, and it seems as if social media is an extension tool to maintain those friendships. Social media can be a distracting factor in creating quality time with in person friendships. From Malaikah's interview, Luke mentions that people do not live in the moment when they are together in their friend group as they are on social media.

“Everyone's just on their phones all the time and they don't like really. I don't know.

Pay attention to each other like in the moment, but rather spend time on their phones.”

Social media can be used possibly too much to nurture online friendships and not enough time given to in person friendships. Luke's frustration seems to occur from this perspective of not feeling valued in person and that an online friendship may be more important in that time.

It has been said that not being able to see one's emotions in person or being able to physically see social cues may lead to confusion and possible lack of understanding or confrontation, especially if you do not know that person incredibly well or have a strong friendship. Luke mentions this in Malaikah's interview –

“I don't know since they don't really know you the probability of you saying something that you like don't mean in the way that they're interpreting it is like just more likely because they don't really like they know they don't know everything of you and like friends you've met offline that really know the way you are, it's kind of easier I think to like avoid misunderstandings and stuff.”

Paranoia and overthinking seem to be occurring when having conversations over social media with people that are not familiar. It is difficult to interpret what the other person is saying. This could affect friendships and its quality or longevity over time.

## **Contradictions**

There have been some notable contrasts between the interviewees, from Willows interview Jill expressed that social media spaces and interactions seemed like a safe space to have intimate conversations, but from Malaikah's interview, Luke mentioned the opposite –

“Everything that's online, like that's on the Internet or on WhatsApp, it's stored there like whatever is happening there. There they could like use it as like evidence against you, if that makes sense and like just send it on.”

There is a fear of having vulnerable conversations online with Luke as they think there is the possibility of the conversations leaking. Perhaps trust with the person on the receiving end is not strong enough or Luke does not feel comfortable enough with the situation.

The majority have expressed comfortability in having different types of conversations online with their friends. In contrast, Maddie from Rachel's interview has expressed that they are happy to have any type of conversation with their friends online –

“I think that I have like chats with friends about shows over social media the same way that I talk with people in real life, so we could talk about like boring stuff like oh what type of coffee do you like, or we could talk about something really deep.”

But in the same interview, when asked what Maddie thinks the disadvantages are, it was expressed that –

“The disadvantage is definitely some people um get very comfortable with just talking on social media so you lose the personal aspect of the friendship completely um and I think that's really really bad as you don't have the physical aspect of seeing them in person.”

It was previously said that Maddie can talk to friends happily and comfortably about any topic even when the person is not there physically, but Maddie then expresses that not having a person there physically can be an issue and could affect a friendship. Maddie may just prefer in person friendships and could value them more over online friendships.



## **Discussion**

The themes that arose from thematic analysis were comfortable and safe, maintained connection and social pressure. The aim of the study is to explore online friendships and ask the research question: does social media have an impact on friendships positively or negatively? It is found that with social media comes social pressure, with people feeling the need to be immediately available, doubting their friendships, the lack of quality of in person relationships or online friendships, as they share a big distance between them, they may not be similar to in person friendships.

Online platforms generally provide a safe haven to share ones feelings and have vulnerable conversations with others online. This in turn can help to build stronger bonds in friendships. People feel comfortable enough to have conversations on social media and have online friendships, as it has been expressed as a means of emotional support from people being available online to talk to. It is also apparent that when a person is familiar with the application or with the person that one is talking to behind the application, that one is more comfortable and is more likely to have a positive experience on social media. One of the biggest themes sought throughout this study is that social media is used as a tool to maintain friendships whether they are in person and the person sees them every day, fully online friendships or friends the person has met before but lives in a different country.

In similar findings to Nagle (2003) and social pressure, people can tend to feel negative feelings as a result of feeling inadequate due to a lack of quality time in friendships whether it is online or in person. There are similarities between the outcome of this study and what Morahan-Martin et al. (2003) found. A person can use social media to decrease social anxiety that one would have in person, especially in difficult or confrontational type situations. A link was found between the internet causing disturbances in their daily life and

people feeling inadequate when people are on their phones by being on the latest social media applications or attending to other online friendships.

As previously stated by Hood et al. (2018) earlier studies have also found that when people have high internet usage it is more so a sign to cover up loneliness and poor social skills and that time could be spent creating more in person friendships. This did not seem the case in this study as most friendships were built in person and then maintained through social media. There were no obvious signs of loneliness and looking to social media for company.

It is apparent that with all three interviewees most of the online friendships stemmed from friends they have met in person and have proceeded to maintain online. People tend to value and be more readily available for those who they have met in person over those they do not know as well or just met online. The participants gain satisfaction from online friendships as it helps emotional support and bonding between friends. This ties in with previous research explored by Anthenuis et al. (2012). As stated by Sinanan et al. (2020) social media is a major factor in maintaining family relationships and friendships, it can be used as a tool in times of when support is needed. This has been shown repetitively throughout this study, that the participants depend heavily on social media to embrace in quality time with lasting online friendships.

Some privacy concerns were mentioned by Luke in Malaikah's interview in not feeling safe or comfortable enough to have vulnerable conversations especially if is over social media. As mentioned previously, a lack of trust and privacy concerns can be a negative impact of having social media dependency to maintain friendships online. To ask the research question, does social media have an impact on friendships positively or negatively? The answer can be both. Social media impacts online friendships positively and negatively. There are many positives and uses to social media, and if social media can allow someone to

maintain contact with their family in another country, then that is an extremely important tool to have. There are also many negatives of social media impacts especially social pressures, such as not having a good of a quality of friendship online than in person friendships. It begs the question of asking does the positives outweigh the negatives or do they even have to outweigh each other at all? There is a balance and the fact on whether it is a positive or negative relies solely on what purpose, level of quality and experiences are with online friendships.

People generally tend to have better experiences of online friendships when they have already met the person, this tends avoids paranoia and social anxiety. The participants in this study have repetitively said that social media is important to maintain friendships either on a daily basis or catching up with someone that lives far away and it seems to be an extremely positive response. There are pros and cons to online friendships which have been previously outlined and the conclusion is that social media can positively influence and help to maintain friendships and in this case, the negative responses seem to be a small price to pay. All three interviewees were asked how it feel if they didn't have access to social media but everyone else did, all three responses suggestion feelings of isolation and a fear of missing out. Not one participant would seem happy if they did not have social media because the benefits outweigh the negatives.

#### *Limitations and recommendations*

There have been limitations to this study, such as the participants that were interviewed were all studying the same course and because of this, are possibly like-minded people who could have similar responses in interviews. The sample size was also extremely small, so the data set does not entirely reflect or is an accurate representation of the research question. All the participants are university students which could affect the responses or data.

With a larger sample size, it is possible to get a more accurate reflection of the research question. All the participants were students so for future studies it is recommended to get a more diverse sample size to allow for a range of responses. These people would have a wide range of experiences and knowledge which can be introduced during the interviews.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A**

#### **Interview Schedule**

1. How do you use social media?
  - a. What kind of platforms do you use?
  - b. How often would you use them?
2. Do you think social media can be used as a tool in friendships?
  - a. How so?
  - b. Do you use social media to make friends?
  - c. Do you use social media to maintain friendships?
3. What kind of conversation do you have with friends over digital platforms?
  - a. How has your experience been with friends on these platforms?
  - b. Has your experience been different when talking to childhood friends and university friends over social media?
4. Do you find social media a safe space to interact with friends?
  - a. If so, why?
  - b. If not, why?

5. How has social media impacted your friendships?
  - a. How would you feel if you were the only one unable to keep in contact with friends through social media?
  - b. Do you rely on social media to keep in contact with your friends? If so, how?
6. What do you think are the advantages or/and disadvantages of using social media to contact/text/talk/converse with friends?



## **Appendix B**

### **Information sheet and consent form**

#### **Information Sheet**

Thank you for considering participating in this research project. The purpose of this document is to explain to you what the work is about and what your participation would involve, so as to enable you to make an informed choice.

The purpose of this study is to research online friendships and focus on the students of University College Cork experience of these online friendships. It will be explored through the method of semi structured interviews. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to be interviewed and recorded one off with no follow ups unless necessary. This will be a one-to-one interview with a member of the research team. This interview will be audio-recorded and is expected to take 10-15 minutes to complete.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no obligation to participate, and should you choose to do so you can refuse to answer specific questions or decide to withdraw from the interview. Once the interview has been concluded, you can choose to withdraw your details at any time in the subsequent two weeks.

All of the information you provide will be kept confidential and anonymous, and will be available only to Rachel Lombard, the research team, Willow Friel and Malaikah Hafeez. The supervisor involved in this study is Orla Walsh and John McCarthy. The only exception is where information is disclosed which indicates that there is a serious risk to you or to others. Once the interview is completed, the recording will immediately be transferred to an encrypted laptop and wiped from the recording device.

The interview will then be transcribed by the researcher, and all identifying information will be removed. Once this is done, the audio-recording will also be deleted and only the anonymized transcript will remain. This will be stored on the University College Cork OneDrive system and subsequently on the UCC server. The data will be stored for a minimum of ten years and if consented to, the data will be stored anonymously and used for future research studies. The data if you wish can be stored indefinitely upon request. The information you provide may contribute to research publications and/or conference presentations. Outline the Positive Ethics, the benefits of this research in the wider context. This data will be contributed to the report required for this study. I will debrief you afterwards and answer any questions you may have.

We do not anticipate any negative outcomes from participating in this study but as this topic may be of a sensitive nature for some, there will be support available for after the interview. The interview can be stopped at any time and you can choose not to answer any questions. Support will be available from Orla Walsh or John McCarthy if required. Should you have any concerns arising from participating in the research, or should it raise any issues for you, the contact details for support services provided below may be of assistance.

John.mccarthy@ucc.ie

This study has obtained ethical approval from the UCC School of Applied Psychology Ethics Committee.

If you have a concern about how we have handled your personal data, you are entitled to this raise this with the Data Protection Commission.

<https://www.dataprotection.ie/>

If you have any queries about this research, you can contact me at [121705031@umail.ucc.ie](mailto:121705031@umail.ucc.ie) or the supervisor John McCarthy at [john.mccarthy@ucc.ie](mailto:john.mccarthy@ucc.ie)

UCC'S Data Protection Officer (DPO) is Catriona O'Sullivan, Information Compliance Manager, University College Cork, 4 Carrigside, College Road, Cork, Ireland.

Telephone: +353 (0)21 4903949\* Email: [gdpr@ucc.ie](mailto:gdpr@ucc.ie)

The Data Controller for this study is University College Cork

If you have a complaint about how this research was conducted please contact in writing:

The Ethics Committee,

School of Applied Psychology,

University College Cork,

Cork

If you agree to take part in this study, please sign the consent form overleaf.

## Consent Form

I Helen De Almeida agree to participate in Rachel Lombard's research study.

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.

I am participating voluntarily.

I give permission for my interview with Rachel Lombard to be audio-recorded.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data within two weeks of the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.

I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the thesis and any subsequent publications if I give permission below:

(Please tick one box:)

I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview

☒

I do not agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview

☐

Signed:



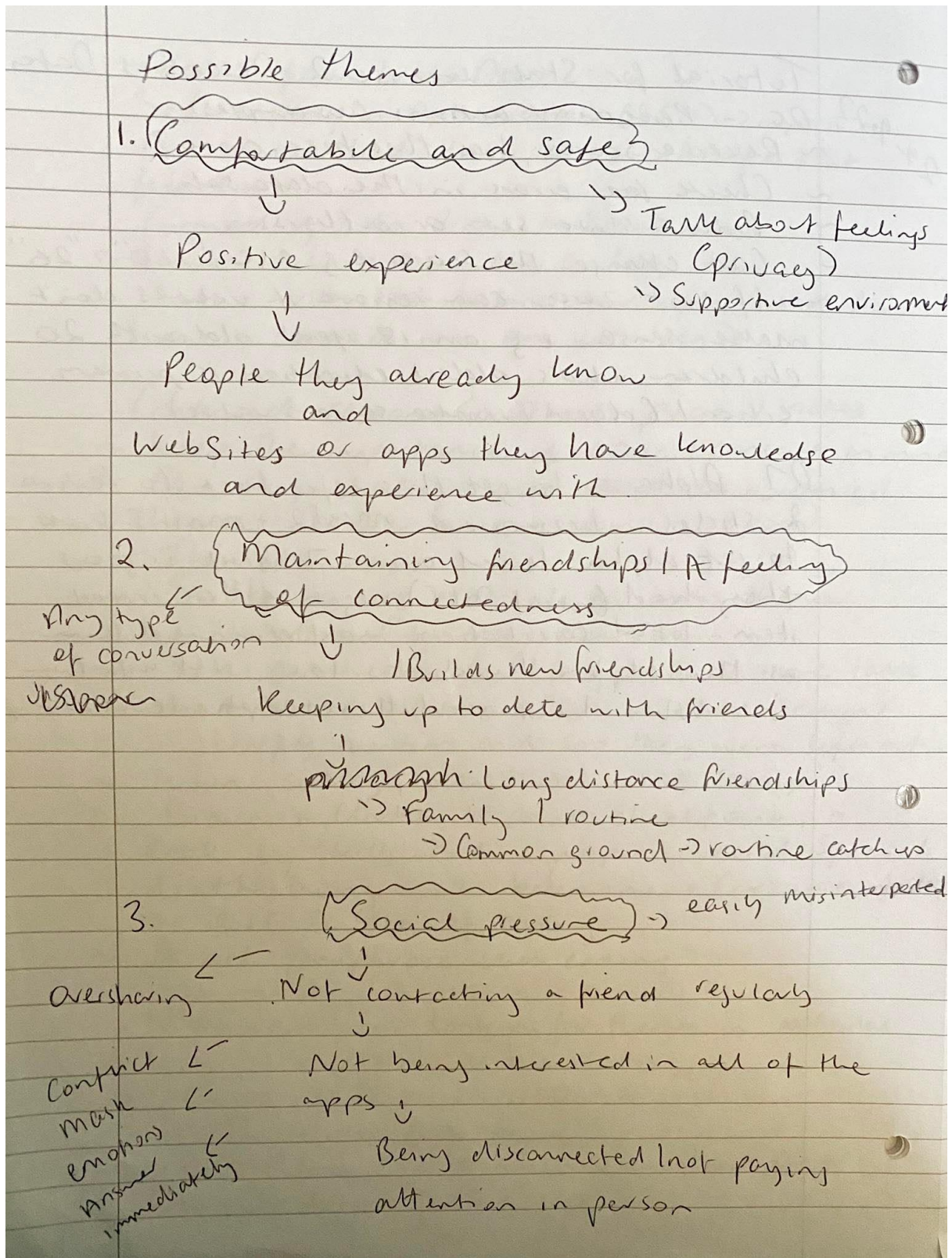
Date: 29/11/2022

PRINT NAME:

HELEN DE ALMEIDA

## Appendix C

### Thematic map



## Appendix D

### Coded interview transcripts

Data - Rachels Interview	Code
<p><b>How do you use social media?</b></p> <p>Um I use social media honestly for basically everything. Um as entertainment, as communication and as inspiration for a lot of things that I do in my day-to-day life, so it's just a huge part of my life I think, and a lot of people lives as well.</p> <p><b>Okay and what kind of platforms do you use?</b></p> <p>Honestly, I mainly use I use Tik Tok a lot, um Snapchat, Pinterest, I used to use um Instagram a lot but it's kinda died down a little bit, so I use it mainly for just chatting to people that I don't usually get a chance to talk to.</p> <p><b>How often would you use those platforms?</b></p> <p>Oh yeah I'd use Tik Tok like every day for whatever when I'm bored, especially Snapchat every second and yeah I use Snapchat mainly just to talk to everybody, um Pinterest I use if I'm let's say like doing a</p>	<p>Social media a big part of daily life and routine and thinks of it as important.</p> <p>Positive thinking</p> <p>Comfortable with using social media as they are experienced with it.</p> <p>Has knowledge.</p> <p>Integrated social media into routine, relies on it to talk to people</p>

<p>project or something and I need to know how to design something then I'll use that, or if I need to organize my room or I need to buy new clothes so I use that. It'd be around like once twice a week probably and Instagram maybe around the same amount like once or twice a week.</p> <p><b>Do you think that social media can be used as a tool in friendships?</b></p> <p>Oh, absolutely like yeah I don't know myself I've made so many friends through social media and when especially when you get like the 'follow this person they have mutuals with you' so you follow them, you start talking to them and you discover that you have a lot in common so you can make friends so easily through social media. It can be used as something to keep in touch or stay in contact with your friends.</p>	<p>Dependent on social media</p> <p>Proactive approach</p> <p>Different uses and needs</p> <p>Positively reflects on how social media has helped them to make friends and how easy it was to connect with others.</p> <p>Reflective, open</p>
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<p><b>Do you use social media to maintain friendships?</b></p> <p>I do yeah so I there's a lot of friends that aren't that close to me like physically, so I have a friend in another country a few friends in other countries, and I use social media to kinda communicate with them and keep up with what they're doing, and even friends that I have here now like um we mainly use social media to communicate and talk to each other or send memes and whatever.</p>	<p>Uses social media to connect with others from other countries and to keep the bond.</p> <p>Friendships can be in person or at a distance, overseas</p>
<p><b>What kind of conversation do you have with friends over digital platforms would you say?</b></p> <p>Honestly, I think that I have like chats with friends about shows over social media the same way that I talk with people in real life, so we could talk about like boring stuff like oh what type of coffee do you like, or we could talk about something really deep like oh you're feeling really sad let's chat about it. Um and it can be through like texting and calling as well so I think because I've been</p>	<p>Variation of type of conversations</p> <p>Positive outlook</p> <p>Comfortability with talking with others online. Sees it the same as in person.</p> <p>Comfortable with any type of conversation.</p>



<p>using social media for so long and so much for so many people as well that it's just been like it's like talking normally as if we were in person.</p> <p><b>How has your experience been when talking to childhood friends and university friends over social media?</b></p> <p>Definitely different I can't exactly say why but I feel like I talk to childhood friends a lot, like with university friends, we chat often, but there's not as much content in it if that's.. you know, if that kind of makes sense. Yeah but when you're talking to childhood friends there's just so many things to get through at once and you just kind of like blurt out everything, it's paragraphs upon paragraphs and it's like 24/7 and then it dies down after a while.</p>	<p>Uses social media as a way or method of supporting friends</p> <p>A supportive friend</p> <p>Confident</p> <p>Has a variation of friendships</p> <p>Seems that it depends on the person for the types of conversations had but is still comfortable talking about a variation of conversations.</p> <p>Supportive environment</p> <p>Comfortable environment</p> <p>Maintains the connection</p>
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<p><b>Do you find social media a safe place to interact with friends?</b></p> <p>Mostly so yeah, most social media platforms I think um if you were chatting with people with friends and stuff like on a Discord chat thing, I don't use Discord that much, but I think that there might be some problems there, like I don't know exactly how to use it so there wouldn't be much safety. I wouldn't feel like there would be as much privacy but in every other aspect of social media I think yeah, it's pretty safe, pretty private and pretty good because I know those platforms and I'm comfortable with using them.</p>	<p>Awareness that social media can be a negative environment especially around websites not familiar with</p> <p>Unfamiliarity brings uncomfortableness</p> <p>Comfortable with familiarity and the people make it familiar and comfortable</p> <p>Doesn't push boundaries too much</p>
<p><b>How has social media impacted your friendships?</b></p> <p>It's been helpful for me to maintain a lot of friendships 'cause especially I come from Brazil and a lot of my friends are over there, I wouldn't have been able to keep up with them half as much as I do, if it wasn't for social media. My friends also they're from different countries, they move away and they come back and it's like nothing ever changed</p>	<p>Friends overseas</p> <p>Social media can be used as a tool to maintain friendships and remain the connection between them</p> <p>Previous positive experience and is hopeful</p>

<p>because we have that kind of connection um</p> <p>and yeah I think it just helped me a lot to keep things going with people and not lose the connection that we previously had.</p>	<p>Social media is a big part of life and tool to maintain friendships and to keep up with them</p>
<p><b>How would you feel if you were the only one unable to keep in contact with friends through social media?</b></p> <p>Oh god that would be so sad like I would feel so left out in the first place and so very lonely, um and just like everybody is moving forward doing things and I'm not that would make me feel like I'm just stagnant in one place can't do anything, stuck basically. I would have a fear of missing out on my friends and on the world.</p>	<p>Feeling of isolation and sadness</p> <p>Lost</p> <p>Fear of missing out</p>
<p><b>Do you rely on social media to keep in contact with your friends and how would you?</b></p> <p>Yeah, yeah, very much so much yeah. It is a big part of my life and my friends' lives, I depend on it to keep the communication going.</p>	<p>Dependent on social media</p> <p>Feelings of optimism</p> <p>Feelings of positivity surrounding social media</p> <p>Likes to have a support network</p>

<p><b>What do you think are the advantages and/or disadvantages of using social media to contact/text/talk with friends, if any?</b></p> <p>I think that the advantages are that you can easily tell a person how you're feeling, what you're thinking at any point, so that is good that you're always able to have somebody there and have some support especially if you're going through a hard time. There might not be like time for you to go to somebody specific in person and talk to them, so being able to call a friend or text a friend and be like hey can you talk to me for a little bit I'm not doing so well, that's really good.</p> <p>And the disadvantage is definitely some people um get very comfortable with just talking on social media so you lose the personal aspect of the friendship completely um and I think that's really really bad as you don't have the physical aspect of seeing them in person.</p>	<p>Uses a support system through positive or negative situations</p> <p>Appreciates the connectedness social media can bring</p> <p>Seems to be subjective</p> <p>Need physical aspect</p> <p>Slight contradiction with strong positive feelings of online friendships</p> <p>Feelings of negativity and confliction</p>
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Data - Willows Interview	Code
<p><b>How do you use social media?</b></p> <p>Em, I use social media like everyday to, like communicate with my friends, to, you know, to see what's happening in the news. Em, just for entertainment purposes, and I use it on, like my phone and on my laptop.</p> <p><b>What kind of platforms do you use?</b></p> <p>Em, for social media I use like Snapchat, Instagram, Eh Youtube, mainly those three, sometimes even Facebook (laughs)</p> <p><b>How often would you use those platforms?</b></p> <p>I'd say I use social media, I don't want to say every hour, but it could be every hour. But definitely everyday.</p> <p><b>Do you think that social media can be used as a tool in friendships?</b></p> <p>I definitely think that social media can be a tool for friendships, because it's one of the best ways to stay in contact with your friends. Especially if you don't live close to</p>	<p>Experienced with social media</p> <p>Uses it for needs such as keeping up with the news, different uses</p> <p>Positive response</p> <p>Has knowledge around these platforms</p> <p>Awareness that social media is a big part of their life</p>

<p>your friends. You can, you know just, text them whenever you want and update them, you can call them, you can, you know send pictures of stuff you want to show them, and I think it's probably the best way to keep in contact with people.</p> <p><b>Do you use social media to make friends, yourself?</b></p> <p>Ehm, not anymore but when I was new to social media, ehm you know, you would kind of just add people that you don't really know and then you would get to know them. Ehm, so I found that was like a really good way, to you know, branch out who you know and stuff like that. But I don't use it to make new friends much anymore.</p> <p><b>Do you use social media to maintain friendships?</b></p> <p>Definitely, I use it everyday to maintain friendships I already have.</p>	<p>Sees social media as a tool</p> <p>Experienced with it</p> <p>A method of communication</p> <p>No longer uses it to make new friends</p> <p>Grown out of it, change of attitude</p> <p>Not interested in using social media to make new friends</p> <p>Uses social media to maintain friendships but not make new ones, seems more comfortable</p>
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<p><b>What kind of conversation do you have with friends over digital platforms would you say?</b></p> <p>Ehm, usually just I have basic conversations like you know how your day was, ehm, how are things going. Sometimes you know if they have big news, and they can't wait to tell me in person they'll tell me you know over social media.</p> <p><b>How has your experience been talking to friends on these platforms? Do you feel as though it's a comfortable space to talk about things?</b></p> <p>I definitely feel like it's a comfortable space, especially if there's a situation where ehm, you might feel uncomfortable, telling them something in person you know, you don't exactly like have to look them in the eye if you're telling them over social media, so it's almost kind of like a safety barrier sometimes so it can make you feel very comfortable.</p>	<p>Comfortable with chatting online to friends, a safe space to share feelings</p> <p>Social media can disable in person conflicts Creates a safety barrier and makes them feel more comfortable in uncomfortable situations Surrounding anxiety around conflict or confrontations Can be more real in expressing their feelings Social media enables a certain type of coping mechanism Used to avoid certain negative situations or feelings</p>
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<p><b>How has your experience been when talking to childhood friends and university friends over social media?</b></p> <p>Ehm there isn't too much difference, I think. I think with my childhood friends it's more just you know keeping up to date seeing how they're doing. You know kind of only talk every once in a while, but then with university friends because I see them more often, I tend to talk to them more often on social media, ehm you know usually just talking about mutual friends the course and stuff like that.</p>	<p>Positive experience and feelings when talking with people from different dynamic relationships</p>
<p><b>Do you find social media a safe place to interact with friends?</b></p> <p>I definitely think that it's a safe space to interact with my friends and I feel very safe using it like it feels like, you know conversations are private, you know like there's no like, it's not like we are uploading our conversations to the internet so everyone can see and compared to like in person, there's no one that could be like possibly</p>	<p>Feeling certain and confident</p> <p>Previous experience with these situations</p> <p>Comfortable when talking with friends only</p> <p>No mention of other websites</p> <p>Positive experience</p>



<p>over hearing. Like it's a safe enclosed space to talk.</p> <p><b>How has social media impacted your friendships?</b></p> <p>Ehm, I think my, I think social media has impacted my friendships positively, you know I don't think I would be as close with my friends if I didn't have social media, so I think it helps me to keep in contact with them, you know maintain a positive you know, friendship not getting too distant from people.</p> <p><b>How would you feel if you were the only one unable to keep in contact with friends through social media?</b></p> <p>I think in that situation I would feel very left out, you know like maybe my friends, if I couldn't access that maybe my friends might have a group conversation without me, and I'd probably be missing some inside jokes and I don't think that would feel nice at all. It would feel very isolated.</p>	<p>Has privacy, in contrast with previous interview</p> <p>Feelings of hope, optimism and positivity upon reflection</p> <p>Helps to build a strong connection and to remain that connection</p> <p>Would feel isolated and have negative or uncomfortable emotions</p> <p>Feelings of left out and anxiety</p>
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<p><b>Do you rely on social media to keep in contact with your friends and how would you?</b></p> <p>Yeah, I do rely on social media to keep in contact with friends because, I do have some like long distance friends that I don't get to see very often and social media allows us to you know stay closer, even though we can't see each other and keep updated on each other.</p>	<p>Sees social media as a positive tool to help maintain relationships</p> <p>Feelings of hope</p>
<p><b>What do you think are the advantages and/or disadvantages of using social media to contact/text/talk with friends, if any?</b></p> <p>I think the advantages include, you know most of what I've already said you know, you sometimes you get to know them more you keep in contact you maintain your friendships. I don't think that there's too many disadvantages maybe you know it might just be if you don't contact them enough, they might be oh you haven't texted me in a while or something like that cause the opportunity is there, but it wasn't taken</p>	<p>Possible conflict due to not contacting a friend regularly</p> <p>A certain pressure</p> <p>Feelings of sadness or anxiety</p>

but that's like a very minimal disadvantage I think	
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Data – Malaikah's Interview	Code
<p><b>How do you use social media?</b></p> <p>So, I use it every day and I usually just use it to get like. Like for information, for entertainment, for chatting. So, like I would say that I would use like Google and like Instagram as like my main sources of information because I don't like have television or something. So, like I follow like the news sites on Instagram to get my news from there.</p> <p>Then I would use like Instagram for like entertainment purposes as well. Like just seeing what like my friends are doing. What like influencers are doing. To also like to watch videos about like. I use it for things I don't know like recipes or like coding stuff. there's like coding people on Instagram as well that like teach you new things I don't know. Just for that and like then I would use WhatsApp to like communicate with my friends like here in Cork and home.</p> <p>And also, since I don't live at home, I would use WhatsApp to like call my family. We</p>	<p>Is experienced in using social media</p> <p>Uses it for a variation of things</p> <p>Has knowledge about where to get information from</p> <p>Uses a variation of apps</p> <p>Uses it to keep in contact with family and makes it a routine</p> <p>Uses social media to learn and gain knowledge</p> <p>Has fun with social media</p> <p>Uses social media as a method of communication</p>

<p>always do like face calls on the weekends and like do make stuff together on Fridays. So, like, yeah, just to like be closer to them.</p> <p><b>Do you think that social media can be used as a tool in friendships?</b></p> <p>I feel like it can be both kind of. It can be really great because you're kind of like when you were not physically close to your friends. You can't still kind of be mentally closed with them, like by sharing things online like, especially with like my friends at home would be like, they would know be no way of like keeping in contact with them without like social media.</p> <p>Umm. Like just seeing what they're doing on Instagram or like chatting with them via WhatsApp. But at the same time, I feel like while you were. Umm yeah, like me and your friends offline.</p> <p>I feel like it can kind of be a detriment if that makes sense, cause like then everyone's just on their phones all the time and they don't like really. I don't know. Pay attention to</p>	<p>Has a routine</p> <p>Family is important and regularly makes time</p> <p>Positive feelings</p> <p>Internalizes friendships and family</p> <p>Relies on social media to stay in contact with friends, especially in a different country</p> <p>Feelings of anxiety</p> <p>Feelings of frustration</p>
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each other like in the moment, but rather spend time on their phones.	In person social media can distract from being in the moment
<b>Do you use social media to maintain friendships?</b>	
Let's say I'd rather maintain friends on social media just cause I when you maintain them there, you already know them in real life and you kind of know what kind of person they are and they know what kind of person they are. And like the probability of getting like misunderstandings and both like having to like break up the friendship.	Likes to be safe online and the feelings of being safe
Thought is just not as likely because they know what kind of person you are and you know what kind of person, like your friend is and just maintaining it is like easy when you're not there. But I feel like making friends online is kind of. It can be cool, but I feel like you don't really know the person fully on the other end. Could be like I don't know, 70 year old man and they could be saying "ohh yeah I'm like 20 haha". And you're like. OK. And you could be sharing stuff with someone that could be a scam,	Reflecting, being logical or having a logical outlook
	Happy with certainty
	Easier to maintain friendships online once already met in person, a need for feeling safe and secure
	Have a better understanding of one another
	Easier to communicate
	Has anxiety about some aspects of the internet or online friendships

<p>well, like and I don't know since they don't really know you the probability of you saying something that you like don't mean in the way that they're interpreting it is like just more likely because they don't really like they know they don't know everything of you and like friends you've met offline that really know the way you are, it's kind of easier I think to like avoid misunderstandings and stuff.</p> <p><b>What kind of conversation do you have with friends over digital platforms would you say?</b></p> <p>Why I would say? It's mostly like it's kind of like catching up and checking all, like we are open with each other. Like put also like talking about other people. Like when you're in a weird place and there's like weird people you're like ohh yeah, I'm in this place. And there's like weird people. What the folks happening or like when you see someone like a mutual acquaintance, I would say. And you like, would text them be like, Oh yeah, I just saw like blah blah in town and they were</p>	<p>Doesn't fully trust online friendships that are not formed in person</p> <p>Does not think its safe or that those people could have an ulterior motive</p> <p>Online friendships communication can be easily misinterpreted</p> <p>Tries to avoid negative behaviours</p> <p>Feelings of open and connectedness</p> <p>Doesn't like uncomfortable situations and tries to find something familiar to feel at ease</p> <p>Uses social media to maintain relationships by finding a common ground with others e.g gossiping</p>
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<p>with, I don't know whom. And this is like the gossip.</p>	<p>Tries to find common ground to help build relationships with others</p>
<p><b>How has your experience been when talking to childhood friends and university friends over social media?</b></p> <p>Yeah, I would say so. I would say that like people I've met recently or not, I'm not like as close with like people in my accommodation. I would say that I wouldn't really like talk to them much over social media except for like when it's absolutely necessary, like when there's like an important information by the landlord or something. Then you would like pop something in or like if something is up with the house or like, then I would like ask them something or like on social media. With college friends, I would say like, because they're like the people I'm like seeing everyday right now. It's more of a like ohh yeah. What's like the story with this lecture? I don't know what. Umm and like more like planning to meet open stuff and with like my childhood friends, I say like it's also the</p>	<p>Different dynamic or types of friendships</p> <p>Types of relationships depend on whether the type of interactions over social media are positive or negative</p> <p>Positive or negative types of interactions can mean different things to people, in this case it's the closeness of a relationship that makes it positive or not</p>

<p>meeting or perish, but also the oh, I'm like.</p> <p>Give me like, the newest gossip from like your life. Because we haven't met each other in, like, half a year like cause just. I feel like when you like from with friends from school you just lead different lives after cuz. Like you go to different colleges and stuff and you don't see each other anymore every day.</p> <p>So it's more of a like yeah catch up kind of thing and like telling you about your life and asking like telling them about your life and like asking them, asking them about theirs.</p> <p><b>Do you find social media a safe place to interact with friends?</b></p> <p>I would say I would feel safe because like sometimes I feel like it's kind of more safe if you don't really know what the reaction to what you're saying is, you know, like if they're gonna be mad or something, if it's online, it's kind of not in your real life if that makes sense. But at the same time. Like everything that's online, like that's on the Internet or on WhatsApp, it's it's stored there like whatever is happening there. There they</p>	<p>More comfortable with childhood or college friends therefore social media experience is more positive</p> <p>Tend to chat more with friends that are not seen on a regular in person basis</p> <p>Positive and negative experience or thoughts. Mindset seems to be the more comfortable the more positive / safe experience</p>
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<p>could like use it as like evidence against you, if that makes sense and like just send it on and stuff. And if you like, tell your friend something in real life and they like. Like everything that's online, like that's on the Internet or on WhatsApp, it's stored there like whatever is happening there. Keep like the gossip, like they turn out to be. No, actually your friend and like, start gossip about it. They don't have like the evidence, if that makes sense. They just can, like, start gossiping and then you can still see. It's kind of gossip. I don't know. It's never happened to me, but that's kind of something like that I would fear with like being online if that makes sense.</p> <p><b>How has social media impacted your friendships?</b></p> <p>Why would kind of say so? Cause like when you're on like when you have like all their social media stuff, he kind of see everything that's going on in their life. Like you know when they meet up with other people, you know when they're meeting up with other</p>	<p>A fear of something bad happening online</p> <p>A sense of unfamiliarity</p> <p>No privacy</p> <p>Not safe</p> <p>Anxious feelings</p> <p>Too easy to keep up with others lives</p>
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<p>friends, you know what they're doing, you're kind of like. You're not only their friend that meets them, like once a week, you kind of go with them. Like depending on how much they share online, but you kind of know more with social media than without. And I feel like that could kind of be something that could lead like towards like becoming like jealous over something and like maybe also like. So there's gonna be like a confrontation with like. You say you're my friend. Bought. You're, like, meeting up with XY all the time and you never meet up with me. And like, you know, something like that, that that could cause conflicts.</p>	<p>Could be seen as 'too much'</p> <p>Too much sharing/oversharing</p> <p>Social media has a negative effect on the maintenance of friendships</p> <p>Jealousy by seeing too much of other people's lives</p> <p>Feelings of frustration, anger, anxiety, sadness, isolation, loneliness and jealousy</p> <p>Could cause confrontation</p>
<p><b>How would you feel if you were the only one unable to keep in contact with friends through social media?</b></p> <p>I feel like it would affect me definitely cause like that's kind of pair of like their lives that other people know them and like I wouldn't. But at the same time for example, I don't have Tik T.O.K and I see people talking about stuff on Tik T.O.K all the time. But</p>	<p>Fear of missing out</p> <p>Would have a lack of common ground or interest with others</p>

<p>I'm just like I shouldn't have tick tock</p> <p>because like, I know how much like people</p> <p>just spend time on Tik T.O.K and I'm like, I</p> <p>don't want that for my life because I know</p> <p>how toxic it can be. Like the topics as well</p> <p>as the.</p> <p>I'm there for like 3 hours a day thing that I'm</p> <p>like. I don't want it, so I'm like at the same</p> <p>time like ohh yeah I'm missing out. Like,</p> <p>that's the price I pay for like. Not knowing</p> <p>the Tik T.O.K gossip.</p> <p>Like I do feel like I'm missing out, but with</p> <p>Tik T.O.K for example, I feel like I'm like</p> <p>it's a price that it's worth paying if that</p> <p>makes sense. If I don't have another app that</p> <p>I spend hours upon iris on every day, so like</p> <p>with Instagram that would be different</p> <p>because there would be like oh, I want to</p> <p>know like, what's going on.</p> <p><b>Do you rely on social media to keep in</b></p> <p><b>contact with your friends and how would</b></p> <p><b>you?/</b></p> <p><b>what do you think are the advantages</b></p> <p><b>and/or disadvantages of using social</b></p>	<p>Looking at it subjectively</p> <p>Feelings of worry or anxiousness</p> <p>Empathetic</p> <p>There is a feeling of being left out when not</p> <p>using a certain app that others have</p> <p>Feeling of happiness as there is an awareness</p> <p>of its toxicity</p> <p>Doesn't want to fall into a rabbit hole</p> <p>Feels that social media apps can be used as</p> <p>common ground in friendship group</p>
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<p><b>media to contact/text/talk with friends, if any?</b></p> <p>Yeah, I feel like there's both, if that makes sense, cause like you could like when you meet someone in person, you can like if someone tells you. Ohh yeah, I'm feeling completely fine. If like your friend tells you that and you see like you're not really fine. Like you're struggling with something, you can see that. And when they tell you over like social media, you just you won't notice it if that makes sense. So like or not like as clearly as it would be in real life. So they could like tell you total ship.</p> <p>Like and you wouldn't know, so I feel like that's kind of bad. But like at the same time, sometimes there is no other way than to talk through social media, like when you're in different countries, when you're in different cities, like, especially like when we're not in college. Over the four months, like there is no other way than to communicate over social media like same goes for my family when I'm here. So yeah.</p>	<p>Social media can be used to mask emotions</p> <p>Wouldn't see this over text but could in person</p> <p>Awareness of self and others feelings</p> <p>Feels like have no other choice</p> <p>Happy to use social media to maintain relationships/friendships</p> <p>Possibly prefers in person relationships over online</p>
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## Appendix E

### Theme table

Theme	Code	Data
Comfortable and Safe	• Positive Experiences	"I've made so many friends through social media"
	• Supportive Environment	"You're always able to have somebody there and have some support especially if you're going through a hard time."
	• Talk about feelings openly and freely because of the feelings of privacy	"I definitely think that it's a safe space to interact with my friends and I feel very safe using it [social media] like it feels like, you know conversations are private, it's a safe enclosed space to talk."
	• Previous knowledge of websites or applications	"I use social media honestly for basically everything, so it's just a huge part of my life."

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<b>Maintained Connection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to have any type of conversation</li> </ul>	<p>“I think that I have like chats with friends about shows over social media the same way that I talk with people in real life, so we could talk about like boring stuff like oh what type of coffee do you like, or we could talk about something really deep”</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Openness to challenging experiences and online communication</li> </ul>	<p>“Catching up and checking all, like we are open with each other.”</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintains long distance friendships</li> </ul>	<p>“Since I don't live at home, I would use WhatsApp to like call my family. We always do</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Built routine</li> </ul>	<p>like face calls on the weekends and like do make stuff together on Fridays.”</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping up to date with friendships and able to build new ones</li> </ul>	<p>“It [social media] helped me a lot to keep things going with people and not lose the connection that we previously had”</p>

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Social Pressure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Oversharing life online</li></ul>	“Like depending on how much they share online, but you kind of know more with social media than without”
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enable masking emotions</li></ul>	“And when they tell you over like social media, you just you won't notice it [not feeling fine] if that makes sense”
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Being disconnected with in person relationships</li></ul>	“Everyone's just on their phones all the time and they don't like really. I don't know. Pay attention to each other like in the moment, but rather spend time on their phones”
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A need to keep up to date with current applications</li></ul>	“At the same time like ohh yeah I'm missing out. Like, that's the price I pay for like. Not knowing the Tik T.O.K gossip.”

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- Not contacting a friend regularly enough
  - Being immediately available
- “If you don't contact them enough, they might be oh you haven't texted me in a while or something like that cause the opportunity is there but it wasn't taken”

- Anxiety
- “It's never happened to me, [evidence of conversations ending up somewhere they don't want] but that's kind of something like that I would fear with like being online if that makes sense.”
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