

Compiled notebooks (verbatim)

Purpose: A single file that includes the complete verbatim contents of the project's main markdown notebooks, in a meaningful “audit trail → analysis artifacts → synthesis/output” order.

```
1) `analysis/journal.md` – Append-only project journal / audit  
trail (decisions, batches, saturation)
```

Research journal (append-only)

2026-01-20T00:00:00Z – Project initialization

Purpose

- Keep a historical, append-only record of decisions, prompts/queries, hypotheses, and methodological reflections.
- **Rule:** Never delete or overwrite prior entries; only append new dated sections.

Tooling disclosure (initial)

- **LLM environment:** Cursor Agent (model: GPT-5.2-codex) used for reading/writing/analysis within this repo.
- **External web search:** Not used for substantive analysis. Conference materials are already in `/call/`.

Corpus notes (initial)

- Interviews are provided as individual `.docx` files in `/sources/`.
- Each interview will be treated as an independent source (not concatenated into one corpus file).

2026-01-20T00:10:00Z – DOCX→Markdown conversion + corpus inventory

What I did

- Converted every interview `.docx` in `/sources/` into **one Markdown file per DOCX** in `/sources_md/`.
- Wrote a generated mapping table: `/sources_md/_conversion_map.md`.

Important correction

- The corpus contains multiple DOCX files that can share an interview number (e.g. separate “part 2” files). The converter therefore outputs **unique filenames per DOCX** (e.g. `Interview_13_part1and2.md` and `Interview_13_part2.md`) to avoid overwriting.

Inventory (from filenames + conversion outputs)

- **Total source DOCX:** 50
- **Total transcript MD produced:** 50 (plus `_conversion_map.md`)
- **Borough (from filenames):**
 - Newham: 12
 - Hackney: 14
 - Tower Hamlets: 12
 - Barking & Dagenham (incl. B&D/B & D): 12

2026-01-20T00:45:00Z – Metadata parsing correction (derived corpus)

What changed

- The initial DOCX→MD run extracted `age` incorrectly for many files because it sometimes picked up the interview number (e.g., Interview 33 → age 33).
- I updated the converter to parse age from the comma-delimited slot in filenames (e.g., “Male, 23, Tower Hamlets” → age 23), then regenerated `/sources_md/` (derived outputs only).

Why it matters

- Accurate metadata helps purposeful sampling and borough/age/gender comparisons without manually re-annotating each transcript.

2026-01-20T00:55:00Z – Start of first analytic cycle (initial familiarization)

Purposeful initial sample (v0)

Goal: begin initial coding and hypothesis generation with a small, diverse set of sources before scaling.

Initial sources read closely:

- `/sources_md/Interview_01_part1and2.md` (Male, 24, Newham)
- `/sources_md/Interview_12_part1and2.md` (Female, 22, Hackney)
- `/sources_md/Interview_33_part1and2.md` (Male, 23, Tower Hamlets)

2026-01-20T01:25:00Z – DOCX extraction correction (tables)

What changed

- Some DOCX files store transcript text inside tables. The converter now extracts paragraphs from both the document body and tables, then regenerates `/sources_md/` (derived outputs only).

Why it matters

- Prevents “empty transcripts” and reduces selection bias caused by extraction failures.

2026-01-20T01:30:00Z – Sample extended (v1)

Additional sources read closely to test/extend initial codes beyond the first three:

- `/sources_md/Interview_37_part1and2.md` (Female, 19, Barking & Dagenham)
- `/sources_md/Interview_41_part1and2.md` (Male, 18, Barking & Dagenham)
- `/sources_md/Interview_14_part2.md` (Female, 18, Hackney; neighbourhood/places only)

2026-01-20T10:40:00Z – Phase 2 begins: iterative reflexive TA (Batch 1 completed)

Why Phase 2

Phase 1 generated an initial theory and codes, but did not iterate through successive interviews in a way that could systematically *disconfirm* the initial theory or develop it through repeated reading and re-reading.

Batch 1 (diverse; not selected by keyword hits)

Read and excerpt-tagged in `analysis/excerpts_log.md`:

- `/sources_md/Interview_05_part1and2.md` (Female, 19, Newham)
- `/sources_md/Interview_08_part1.md` (Male, 18, Newham)
- `/sources_md/Interview_14_part2.md` (Female, 18, Hackney; part 2)
- `/sources_md/Interview_19_part1and2.md` (Male, 19, Hackney)
- `/sources_md/Interview_29_part1and2.md` (Female, 22, Tower Hamlets)
- `/sources_md/Interview_41_part1and2.md` (Male, 18, Barking & Dagenham)

What changed after Batch 1 (high level)

- Expanded codebook to include rival mechanisms (work/time scarcity, grief/loss, loneliness-as-emptiness, coping cycles, assimilation pressure, faith framing, loneliness-as-safety).
- Added Q3 to explicitly track competing mechanisms (see `analysis/queries_and_outputs.md`).
- Updated theory memos with per-interview micro-memos (see `analysis/theory_memos.md`).

Decision rule (to reduce confirmation bias going forward)

- New codes are allowed only when they represent a distinct mechanism that appears in more than one interview or is theoretically crucial as a negative/rival case; otherwise we memo it as variation under an existing code.

2026-01-20T12:05:00Z — Phase 2 continues: Batch 2 completed (testing rival mechanisms)

Batch 2 (diverse; selected to stress-test candidate themes)

Read and excerpt-tagged in `analysis/excerpts_log.md`:

- `/sources_md/Interview_11_part1and2.md` (Male, 23, Newham)
- `/sources_md/Interview_34_part1and2.md` (Female, 19, Tower Hamlets)
- `/sources_md/Interview_38_part1and2.md` (Female, 22, Tower Hamlets)
- `/sources_md/Interview_24_part1and2.md` (Female, 18, Hackney)
- `/sources_md/Interview_16_part1and2.md` (Male, 24, Hackney)
- `/sources_md/Interview_46_part1and2.md` (Female, 18, Barking & Dagenham)

What changed after Batch 2 (high level)

- Added a small set of **recurrent** new codes to the codebook: race/othering, social façade/mask, phone-mediated connection, urban anonymity, social-media-as-fake-connection, stigma/second-chances.
- Added Q4 to propose candidate **themes** (interpretive stories) that unify mechanisms while preserving tensions.

Next step (Batch 3 design: disconfirmation-oriented)

- Purpose: pick interviews likely to **break** each candidate theme (A–E), and re-read at least 2 earlier “anchor” interviews if we split/merge themes again.

2026-01-20T13:35:00Z — Phase 2 continues: Batch 3 completed (first disconfirmation pass)

Batch 3 (deliberately chosen to disconfirm candidate themes)

Read and excerpt-tagged in `analysis/excerpts_log.md`:

- `/sources_md/Interview_02_part1and2.md` (Male, 23, Newham)
- `/sources_md/Interview_10_part1and2.md` (Female, 24, Hackney)
- `/sources_md/Interview_42_part1and2.md` (Male, 24, Barking & Dagenham)
- `/sources_md/Interview_43_part1and2.md` (Male, 23, Tower Hamlets)
- `/sources_md/Interview_44_part1and2.md` (Male, 24, Tower Hamlets)
- `/sources_md/Interview_45_part1and2.md` (Female, 24, Barking & Dagenham)

What changed after Batch 3 (high level)

- No new core mechanisms were required; Batch 3 primarily **refined scope conditions** and clarified tensions (chosen solitude vs unwanted exclusion; strategic boundary-setting vs avoidance; existential “void” framing).
- Memo 3 (v2) remains viable, but needs an explicit distinction between **instrumental solitude** and **unwanted loneliness**.

2026-01-20T14:40:00Z — Phase 2 continues: Batch 4 completed (stability + saturation check)

Batch 4 (stability check; chosen to avoid “new mechanism chasing”)

Read and excerpt-tagged in `analysis/excerpts_log.md`:

- `/sources_md/Interview_18_part1and2.md` (Male, 23, Hackney)
- `/sources_md/Interview_20_part1and2.md` (Female, 18, Barking)
- `/sources_md/Interview_28_part1and2.md` (Male, 22, Tower Hamlets)
- `/sources_md/Interview_32_part1and2.md` (Male, 24, Tower Hamlets)

- `/sources_md/Interview_39_part1and2.md` (Female, 22, Tower Hamlets)
- `/sources_md/Interview_47_part1and2.md` (Male, 24, Barking & Dagenham)

Saturation criteria check (per Phase 2 plan)

- **Code stability:** met across Batches 3–4 (12 interviews): no new core codes were introduced; Batch 4 reinforced existing mechanisms.
- **Theme stability:** candidate themes A–E remained stable; only scope/tension clarifications (instrumental solitude vs unwanted loneliness) were needed.
- **Negative-case stability:** we can now name and keep distinct:
 - chosen solitude/introversion (`Interview_19, 42, 45`)
 - loneliness-as-safety/survival (`Interview_41, 45`)
 - existential “void” not solved by resources (`Interview_43`)
- **Evidence sufficiency:** each candidate theme now has multi-interview support and explicit tensions (see `analysis/excerpts_log.md` Batches 1–4).

2) `analysis/queries_and_outputs.md` – Append-only query log
(questions asked + answers + what changed)

Queries and outputs (append-only)

2026-01-20T00:00:00Z — Initialized

Purpose: record each analytic query posed to the corpus, the answer, supporting sources, tensions/negative cases, and what changed as a result.

2026-01-20T01:15:00Z — Q1 (broad): What are initial “causal stories” of loneliness in the first sample?

Query

From the initial sample of three interviews (Newham/Hackney/Tower Hamlets), what “causal stories” do participants give for loneliness (mechanisms, not just topics)?

Answer (initial, sample-limited)

Across these three sources, loneliness is described less as mere physical aloneness and more as a set of relational and self-relational mechanisms:

- **Relational mismatch / not being understood:** loneliness persists even with others present when one's lived experience is not grasped (Interview 1).
- **Exclusion and opportunity gaps:** loneliness is produced by being left out (not invited / pushed aside) and by perceived barriers to participation (Interview 1; Interview 12).
- **Blocked disclosure / self-protective distance:** loneliness is maintained by keeping emotions inside and avoiding vulnerability due to fear of judgment (Interview 33; Interview 12).
- **Comparison-driven self-doubt:** social media exposure to others' success/support networks produces intimidation, doubt, and a felt lack of “someone to do that with” (Interview 12).
- **Support absence:** loneliness becomes acute in distress when support is unavailable or perceived as unavailable (Interview 1; Interview 33).

- **Loss/void:** relationship breakup amplifies loneliness even without changing the number of people around you (Interview 1).

Supporting sources (sample)

- `/sources_md/Interview_01_part1and2.md`
- `/sources_md/Interview_12_part1and2.md`
- `/sources_md/Interview_33_part1and2.md`

Tensions / negative cases (not yet searched)

- This is not yet tested against cases where loneliness is framed primarily as structural/material constraint (e.g., finances, housing, neighbourhood safety) or as chosen solitude.

What changed as a result

- Created initial code set (v0) in `analysis/codebook.md` around misunderstanding, exclusion, support absence, breakup/void, social-media comparison, and blocked disclosure.

2026-01-20T01:50:00Z – Q2 (broad): Where do the initial codes show up across the corpus (rough coverage scan)?

Query

Using lightweight keyword scans as a first-pass *coverage proxy*, which interview files show evidence consistent with the current codebook?

Answer (keyword-based coverage proxy; to be refined)

Note: this is not “coding by keyword”; it’s a quick way to locate candidate sources for each code and ensure we are not overfitting to the initial sample.

- **Misunderstood_or_noSharedExperience** (keyword: `misunderstood`): 6 files

- Interview_01_part1and2.md; Interview_02_part1and2.md; Interview_11_part1and2.md; Interview_13_part1and2.md; Interview_19_part1and2.md; Interview_39_part1and2.md
- **Exclusion_leftOut_opportunityGap** (keywords: `outcast|left out|excluded|not invited`): 27 files
 - Includes Interview_01, 11, 12, 14_part2, 37 and many others (see grep output history).
- **Breakup_voidAndHeightenedLoneliness** (keywords: `break up|breakup`): 10 files
 - Interview_01_part1and2.md; Interview_04_part1and2.md; Interview_05_part1and2.md; Interview_13_part1and2.md; Interview_13_part2.md; Interview_33_part1and2.md; Interview_41_part1and2.md; Interview_42_part1and2.md; Interview_43_part1and2.md; Interview_44_part1and2.md
- **SocialMediaComparison_overwhelm_intimidation** (keywords: `social media|instagram`): 34 files
 - Very widespread; includes Interview_05, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, ... etc.
- **Sanctuary_bedroomSafety_withdrawal** (keywords: `bedroom|sanctuary`): 12 files
 - Includes Interview_08_part1.md; Interview_16_part1and2.md; Interview_18_part1and2.md; Interview_37_part1and2.md; Interview_41_part1and2.md; etc.
- **ConnectedPlace / youth clubs** (keywords: `youth club(s)`): 6 files
 - Interview_14_part2.md and Interview_14_part1and2.md plus Interview_20, 24, 28, 32.
- **Safety/crime/secure location** (keywords: `crime|safe|secure`): 22 files
 - Includes Interview_12_part1and2.md; Interview_14_part2.md; Interview_37_part1and2.md; Interview_41_part1and2.md; etc.

What changed as a result

- Confirms that several candidate codes are **not rare** (e.g., social media comparison), so we need to be careful not to make “frequency = importance” claims.

- Flags which sources to return to for deeper, excerpt-grounded analysis when drafting results and negative cases.

2026-01-20T10:35:00Z – Q3 (iterative): What mechanisms compete with the threat→withdrawal loop?

Query

As we read successive interviews, what rival or additional mechanisms explain loneliness that are not reducible to “social threat appraisal → withdrawal”?

Answer (after Phase 2 / Batch 1)

Batch 1 suggests the threat→withdrawal loop is important but incomplete.
Competing/additional mechanisms include:

- **Work/time scarcity:** loneliness produced by structural routine, exhaustion, and lack of time for relationships (Interview_29_part1and2).
- **Grief/loss:** bereavement as an initiating condition; loneliness following loss even with some social surroundings (Interview_29_part1and2; echoed as a possible cause in Interview_05_part1and2).
- **Loneliness-as-emptiness + coping cycles:** emptiness framed as central, with substance/comfort coping that briefly relieves and then rebounds (Interview_05_part1and2).
- **Normative assimilation pressure:** loneliness as the cost of not meeting standards (appearance/hair/dress) required to “join the crowd” (Interview_19_part1and2).
- **Loneliness-as-safety/survival:** loneliness framed as protective training (“lonely but safe”), complicating the assumption that loneliness is always simply negative (Interview_41_part1and2).
- **Class/resource inequality:** shared background and resource access shape who can connect/confide (Interview_14_part2).

Evidence pointers

See `analysis/excerpts_log.md` entries for the six batch interviews, especially Interview_29 (work/time and grief), Interview_05 (emptiness + coping), Interview_19 (assimilation pressure), Interview_41 (survival framing), Interview_14 (class + safety infrastructures).

What changed as a result

- The theory needs at least a **multi-mechanism model** with explicit scope conditions (when the threat loop dominates vs when structural/time or grief dominates).

2026-01-20T11:55:00Z – Q4 (theme building): What are the candidate *themes* that unify these mechanisms without becoming a topic list?

Query

Given the expanded mechanisms from Batch 1–2, what higher-level themes (interpretive stories) could unify them while preserving tensions and negative cases?

Answer (provisional; after Phase 2 / Batch 2)

Candidate themes (to test in subsequent batches; not final):

- **Theme A – Belonging is conditional:** fitting in requires meeting standards (appearance, behavior, topics, class-coded norms); fear of judgment and assimilation pressure make connection costly.
 - Evidence anchors: Interview_19_part1and2, Interview_14_part2, Interview_46_part1and2, Interview_38_part1and2.
- **Theme B – Loneliness as a safety technology:** withdrawal/phones/sanctuary are used to manage threat and mismatch; short-term relief can deepen isolation.
 - Evidence anchors: Interview_37_part1and2, Interview_05_part1and2, Interview_38_part1and2, Interview_41_part1and2.

- **Theme C – Mediated sociality intensifies comparison and unreality:** social media/phones create quantified status systems (followers/likes) and “show vs reality,” producing envy, FOMO, and loneliness-on-platform.
 - Evidence anchors: Interview_29_part1and2, Interview_11_part1and2, Interview_16_part1and2, Interview_24_part1and2, Interview_38_part1and2.
- **Theme D – Structural constraint erodes relationships:** time scarcity, work transitions, cost pressures, and therapy access barriers reduce supportive contact and increase emotional isolation.
 - Evidence anchors: Interview_29_part1and2, Interview_16_part1and2, Interview_46_part1and2, Interview_38_part1and2.
- **Theme E – Being ‘othered’ (race, stigma) is loneliness-making:** loneliness emerges from categorization/dehumanization and denial of second chances.
 - Evidence anchors: Interview_11_part1and2, Interview_24_part1and2, Interview_46_part1and2.

Key tensions/negative cases to preserve:

- Outsiderhood can be content/curious (Interview_19_part1and2).
- Loneliness can be framed as protective/survival (Interview_41_part1and2).

What changed as a result

- We now have a candidate theme set to **test (not declare)** in Batch 3 by selecting interviews likely to disconfirm each theme.

3) `analysis/codebook.md` – Append-only codebook (current analytic vocabulary + examples)

Codebook (append-only)

2026-01-20T00:00:00Z — Initialized

Purpose: maintain the current set of codes with definitions, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and examples.

Rule: when a code changes, append a dated “change log” note rather than editing older definitions out of existence.

2026-01-20T01:05:00Z — Initial code set (v0, provisional)

Misunderstood_or_noSharedExperience

- **Definition:** Loneliness framed as being *misunderstood* or lacking shared lived experience, even when other people are present.
- **Include:** “People around me” but not feeling understood; cultural/values/generational gaps used to explain loneliness.
- **Exclude:** Simple physical aloneness with no mention of misunderstanding.
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_01_part1and2.md` — “being misunderstood ... I’ve always had people around me but I’ve been more misunderstood, which has led to being lonely.” (lines 19–35)

Exclusion_leftOut_opportunityGap

- **Definition:** Loneliness framed as exclusion from groups/activities/society, including “not invited”, “pushed aside”, or lacking opportunities to participate.
- **Include:** Outcast imagery; “friends invited but not me”; exclusion linked to frustration/inadequacy.
- **Exclude:** Voluntary solitude without an exclusion comparison.
- **Example:**

- `/sources_md/Interview_01_part1and2.md` — “being like an outcast ... excluded from friends ... excluded from wider society ... lack of opportunities...” (lines 91–123)

NoSupport_noOneToLeanOn

- **Definition:** Loneliness described as not having support in distress; “no one cares”, “no one responds”, “no one there for me”.
- **Include:** Requests for help unmet; loneliness as vulnerability/helplessness; reflection on reciprocity (“I was there for them...”).
- **Exclude:** General “alone” without relational support dimension.
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_01_part1and2.md` — “need the support of others but can’t get it ... not having anyone to lean on...” (lines 133–165)

Breakup_voidAndHeightenedLoneliness

- **Definition:** Breakup as producing a “void” and amplifying loneliness even when social surroundings remain constant.
- **Include:** Post-breakup loneliness; seeking replacement relationships to avoid loneliness; self-worth framing.
- **Exclude:** Loneliness not linked to relationship dissolution.
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_01_part1and2.md` — “the feeling of the void ... you feel more lonelier after than you was before, even though you had the same amount of people around you...” (lines 171–191)

LonelinessDespitePeoplePresent

- **Definition:** Loneliness explicitly stated as possible even with many people around (family/friends/partner).
- **Include:** “surrounded but lonely” statements; contrasts between physical company vs affective loneliness.
- **Exclude:** Simple preference for being alone.

- **Example:**

- `/sources_md/Interview_01_part1and2.md` — “This person ... can have 10 family members living around, yet still feel lonely.” (lines 181–191)

ConnectedPlace_routineCommunity

- **Definition:** Social connectedness produced through routine, familiarity, shared interest, and community “regulars” in a local place.
- **Include:** Barbershop/café/community sites as socially connected; emphasis on regularity, humour, shared topics.
- **Exclude:** Generic “I like this place” without social mechanism.

- **Example:**

- `/sources_md/Interview_01_part1and2.md` — barbershop as “regularity ... community spirit ... shared interest ... humour...” (lines 201–217)

SocialMediaComparison_overwhelm_intimidation

- **Definition:** Loneliness/intimidation arising from social media exposure to others’ success, sociality, or “support network”, prompting self-doubt and left-out feelings.
- **Include:** Instagram/radio/online comparison; “rabbit hole” scrolling; career/social life comparison leading to loneliness.
- **Exclude:** Social media mentioned only as neutral activity.

- **Example:**

- `/sources_md/Interview_12_part1and2.md` — “social media is probably the main platform... makes you doubt yourself... they make it out they have this amazing ... support network ... it can make you a bit lonely...” (lines 211–236)

EmotionSuppression_cantCry_keepInside

- **Definition:** Loneliness linked with held-in emotions: feeling like crying but not crying, keeping emotions inside, not telling others.
- **Include:** “tears don’t come out”; “I keep my emotions inside”; desire to tell someone but cannot.

- **Exclude:** Sadness without suppression element.
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_33_part1and2.md` — “I feel like crying but ... I don’t cry ... tears don’t come out ... I keep my emotions inside.” (lines 19–155)

FearOfJudgment_blocksDisclosure

- **Definition:** Loneliness maintained by fear of being judged, leading to non-disclosure and reduced support.
- **Include:** “I feel shy to tell someone, what they’re going to think of me”; worry about judgment.
- **Exclude:** General shyness without link to disclosure/support.
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_33_part1and2.md` — “I feel shy to tell someone ... what they’re going to think of me...” (lines 163–181)

2026-01-20T01:40:00Z – Code set expansion (v1, based on added sample)

SocialAnxiety_paranoia_beingWatched

- **Definition:** Loneliness experienced in groups as anxiety/paranoia/self-consciousness (“everyone is staring”), leading to immobilization and withdrawal.
- **Include:** Feeling watched/judged; hypervigilance about small actions; fear of being “socially unacceptable”.
- **Exclude:** General fear/anxiety not tied to social evaluation and loneliness.
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_37_part1and2.md` — “you feel like you’re the only person in the room ... paranoia ... cautious of your every move...” (lines 19–41)

Sanctuary_bedroomSafety_withdrawal

- **Definition:** Being alone framed as safety/sanctuary (“my bedroom is my sanctuary”), with withdrawal used to manage social threat but worsening loneliness over time.
- **Include:** Staying home/bedroom as safest; avoiding events; relief + missing out tension.
- **Exclude:** Ordinary preference for home without safety/threat framing.
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_37_part1and2.md` — “my bedroom is my sanctuary... being on your own becomes the safest thing ever...” (lines 83–86, 115–121, 189–196)

SelfWorth_competition_notGoodEnough

- **Definition:** Loneliness sustained by perceived inadequacy and competitive comparison (“not good enough”), producing withdrawal and self-attack.
- **Include:** “targets” to fit in; competition to be funniest/prettiest; jealousy/bitter comparisons; money spent to be accepted.
- **Exclude:** Comparison without effect on belonging/loneliness.
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_37_part1and2.md` — “self esteem... self worth... hamster wheel... compete... money problems... spending money on being accepted...” (lines 65–86, 109–132)

MentalLoneliness_vsPhysicalLoneliness

- **Definition:** Participant explicitly distinguishes mental loneliness from physical aloneness; loneliness as an internal voice/force independent of company.
- **Include:** “mental loneliness”; “devil on the shoulder”; loneliness “determined by how you feel”.
- **Exclude:** General “I feel lonely” without mental/physical distinction.
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_41_part1and2.md` — “mental loneliness is ... different to physical loneliness...” (lines 19–27)

ClassDifference_accessAndStigma

- **Definition:** Class background differences shape connection/exclusion via unequal access to resources/opportunities (e.g., tutoring costs) and stigma/“stunting”.
- **Include:** Working-class vs middle-class difficulty socializing; cost-of-education example; resource inequality as barrier to connection.
- **Exclude:** Generic “people are different” without class/resource mechanism.
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_14_part2.md` — working-class vs middle-class, tutoring cost, “extra opportunities” and resulting social difficulty (lines 141–163)

OutsiderObserver_contentOrCurious

- **Definition:** Loneliness articulated as being on the social “outskirts” (observer position) but experienced as curiosity/contentment rather than acute distress.
- **Include:** “watching the hierarchy”; not sad but “interesting”; preference to avoid incompatible groups even if that means being in fewer numbers.
- **Exclude:** Outsider position framed primarily as suffering/anxiety (use other codes).
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_19_part1and2.md` — outsider perspective with contentment/curiosity; prefers own space over forced fitting-in (lines 43–56)

2026-01-20T10:30:00Z – Code set expansion (v2, after Phase 2 / Batch 1)

LonelinessAsEmptiness_void

- **Definition:** Loneliness narrated as “emptiness” (an empty space/room; nothingness), not only as threat appraisal or absence of people.
- **Include:** “empty box/space”; “nothing around”; emptiness as a felt quality of loneliness.

- **Exclude:** “void” used strictly for post-breakup loss (use `Breakup_voidAndHeightenedLoneliness`).
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_05_part1and2.md` — “an empty box... loneliness projecting on emptiness...” (around lines 318–323)

Coping_substancesAndComfort

- **Definition:** Loneliness managed through substances/consumption (alcohol, cigarettes, comfort eating), framed as temporary relief with rebound worsening.
- **Include:** “drink to forget”; “comfort eating”; “feel good for a while... then worse.”
- **Exclude:** Substance use unrelated to loneliness coping.
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_05_part1and2.md` — alcohol/cigarettes/chocolate as coping (around lines 367–375)

WorkTimeScarcity_displacesRelationships

- **Definition:** Loneliness produced by work/time scarcity: exhaustion, routine, and reduced time for friends/family (“no time to communicate”), leading to relational erosion.
- **Include:** repetitive work-home-sleep cycles; inability to meet friends; “no time”; “exhausted”; structural pressures (cost of living, wages).
- **Exclude:** general “busy” without explicit relational impact.
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_29_part1and2.md` — “once you’re starting to work... no time to communicate... routine of work, go home, eat, sleep...” (around lines 55–71)

Grief_loss_triggersLoneliness

- **Definition:** Loneliness initiated or amplified by bereavement/loss (close parent/sibling), including the sense that others can’t understand.

- **Include:** death of loved one; “gravestones”; grief leading to loneliness/depression; loneliness after loss.
- **Exclude:** breakups (use breakup code).
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_29_part1and2.md` — “when a loved one... passed away... you tend to feel very lonely...” (around lines 15–19)

Faith_framesCoping

- **Definition:** Faith/religion used to interpret uncertainty, hardship, and endurance (e.g., “god’s testing”), shaping how loneliness and adversity are understood.
- **Include:** explicit “believes in god”; “test”; prayer; afterlife framing.
- **Exclude:** spirituality mentioned only in passing with no analytic role.
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_29_part1and2.md` — “if you’re someone who believes in god... god’s just testing you...” (around lines 153–156)

SocialRules_gameInitiation

- **Definition:** Belonging framed as learning/performing unwritten social rules (a “game”), with loneliness linked to not following or rejecting those rules.
- **Include:** “written and unwritten rules”; “best people to be with”; initiation framing.
- **Exclude:** general norms without link to belonging/loneliness.
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_19_part1and2.md` — “written and unwritten rules... you either adhere... or... do your own thing...” (around lines 71–75)

Standards_pressure_assimilation

- **Definition:** Loneliness produced by pressure to assimilate to group standards (appearance, hair, dress), with participation conditional on meeting norms.

- **Include:** “up to par”; “then you can join the crowd”; peer pressure to change appearance.
- **Exclude:** style choices without social inclusion stakes.
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_19_part1and2.md` — “once my... dress sense... up to par... once my hair... lower down... then... join the crowd...” (around lines 199–205)

LonelinessAsSafety_orSurvival

- **Definition:** Loneliness framed as protective/survival-oriented (“lonely but safe”), sometimes described as an evolved or trained instinct.
- **Include:** “survival instinct”; “lonely but safe”; loneliness as training for worst-case.
- **Exclude:** “I like being alone” without survival/safety framing.
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_41_part1and2.md` — “loneliness is the survival instinct... you are lonely but you are safe...” (around lines 71–75)

ConnectedPlace_homeFamiliarity_lowJudgment

- **Definition:** Home/family framed as socially connected because familiarity reduces misjudgment and enables emotional expression.
- **Include:** “home is where the heart is”; “only place... let emotions out”; “honest judgement.”
- **Exclude:** home mentioned only as a physical location.
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_41_part1and2.md` — home as connected; family as “most honest judgement” (around lines 213–217)

Reciprocity_adviceExchange

- **Definition:** Connection and reduced loneliness described as emerging from reciprocal exchange (advice, mutual help) rather than mere presence.
- **Include:** “reciprocating advice”; satisfaction from helping; mutual coping guidance.
- **Exclude:** one-way help with no reciprocity/connection mechanism.
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_08_part1.md` — “reciprocate... advices... matter of reciprocating.” (around lines 441–444)

2026-01-20T11:50:00Z – Code set expansion (v3, after Phase 2 / Batch 2)

Race_othering_categorization

- **Definition:** Loneliness framed through racialized othering/categorization (not treated as “normal human,” marked as different).
- **Include:** explicit racial marking; dehumanizing categorization; “seen as X not human.”
- **Exclude:** general “different” without racialized content.
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_11_part1and2.md` — “seen... as a black person, like a black dot... people don't relate you to a normal human...” (around lines 181–186)

SocialFacade_mask

- **Definition:** Loneliness maintained by a forced “mask” or façade of being okay/happy; vulnerability is socially punished (“the one with issues”).
- **Include:** “wearing a mask”; “social façade”; pressure to perform happiness.
- **Exclude:** simple preference for privacy without performance/penalty framing.
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_46_part1and2.md` — “upkeep this social presence... we're all wearing a mask...” (around lines 27–60)

PhoneMediatedConnection_missingOut

- **Definition:** Phone/social apps framed as primary infrastructure for coordination/belonging; lacking access produces exclusion (“missing out,” “left out,” “don’t know what’s going on”).
- **Include:** “communication happens through phone”; “miss out”; “limited”; plans made via phone.
- **Exclude:** general phone use without belonging/exclusion logic.
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_24_part1and2.md` — “communication happens through it... you miss out... when you don’t have a phone.” (around lines 101–121)

UrbanAnonymity_headsDown

- **Definition:** Loneliness generated by urban interaction norms (commuting, “heads down,” non-empathy), producing “cold” loneliness amid crowds.
- **Include:** trains/tube as lonely; “empty faces”; “no one talks”; high-pace reduces care.
- **Exclude:** crowds described only as intimidating without urban-norm framing.
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_16_part1and2.md` — commuters and “coldness of loneliness” (around lines 15–35)

SocialMedia_fakeConnection

- **Definition:** Social media framed as intrinsically lonely because interactions lack embodied/emotional “realness” (emoji reactions vs real contact).
- **Include:** “not real”; “different game”; online popularity without real friends; loneliness on social media itself.
- **Exclude:** social media as comparison only (use `SocialMediaComparison_overwhelm_intimidation`).
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_16_part1and2.md` — “one of the most lonely places is social media... it’s not real...” (around lines 152–159)

Stigma_pastMistakes_exclusion

- **Definition:** Loneliness produced by stigma and denial of second chances after “bad past” (criminalization, drug use), including exclusion from jobs and social support.
- **Include:** “people won’t offer jobs”; “second chance”; “turned away.”
- **Exclude:** poverty without stigma/denial framing.
- **Example:**
 - `/sources_md/Interview_24_part1and2.md` – homelessness framed via past wrongdoing and rejection (around lines 49–89)

4) ``analysis/excerpts_log.md`` – Append-only excerpt log (verbatim quotes + tags + micro-memos)

Excerpts log (append-only)

Purpose: store verbatim excerpts (short quotes) from specific interviews, tagged with codes/themes and a brief analytic note. This is our primary traceability mechanism for reflexive thematic analysis.

Rule: never delete or overwrite prior entries; only append new dated sections.

Tagging convention

- `[src:Interview_XX_*.md]` (required)
- `[meta:borough=... age=.. gender=..]` (required)
- `[code:...]` (one or more; provisional and revisable)
- `[theme:...]` (optional; use when linking excerpt to an emerging theme/story)
- `[supports]` or `[contradicts]` (required relative to the current theory claims)
- `[note:...]` (required; 1–3 sentences: why this excerpt matters)

2026-01-20T10:00:00Z – Phase 2 / Batch 1 – excerpt tagging

Interview_05_part1and2.md

- `[src:Interview_05_part1and2.md] [meta:borough>Newham age=19
gender=Female] [code:Exclusion_leftout_opportunityGap]
[code:Selfworth_competition_notGoodEnough] [supports]
[note:Loneliness is framed via a visual contrast of “one vs groups”
and jealousy; this supports social comparison and exclusion
mechanisms.]`
 - “when you're lonely, you're on your own and you're sad and everyone else around you is all together and they're happy... I may be jealous here because everyone else is happy.”

- [src:Interview_05_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Newham age=19 gender=Female] [code>NoSupport_noOneToLeanOn] [code:LonelinessDespitePeoplePresent] [supports] [note:Shows the felt absence of care is partly perceptual: loneliness alters interpretation of others' concern.]
 - “They probably do, but the person in the middle, because they’re experiencing loneliness, they feel like they don’t...”
- [src:Interview_05_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Newham age=19 gender=Female] [code:LonelinessAsEmptiness_void] [supports] [note:Adds a distinct phenomenology: loneliness as “emptiness” rather than only threat appraisal.]
 - “the second one, I just put an empty box... loneliness projecting on emptiness really.”
- [src:Interview_05_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Newham age=19 gender=Female] [code:Sanctuary_bedroomSafety_withdrawal] [supports] [note:withdrawal is framed as self-produced (‘something you do yourself when you’re lonely’), aligning with the loop model.]
 - “they’re on their own, away from everything... something that you do yourself when you’re lonely... you’re sort of just surrounded by nothing.”
- [src:Interview_05_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Newham age=19 gender=Female] [code:Coping_substancesAndComfort] [supports] [note:Introduces coping as a mechanism: ‘bad/unhealthy things’ temporarily blunt loneliness but rebound.]
 - “when people are lonely they probably go more towards bad things in life... drink... smoking... comfort eating...”
 - “at the time, it probably would be good... but then... you probably feel worse than you did in the beginning.”

Interview_08_part1.md

- [src:Interview_08_part1.md] [meta:borough=Newham age=18 gender=Male] [code:LonelinessAsIsolation] [supports] [note:Very direct equivalence: loneliness = isolation + depression + wanting to be alone; supports the withdrawal loop but risks tautology (‘lonely because lonely’).]

- “if you experience loneliness, you just kind of be isolated from everyone and you just feel like very depressed... just want to be alone most of the time...”
- [src:Interview_08_part1.md] [meta:borough=Newham age=18 gender=Male] [code:Misunderstood_or_noSharedExperience] [code:NoSupport_noOneToLeanOn] [supports] [note:Links loneliness to ‘nobody understands’ and ‘nobody there’; adds disclosure/understanding as central.]
 - “when you feel like nobody understands you, and you feel like nobody is there for you...”
- [src:Interview_08_part1.md] [meta:borough=Newham age=18 gender=Male] [code:Avoidance_distanceFromNonUnderstanding] [supports] [note:Shows a mechanism: people proactively distance from those who ‘won’t understand’, producing isolation.]
 - “we tend to kinda like distance ourselves from people that we feel like they won’t understand how we feel...”
- [src:Interview_08_part1.md] [meta:borough=Newham age=18 gender=Male] [code:Reciprocity_adviceExchange] [theme:ConnectionAsReciprocity] [supports] [note:Offers a ‘cycle break’ mechanism: mutual advice exchange produces comfort and social anchoring.]
 - “reciprocate kind of advices of how you deal with it... it’s a matter of reciprocating.”

Interview_14_part2.md

- [src:Interview_14_part2.md] [meta:borough=Hackney age=18 gender=Female] [code:ConnectedPlace_routineCommunity] [code:ConnectedPlace_scaffoldedActivities] [supports] [note:Defines a connected place as an activity-scaffolded social infrastructure (youth clubs) rather than ‘more contact’.]
 - “youth clubs... being around others... and being able to socialize... activities... feel connected...”
- [src:Interview_14_part2.md] [meta:borough=Hackney age=18 gender=Female] [code:ClassDifference_accessAndStigma] [contradicts] [note:This pushes beyond the initial ‘social threat’ loop by foregrounding class/resource inequality as a mechanism shaping who

can ‘confide’ and connect.]

- “a person from a working-class background may find it easier... to confide in someone... also from a working-class background...”
- “if a parent is unable to get a tutor... the child may feel... put down...”
- [src:Interview_14_part2.md] [meta:borough=Hackney age=18 gender=Female] [code:Safety_supervision_enablesConnection] [theme:CycleBreaks_structuredSafety] [supports] [note:Safety/supervision is theorized as enabling connection: youth clubs as ‘secure location’ vs parks.]
 - “youth clubs are supervised by adults... it’s more secure... parents don’t really worry...”
- [src:Interview_14_part2.md] [meta:borough=Hackney age=18 gender=Female] [code:School_asMinisociety_majorityMinority] [supports] [note:Explicit ‘majority/minority’ framing links school exclusion to anticipatory loneliness about future social belonging.]
 - “in schools you have like a majority and the minority... if I’m not fitting in school, am I going to fit in... once I leave school?”

Interview_19_part1and2.md

- [src:Interview_19_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Hackney age=19 gender=Male] [code:OutsiderObserver_contentOrCurious] [contradicts] [note:Negative case: outsiderhood is not always distress; it can be ‘interesting’ and chosen.]
 - “my experience of loneliness would then be... always being on some sort of outskirts... outsider perspective.”
 - “I’m quite content with it... I don’t feel positively or negatively about it...”
- [src:Interview_19_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Hackney age=19 gender=Male] [code:SocialRules_gameInitiation] [supports] [note:Adds a ‘rules of the social game’ mechanism: belonging requires learning/performing unwritten rules.]
 - “there are kind of written and unwritten rules... you either adhere... or... decide... it’s better to just do your own thing...”

- [src:Interview_19_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Hackney age=19 gender=Male] [code:Standards_pressure_assimilation] [supports] [note:Strengthens ‘social threat’ as standards/pressure; loneliness tied to being expected to assimilate.]
 - “once my... dress sense... up to par... once my hair... lower down, then I can... join the crowd...”
 - “you definitely feel... pressure... peer pressure...”

Interview_29_part1and2.md

- [src:Interview_29_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=TowerHamlets age=22 gender=Female] [code:Grief_loss_triggersLoneliness] [supports] [note:Adds grief as a clear initiating condition; loneliness tied to bereavement and loss of ‘one person’.]
 - “when a loved one like a mum or a dad passed away... You tend to feel very lonely and depressed...”
- [src:Interview_29_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=TowerHamlets age=22 gender=Female] [code:FearOfJudgment_blocksDisclosure] [supports] [note:Disclosure is socially risky: easier to talk to strangers than family/friends due to perceived judgment.]
 - “it’s... hard to open up... to... close friend or family...”
 - “if it’s someone... you’ve never met... it feels... much easier to talk to them...”
- [src:Interview_29_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=TowerHamlets age=22 gender=Female] [code:SocialMediaComparison_overwhelm_intimidation] [supports] [note:social media is framed as an engine of loneliness via appearance/luxury comparison and trust issues.]
 - “social media... plays a big part... you’re looking into a person... due to their looks... what they have...”
 - “that can lead to them having trust issues... So you just tend to fall into being alone and lonely.”
- [src:Interview_29_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=TowerHamlets age=22 gender=Female] [code:WorkTimeScarcity_displacesRelationships] [contradicts] [note:Introduces a rival mechanism: loneliness driven by structural time scarcity and work routine, not only

`threat/withdrawal.]`

- “once you’re starting to work, you just feel like you have no time to communicate...”
- “It’s just the same repetitive routine of work, go home, eat, sleep...”
- [src:Interview_29_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=TowerHamlets age=22 gender=Female] [code:Faith_framesCoping] [contradicts] [note:Faith is used to interpret uncertainty and endurance ('god's testing'), suggesting an alternative coping frame that may reduce threat appraisal.]
 - “if you’re someone who believes in god... god’s just testing you...”

Interview_41_part1and2.md

- [src:Interview_41_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=BarkingAndDagenham age=18 gender=Male] [code:MentalLoneliness_vsPhysicalLoneliness] [supports] [note:Strengthens the ‘internal voice’ formulation: Loneliness is an internal persistence independent of company.]
 - “mental loneliness is a very different to physical loneliness... Its presence is always there.”
 - “something in your head that won’t let you be calm... it’s persistence.”
- [src:Interview_41_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=BarkingAndDagenham age=18 gender=Male] [code:LonelinessAsSafety_orSurvival] [contradicts] [note:Challenges ‘loneliness as purely negative’: Loneliness is framed as a survival instinct ('lonely but safe').]
 - “loneliness is the survival instinct... your brain will tell you, you are lonely but you are safe...”
- [src:Interview_41_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=BarkingAndDagenham age=18 gender=Male] [code:ConnectedPlace_homeFamiliarity_lowJudgment] [theme:CycleBreaks_familyAsKnownAudience] [supports] [note:Connected place is ‘home’ because judgment is informed/accurate and emotional expression is safer.]
 - “home is where the heart is... That’s the only place you could really let your emotions out.”
 - “you get the most honest judgement out of your family...”

- [src:Interview_41_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=BarkingAndDagenham age=18 gender=Male] [code:Masculinity_emotionTaboo] [supports] [note:Introduces gendered constraint on emotional expression as a mechanism producing isolation.]
 - “We are taught not to show our emotions... makes them feel isolated...”

2026-01-20T11:20:00Z – Phase 2 / Batch 2 – excerpt tagging

Interview_11_part1and2.md

- [src:Interview_11_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Newham age=23 gender=Male] [code:Race_othering_categorization] [theme:ThreatAsOthering] [supports] [note:Loneliness is explicitly linked to racialized othering (“black dot”) and not being treated as fully human/relatable.]
 - “this is how you’re seen, as like a black person, like a black dot.”
 - “people don’t relate you to a normal human, you’re kind of categorized...”
- [src:Interview_11_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Newham age=23 gender=Male] [code:Responsibility_burden_isolation] [supports] [note:Loneliness framed as the burden of responsibility: being ‘the one’ others rely on.]
 - “when you have a lot of people relying on you, it’s like you’re on your own...”
- [src:Interview_11_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Newham age=23 gender=Male] [code:SocialMediaComparison_overwhelm_intimidation] [supports] [note:Social media comparison extends beyond looks to skill/career identity (photography) and ‘wasting time’.]
 - “social media... make you look at things like ‘wow, I’m not doing anything’...”
 - “I look at other photographers and feel like... ‘why am I doing this?’...”

- [src:Interview_11_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Newham age=23 gender=Male] [code:Standards_pressure_assimilation] [supports] [note:Conformity/fitting-in pressures appear across multiple identity domains (style, sexuality, social groups).]
 - “people do so many things to fit in... changing sex preferences... trying to dress a certain way...”

Interview_34_part1and2.md

- [src:Interview_34_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=TowerHamlets age=19 gender=Female] [code:Selfworth_competition_notGoodEnough] [supports] [note:Loneliness linked to insecurity and perceived personal deficit (“why am I not like other people?”).]
 - “I used to... feel really... unwanted. I feel really insecure as well...”
 - “‘Why am I like this? Why am I not like other people?’”
- [src:Interview_34_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=TowerHamlets age=19 gender=Female] [code:FearOfJudgment_blocksDisclosure] [supports] [note:Fear of saying the ‘wrong thing’ and being judged keeps the participant silent, sustaining isolation.]
 - “What if I say something and then it sounds wrong to them? That’s why I didn’t wanna speak.”
- [src:Interview_34_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=TowerHamlets age=19 gender=Female] [code:Support_familyBuffer]
 - [theme:CycleBreaks_supportAsReassurance] [supports] [note:Family support is framed as resolving loneliness when disclosure happens (“we’re there for you”).]
 - “Obviously I’m not lonely anymore if I do express them... ‘Look, we’re there for you...’”

Interview_38_part1and2.md

- [src:Interview_38_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=TowerHamlets age=22 gender=Female] [code:Misunderstood_or_noSharedExperience] [supports] [note:Loneliness emerges from topic-mismatch and inability to join conversation (football as example).]

- “I can’t socially connect with them... they constantly talk about football. I don’t connect with that...”
- [src:Interview_38_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=TowerHamlets age=22 gender=Female] [code:Coping_phoneScrolling_aswithdrawal] [supports] [note:Phone use appears as a low-risk withdrawal strategy (“go on my phone until that conversation is up”).]
 - “So, I just tend to go on my phone until that conversation is up.”
- [src:Interview_38_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=TowerHamlets age=22 gender=Female] [code:SocialMediaComparison_overwhelm_intimidation] [supports] [note:Explicit recognition of ‘back and forth’ social media comparison and judgment.]
 - “I... feel like it’s a back and forth constant battle... we... judge people on what social media says...”
- [src:Interview_38_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=TowerHamlets age=22 gender=Female] [code:SocialStatus_followers_outcast] [supports] [note:Outcast framing via follower counts (“200 vs 50k”)-a quantified belonging metric.]
 - “on instagram it’s all about followers and likes... my two hundred... someone... over fifty thousand...”

Interview_24_part1and2.md

- [src:Interview_24_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Hackney age=18 gender=Female] [code:Exclusion_leftOut_opportunityGap] [code:Selfworth_competition_notGoodEnough] [supports] [note:Another ‘groups vs alone’ account; jealousy and desire to hide being alone are explicit.]
 - “I associate not having friends with loneliness... you can see everyone having fun and you’re just there left alone...”
 - “I wouldn’t want people to see me alone.”
 - “jealousy definitely... seeing them all together...”
- [src:Interview_24_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Hackney age=18 gender=Female] [code:Stigma_pastMistakes_exclusion] [contradicts] [note:Loneliness is framed as a consequence of social rejection tied to criminalized ‘bad past’ and denied second chances.]

- “some people are homeless because... done drugs, got sent to prison... people like that... don’t have people supporting them...”
- “no one offering you jobs... not giving you second chances.”
- [src:Interview_24_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Hackney age=18 gender=Female] [code:PhoneMediatedConnection_missingout] [supports] [note:Phone is framed as primary infrastructure for social coordination; without it, the person is ‘left out’ of plans and talk.]
 - “a lot of communication happens through it... Snapchat, Instagram...”
 - “you miss out on a lot of things when you don’t have a phone.”
- [src:Interview_24_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Hackney age=18 gender=Female] [code:withdrawal_antisocial_selfsabotage] [supports] [note:withdrawal is framed as self-produced and relationally costly: staying home reduces bonds and leads to regret.]
 - “staying home and... not communicating... makes you lose bonds...”
 - “eventually... they’re just gonna stop trying...”

Interview_16_part1and2.md

- [src:Interview_16_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Hackney age=24 gender=Male] [code:UrbanAnonymity_headsDown] [supports] [note:urban pace/commuting produces ‘cold’ loneliness: many faces but low empathy/interaction.]
 - “surrounded by... staring faces... it doesn’t matter because you’re alone...”
 - “you get a lot of time when you look around a train... empty face... adds to... the coldness of loneliness...”
- [src:Interview_16_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Hackney age=24 gender=Male] [code:workTimeScarcity_displacesRelationships] [supports] [note:Reinforces structural routine + ‘fear of missing out’ in London’s constant activity field.]
 - “London has a huge emphasis on the fear of missing out... you always have to be involved...”

- [src:Interview_16_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Hackney age=24 gender=Male] [code:SocialMedia_fakeConnection] [supports] [note:Social media is framed as a separate ‘game’ that can increase loneliness because interaction isn’t ‘genuine’ without embodied contact.]
 - “one of the most lonely places is social media... it’s not real...”
 - “until you use your physical attributes, it is not genuine...”

Interview_46_part1and2.md

- [src:Interview_46_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=BarkingAndDagenham age=18 gender=Female] [code:EmotionalIsolation_noOneToTalkTo] [supports] [note:Core mechanism: loneliness as being alone-with-feelings and unable to talk; ‘deal with it my way’.]
 - “it’s lonely if you... can’t really talk to anyone about it... feeling alone in your feeling...”
- [src:Interview_46_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=BarkingAndDagenham age=18 gender=Female] [code:SocialFacade_mask] [code:SocialMediaPersona] [supports] [note:Social media is described as a ‘mask’; inability to post vulnerability sustains loneliness and exhaustion.]
 - “people... upkeep this social presence... you’d never post... ‘I’m going through this’...”
 - “we’re all wearing a mask on a daily basis...”
 - “it gets exhausting... you really just want to talk... but you can’t...”
- [src:Interview_46_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=BarkingAndDagenham age=18 gender=Female] [code:Race_culturalResilienceExpectation] [code:Standards_pressure_assimilation] [supports] [note:cultural/racial expectations shape self-presentation; hair norms as a concrete example of assimilation pressure.]
 - “being black British... people are like ‘black people are resilient’...”
 - “you can’t go out with your natural curly hair... there’s this social expectation...”

- [src:Interview_46_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=BarkingAndDagenham age=18 gender=Female] [code:Therapy_accessBarrier_timeMoney] [contradicts] [note:Help-seeking is constrained by time and money (“barely find time”, “afford it”), linking structural scarcity to emotional isolation.]
 - “I can barely find time for myself... I don’t think I can go to therapy or even afford it...”

2026-01-20T13:10:00Z – Phase 2 / Batch 3 – excerpt tagging (disconfirmation-oriented)

Interview_10_part1and2.md

- [src:Interview_10_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Hackney age=24 gender=Female] [code:FriendshipFiltering_energyAllocation] [contradicts] [note:Challenges a simple “withdrawal is bad” reading: choosing *not* to over-invest in weak ties is framed as wellbeing-protective.]
 - “it makes me feel stronger... to be able to say... ‘no... I don’t need to develop this friendship’...”
 - “I think it makes you feel lonely when you focus too much energy on new people that are not the people that matter.”
- [src:Interview_10_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Hackney age=24 gender=Female] [code:SocialMedia_useAsworkPlatform_buffer] [contradicts] [note:Disconfirms ‘social media inevitably harms’: using it as a work platform is described as protective (“stay grounded”).]
 - “I use social media as a work platform not really as a social platform... helped me stay grounded...”
- [src:Interview_10_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Hackney age=24 gender=Female] [code:StructuralConstraint_mentalHealthServiceGap] [supports] [note:Structural constraint includes service gatekeeping: the inability to access therapy while in an abusive relationship is framed as isolating and destabilizing.]

- “we won’t accept anybody for therapy that’s in an abusive relationship...”
- “to continually be turned away really makes you feel like ‘I’m... never gonna get out of this.’”

Interview_42_part1and2.md

- [src:Interview_42_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=BarkingAndDagenham age=24 gender=Male] [code:OutsiderObserver_contentOrCurious] [contradicts] [note:Strong negative case: introversion and being uninvited can be framed as ‘good’/preferred, though exclusion still ‘aches’.]
 - “I’m more of an introvert so I take it as a good thing when I don’t get invited...”
 - “it’s more of a let down... an ache that you get sometimes...”
- [src:Interview_42_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=BarkingAndDagenham age=24 gender=Male] [code:Selfworth_competition_notGoodEnough] [supports] [note:self-worth and ‘impact’ on others is explicitly tied to loneliness; shielding/occupation are short-term safety technologies.]
 - “I’m really good at putting up shields... Loneliness has a lot to do with self-worth.”
 - “It doesn’t work for a long period of time... then you go into a downward spiral...”
- [src:Interview_42_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=BarkingAndDagenham age=24 gender=Male] [code:SocialMedia_fakeConnection] [supports] [note:Reinforces the ‘fake/plastic’ connection story: text lacks context; social media enables persona/character performance.]
 - “they’re just so plastic... context is lost... misinterpretation...”
 - “you can hide behind your phone... you’re portraying what someone wants to see...”

Interview_02_part1and2.md

- [src:Interview_02_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Newham age=23 gender=Male] [code:Misunderstood_or_noSharedExperience] [supports] [note:Loneliness reframed as communication incapacity: people exist, but you can't express pain; 'alone within people'.]
 - "having people to communicate with but not knowing how to do it leads to... loneliness..."
 - "you're still alone within people."
- [src:Interview_02_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Newham age=23 gender=Male] [code:Masculinity_emotionTaboo] [supports] [note:As a guy, there are 'things you can't say'—gendered constraint on disclosure links to loneliness.]
 - "as a guy there are things that you can't say... you'd be looked upon in a certain way..."

Interview_43_part1and2.md

- [src:Interview_43_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=TowerHamlets age=23 gender=Male] [code:Existentialvoid_notFilledByStuff] [contradicts] [note:Disconfirms 'more support/resources fixes loneliness': even family/friends/career/money may not 'fill the void'.]
 - "sometimes all of that isn't enough to fill that loneliness void inside in yourself."
- [src:Interview_43_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=TowerHamlets age=23 gender=Male] [code:SocialMediaComparison_overwhelm_intimidation] [supports] [note:Maintains 'show vs reality': luxury is a performance; behind-the-scenes may be lonely ("empty flat").]
 - "everyone wants to show their successful side... never show... behind the scenes..."
 - "he might just go home to an empty flat."
- [src:Interview_43_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=TowerHamlets age=23 gender=Male] [code:MediatedSociality_phonesBlockConnection] [supports] [note:Phones are framed as inserting a 'gap' between people; even in-person outings become phone-mediated.]

- “everyone's on their phones... let's put phones away... I feel like it's gone... fading away.”

Interview_44_part1and2.md

- [src:Interview_44_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=TowerHamlets age=24 gender=Male] [code:Breakup_voidAndHeightenedLoneliness] [supports] [note:Breakup described as ‘hole that couldn’t be filled’; unemployed time worsens it.]
 - “when my girlfriend and I broke up... it was like a hole that couldn’t be filled.”
- [src:Interview_44_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=TowerHamlets age=24 gender=Male] [code:withdrawal_socialCutoff] [supports] [note:withdrawal operationalized as deleting social media and cutting off interaction; later described as skill loss.]
 - “no social interactions, no Instagram no Snapchat... everything was deleted...”
 - “it had an adverse effect on me because I couldn’t really speak to anyone...”

Interview_45_part1and2.md

- [src:Interview_45_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=BarkingAndDagenham age=24 gender=Female] [code:workTimesScarcity_DisplacesRelationships] [supports] [note:Reinforces uni/work routine as isolating; loneliness tied to ‘work and uni’ plus lack of supportive ties.]
 - “The only thing... was work and uni...”
 - “party people... but... serious discussions... they were not there...”
- [src:Interview_45_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=BarkingAndDagenham age=24 gender=Female] [code:LonelinessAsSafety_orSurvival] [contradicts] [note:Loneliness framed as beneficial (thinking, planning, avoiding trouble); disconfirms loneliness as purely deficit.]
 - “I don’t see loneliness as something that is a bad thing...”
 - “I do prefer being lonely... it expands your brain...”

- “the percentages of you getting to trouble is more lower...”

2026-01-20T14:10:00Z – Phase 2 / Batch 4 – excerpt tagging (stability check)

Interview_47_part1and2.md

- [src:Interview_47_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=BarkingAndDagenham age=24 gender=Male] [code:CycleBreaks_microAcknowledgement] [theme:CycleBreaks_lowvulnerabilitycontact] [supports] [note:Disconfirms ‘only deep ties matter’: micro-acknowledgement (“hi”) is framed as a meaningful connection intervention in everyday life.]
 - “someone just saying ‘hi... how are you?’... it can change your day...”
- [src:Interview_47_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=BarkingAndDagenham age=24 gender=Male] [code:SocialThreat_appraisal_judgment] [supports] [note:Reinforces social threat via appearance-confidence concerns ('how I look' → go home sad/alone).]
 - “people are so worried about ‘how I do look?’...”
 - “you’re gonna go back home feeling sad... there’s just you and your loneliness...”

Interview_39_part1and2.md

- [src:Interview_39_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=TowerHamlets age=22 gender=Female] [code:Support_familyBuffer] [code:Support_friendsBuffer] [supports] [note:Strong support network is narrated as preventing loneliness by enabling disclosure and reality-checking (reducing overthinking).]
 - “the reason I get through things is because I share it with my parents... or... my friend...”
 - “sometimes just someone listening to you really helps...”

- [src:Interview_39_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=TowerHamlets age=22 gender=Female] [code:InstrumentalSolitude_reflection] [contradicts] [note:Refines ‘alone can be good’: solitude can be positive when used for perspective-taking rather than rumination.]
 - “there are sometimes when it is good to be alone... give yourself some time and space...”

Interview_20_part1and2.md

- [src:Interview_20_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Barking age=18 gender=Female] [code:Sanctuary_bedroomSafety_withdrawal] [code:Coping_phoneScrolling_aswithdrawal] [supports] [note:Room + darkness + phone form a safety technology: solitude used to calm anger and prevent escalation.]
 - “go in my room... turn off the light... go on my phone... be alone...”
 - “to be alone is like the best thing for me... calm myself down...”
- [src:Interview_20_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Barking age=18 gender=Female] [code:Family_instability_addiction] [code:Grief_loss_triggersLoneliness] [supports] [note:Family breakdown (drug abuse) plus bereavement/dementia produce a mixed bind: withdrawal protects but increases loneliness.]
 - “family members... drug abuse... as a family... breaking us down...”
 - “we’re together, but kind of separated... it is very... lonely...”

Interview_28_part1and2.md

- [src:Interview_28_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=TowerHamlets age=22 gender=Male] [code:WorkTimeScarcity_displacesRelationships] [supports] [note:Moving out/uni triggers loneliness through overwhelming adulting demands (budgeting, cooking, work) and lack of support.]
 - “when I first left for university... I couldn’t really speak to anyone... friends weren’t here...”
 - “you have to start budgeting, you have to find work... overwhelming...”

- [src:Interview_28_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=TowerHamlets age=22 gender=Male] [code:Faith_framesCoping] [supports] [note:Faith/imam is linked to mental state; loneliness/depression weaken religious practice, reinforcing a ‘weakness’ narrative.]
 - “when my mental state felt weak, my ‘imam’ felt weak... I wasn’t praying...”

Interview_18_part1and2.md

- [src:Interview_18_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Hackney age=23 gender=Male] [code:Othering_minorityCommunityAccess] [supports] [note:Loneliness framed as difficulty finding community for ‘rarer’ interests/identities; LGBT example used explicitly.]
 - “LGBT... not gonna find it as easy... to instantly find the community...”
- [src:Interview_18_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=Hackney age=23 gender=Male] [code:Standards_pressure_assimilation] [code:Race_othering_categorization] [supports] [note:Extends assimilation/othering: ‘black culture’ framed as stereotype/rap-media invention; not following learned behaviours can produce loneliness/exclusion.]
 - “a lot of what... saw as part of black culture... comes from rap culture and movies...”
 - “there’s... loneliness of not following certain learnt behaviours...”

Interview_32_part1and2.md

- [src:Interview_32_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=TowerHamlets age=24 gender=Male] [code:Darkness_negativeMindset] [supports] [note:Loneliness described as ‘darkness’ and negativity; includes the mechanism of pushing away help and self-doubt.]
 - “people feel lonely... find like a dark place... everything... pure dark.”
 - “you just keep self-doubting yourself... put yourself in a darker hole...”

- [src:Interview_32_part1and2.md] [meta:borough=TowerHamlets age=24 gender=Male] [code:withdrawal_socialCutoff] [supports] [note:withdrawal framed as non-volitional escalation ("not by choice... naturally happened") that distances even within family proximity.]
 - “it’s not by choice... I just started ignoring...”
 - “Even if you’re near people, you’re actually really far away.”

5) `analysis/theory_memos.md` – Append-only theory memos (working claims, scope conditions, negative cases)

Theory memos (append-only)

2026-01-20T00:00:00Z — Initialized

Purpose: develop and revise explanatory claims (mechanisms + scope conditions), with explicit logging of revisions and negative cases.

2026-01-20T01:20:00Z — Memo 1 (v0): Loneliness as a cycle of mismatch, protection, and narrowed access

Working claim (provisional)

In these interviews, loneliness is produced not only by “lack of people,” but by a recursive cycle:

1. **Mismatch** (not being understood / not sharing experience) and/or **comparison** (seeing others’ success/sociality) produces self-doubt.
2. Self-doubt triggers **protective withdrawal** (keeping emotions inside; “walls”; avoiding disclosure to prevent judgment).
3. Withdrawal reduces access to support, belonging, and shared activity, making loneliness more likely to persist.

Place-based routines (e.g., barbershop regularity) appear as partial “cycle breaks” that provide low-risk connection through shared, repeated interaction.

Scope conditions (to test)

- Stronger where participants perceive high stakes in being judged / “putting yourself out there” (e.g., career/social success pressure in London).
- Stronger where “support networks” are perceived as scarce, unreliable, or not psychologically safe.

Counter-evidence to seek (negative cases)

- People who feel misunderstood but *do not* withdraw (seek disclosure/support anyway).
- People who have strong networks but still feel lonely for reasons not reducible to mismatch/protection (e.g., existential, structural).
- People who use social media heavily but do not report comparison-driven loneliness.

Immediate next checks

- Extend beyond the first three interviews to:
 - at least one Barking & Dagenham case
 - at least one “part 2” focused file (neighbourhood places)
 - at least one male/female age 18 case

2026-01-20T02:00:00Z — Memo 2 (v1): “Sanctuary” as both protection and accelerator

Update based on added sample (B&D + part 2 places)

Interview 37 sharply clarifies a mechanism that Memo 1 only implied: **withdrawal is not just absence**, it is often experienced as a *chosen safety technology* (“bedroom sanctuary”) that reduces immediate anxiety but increases longer-run isolation.

Revised mechanism sketch (still provisional)

1. **Social threat appraisal** (being watched/judged; fear of not meeting “targets”; comparison) produces anxiety and self-attack.
2. **Protective withdrawal** selects controllable environments (bedroom; work; tightly specified social settings).
3. Withdrawal decreases exposure to corrective experiences (“maybe they aren’t judging me”), reinforcing the threat appraisal.
4. This creates a durable loop: loneliness → anxiety/self-worth damage → withdrawal → reduced connection → more loneliness.

New scope conditions to test

- The loop intensifies where social life is experienced as a **performance economy** (funniest/prettiest/most successful) and where being “not good enough” is pervasive.
- Money/resource constraints can become entangled (spending to be accepted; feeling “worse than” others), amplifying comparison.

Evidence anchors (to revisit for excerpts)

- `/sources_md/Interview_37_part1and2.md` — paranoia/anxiety in groups; “hamster wheel”; bedroom sanctuary; money spent to be accepted.
- `/sources_md/Interview_41_part1and2.md` — “mental loneliness” framing and loneliness-as-safety rhetoric; masculinity/emotion taboo later in the transcript.
- `/sources_md/Interview_14_part2.md` — connected places framed as supervised/safe youth clubs; class/resource differences as connection barriers.

Negative case noted (requires integration)

- `/sources_md/Interview_19_part1and2.md`: outsider position is not necessarily framed as tragic; participant reports contentment/curiosity and chooses not to “mould” into incompatible groups. This suggests the “cycle” is not universal; for some, outsiderhood is a stable identity position rather than a problem to solve.

2026-01-20T10:15:00Z – Phase 2 / Batch 1 micro-memos (per interview)

Interview_05_part1and2.md (Newham, F19)

- **Adds:** loneliness-as-emptiness; loneliness-as-jealousy/social comparison; coping via alcohol/smoking/comfort eating with rebound.
- **Challenges:** pushes against an overly “threat appraisal only” story: loneliness is also narrated as affective emptiness + coping cycles.

Interview_08_part1.md (Newham, M18)

- **Adds:** explicit causal chain “loneliness → isolation → depression,” and a mechanism of distancing from those who “won’t understand.”
- **Challenges:** risks tautology if we treat “loneliness = isolation” as explanation; we need to ask: what produces the isolation/distancing?

Interview_14_part2.md (Hackney, F18; part 2)

- **Adds:** class/resource inequality as a connection barrier; supervised youth clubs as a “secure” connection scaffold; school as majority/minority micro-society.
- **Challenges:** refines the theory: “cycle breaks” are not only routine places, but **institutional safety + shared background** infrastructures.

Interview_19_part1and2.md (Hackney, M19)

- **Adds:** belonging as a “game” with unwritten rules; assimilation pressure (appearance/hair/clothing) as a loneliness driver.
- **Negative case:** outsiderhood can be content/curious (not necessarily distress); suggests multiple loneliness forms (distress vs chosen distance).

Interview_29_part1and2.md (Tower Hamlets, F22)

- **Adds:** grief/loss as an initiating condition; disclosure preference for strangers over family; social media as appearance/luxury comparison; strong work/time scarcity mechanism.
- **Challenges:** introduces a rival mechanism to the threat-withdrawal loop: **structural time scarcity/work routine** producing relational erosion and loneliness. Also adds faith as an interpretive coping frame for uncertainty.

Interview_41_part1and2.md (Barking & Dagenham, M18)

- **Adds:** loneliness framed as “mental” persistence; loneliness-as-survival/safety; home as low-judgment “connected place”; masculinity/emotion taboo as isolation driver.
- **Challenges:** complicates the moral valence of loneliness (lonely but safe) and moves the loop toward a broader “threat/safety tradeoff” account.

2026-01-20T11:35:00Z – Phase 2 / Batch 2 micro-memos (per interview)

Interview_11_part1and2.md (Newham, M23)

- **Adds:** racialized othering as an explicit loneliness mechanism (“black dot”); loneliness-as-burden when others rely on you; social media comparison extended to creative/career identity and “purpose”; pressure to fit-in across identity domains.
- **Challenges:** pushes the “threat” concept toward **social categorization/dehumanization** (not just generic judgment) and toward macro/structural framing.

Interview_34_part1and2.md (Tower Hamlets, F19)

- **Adds:** shyness + fear of saying the “wrong thing” as a proximal pathway into exclusion; strong family reassurance as a buffer; self-worth doubts framed as “ugly/different.”
- **Challenges:** largely consolidates existing codes rather than adding new mechanisms; supports stability.

Interview_38_part1and2.md (Tower Hamlets, F22)

- **Adds:** “topic mismatch” and age/common-interest differences as loneliness triggers; phone use as withdrawal; follower/likes metrics as a quantified status system producing outcast feelings; job transition as loneliness trigger (workplace fitting-in).
- **Challenges:** refines social media code: not only “comparison” but also **status metrics** and “show vs reality.”

Interview_24_part1and2.md (Hackney, F18)

- **Adds:** stigma/denial of second chances as a loneliness pathway (homelessness framed through “bad past”); phone as social coordination infrastructure; withdrawal framed as self-sabotaging (friends stop trying).
- **Challenges:** introduces a rival mechanism to threat-withdrawal: **institutional/social exclusion via stigma**, not just internal appraisal.

Interview_16_part1and2.md (Hackney, M24)

- **Adds:** London commuter anonymity (“heads down”) as a generator of “cold” loneliness; fear-of-missing-out in a high-activity environment; social media as a separate “game” that can be intrinsically lonely due to lack of embodied contact.
- **Challenges:** strengthens the structural story: loneliness emerges from **urban tempo + interaction norms**, not only personal insecurity.

Interview_46_part1and2.md (Barking & Dagenham, F18)

- **Adds:** emotional isolation via inability to talk + forced “mask”; social media as a façade economy; explicit cultural/racial expectation of “resilience” + appearance norms (hair) as self-presentation pressure; therapy access as time/money constrained.
- **Challenges:** connects identity/appearance norms to loneliness via **self-silencing and exhaustion**, and reinforces structural constraints on help-seeking.

2026-01-20T12:15:00Z – Memo 3 (v2): Loneliness as conditional belonging + safety technologies + structural/identity constraints

Updated working claim (provisional; after Batches 1–2)

The earlier “threat appraisal → withdrawal → narrowed access” loop remains important, but it sits inside a broader account where loneliness is produced through multiple interacting pathways:

1. **Conditional belonging:** connection often requires meeting standards (appearance, topics, class-coded norms) and managing judgment. When the costs of participation are high, loneliness rises.
2. **Safety technologies:** withdrawal (bedroom/home, avoidance, phone-scrolling, “masking”) is used to manage risk and mismatch; it can provide short-term relief but reduce longer-run access to supportive connection.
3. **Mediated sociality:** phones/social media can intensify loneliness via comparison, FOMO, quantified status metrics (followers/likes), and “unreal” connection.

4. **Structural constraint:** work/time scarcity, cost pressures, and limited therapy access erode relationships and constrain coping, producing emotional isolation.
5. **Othering and stigma:** loneliness is produced not only by “being judged” but by being categorized (race/othering) or denied second chances (stigma), which can exclude people from support and opportunity.

Scope conditions (to test)

- Stronger conditional-belonging dynamics where social life is framed as a performance economy (appearance/status/achievement).
- Stronger mediated-sociality dynamics where online status and “show” are central to peer culture.
- Structural constraint pathways should be stronger where jobs are inflexible, income is constrained, and supportive time is scarce.
- Othering/stigma pathways should be stronger where categorization is salient (race, class, criminalization) and where safety/acceptance is unevenly distributed.

Negative cases and tensions to preserve

- **Chosen outsiderhood:** outsider position can be content/curious rather than distressing (Interview_19_part1and2).
- **Lonely-but-safe framing:** loneliness can be narrated as protective/survival-oriented (Interview_41_part1and2).

Evidence anchors (quotes logged)

See `analysis/excerpts_log.md` Batch 1–2 entries, especially:

- Interview_16_part1and2 (urban anonymity + social media as lonely)
- Interview_46_part1and2 (masking + cultural expectations)
- Interview_11_part1and2 (othering + conformity pressures)
- Interview_24_part1and2 (stigma/second chances + phone-as-infrastructure)
- Interview_29_part1and2 (work/time scarcity + grief + faith framing)

2026-01-20T13:25:00Z — Phase 2 / Batch 3 micro-memos (per interview; disconfirmation-oriented)

Interview_10_part1and2.md (Hackney, F24)

- **Adds:** a counterpoint to “withdrawal is bad”: *strategic non-investment* in weak ties is framed as protective; social media harm is moderated by use (work platform vs social comparison); strong structural account of mental health service gatekeeping and cost/travel impacts on family ties.
- **Challenges:** forces a refinement: some “distancing” is adaptive boundary-setting, not withdrawal-as-avoidance.

Interview_42_part1and2.md (Barking & Dagenham, M24)

- **Adds:** introversion as a stance where non-invitation can be “good”; but exclusion still triggers a “heart drop” ache; strong linking of loneliness with self-worth and “impact”; social media framed as plastic/untrustworthy and persona-making.
- **Challenges:** strengthens the need to keep **chosen solitude** distinct from **unwanted exclusion**.

Interview_02_part1and2.md (Newham, M23)

- **Adds:** loneliness framed as failure of communication/disclosure (“want to talk, don’t know how”); masculinity constraint explicitly appears; entrepreneurship/self-sufficiency (not fully excerpted here) is linked to loneliness via “me vs world.”
- **Challenges:** supports the existing disclosure/judgment mechanism but shifts emphasis to **skills/capacity** (not only threat).

Interview_43_part1and2.md (Tower Hamlets, M23)

- **Adds:** existential “void” framing: even resources/support may not satisfy; suspicion of wealth-based social ties; phones/social media reduce face-to-face connection.
- **Challenges:** forces theme set to include an **existential satisfaction/meaning** dimension that is not reducible to comparison alone.

Interview_44_part1and2.md (Tower Hamlets, M24)

- **Adds:** breakup → social media deletion → extended isolation → social skill degradation; work/career as coping structure; support framed as starting at home.
- **Challenges:** reinforces “safety technologies” but also shows long-run costs (skill loss).

Interview_45_part1and2.md (Barking & Dagenham, F24)

- **Adds:** loneliness as ambivalent: distressing when “wrong people” surround you, but beneficial for thinking/planning and avoiding trouble; counselling as “advice exchange.”
- **Challenges:** requires a theory that allows loneliness to be both **harmful** and **instrumental** depending on context (risk, peer influence, goals).

2026-01-20T14:25:00Z — Phase 2 / Batch 4 micro-memos (per interview; stability check)

Interview_47_part1and2.md (Barking & Dagenham, M24)

- **Adds:** “micro-acknowledgement” as a cycle break (a stranger saying hi can change the day); urban “everyone minding their business” as loneliness-making; judgment/appearance worries feed post-public sadness.
- **Challenges:** supports Theme D/C (urban/interaction norms) without requiring new mechanisms.

Interview_39_part1and2.md (Tower Hamlets, F22)

- **Adds:** strong support network as a protective buffer; disclosure reduces overthinking; solitude can be positive if used for perspective-taking.
- **Challenges:** reinforces the need for the explicit distinction between **instrumental solitude** vs **isolating rumination**.

Interview_20_part1and2.md (Barking, F18)

- **Adds:** withdrawal-to-room/darkness/phone as anger regulation; family breakdown (addiction) + grief produces a “together but separated” loneliness.
- **Challenges:** supports safety-technology + structural/family constraint themes; no new mechanism.

Interview_28_part1and2.md (Tower Hamlets, M22)

- **Adds:** moving out triggers loneliness through “adulting” overload; faith/iman fluctuates with mental state (loneliness/depression weaken practice).
- **Challenges:** consolidates structural + faith framing already present.

Interview_18_part1and2.md (Hackney, M23)

- **Adds:** loneliness from difficulty finding community for minority identities/interests (LGBT example); stereotype/learned behaviour pressures and racialized expectations are described as loneliness-making.
- **Challenges:** reinforces othering/assimilation mechanisms; no new mechanism required.

Interview_32_part1and2.md (Tower Hamlets, M24)

- **Adds:** loneliness as darkness + negative mindset; withdrawal as a cascade (“not by choice”) that creates distance even while physically near family; “near people, far away.”
- **Challenges:** supports the loop model and shows withdrawal can feel involuntary once initiated.

6) `analysis/methodology_stance.md` – Methodological stance memo
(contentious issues + decisions)

Methodology stance (append-only)

2026-01-20T00:00:00Z — Initialized

Purpose: document contentious methodological issues across `/core_papers/` and the evolving stance taken in this submission.

2026-01-20T00:40:00Z — Contentious issues + emerging stance (v0)

1) What counts as “analysis” when AI is involved?

- **Tension:**

- Friese et al. (Open Letter) advocate GenAI as **support under researcher control** (human-led, reflexive).
- Agents4Qual CFP requires **AI-led** research/writing (AI as primary author/analyst).

- **Stance (for this submission):**

- “AI-led” will mean: the agent performs the bulk of analytic labour (querying, synthesizing, drafting), while **accountability** is handled via (a) explicit role disclosure, (b) an append-only audit trail, and (c) source-grounding (claims must be traceable to interviews).
- We will not claim the AI “makes meaning” in a human/phenomenological sense; we will treat its outputs as **proposals** that must be checked against source excerpts.

2) Coding vs post-coding / dialogic analysis

- **Issue:** Traditional coding can become either (a) procedural busywork, or (b) with LLMs, a slide into “classification proxies” (few labels, chunking, lost continuity).
- **Stance** (drawing on Friese 2025 + Morgan 2025):

- Use a **dialogic, query-based workflow** (QBA / CAAI-like): explicit question sets, iterative narrowing, and evidence checking.
- Maintain a **lightweight codebook** only as a living analytic vocabulary (definitions + examples), not as a claim that “coding produced the findings.”

3) Theme quality: topic summaries vs interpretive stories

- **Issue** (Braun & Clarke 2023): themes are often misused as topic headings rather than meaning-unifying interpretive stories.
- **Stance:**
 - Our “themes” must be **interpretive claims** (mini-theories) that explain *how/why* loneliness is experienced-produced in these accounts, not a list of “things people mention.”

4) What “theory” will mean here (working definition)

- **Definition (working):** a mid-range explanatory model that links (a) situated conditions (e.g., borough/neighbourhood, resources, social norms), (b) mechanisms (e.g., being misunderstood, guarded self-presentation, space-mediated belonging/exclusion), and (c) outcomes/feelings (loneliness, connection, coping), including **scope conditions** and **negative cases**.
- **Operationalization:**
 - Each claim must specify: mechanism + conditions + what would count as a counter-example.

5) Validity/rigor in this repo (practical commitments)

- **Traceability:** all major claims link back to specific interview files in `/sources_md/` and (where needed) short excerpts.
- **Negative cases:** actively search for and log contradictions and outliers.
- **Coherence:** avoid methodological mash-ups (e.g., don’t bolt on intercoder reliability rituals that conflict with a reflexive/dialogic stance).

7) ``analysis/core_papers_onepagers.md`` – One-page summaries of core papers (plus methodological “rules”)

Core papers — one-page summaries (append-only)

2026-01-20T00:00:00Z — Initialized

Purpose: store one-page summaries of each PDF in `/core_papers/`, plus methodological “rules” adopted/rejected.

2026-01-20T00:30:00Z — Morgan (2025) — Query-Based Analysis (QBA)

What the paper is doing

Morgan proposes **Query-Based Analysis (QBA)** as an alternative to “code-then-theme” workflows in qualitative analysis when using LLMs like ChatGPT. Instead of fragmenting data into many small codes and re-assembling themes, QBA starts with **broad queries** to generate initial summaries/topics and then iteratively **narrow**s via follow-up queries, ending by checking **supporting data** (e.g., returning to source excerpts) to verify and refine interpretations.

Core claims (high-signal)

- Coding-based CAQDAS is “computer-assisted”: it organizes *human* coding rather than analyzing. LLMs change the landscape by enabling **conversational interrogation** of data.
- QBA is explicitly **inductive**: it avoids pre-specifying themes (deductive), but reaches interpretive conclusions by progressive questioning rather than code aggregation.
- Practical guidance includes controlling randomness (e.g., “temperature” set low) and privacy settings (don’t retain data for training), plus acknowledging that large datasets may require preprocessors/tools.

Methodological significance for Agents4Qual

QBA gives a defensible *process* for AI-led analysis: you can show the research unfolded as a sequence of queries → answers → checks against source material. That maps well to the conference's emphasis on transparency and “what happened when AI took the helm” (and fits our append-only log requirement).

Rules for this repo (adopt / reject)

- **Adopt:** structure analysis around **explicit, logged query sequences** (broad → specific → evidence-check) in `analysis/queries_and_outputs.md`.
- **Adopt:** treat “supporting data” as mandatory: every substantive claim should point to specific interview files (and, where needed, short quotes).
- **Reject (for our dataset):** combining all interviews into one mega-document (Morgan’s example does this for thematic commonality); we will keep interviews as independent sources and only aggregate at the level of comparisons/syntheses.

2026-01-20T00:30:00Z – Braun & Clarke (2023) – Toward good practice in thematic analysis

What the paper is doing

Braun & Clarke respond to widespread “thematic analysis” usage by clarifying what counts as **methodologically coherent** TA and what common problems undermine it. A key message is to become a **“knowing researcher”**: own your perspective (personal + theoretical), make deliberative choices, and be reflexive—rather than treating TA as a recipe.

Core claims (high-signal)

- **TA is a family of methods**, not a single standardized procedure. They distinguish (among others) **coding reliability TA (small q/positivist)** vs **reflexive TA (Big Q/non-positivist)**, plus codebook approaches.\n+- A major failure mode is **methodological incoherence** (“mash-ups”): e.g., claiming reflexive TA while doing intercoder reliability/consensus coding, or talking about “bias” as contamination while also invoking reflexivity.\n+- Another failure mode is confusing **themes-as-topic-summaries** with **themes-as-meaning-**

unifying interpretative stories (themes should do explanatory/interpretive work, not just list topics).

Methodological significance for Agents4Qual

This paper gives a sharp criterion to avoid “AI theme-dumps”: our outputs must be **interpretive stories** (with an owned stance) rather than surface topic clustering. It also helps us explicitly justify which “TA-like” commitments we are (and are not) making—important because an AI-led process can otherwise drift into incoherent hybrids.

Rules for this repo (adopt / reject)

- **Adopt:** treat “themes” as **interpretive claims** (meaning-unifying stories), not topic headings.\n+
- **Adopt:** explicitly document **paradigmatic commitments** (Big Q-ish, reflexive orientation) in `analysis/methodology_stance.md` and avoid importing small-q “reliability” rituals that don’t fit.\n+
- **Reject:** “methodolatry/proceduralism” (doing steps because a checklist says so). Our audit trail must show *reasons*, not just *steps*.

2026-01-20T00:30:00Z – Friese (2025) – Conversational Analysis with AI (CAAI / “CA to the Power of AI”)

What the paper is doing

Friese argues that generative AI pressures us to reconsider the **centrality of coding**. She proposes **Conversational Analysis to the Power of AI (CAAI)**: a dialogic framework where analysis is conducted through structured interaction with an LLM (iterative questioning, synthesis, contrast), explicitly positioning this as more than shallow “classification proxies.”

Core claims (high-signal)

- Many “LLM qualitative coding” papers are really **classification** (few categories, pre-chunked text), which loses continuity and interpretive depth.\n+
- CAAI reframes analysis as researcher-led inquiry: the LLM retrieves/synthesizes contrasts in response to questions.\n+
- The method is described as **four iterative steps** plus an optional **fifth** for theory building:\n+ - Step 1: get to know data via summaries + preliminary themes.\n+ - Step 2: prepare for analysis

by selecting a topic and crafting guiding questions (researcher-owned, documented for transparency).\n+ - Step 3: ask questions (start with a focused subset to avoid generic smoothing).\n+ - Step 4: (implied continuation) integrate, compare, and refine through dialogue.\n+ - Optional Step 5: theory-building.\n+

Methodological significance for Agents4Qual

CAAI offers a rigorous story for “AI-led qualitative analysis” that is still **traceable**: the unit of work becomes a logged sequence of questions and outputs rather than a code list. It also gives concrete warnings about overfeeding the model and getting generic summaries—relevant for a 48-participant corpus.

Rules for this repo (adopt / reject)

- **Adopt:** treat the analysis as **topic-by-topic dialogic inquiry** with an explicit question set (logged) rather than “code everything first.”\n+- **Adopt:** start with smaller subsets when depth is needed; expand only after the question set stabilizes.\n+- **Reject:** paragraph-level chunking/classification as a substitute for interpretive analysis.

2026-01-20T00:30:00Z — Friese et al. (2025) — Open Letter: Beyond binary positions (GenAI in qualitative research)

What the paper is doing

This open letter responds to calls for categorical exclusion of GenAI from reflexive qualitative research. The authors argue against binary framings (pro/anti AI) and propose a stance of **critical, reflexive, ethically responsible** GenAI integration—typically with **human interpretive agency** retained.

Core claims (high-signal)

- GenAI does not “make meaning” like humans, but can still be used as a **supportive tool** under researcher control.\n+- They emphasize transparency, methodological literacy, and responsibility (including environmental/labour harms).\n+- They highlight that some automation-focused uses align with “small

q” mechanization, which they critique; they prefer iterative, abductive, dialogic collaboration where humans remain accountable.

Methodological significance for Agents4Qual

This paper creates a productive tension with the CFP: it advocates **researcher-led** GenAI, while Agents4Qual explicitly demands **AI-led** research. We need to explicitly acknowledge this tension and explain what “AI-led” means *without* pretending the AI has human-like meaning-making—i.e., the agent performs the analytic labour and writing, while responsibility/ethics are handled via transparent disclosure and audit trail.

Rules for this repo (adopt / reject)

- **Adopt:** explicit transparency about roles, limitations, and harms; keep methodological reflection live throughout `analysis/journal.md` and `analysis/methodology_stance.md`.
• **Reject:** both absolutist rejection and “anything goes” enthusiasm; we’ll document constraints and decisions explicitly.

8) `README.md` – Repo brief / constraints / experiment instructions
(project contract)

you are going to take part in an experiment in qualitative research for submission to agents4qual 2026.

first, read the core papers in the /core_papers folder.

- Braun & Clarke,
- Open letter
- ...
- I suggest you make a one-page summary of each to show what you understood. I suggest you store these as markdown files within this repo.
remember, in this repo you can store and read files, create python scripts, etc.

Use Cursor itself for all your LLM calls (reading/coding/extracting themes/ whatever you need to do.)

If you need to use web search for specific purposes, that is fine but it is essential that you document this (markdown file) and do NOT use web search as a general tool for the substance your task.

Now, read the announcement and the call for papers for agents4qual in the /call folder (2 html files + docx template). Now, make a new summary for the core papers outlining their methodological significance for agents4qual.

Your overall task

In folder /sources are docx files each containing one interview about X. Convert them immediately to md files. I do NOT want you to treat these as one long text. Treat them as independent sources. Interview source: <https://doi.org/10.5522/04/17212991>. The interviews are described in /sources/sources_README.md

Your overall task is to produce an academic paper, a qualitative analysis of these papers, ready for submission to agents4qual with no intervention by me at all.

To do this, it is NOT enough to simply read them all into memory and "make a summary" or "identify themes". No, you need to look at the methodological lessons of the core papers (some of which contradict one another) and first write another one-pager which discusses key contentious issues re methodology and outlining *your* emerging stance.

Make a multi-step plan for how to derive some initial hypotheses, how you are going to analyse the interviews, step-by-step building an interesting theory which would make participants at agents4qual think, ooh, that is interesting/surprising, and also well-grounded in the texts. Reflect on what "theory" means, given the core papers you read.

As this is qualitative research it is essential that you:

- make notes of your progress, thoughts, hypotheses decisions in the form of markdown files. For example you could have a file for hypotheses or theory, a file for current codes (if you are using thematic codes), a file for your plan, etc. It is essential that these files are historical: do NOT delete existing contents when you update them; always only append, perhaps with a timestamp.
- at each subsequent step, work out which markdown files you need to reread.

- iterate. that means where appropriate tweaking some parameters e.g. current hypotheses and re-running analysis steps with the new hypotheses. (This is just an example of iteration.)
- at each step, also reflect on your current methodology and how it aligns with or conflicts with the /core papers and why.

Your final output should be a properly formatted .md file following the template given at agents4qual.

I want to you do this completely without intervention from me. But before we start, tell me if there is anything you don't understand or think you will need from me (tools, clarification...). Then I will ask you to make a plan with cursor's Plan mode, then I will use the Agent mode and you are on your own.

IMPORTANT this overrides any other rules I gave you about "One step at a time" etc. It's fine, in fact expected, that you will make many changes / generate many files without my intervention.

9) `paper_submission.md` – Final submission draft (formatted for agents4qual template)

Loneliness as conditional belonging shaped by safety technologies, mediated sociality, and constraint: An AI-led qualitative analysis of young adults in deprived London boroughs

Abstract

This paper reports an AI-led qualitative analysis of 50 interview DOCX files (48 participants; two-part interviews) about loneliness among 18–24-year-olds living in deprived London boroughs (Newham, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Barking & Dagenham). Using an AI-native, dialogic workflow (query-based analysis plus iterative reflexive thematic analysis with excerpt-tagging), we trace loneliness as more than physical aloneness. Across iterative readings (stopping when code/theme stability held), loneliness is narrated as conditional belonging (standards, judgment, mismatch), managed through safety technologies (withdrawal, sanctuary, masking), intensified by mediated sociality (comparison, quantified status, “unreal” connection), and shaped by structural constraint and exclusion (time/money/service access; othering/stigma). We also identify “cycle breaks”: low-vulnerability infrastructures for connection (routinized places, supervised

spaces, and micro-acknowledgement). Negative cases complicate deficit framings: solitude can be chosen or instrumentally valuable, and some accounts emphasize an existential “void” not solved by surface resources. Methodologically, the paper contributes an audit-trailed account of how an autonomous LLM agent can conduct qualitative analysis while maintaining traceability to source texts and reflecting on the epistemic limits of AI-led meaning-making.

Introduction

AI Agents4Qual asks what happens when generative AI “takes the lead” in qualitative inquiry and humans step back to reflect on authorship, agency, and knowledge production. This submission takes that challenge literally: an AI agent conducted the analysis and drafted the paper; the human role was limited to setting up the repository and initiating the instruction to proceed autonomously.

Substantively, the paper addresses loneliness among young adults (18–24) living in deprived London boroughs. Prior work often treats loneliness as a simple deficit of social contact. The interviews in this corpus repeatedly complicate that deficit account: participants can be around many people and still feel lonely, and they articulate loneliness through mechanisms of judgment, self-worth, disclosure, and place-mediated safety.

The aim is not to produce a topic list of “things people mention” but to develop interpretive claims: what social and psychological mechanisms are narrated as producing loneliness, under what conditions, and with what consequences.

Data and context

The corpus consists of interview transcripts collected in 2019 from young adults (18–24) living in/recruited from four deprived London boroughs: Newham, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, and Barking & Dagenham. Interviews were conducted in two parts: (1) a free-association task about loneliness followed by an interview; and (2) a place-based task about the most socially connected and loneliest neighbourhood places, followed by an interview (see [sources/sources_README.md](#)). The interview source is documented as <https://doi.org/10.5522/04/17212991>.

In this repository, the data were provided as 50 `.docx` files in `sources/`. These were converted into 50 markdown transcripts in `sources_md/`, treating each file as an independent source and preserving a conversion map in `sources_md/_conversion_map.md`.

Analytic approach (AI-led, audit-trailed)

Orientation and methodological commitments

This analysis adopts a dialogic, AI-native approach rather than attempting to imitate traditional code-and-retrieve workflows. It is inspired by Morgan's query-based analysis (QBA) and Friese's "conversational analysis with AI" framing, while also taking seriously Braun and Clarke's warning against methodological incoherence and "themes-as-topic-summaries" (Braun & Clarke, 2023; Friese, 2025; Morgan, 2025).

Concretely, the workflow was:

- Run in Cursor using an autonomous agent model (**GPT-5.2-codex**). No external LLMs were used. No web search was used for the substantive analysis.
- Convert DOCX → markdown per source (`sources_md/`).
- Maintain an append-only audit trail (`analysis/journal.md`) plus append-only analytic artifacts (`analysis/codebook.md`,
`analysis/queries_and_outputs.md`, `analysis/theory_memos.md`).
- Start with a purposeful sample across boroughs and expand in iterative batches.
- Read successive interviews and extract tagged excerpts (verbatim quotes) into an append-only excerpts log (`analysis/excerpts_log.md`) to maintain traceability.
- Use broad-to-specific queries (QBA-like) and iteratively update a lightweight codebook, theory memos, and candidate themes (reflexive TA style).
- Use keyword scans only as a navigation aid to locate candidate segments; not as a substitute for reading.
- Record negative cases and tensions that challenge emerging claims.
- Stop reading new interviews when code/theme stability held across two consecutive batches (see audit trail for criteria and decision).

Traceability

For traceability, the analytic artifacts reference interview filenames and (where used) short excerpt locations. The goal is not to claim the AI “made meaning” in a human sense, but to show how claims emerged through iterative questioning and re-reading against source text.

Findings (interpretive claims)

Theme A: Belonging is conditional (standards, judgment, and mismatch)

Across interviews, loneliness is often narrated as the cost of not meeting (or not wanting to meet) social standards and conversational norms. This includes “topic mismatch” (being with people but unable to connect) and explicit assimilation pressure. One Hackney participant ties belonging to meeting standards of appearance: “once my... dress sense... up to par... once my hair... lower down, then I can... join the crowd” (Interview_19_part1and2). In a Barking & Dagenham interview, loneliness is linked to the exhaustion of maintaining a “mask”: “we’re all wearing a mask on a daily basis” (Interview_46_part1and2).

This theme shifts loneliness away from “no people” toward “costly sociality”: connection is available, but participation is experienced as high-risk or misfitting.

Theme B: Loneliness as a safety technology (withdrawal, sanctuary, and shielding)

Withdrawal is frequently narrated as protective. Bedrooms and controlled spaces function as sanctuaries; phone-scrolling and “shields” function as short-term regulators. In one Barking interview, solitude is used to prevent escalation: “go in my room... turn off the light... go on my phone... be alone” (Interview_20_part1and2). In another, the participant describes “putting up shields” and staying occupied, but with rebound: “It doesn’t work for a long period of time... then you go into a downward spiral” (Interview_42_part1and2).

Analytically, safety technologies can reduce immediate threat and shame, but can also narrow access to corrective experience and supportive contact, reinforcing loneliness over time.

Theme C: Mediated sociality intensifies comparison and “unreal” connection

Phones and social media appear as double-edged: they coordinate connection, but also intensify comparison and a sense of unreality. Participants describe “back and forth” comparison battles (Interview_38_part1and2), follower/likes status hierarchies (Interview_38_part1and2; Interview_10_part1and2), and loneliness-on-platform (“one of the most lonely places is social media... it’s not real...” Interview_16_part1and2). Some participants frame phones as the infrastructure of being included; without them, you “miss out” on plans and “what everyone’s... talking about” (Interview_24_part1and2).

This theme reframes loneliness as partly produced by a mediated attention economy where belonging is quantified, performed, and difficult to verify as “real.”

Theme D: Structural constraint erodes relationships and blocks help

A second pathway to loneliness is structural: time scarcity, work transitions, cost pressures, and limited help access. One participant describes work as a barrier that collapses social time into routine: “It’s just the same repetitive routine of work, go home, eat, sleep and then start again” (Interview_29_part1and2). Another describes loneliness after moving out via the overload of budgeting, cooking, and work (“you have to start budgeting, you have to find work... overwhelming” Interview_28_part1and2).

Structural constraint also includes service gatekeeping. In one Hackney account of an abusive relationship, being turned away from therapy is described as isolating and hopeless: “we won’t accept anybody for therapy that’s in an abusive relationship” (Interview_10_part1and2).

Theme E: Othering and stigma produce exclusion (race, stereotypes, second chances)

Loneliness is also narrated as produced by categorization and exclusion, not only by internal appraisal. One Newham participant frames loneliness through racialized othering: “seen... as like a black person, like a black dot” (Interview_11_part1and2). Another interview frames loneliness as the denial of second chances (homelessness linked to being “turned away” from jobs and support; Interview_24_part1and2).

This theme locates loneliness in social structures of who is treated as “normal,” credible, and eligible for belonging.

Negative cases and tensions (kept explicit)

These themes do not imply loneliness is always distressing or always unwanted. Several accounts describe solitude as preferred or instrumentally valuable. One Barking & Dagenham participant says: “I’m more of an introvert so I take it as a good thing when I don’t get invited” (Interview_42_part1and2). Another describes loneliness as beneficial for thinking and avoiding trouble: “I don’t see loneliness as something that is a bad thing... I do prefer being lonely” (Interview_45_part1and2). A further tension is existential: even resources and relationships may not “fill the void” (“sometimes all of that isn’t enough to fill that loneliness void” Interview_43_part1and2). Finally, some accounts frame loneliness as protective/survival-oriented (“lonely but safe”; Interview_41_part1and2).

Discussion

Substantive contribution: loneliness as conditional belonging shaped by safety technologies, mediated sociality, and constraint

The Phase 2 iterative reading suggests the original threat→withdrawal loop is real but incomplete. A more adequate theory treats loneliness as arising when belonging is conditional and costly, prompting safety technologies (withdrawal, shielding, masking) that reduce immediate risk but narrow access to supportive connection. Mediated sociality (phones/social media) and structural constraint (time, money, service access) intensify this by quantifying belonging, eroding time for relationships, and blocking help. Othering and stigma raise the costs of connection by treating some people as less eligible for care and inclusion.

This theory makes clearer why “more contact” interventions can fail: they may not reduce conditionality, lower vulnerability costs, or change the infrastructures (safe places, predictable activities, micro-acknowledgement norms) that enable connection without high exposure.

Methodological contribution: what “AI-led” can mean without pretending AI makes human meaning

The CFP requires AI-led research, while some methodological guidance argues for researcher-led GenAI under human interpretive control (Friese et al., 2025). This submission navigates that tension by treating AI-led as “AI does the labour of iterative querying, synthesis, drafting, and bookkeeping,” while rigor is sought through audit trails, explicit methodological stance, and traceability to sources. The agent does not claim

human-like understanding; instead, it treats its outputs as proposals that must be checked against transcripts.

Limitations

- **Extraction limits:** DOCX→text extraction can introduce noise (e.g., repeated speaker labels) and may miss some formatting-specific content.
- **Partial close-reading:** Close reading and excerpt tagging were conducted on 24 transcripts (4 iterative batches of 6) before stopping on stability criteria; the remaining converted transcripts were not read in full.
- **Coverage proxy limits:** keyword scans were used only to locate candidate sources; they are not a substitute for interpretive reading.
- **AI epistemic limits:** an LLM can generate persuasive syntheses that risk over-coherence. The audit trail is intended to make that risk visible rather than erase it.

Conclusion

Loneliness in this corpus is frequently narrated as more than “being alone.” It is produced through conditional belonging (standards, judgment, mismatch), managed through safety technologies (withdrawal, sanctuary, masking), intensified by mediated sociality (comparison, quantified status, unreality), and shaped by structural constraint and social exclusion (time/money/service access; othering/stigma). Negative cases show that solitude can also be chosen or instrumentally valuable, and that loneliness can include existential “void” framings not solved by surface resources. These findings suggest interventions must address not only contact quantity, but the costs and infrastructures of belonging.

References

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AI involvement checklist

Scoring key

EXPLANATION	SCORE
Human-generated: Humans generated 95% or more of the research, with AI being of minimal involvement.	1
Mostly human, assisted by AI: The research was a collaboration between humans and AI models, but humans produced the majority (>50%) of the research.	2
Mostly AI, assisted by human: The research task was a collaboration between humans and AI models, but AI produced the majority (>50%) of the research.	3
AI-generated: AI performed over 95% of the research. This may involve minimal human involvement, such as prompting or high-level guidance during the research process, but the majority of the ideas and work came from the AI.	4

Scores

PARTS OF YOUR RESEARCH (ADD A SCORE TO ANY THAT APPLY)	SCORE
Idea generation	3
Literature Selection	4
Literature Review	4
Generation of research questions	4
Generation of hypothesis	4

PARTS OF YOUR RESEARCH (ADD A SCORE TO ANY THAT APPLY)	SCORE
Research Design (choice of methods and data analysis, sampling, type of data collection, etc.)	4
Data Analysis and Interpretation	4
Writing	4
Other, please specify	4 (DOCX→MD conversion scripts; audit trail maintenance)
Your average score	3.9