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The Relational Experience of Facebook

The Impact of Online Social Networking on Users' Relationships and Relational Selves

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The Relational Experience of Facebook: The Impact of Online Social Networking on Users' Relationships and Relational Selves

By Caitlin Allison BA MSc

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree of:

Doctor of Psychology (PsychD)

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Abstract

Increasing numbers of people worldwide engage in online social networking, most notably the site of Facebook, yet little is known about the impact of online social networking as a communication and networking tool on users' relational selves, skills and relationships. Counselling Psychology, with its emphasis on relational working with and understanding of clients, may need to develop a greater understanding of this area. This research, using a grounded theory methodology, is an exploratory study of the possible relational implications of online social networking. Semi-structured interviews (11 face to face and 3 via email) were conducted with 14 Facebook users to gather information about their experiences of the site and the impact of social networking on their relationships and relational selves. The findings, grounded in the participants' accounts, led to theory development about the complicated relational experiences of Facebook users, which challenge their psychological state. There are indications that the loss of separation between public and private life has implications for both clients and Counselling Psychologists. Recommendations for both practice and further research conclude the thesis.

Key Words*: Counselling Psychology, Online Social Networking, Facebook, Relational, Internet, Technology, Paranoid-Schizoid Position, Interpersonal, Intrapsychic, Psychodynamic*

Table of Contents

Abstract			2
1.0 Introduction			**6**
	1.1 Facebook: Historical Development		7
	1.2 Facebook: Usage		8
	1.3 Facebook Impact: Being Connected		9
	1.4 Facebook Impact: The Process of Adopting New Technology		10
	1.5 Implications for the work of Psychologists		13
	1.6 Personal versus Professional Concerns for Psychologists		15
	1.7 Research Aims		17
2.0 Review of Literature			**20**
Introduction			20
	2.1 The Internet Begins – Initial Findings of the Effects on Psychological Well-Being and Relating Before Online Social Networking Sites		21
		2.1i Internet Addiction	22
		2.1ii Positive Internet Use	23
	2.2 The Role of Anonymity		24
	2.3 An Issue of Stigma		26
	2.4 The Dawning Age of Facebook		27
	2.5 Difference Between Traditional Connections with Others Online and Online Social Networking		29
	2.6 Possible Psychological Impacts for Facebook Users and Motivation for Use		30
	2.7 What is Actually Happening on Facebook?: Fiction vs Fact		34
	2.8 What's Real, What's Virtually Real?		35
		2.8i Lack of Traditional Cues in General Cyberspace	37
		2.8ii Comparing and Contrasting Online versus Offline Life	39
	2.9 Who am I? Issues of Identity in a Changing Social Reality		42
		2.9i The Impact on Social Rules	44
		2.9ii Presentation of the Self on Facebook	45
		2.9iii Developing an Online Identity and Developmental Stages	48
	2.10 The Relational World According to Facebook		50
	2.11 Issues of Attachment		52
	2.12 Social Capital		53
	2.13 Information Overload – Leading to a Psychosocial Shift?		54
	2.14 The Power of Humanity Reigns?		56
	2.15 Relevance for Counselling Psychology		58
3.0 Methodology			**60**
Introduction			60
	3.1 The Research Context		60
	3.2 Rationale for Choosing Grounded Theory		61
	3.3 Rationale for Using Social Constructivist (Charmaz's) Grounded Theory		62
	3.4 Reflexivity		63
	3.5 Grounded Theory Procedure		64
		3.5i Sampling	64
		3.5ii Coding	65
		3.5iia Open Coding	65

		3.5iib Focus Coding/Constant Comparison	65
		3.5iic Core Categories	66
		3.5iid Selective Coding/Delimiting	67
	3.5iii Memoing		68
	3.5iv Saturation		68
	3.5v Integrating Literature		69
	3.5vi Theoretical Sorting/Write Up		70
3.6 Research Method for Present Study			72
	3.6i Recruitment		72
	3.6ii Description of Sample		73
	3.6iii Interview Process		74
3.7 Ethical Considerations			75
4.0 Results/Discussion			**77**
Introduction: The Research Experience			77
	4.0i Research Process relating to the GT Method		79
	4.0ii Data Collection Process		80
4.1 Method of Analysis			81
	4.1i Presentation of Results and Discussion		85
4.2 The Five Facebook Categories (Overview)			86
4.3 Category One - Key Category: Knowing (Assumption Making) vs Uncertainty			87
	4.3i I Know you More?		88
	4.3ii The Issue of Time		91
	4.3iii Findings in Relation to Previous Research		92
4.4 Sub Category One - Emotional Depth: Facebook is a Superficial Experience vs Facebook is Profound Emotional Experience			95
	4.4i Re-negotiating Emotions		99
	4.4ii Findings in Relation to Previous Research		101
4.5 Sub Category Two – Exposure: Great, we can see each other vs OMG, we can see each other			103
	4.5i Findings in Relation to Previous Research		110
4.6 Sub Category Three – Relational Need: I need you here, do you know what I mean? vs Who are you? What are doing here? Do I care about you?			113
	4.6i Frequency of Use		121
	4.6ii Findings in Relation to Previous Research		123
4.7 Sub Category Four – Addiction and Exploitation: I love using it! vs Is it using me? vs What is it?!			127
	4.7i Commercial Considerations		128
	4.7ii It makes things easier		130
	4.7iii ...But is it that great?		131
	4.7iv Leaving Facebook		132
	4.7v Is it Addictive?		134
	4.7vi Facebook in Control All of the Time?		136
	4.7vii How Does Facebook Work?		137
	4.7viii What is It?!		138
	4.7ix Findings in Relation to Previous Research		139
4.8 The Grounded Theory – The Complicated Relational Experience of Facebook			143
4.9 Using the Internet and Social Networking in Psychological Practice			145
4.10 Implications for the Practice of Counselling Psychology – Blurred Boundaries – Personal vs Professional Societal Issues			147

	4.11 Reflection on the Process of the Research Itself		149
5.0 Evaluation and Transferability of Findings			**151**
	5.1 Evaluation of the Research Process		151
		5.1i Possible findings in relation to Psychodynamic Theory: Is Facebook a Good Enough Mother?	154
	5.2 Contribution to Knowledge and Implications for the Practice of Counselling Psychology		157
		5.2i Potential Relational Implications for Clients	158
		5.2ii Potential Professional Issues for Counselling Psychologists	159
		5.2iii Potential Implications for Therapeutic Relationships	161
	5.3 Evaluation of the Research Design and Methodology		161
		5.3i Time Issues	162
		5.3ii Participants/Study Size	163
		5.3iii Subjectivity	164
		5.3iv Email Interviewing	164
		5.3v Limitations of the Grounded Theory Method	165
	5.4 Suggestions for Further Research		166
6.0 Conclusion			**174**
Reference List			**179**
Appendix			**A1**
	1	Participant Recruitment Information	A2
	2	Recruitment Poster	A6
	3	Participant Consent Form	A8
	4	Participant Debriefing Form	A11
	5	Expanded Ethical Considerations	A15
	6	Example Face-to-Face Interview	A20
	7	Example Email Interview	A49
	8	Facebook Glossary of Terms	A58
	9	Key Themes Table	A63
	10	Theme Occurrence Table	A67

1.0 Introduction

With the dawn of the new century, Web 2.0 emerged, a phrase used to describe the increased levels of interactive and user-driven behaviour occurring online (Baym, 2010). Online Social Networking has been argued to have begun in 1997 with the launch of a site called SixDegrees.com. The site "allowed users to create profiles, list their friends and, beginning in 1998, surf the Friends list" (boyd and Ellison, 2007, 214). This networking tool, arguably basic by today's standards, nevertheless paved the way for social networking to become the central fixture in Web 2.0 applications as well as part of the daily routine in many individuals' lives.

Social networking sites have a global audience, attracting many hundreds of millions of users everyday. Of these sites, Facebook is currently the most popular, with over 800 million users, of whom more than half log on everyday (according to Facebook.com statistics, retrieved November 2011). Online social networking is a tool that provides its users with increasing levels of interaction with one another. Notably, there is very limited available research on the relational impact and psychological implications of this technology. This research aims to explore and uncover potential issues regarding this relatively new medium and to investigate its relational impact from the perspective of Counselling Psychology. Of the many branches of psychology, Counselling Psychology can be argued to be well suited to explore the relational impacts of Online Social Networking Sites (OSNS) due to the relational focus of training and its central guiding principles. This chapter describes the history of Facebook use since its inception in 2004, explains the procedure of joining, the expanding use of Facebook and its potential impact on individual and the wider social group, as indicated by early research studies. The

conclusion sums up the findings from early research, examining personal and professional boundaries and implications for Counselling Psychology (CP) and includes an outline of the aims of the current study.

1.1 Facebook: Historical Development

Facebook was created in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, a Harvard student looking to expand the Harvard students' 'facebook', which allowed students to browse and see each others' photographs (Kirkpatrick, 2010). As Zuckerberg is recorded as stating:

> Our project just started off as a way to help people share more at Harvard… so people could see more of what's going on at school. I wanted to make it so I could get access to information about anyone, and anyone could share anything that they wanted to.
>
> (Kirkpatrick, 2010, 29)

To join the original Facebook (or 'thefacebook', as it was then called), users needed to have a Harvard university email address. Facebook's popularity was immense and was soon expanded outside Harvard to include other universities, the rule remaining that at each university where Facebook was rolled out, membership was limited to those having email accounts for their respective university. . boyd and Ellison (2007, 218) reflect on this requirement of the early Facebook as: "a requirement that kept the site relatively closed and contributed to users' perceptions of the site as an intimate, private community". This early notion of Facebook as a close-knit community has evaporated at a significant rate. While its roots lie in the United States, Facebook statistics (January

2012) indicate that some 80 per cent of Facebook users are outside the United States. Furthermore, Facebook is not just used by young people; people of all ages are joining in huge numbers (Giles, 2010). It is clear that Facebook and online social networking engage a diverse audience: it is pervasive, consistently expanding and shows little evidence of disappearing anytime soon. However, little is known or understood regarding some key psychological issues relating to its use – not least, about the impact on users' relationships and relational selves (Nosko, Wood and Molema, 2010).

1.2 Facebook: Usage(see also Glossary of Facebook Terms, Appendix 8)

Facebook is designed around the concept of various networks that interweave its users. Each user typically holds membership with one or more categories (i.e. geographical location, a place of work, school, etc.). There are then various privacy settings, which allow a user to disclose varying degrees of information either to their category of network membership (i.e. everyone connected to a workplace network), or to restrict this further to "friends" or "friends of friends". If a user does not employ privacy settings, all content is available to be seen by any user of Facebook. Once logged on to Facebook, users can then search for others by name (friends, colleagues, acquaintances, strangers) and then send a request for these individuals to be "friends". All friends are generally then available to be seen on a user's profile under their "friend's list". Each profile has a private message inbox, as well as a public venue for messages called "the wall". Users can also upload photographs, describe their education, employment, religious views, purpose for being on Facebook, relationship status and a whole host of other activities and interests, which are all displayed on their profile page. Also common on Facebook is

the creation of “groups”, which users create, join or invite others to join. This activity helps users to represent their interests, as well as further adding to their “identity” as a user.

1.3 Facebook Impact: Being Connected

What is the impact of this online gathering, communicating and sharing? As Baym (2010) states in her book *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*:

> many online groups develop a strong sense of group membership. They serve as bases for the creation of new relationships as people from multiple locations gather synchronously or asynchronously to discuss topics of shared interest, role play, or just hang out. (72)

Users are increasingly engaging in this online “sharing” and relating with others. As a result, major changes are occurring. Not least, what was once private or unknown is now becoming publicly available, and is in fact broadcasted in real time for all to see.

Prensky (2001) has explored this shift in social forum from offline to online, and argues that this technology immediately divides users into two categories: the “Digital Natives” and the “Digital Immigrants”. The “Natives” are those who have been and continue to be born into a world where the internet is omnipresent and which is engaged with and “learnt” as a matter of course alongside “offline” development. The “Immigrants” are those for whom this technology has not always been a reality. They have needed to verse themselves and learn this “language” in order to converse effectively with the “Natives” (Prensky, 2001). In relation to the impact of this technology, these two categories perhaps suggest different psychological implications and with constant change

occurring in the use, language and culture of online relating, it is imperative that psychologists keep appraised of this changing relational world (for both "Natives" and "Immigrants"), as well as how they locate and manage themselves (personally and professionally) in a networked society. As highlighted by Levahot, Barnett and Powers (2010, 161):

> with each passing day the "language" of the Digital Natives becomes more a part of our culture and how individuals communicate and relate to each other. Therefore, it becomes increasingly important to study and understand how these media are being used by psychologists, those training to become psychologists and those who we provide clinical services.

1.4 Facebook Impact: The Process of Adopting New Technology

The popular public notion of the internet has moved from a hobby and activity reserved for 'geeks' and 'lonely people' hiding behind anonymous aliases to an entity where, through Online Social Networking Sites (OSNSs), millions meet and engage using mostly their own "offline" identities online (Giles, 2010).

The invention of the internet, and specifically online social networking, has been met with a combination of optimism, confusion and concern (Baym, 2010). Research has followed within the same vein, with the popular media also reporting a great deal on the potential negative impact of people's engagement within these new means of communication.

This sense of confusion and uncertainty about a new communication construct in society is not unique to the internet. Historically there has been a tendency for new innovations

to be treated both as a dangerous entity, as well as a symbol of hope for possible better things to come (Baym, 2010). Parks and Floyd remark on the work of Marvin (1987) and Wellman (1979) expressing the view that "these conflicting visions… reflect long-running, historical debates about the nature of modernity and the social effects of changes in communication" (Parks and Floyd, 1996, 86).

There are many potential issues thrown up by the adoption of this new form of communication, specifically with regard to psychological well-being. The extent of use, and the tendency for continuous access, have both sociological and psychological implications, as well as implications for privacy (Baym, 2010). A deep exploration of the sociological constructions of technology lies outside the remit of this current study, however, it feels prudent to state that a technological determinist assumption (that this technology is happening to us), rather than a more social constructivist assumption (e.g. it is occurring amongst us, as a part of a dialogue between us and "it") – allows us to put our perceptions of the new technology in context. In lieu of arguments favouring technological determinism, Sir Tim Berners-Lee, the creator of the World Wide Web, maintained that the internet was always more of a social creation than a technological one: the prevailing goal being to connect people and to allow for a greater amount of collaboration (Berners-Lee, 1999). Katz and Rice (2002) described a "syntopian perspective" which sees the internet and associated technologies as simultaneously enabling and disabling, suggesting that it is a love/hate relationship, and that the ultimate need for users and society alike is to tolerate their feelings of ambivalence.

There are suggestions that the role of OSNSs will change rapidly. Roblyer and colleagues (2010) have explored perceptions of Facebook, but suggested that their study may only

be a brief snap-shot in time. They muse that "as the rapid evolution in societal perceptions and uses of the internet has shown in the last decade, attitudes toward technologies tend to change over time" (Roblyer et al., 2010, 138).

The perception that our connection to OSNSs is constantly changing and adapting, and the lack of a solid understanding about the "whats", "hows" and "whys" of our usage, lead to confusion. We are also unsure how our own personal use is impacting upon us, let alone a more generalised understanding about the impact on society. Katz and Rice (2002) emphasized the need to tolerate one's own ambivalence. This is also implied within the work of Campbell, Cumming and Hughes (2006). In exploring internet use, they found that some participants felt that their usage was psychologically beneficial, but also reported feelings that internet usage was addictive.

> This apparent paradox may reflect a dissonance between introspective and extrospective evidence regarding internet use – I believe from my own experience that the internet is useful and helpful, but I believe from agencies such as the media that it can be harmful – or it may reflect an internal paradox whereby I simultaneously hold beliefs that the internet is "good for me" and "bad for me".
>
> (Campbell et al., 2006, 78)

Whenever a new technology appears which is seen to disrupt the "norm", there is initially a backlash against it before it becomes broadly accepted (Giles, 2010). The written word, the telephone, television and various other communication tools – all faced this sense of backlash in some quarters upon their emergence, and yet have now all become completely adapted and taken for granted in our everyday lives (Baym, 2010).

1.5 Implications for the work of Psychologists

An article in the professional BACP publication *Therapy Today* in 2008 questioned the lack of involvement of the psychotherapy profession in cyberspace and virtual worlds. In the article, Daniel (2008) challenged therapists to think about the reality of clients potentially presenting with dual lives, one offline and one online. He suggested that clients may present issues related to their virtual selves in therapeutic settings. The interaction between actual and virtual selves may be even more complicated on interactive cyberworlds such as Second Life, where clients may actually have two completely different lives. Daniel (2008) raises questions about what we really know of the online process and the psychological implications of such activities. Interestingly, he also explored how virtual worlds themselves can be therapeutic. The work of Suler (2004 a, b) has also suggested that virtual worlds can offer a safe environment for clients to test out new behaviours and means for expressing themselves. This sense of freedom may be especially relevant for those with physical or mental disabilities who are able to express themselves in a potentially more open and free manner (Daniel, 2008).

Barak (2005) has explored how psychological assessment and intervention have been occurring in online environments. It is argued that cyberspace can provide a liberating environment that is more fun, creative and thus a potentially better therapeutic space compared with offline environments (Whitty, 2003, 2008; Whitty and Carr, 2006). In exploring Winnicott's concept of "potential spaces", understood as a space between an internal conception of the self and the external world in which connections can be established, Whitty (2003, 349) writes:

> Cyberspace is perhaps a space somewhere outside the individual, but is still not the external world. The participants, the computers, the monitors, keyboards, mice, software… [as transitional objects] all occupy this potential space; this space between the "real individuals" and the "fantasy individuals"… the web might be conceptualised as a potential playground.

Whitty (2008) suggests that cyberspace may therefore provide a potentially psychologically beneficial space, particularly for those deemed lonely, shy, socially inept and socially anxious (Whitty and Carr, 2006). However, the concern about the ego strength of clients required to ensure healthy engagement and ability to distinguish reality from fiction has also been highlighted as a potential concern (Whitty, 2008; Daniel, 2008).

In considering cyberspace as a therapeutic space, Barak and Gluck-Ofri (2007) explore the implications of self-disclosure and reciprocity elicited in online settings, in relation to the potential for online therapeutic work. Their suggestion is that, in order to ensure a client's self-disclosure in online environments, a therapist must make their own disclosures. The issue and potential implications of increased therapist disclosure online will be further discussed in Section 1.6.

Nearly a decade ago, a panel consisting mainly of psychoanalysts met to explore the psychological impacts of computer-mediated communication (CMC), and the potential impacts on the therapeutic work conducted by psychological professionals (Hanlon, 2001). They suggest that psychological professionals need to begin to "understand the multidimensional meanings" (Hanlon, 2001, 567) inherent in this rapidly developing communicative technology. They proposed that online therapy would be inevitable, and

that “psychologists must be there to contribute expertise and understanding as the new technology unfolds” (Hanlon, 2001, 570). Seven years later, Daniel (2008) urged that the psychology of the online world, and the way that individuals communicate through it, constitutes an area urgently requiring further research. More recent research echoed that “it seems likely that technological changes may drastically affect the way clients and psychologists associate in the future” (Taylor, McMinn, Bufford and Chang, 2010, 157).

From the psychopathological perspective, the issue of internet addiction is becoming more prominent. The opening of a private internet addiction treatment centre in London (http://www.nightingalehospital.co.uk/services/addictions/technology-addiction/) is symptomatic of a growing concern, substantiated by the increasing demand for this type of specialised service. Whang, Lee and Chang (2003) highlighted the need for greater understanding of internet addiction. The formal establishment of a definition and diagnostic criteria for such an addiction is relevant to the work of Counselling and Clinical Psychologists, and could be extremely beneficial in our work. This may become increasingly relevant as society’s engagement and reliance with OSNS continue to expand.

1.6 Personal versus Professional Concerns for Psychologists

Beyond the scope of how the internet and OSNSs are affecting the wider society, psychologists themselves are not immune to the effects. Research is beginning to explore the professional versus personal “us” as psychological professionals within a world of online social networking (Lehavot, Barnett and Powers, 2010; Taylor, McMinn, Bufford and Chin, 2010): “Social networking sites allow for the possibility of unwanted personal information leaking into professional lives, which may impact psychologists’

relationships with colleagues, faculty, students and clients" (Lehavot et al., 2010, 160). Not so long ago, virtually all psychologists affirmed the need to be thoughtful and intentional when handling issues of self-disclosure (Schwartz, 1993). Current issues relating to information disclosure include such experiences as inappropriate pictures being seen by those for whom they were not intended, psychologists' receiving "friend" requests from clients, to the extreme of psychologists finding themselves matched with clients on online dating sites (Taylor et al., 2010). New thinking about, and a redefinition of, self disclosure for psychological therapists may well be called for. Pipes, Holstein and Aguirre (2005) have stated that in our networked age, the personal versus professional divide which psychologists have sought to keep as distinct and separate, will need to be explored and reconsidered. This process presents some significant ethical issues, issues that in many cases are being faced most by those with the least amount of experience (Taylor et al., 2010). The potential for Facebook to leak information and to take voluntary or at least predictable self-disclosure out of the hands of psychological professionals is becoming very clear (Lehavot et al., 2010). Fox (2005) observed that eight out of ten internet users reported that they searched for health-related information online, which included searches for information pertaining to specific doctors and other health-care professionals. This leaked information may impact upon the therapeutic relationship (Lehavot et al., 2010) which stands at the centre of Counselling Psychologists' work. As argued by Taylor et al. (2010, 154),

> contact with clients via the internet, whether intentional or not, can change the nature of a client–psychotherapist relationship. It is easy for a client to begin to

view the psychotherapist as a friend rather than a hired professional or expert once the client has knowledge of the psychotherapist's personal life.

Taylor et al. highlight that psychologists should not only to be very mindful of what they post online, but also what others may have posted about them (Zur, 2008). The frequently used approach of "Googling" someone to find out information is now commonplace, and psychologists may find that they do not have control over all references to themselves available in the online world. This highlights the degree to which psychologists may not be able to control what their clients know or can find out about them which indicates that greater understanding of the use and meaning attached to online information requires further examination, and certainly also suggests that this is an area which CP's and other psychologists cannot afford to ignore (Taylor et al., 2010).

1.7 Research Aims

Counselling Psychology is now operating in the age of social networking. This phenomenon is becoming ever more pervasive and there are many unanswered questions about what the impact of this form of relating might be having on users' relational selves. It is important for all psychologists, and especially Counselling Psychologists (who place a great emphasis on the significance of relational understanding in therapeutic work), to gain greater awareness of social networking tools and their potential impact. This research will explore the experiences of users who have accessed online social networking through Facebook. The key aims of the current research study are as follows:

1) To explore how the use of Facebook impacts on users, with particular reference to how use impacts upon relationship experiences and issues of relating;
2) To explore any themes regarding how users understand their use of and relationship to Facebook itself; and
3) To consider the relevance and applicability of these findings from the perspective of Counselling Psychology.

Consideration of the potential impact upon users of Facebook, and thus relevance for clinical practice, implications for training and future practice, are very important. Such research has been slow in materialising, especially in the UK, where perhaps the stereotypical national characteristic of the British "stiff upper lip" and the avoidance of discussing difficult feelings could even be relevant. Writing from a more sociological and psychosocial viewpoint, the now immortalised Second World War mantra of "Keep Calm, Carry On" has been massively utilised in a variety of forms in the UK over the last decade. It might be a coincidence, that the timing of this revisited message emerged alongside the changing social arena and mass availability of the internet, the "hyper-connectiveness", and all the uncertainty that this brings. Though it might be somewhat extreme to describe the current change and distress in society as resembling war-time, it does raise the possibility that Britons are intrinsically socialised to downplay their feelings of uncertainty – uncertainty that is all too apparent in the widespread and ever-growing use of online social networking. There has perhaps never been a new technology or communication tool that has expanded and covered the globe with such rapidity. It is the researcher's strong conviction that CP's and other psychologists must not be left behind. Conversely, psychologists should be precisely those professionals in society who are very well placed to assist with greater understanding of the psychological aspects of this evolving human-communication tool and its burgeoning use. In this flurry of cyberspace and changing relational environments, Counselling Psychologists are well situated to

explore this phenomenon. This study may contribute to showing that the profession needs to become as well versed as possible in this field, in order to support ourselves, clients and society at large with this rapidly changing social and relational medium.

2.0 Review of Literature

Introduction

Since the creation of computers, the internet and World Wide Web researchers have been seeking to explore the potential impact that this new communication medium presents to individuals. We are still at a relatively early stage in what is often represented as an "information overload" phase of increased communication (Katz and Aakhus, 2002; Baym, 2010). Researchers from a myriad of disciplines are struggling to keep up with the sheer rapidity of innovation and change.

The review of literature was directed by the emergent themes that became apparent throughout the data collection and analysis in accordance with the grounded theory methodology adopted (See Section 3.5v). This chapter begins by exploring psychological and relational aspects of the experiences of users online and how this experience online has evolved throughout the digital age. All online spaces are by no means equal or identical, but the exploration of the range of evolving online spaces provides a greater overall perspective on users' developing online relational experience. This was led by a general theme within interviews of participants displaying definite feelings about communicating through online spaces. It was felt that some exploration into the history of how general internet usage has developed with regard to psychological and relational aspects is important to give context to the current and specific use of Facebook. The review will then examine more specific psychological issues that have been examined in relation to the use of Facebook. The motivations and possible driving factors for users' use of Facebook and levels of disclosure will be explored. Research which explores the way in which users choose to present themselves within OSNSs, as well as comparisons

between online and offline settings, will also be examined, as this was a theme commonly raised by participants. This leads to speculation surrounding a possible changing sense of self and identity. This review will also consider potential features of Facebook's design that may be relevant to users' relational worlds. Finally, the review considers what it could mean to incorporate a more integrated approach and utilise aspects of online social networking within a clinical context.

2.1 The Internet Begins

Initial Findings on the Effects on Psychological Well-Being and Relating before Online Social Networking Sites

The proposition that internet usage may contribute to possible ill-effects on mental health is one that is equally present in popular media coverage and in research. Since the inception of the internet, discussions of its impact on humankind have included widespread divisions of opinion. On one hand it has been suggested that the internet is only capable of providing, at best, impersonal and shallow relationships, and at worst, that hostile and psychologically damaging relationships are to be expected (Parks and Floyd, 1996). On the other hand, it is argued that the internet provides a whole new world of opportunities (Parks and Floyd, 1996; Suler, 2004a). Kraut et al. (1998) examined the supposed paradox of the internet as a social technology that reduces social involvement and found a correlation between the amount of time spent online and reported feelings of loneliness and depression. The findings indicated that spending time on the internet resulted in less time spent engaging with "real human beings" and that this impacted negatively on psychological well-being (Kraut et al., 1996). Nie and Erbring

(2000) corroborated this claim that the internet has indeed decreased levels of interaction with "real people". They claimed that the more time spent on the internet, the greater the likelihood that users would experience the deterioration of their social relationships. Brenner (1997) took a slightly more diplomatic approach when reflecting on his own similar findings. He indicated that those using the internet regularly were also experiencing a disruption to various aspects of their lifestyles as a result of their use (such as missing sleep, having poor time management, skipping meals, etc.). Brenner felt that it was clear that the internet was a compelling medium. When seen as a hobby, like other possible hobbies, which demand time, concentration and inevitable disruption to everyday life, internet use need not necessarily be seen as pathological (Brenner, 1997). One wonders whether the difference in opinion about similar findings represents more about researchers' individual beliefs based on their own interpretations of their findings.

2.1i Internet Addiction

There have been others who do believe that the impact of "over use" can result in a diagnosis of "internet addict" (or IA) (Young, 1996; Beard and Wolf, 2001; Whang et al., 2003). Whang et al. (2003) found that those deemed to be IA's reported higher degrees of loneliness, depressed mood and compulsivity than those not defined as addicted. Mottram and Fleming (2009) also report levels of impulsivity in those excessively using the internet. Whang et al.'s (2003) findings indicated a greater tendency for those defined as addicts to attempt more escape from reality behaviour online than those defined as non-addicts. Young (1996) reported that approximately 5–10 per cent of the total population may be regarded as an IA. A need for further understanding, and

perhaps a clinical definition of what it means to be "addicted" to the internet, seems important for the work of CP's and other psychologists; and though not the direct focus of this study, this highlights the comparative ignorance with which we are working in this area. As there are only vague and varied descriptions of what internet addiction is, and even fewer guidelines about how to identify and treat this increasingly visible issue, this would suggest that much more understanding is required in this area.

2.1ii Positive Internet Use

However, the internet has also been argued to be therapeutically beneficial, with Shaw and Gant (2002) observing that the use of online chat over a 4–8 week period could significantly decrease levels of depression and loneliness, whilst also providing perceived experiences of social support and self-esteem. More recently, a study by Sum et al. (2008) examined the use of the internet in older adults. They found that greater usage of the internet for communication with friends and family was associated with lower levels of social loneliness. Conversely, Sum and colleagues also found that greater use of the internet for communication with new connections, or those unknown in a face-to-face context to the user, were associated with greater levels of loneliness.

Research focusing on "online communities" such as chat rooms, where people with like-minded interests or concerns can share issues, suggests that computer-mediated communication (CMC) can facilitate emotional disclosure (Bargh and McKenna, 2004; Barak et al., 2008). Being a member of a group that offers support to each other enables

group members to feel attached to the group, and provides a sense of belonging and solidarity (Orgad, 2005; van Uden-Kraan, et al., 2008 in Tang, 2009).

2.2 The Role of Anonymity

At the beginning of internet use (and the use of chat rooms, and in other forums in which people met and related to one another online), the focus was upon anonymity. Perhaps the initial attraction to the internet was the anonymity that it offered (Mckenna and Bargh, 2000). Joinson (1998, 2001a, b) examined the effects of this anonymity provided by the internet, and the greater levels of freedom individuals experienced online. Others (Turkle, 1996a,b; McKenna and Bargh, 1998) explore how this anonymity allows interaction without the concern of (potentially perceived) limitations experienced in offline, face-to-face relationships. Suler (2004a) describes the impact succinctly as the "online disinhibition effect", proposing that within the behaviour of individuals engaging online, it was apparent that individuals became more free and open. The typical rules of face-to-face contact, and the social restrictions and inhibitions associated with this contact, were relaxed or dropped altogether in favour of more disinhibited behaviour. Tied in with the online disinhibition effect is the process of increased self-disclosure in online settings (Barak and Gluck-Ofri, 2007). As explored through more generalised research on the required conditions for self-disclosure and the need for reciprocity (Archer and Berg, 1987; Derlega, et al., 1993 in Barak and Gluck-Ofri, 2007), online meeting venues can provide a sense of an environment of trust. However, as noted by Barak and Gluck-Ofri: "… this 'protected environment' [online] and sense of privacy are only perceived as such and do not actually exist; these virtual features contribute to the subjective experience of a person in cyberspace and, consequently, to disclosing

personal, often intimate information" (2007, 408). Their work echoes the work of Ben-Ze'ev (2004), who explored interpersonal relations online. He proposed a unique quality in which relations indicate a combination of attachment and distancing components, which he described as "detattachment". As he describes:

> In online relationships, people are neither close, intimate friends nor complete strangers. Online relationships constitute a unique kind of relationship – termed "detached attachment" or… "detattachment" that includes opposing features whose presence in offline relationships would be paradoxical.
>
> (Ben-Ze'ev, 2004, 55)

Issues of attachment will be further discussed in Section 2.11.

Further exploration of the effects of anonymity online indicate that there is a broad sense of freedom within the protection of not being seen; being able to log off and change screen names without having to face the consequences of disclosures gone wrong (Baym, 2010). It would seem, even when communicating with those known to us online, that the ability to be more honest, perhaps due to not needing to face the other (and their reaction), lends itself to greater levels of honesty (Baym, 2010). As discovered by Rainie et al. (2000) within the Pew Internet and American Life Project, Americans reported greater levels of honesty with loved ones through email than face-to-face meetings. Rainie et al. (2000) also found that internet users were more likely to be involved socially than non-users.

2.3 An Issue of Stigma?

There is an increasing evidence base that online relating has a positive influence on our social and psychological well-being. However, Anderson (2005) found that our societal perception of online interpersonal relationships, and romantic relationships in particular, still carries an element of stigma. As she argued: "attitudes overall are not favourable, and range from those people who perceive online relationships as tenuous connections formed by desperate people embarking on their last attempt at a romantic interlude..." (Anderson, 2005, 521). Anderson postulates that previous research supports the notion that computer-mediated communication (CMC) was impersonal by nature, and therefore inappropriate for interpersonal relations. Sensales and Greenfield (1995) sought to discover attitudes towards computers, science and technology, discovering negative attributions to computers concerning individual psychological and social-psychological issues. Wildermuth (2004) found that those not involved in online relationships held very strong, negative views of those involved in online relating, and were very likely to share these views with friends and family. Key issues arising about the forming of relationships online were discovered by researchers to focus around concerns that online others would misrepresent themselves (Frankel and Sang, 1999; Cornwall and Lundgren, 2001; Ramirez et al., 2002). Concerns revolved around the lack of social cues. Without physical presence, the assumption was made that with the freedom for deception, not only will deception occur, but observers were much less likely to detect the deception online compared with face-to-face settings (Frankel and Sang, 1999).

Stigma findings in the 1990s might have been related to the fact that fewer people utilised the internet at this time. A social perception based on the unknown? However,

the present research seeks to explore the nature and impact of online social networking sites on users' relationships and relational selves which arguably provide a very different means of interaction for users compared with the more traditional media in which interaction first occurred through the internet. Indeed, Wilson, Fornaiser and White (2010) found that motivations and personality traits impact much differently on online social networking use than on regular internet use.

2.4 The Dawning Age of Facebook

Even with millions logged on, a few years ago there was very little empirical research focused on this medium; Facebook and other similar social networking sites appeared to initially be considered as a phenomenon of the young. Increasingly over the past few months, and with Facebook's membership currently topping 800 million worldwide and continuing to grow, it would seem that the world is starting to take notice. However, much of the presently available research regarding the use of Facebook does tend to reflect its University campus beginnings. Findings initially indicated (Lenhart and Madden, 2007; Steinfield, Ellison and Lampe, 2008) that amongst those attending University, membership and regular usage of Facebook (in the US) is upwards of 90 per cent. With even more recent studies indicating this could be even higher (up to 95 per cent) and with 78 per cent accessing Facebook at least twice each day (Sheldon, Abad and Hinsch, 2011). However, despite Facebook research tending to focus on young people, the average age of all Facebook users is 38, with nearly 40 per cent of all users being over 35 (Facebook Statistics, March, 2012).

Why have so many people logged on to Facebook? Early research by McKenna, Green and Glenson (2002) indicated that interactions made possible by online social networking systems (OSNS) might have resulted in stronger relationships than were possible through face-to-face approaches. Online settings had been found to promote a greater sense of openness and therefore, it was proposed that OSNS's in particular had a different set of rules that governed interactions in these settings. Tidwell and Walther (2002) observed that the potential for increased self-disclosure in these settings led to a greater use of more personal questions with much deeper levels of interaction being achieved. Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008) found that several key reasons for belonging could be discerned, including: "to keep in touch with old friends", "to keep in touch with current friends", "to post/look at pictures", "to make new friends" (which tend to be friends of friends) and "to locate old friends".

Sheldon (2008) observed that those who experienced feelings of anxiety and fears about interacting in face-to-face settings used Facebook to pass time and feel less lonely. Valkenburg, Peter and Schouten's (2006) review of Facebook use amongst adolescents found that positive feedback received from other users on one's profile enhanced social self-esteem and well-being. A further study examining college students' use of Facebook reported that users desired responses to their posted content from other users as a form of self-validation, and that checking Facebook daily and throughout the day was firmly a part of users' daily routines (Pempek, Yermolayeva and Calvert, 2009).

2.5 Differences between Traditional Connections with others Online and Online Social Networking

A developing area of interest within OSNSs is that traditionally, online interactions tended to be formed online and then might develop into offline relationships (McKenna et al., 2002). The days of the internet mostly being used for the anonymity it provided seem to be behind us (Jones and Fox, 2009). Facebook thus presents a different trend: its users and their connections typically begin offline and then develop an online connection through Facebook as well. Jones and Fox (2009) found that almost all internet users report that their primary purpose of going online is to communicate, and Facebook provides the medium for socialising with those already known, and also for expanding circles of friends (Jones and Fox, 2009). With Facebook and other OSNSs, the potential for ever-expanding social networks is immense (Wu and Chiou, 2009). Through Facebook's design, the ability to disseminate information to all friends at once has been observed to benefit younger users (Pempek et al., 2009). These studies do not uncover how users actually relate to their Facebook "friends", focussing instead on users' perceived feelings that "Facebook makes interacting easier"; but this potentially misses the issue of how they actually relate to the others linked as their "friends". However, generally, within the lives of young adults, being connected to their social group and the need for popularity are key issues (Christofides, Muise and Desmarais, 2009). There is therefore an implied importance of being seen on Facebook, but how users' actually engage with the site and their friends is less apparent.

Despite Facebook's enormous popularity, research has not yet been forthcoming that matches its power and influence. A heavy focus on research into issues of privacy and

identity presentation as noted by previous researchers (Ellison et al., 2007) might reflect concerns and issues raised in the popular media. This appears to show a leaning towards reporting unusual one-off stories (Bentham, 2010; Leith, 2010; Steele, 2010a; Attewill, 2009; Hartley, 2009; Perrie, 2009). However, most users use Facebook to keep in contact with those already known to them or known through connections. They list information about themselves in order to make themselves easier to find by those previously known to them. Consequently, privacy is not a pressing issue (Ross et al., 2009). Fogel and Nehmad (2009) observed that in comparison to other OSNSs, Facebook provides a greater sense of trust amongst its users. Furthermore, they found that compared with those without social networking profiles, OSNer's had significantly greater risk-taking attitudes (Fogel and Nehmad, 2009), thus suggesting that any perceived risk is perhaps not being considered as it may be for others who are more cautious.

2.6 Possible Psychological Impacts for Facebook Users and Motivation for Use

The deviation away from anonymity and the dynamic inherent in interpersonal engagement online led researchers to explore personality traits of users of OSNSs. Narcissism as depicted on social networking sites was a connection highly publicised by media, receiving a lot of attention and speculation (Baldwin and Strolman, 2007; Orlet, 2007; Buffardi and Campbell, 2007; Vaidhyanathan, 2006). A major concern was that these sites appeared to "offer a gateway for self-promotion via self-descriptions, vanity via photos, and large numbers of shallow relationships (friends are counted – sometimes reaching the thousands – and in some cases ranked), each of which is potentially linked to the trait of narcissism" (Buffardi and Campbell, 2007, 1303). Findings indicated that

OSNSs provided “fertile ground” for the kind of behaviour associated with the label of “narcissism”, and that social relationships established through “friend networks” could easily promote self-esteem. This perhaps also suggests that some users utilise Facebook to help meet their own needs, rather than necessarily using it as a tool for communication with others, a perspective that was missed in this research. Furthermore, Gonzales and Hancock (2011) identified how Facebook may promote self-esteem (through the freedom afforded by selective self-presentation), but that the process of comparing oneself to others, which is rampant on Facebook, can lead to reduced self-esteem.

A further interesting finding was that strangers viewing OSNS profile pages judged more narcissistic page owners to be more narcissistic (Buffardi and Campbell, 2007). This finding suggests that users are prone to making assumptions based on online material. A suggestion that was backed by research completed by Goel, Mason and Watts (2010) who found that Facebook users assume that their friends think the same as them, making this assumption without ever checking this with their “friends”. Young, Dutta and Dommety (2009) found that more generally speaking, content on Facebook profiles could reveal information about a user, even though this information was not explicitly expressed. Tom Tong, Van Der Heide and Langwell (2008) reported that Facebook users would make assumptions based on the number of friends held by other users; for instance, the tendency was that for those seen as having “too many” Facebook friends, the authenticity of this popularity was questioned. Young and colleagues suggested that there is a growing need for Psychologists to better understand the psychology of Facebook users, and that Facebook profiles could potentially reveal and hold a plethora

of psychological information (Young et al., 2009). However, research has also explored how Facebook provides an environment open to providing ambiguous scenes or information (Muise et al., 2009). The regular presence of this kind of information on Facebook would suggest a high potential for varied interpretations of information viewed through Facebook. As Muise et al. (2009) further found, the ambiguous nature of Facebook often left participants with strong emotional reactions based on real or imagined situations.

Previous research studies have explored and made successful significant connections between internet use and the personality traits of its users (Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2002; Landers and Lounsbury, 2006; Swickert et al., 2002). Kramer and Winter (2008) found that extroversion exerted a slight influence on online behaviour and relating, as well as self-efficacy being related to the way in which people present themselves on OSNS profiles. However, holding true to many avenues of research regarding the internet and the interpersonal and psychological aspects of our usage, seemingly contradictory results are evident. Ross and colleagues (2009) explored personality factors and motivations for using Facebook, and despite their expectations that clear trends would emerge, their results did not show that personality factors were influential in predicting the use of Facebook. This discrepancy may be, as explored by Correa et al. (2010), that the shift from anonymity to one's own identity being used pervasively on OSNS's has led to a change in motivations as well as in online interpersonal behaviour. This therefore suggests an even greater need for much more in-depth and up-to-date research on OSNSs.

Nosko, Wood and Molema (2010) highlight how little is known about online social networking sites, how they are used, and the potential implications for psychological knowledge and practice. They examine how the media highlights concerns about privacy and levels of disclosures on Facebook and how by design, Facebook and other similar OSNSs prompt and encourage personal disclosures. However, despite this focus on levels of disclosure, it would seem that users are not disclosing all that they could be. Nosko et al. (2010) further found that on average, users were choosing to display around 25 per cent of the possible information they could display to other users. However, again there exist inconsistent findings, for of the information that was disclosed by users, Nosko and colleagues (2010) observed that the disclosed items were randomly distributed between items that were deemed "safe" and those considered "unsafe". But there was a clear indication that those looking to "relate" (as indicated by their Facebook settings, i.e. listed as "looking for" friendship, relationship, etc.) presented with the highest level of self-disclosure, and unlike expected results within offline relating, there were no differences observed between level of disclosure and gender (Nosko et al., 2010).

Sheldon, Abad and Hinsch (2011) found that people lacking in relatedness go onto Facebook more as a coping strategy. Users looking for an increased sense of connection may feel this will be satisfied by spending time on the site, but the authors make clear that a person suffering in the offline social world will probably not solve their problems by constantly retreating to Facebook.

2.7 What is Actually Happening on Facebook? - Fiction versus Fact

The research earlier (Section 2.2) examined how anonymity in online environments led to a greater level of self-disclosure; what has also been explored is how different the experience and process of relating are believed to be in the relatively new online settings of OSNSs. Some research is beginning to address this shift, however. As Acquisti and Gross (2006, 1) clearly state: "one can not help but marvel at the nature, amount, and detail of the personal information some users provide". As summarised in Krasnova et al. (2010), initial insights into the motivating factors associated with disclosures made within OSNSs appear to be enjoyment (Sledgianowski and Kulviwat, 2008), self-presentation (boyd, 2007) and the ability to maintain social ties (Ellison et al., 2007). Hui et al. (2006) make a case that for some, perhaps the promise of saving time can motivate users to make self-disclosures. This finding was echoed by Hann et al. (2007) which conferred that users were willing to give up some privacy for the sake of convenience. However, these studies fail to address whether there might be other motivating factors that users describe as "convenience", but that instead reflect much more personal motivations. While Gibbs et al. (2006) argue that the intention to form new relationships is often connected with information disclosure. Christofides et al. (2009) report that "information disclosure increases the impression of trustworthiness and results in reciprocal personal disclosure on the part of the conversation partner" (342), thus indicating that the more users disclose to each other about themselves, the more an aura of trust is sustained.

Suggestions have been made throughout the media that OSNS profiles may be used to present idealised versions of oneself (Manago et al., 2008). However, in reality it is difficult to do, given the layout of OSNS, and especially due to the organisation and

design of Facebook. A study carried out by Back and colleagues (2010) indicated that users are not using their profiles to promote idealised virtual identities. On the contrary, Back et al. (2010) suggest that OSNSs may provide an "efficient medium for expressing and communicating real personality, which may help explain their popularity" (374). The issue of identity construction on Facebook will be explored in greater detail in Sections 2.9.

Sparked by further media coverage and general assumptions about how Facebook may be changing the nature of social relationships, Muise, Christofides and Desmarais (2009) examined the issue of jealousy on Facebook. They found that Facebook does seem to leave its users feeling more jealous, which in turn also increases the amount of time they spend on Facebook. The process is aptly described by the researchers and aided by a participant: "the open nature of Facebook gives people access to information about their partner that would not otherwise be accessible…. Participant: 'it turns people into nosey parkers… all of that personal information is totally unnecessary, but no one can help themselves'" (Muise et al., 2009, 443). The process perpetuates itself, as the more that is learnt through Facebook, the more a user feels the need to monitor another's profile and disclosure of information. Also highlighted by their research was the ease with which information can be taken out of context on Facebook (Muise et al., 2009).

2.8 What's Real, What's Virtually Real?

Through the exploration of literature relating to humankind's continuing and deepening involvement within the virtual world, it becomes apparent that there is a consistent

comparison between real and virtual worlds. As Baym (2010) has explored in her book, with new media comes new boundaries, and she asks, what does it mean to be real? As she eloquently states while reflecting on the work of Kenneth Gergen (2002) who describes our

> struggling with the "challenge of absent presence", worrying that too often we inhabit a "floating world" in which we engage primarily with non-present partners despite the presence of flesh-and-blood people in our physical location. We may be physically present in one space yet mentally and emotionally engaged elsewhere.
>
> (Baym 2010, 3)

Baym (2010, 50) further makes reference to her own work in 2002, which clearly indicated that social cues: "hear their voice", "see their reactions" and "vocal satisfaction" had been described by participants and suggested these qualities were important indicators of perceived levels of intimacy when interacting with another. Of course all of these elements are lost in the Facebook environment, thus suggesting that there needs to be significantly greater understanding of how this kind of relational environment actually impacts upon users. The next section will explore the literature related to this massive shift away from face-to-face (or 'body to body', as expressed by Fortunati, 2005) contact in questioning what our "default setting" now is for relating with others. While research is beginning to tap into the tip of the iceberg in terms of relating within online social networks and its psychological implications, we move closer to understanding what is really occurring in online vs offline environments.

2.8i Lack of Traditional Cues in General Cyberspace

One of the key concerns related to interactions and relating online has always been to cite concerns about a lack of visual and aural cues. Parks and Floyd (1996) explored the arguments against Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) vs Face-to-Face communication (f2f). The assumptions and theoretically backed views that were observed regarding communication without visual and aural cues was that this would lead to "impersonality, hostility and non-social orientation" (Parks and Floyd, 1996, 2). As further explored by Reynolds and Brannick (2009, 234), "one of the primary functions of non-verbal cues is to reduce psychological distance". However, internet communication, with fewer social cues, was initially accompanied by the hope that without certain social cues, there was potential for more equal, less discriminatory communication (Baym, 2010). In comparison to f2f and telephone interactions, CMC was seen as a lesser form of "the real thing" (Baym, 2010). However, Parks and Floyd (1996) also explored the potential for users engaging in cyber-relating to adapt to this setting, and to find or create the textual cues necessary when faced with settings which do not provide the usual cues. They ultimately concluded that "the important point… is not that CMC is unable to convey relational and personal information, but rather that it may take longer to do so (Parks and Floyd, 1996, 2). At the time of this study, completed by Parks and Floyd in the mid 1990s, the use of "smileys" to imitate facial expressions and other symbols used to express emotions and therefore appropriately named "emoticons" were the primary means of getting around the lack of visual and aural cues. However, on Facebook, a space that is very different from traditional cyberspace with pictures and videos being uploaded and/or links to various content being available and widely utilised by online

users to aid interpersonal interactions, it seems that ways around the necessities of conventional face-to-face communication are being further developed.

Back, Schmukle and Egloff (2008) suggest that whatever the setting, as long as the model for interpersonal perception are followed, that correct assumptions of others will be reached, by users adapting methods as necessary. However, this latter finding arguably ignores the potential psychological complexity of the Facebook environment, without taking into account how users actually relate through the site. Ellison, Heino and Gibbs (2006) uncover how certain cues relayed in an environment devoid of many traditional social cues may be utilised in online settings to a far greater extent than they would with f2f. Whitty (2008) presents a case that the lack of social cues in online settings in fact leads to more interpersonal communication; however, this leaves questions open about the psychological stability of this kind of communication.

In 1976, Short, Williams and Christie presented their Social Presence theory, a theory devised very near the beginning of computer-mediated communication (CMC), before the advent of the internet. Being one of the first theories of communication media, it is still widely referred to in this area of research. Social Presence can be defined as:

> the degree of salience (i.e., quality or state of being there) between two communicators using a communication medium… that communication media differ in their degree of social presence and that these differences play an important role in how people interact. (Lowenthal, 2009, 4)

As considered by Baym (2010), the theory seeks to explain a psychological phenomenon with regards to how 'interactants' perceive one another, and focuses on the perception of others as real and present. A lack of social presence is thus seen potentially as grounds for unsociable behaviour, permitted due to the lack of social cues keeping one "in line" (ibid.). Whitty (2007) found a greater possibility for stalking and harassing behaviour in online settings compared to f2f, given the lack of social cues and the perceived sense of being able to play "out of bounds", which also suggests the potential depth of the psychological impact of communicating in online settings, and potentially also in the realm of online social networking.

As further explored by Krasnova et al. (2010), the lack of f2f contact and other traditional cues may also lead to more negative uncertainty about other OSNS users: "Since users are unable to monitor other members on the network, they have to implicitly trust them not to abuse their personal information" (2010, 113). Furthermore, the sense of "virtual intimacy" thus created between users, perceiving themselves as similar to others, can thus lead to a sense of idealisation about their "audience" (Krasnova et al., 2010).

2.8ii Comparing and Contrasting Online Versus Offline Life

Ten years ago, research compared online versus offline engagements, highlighting the potential for psychological distance to be created between conversation partners by delays in response time. This thus led to an element of disjointedness between communicators (Tu, 2000; Silvester et al., 2000). In the Facebook age, users are plugged into the service at the workplace, home, cafés, gyms, anywhere where there is internet access, and more than 350 million users are also connected via mobile phones (Facebook

Statistics, January 2012); thus, users are seemingly permanently "connected". These days, an online communicator potentially never need be unavailable or miss out on an opportunity for an online interaction. This resulting sense of "being connected" may be related to findings that many users feel safer online than in face-to-face settings (Caplan, 2007). It may also arguably impact on the very nature of what it means to be, and identify oneself as, a user of Facebook. Mckenna, Greene and Gleason (2002) suggested that for isolated and/or lonely individuals, there was a greater sense of being able to express their "real self" more effectively online, than in face-to-face settings – suggesting that it is perhaps very difficult to generalise about the psychological beneficence or otherwise of these technologies. Caplan (2007) has called this POSI (Preference for Online Social Interaction) and explores the increased levels of confidence that can result for users. Findings from Scott, Mottarella and Lavooy (2006) indicated that individuals who struggle with intimacy in face-to-face relating often turn to online relating as an alternative. However, these online relationships generally do not provide the individual with higher levels of intimacy within the online relationship (ibid., 2006).

As explored by Walther et al. (2009), Walther and Parks's (2002) previous work proposed what they termed "the warranting principle", which suggests that "observers place greater credence in information about the personal characteristics and offline behaviours of others when the information cannot be easily manipulated by the person it describes" (229). As discussed by the authors, Facebook provides a unique setting in which users comment and display information about themselves; however, this content is also free to be commented upon by others, as well as others potentially providing additional information and content outside of the user's control (Walther et al., 2009). In a related

study Walther et al. (2008) observed that "externally generated information about a person affects evaluation of that person's persona, even though (and perhaps because) the target did not disclose the information" (Walther et al., 2009, 233). This therefore suggests that the actual design of Facebook, with personal information being on display, is highly significant from a psychological standpoint. Lampe, Ellison and Steinfield (2007, 1) describe Facebook further being utilised to "establish explicit links with other users, who are described as 'friends' by the system". As stated by Baym (2010, 145), "When friends in an [online] SNS can be strangers, admirers, confidants, co-workers, family, and a host of other relationship types, yet all be called the same thing on the site, it triggers inevitable confusion." It is unclear what the meaning of a "friend" on Facebook represents to users. While there may be some discrepancy in the definition of a "friend" offline amongst different individuals, online it seems that definitions are very blurred and unclear. This discrepancy, and its meaning within a relational and psychological context, is one that is often omitted within research relating to Facebook, and would repay more concerted investigation.

Within the work of sociologist Emile Durkheim, considered one of the architect's of modern social science, was a central focus upon how societies could maintain their integrity and coherence in the modern era. The significant impact of the process of "collective effervescence", as explored by Durkheim ([1912] 1976), was found to be occurring within groups of people who come together, becoming united, reinforcing each other and the particular feelings of the group. This very offline and "real world" experience was found to be occurring online by Tang (2009), observing that shared

experiences reflected and expressed through typed communication served to elicit a similar “collective effervescence”.

More recent evidence has suggested that offline relating patterns can be continued and supported on Facebook (Ledbetter et al., 2011; Wright and Li, 2011). Wright and Li explored how adolescents were similarly psychologically connected to online settings, and specifically Facebook, as they were to their offline worlds (2011). They found that adolescents’ use of Facebook supported and complemented their relational habits. However, whether their online relational habits are influenced by their offline habits, or whether their offline relational habits are instead being altered by their use of Facebook (i.e. the direction of causal influence), was a significant limitation of this research. For younger users, who have only ever known a world with Facebook, for example, it may be much harder meaningfully to compare their offline and online habits and behaviours. Considering whether their online behaviours impact their offline behaviour or vice versa and the possibly insurmountable difficulties involved in operationalising these variables in a mutually excluding yet valid way, would require specific thought.

2.9 Who am I? Issues of Identity in a Changing Social Reality

It has been stated that with the invention of Facebook has come a new social reality (Giles, 2010; boyd and Ellison, 2007). While a deep philosophical exploration of identity and the self online is beyond the remit of this study, initial understandings of who we become when we enter the online world have changed in a short space of time. A classic cartoon, amongst many that have fallen on to the pages of *The New Yorker* magazine,

appeared in 1993 involving two dogs: one sat at a computer exclaiming to the other "on the internet, nobody knows you're a dog" (Steiner, 1993). On Facebook, users are themselves, and this shift from anonymity to nonymity (the opposite of anonymity) has presented new issues in the study of our online identities, as well as our new social reality. As reflected upon by Baym (2010, 105), "scholars have noted that digital media, especially the internet, disrupt the notion held dear in many cultures that each body gets one self… leading to *disembodied identities* that exist only in actions and words." However, Baym also notes that Erving Goffman, a renowned sociologist heavily involved in the understanding of identity, had long argued that the self "plays multiple roles in everyday life and cannot be understood adequately as a single unified entity" (Baym, 2010, 106), a view that coheres with "post-modern" perspectives on the decentred or fragmented "self" (Levin, 1987). However, the internet and OSNSs may be pushing this understanding of reality further than Goffman's initial description. Todd Essig, a prominent American psychologist/psychoanalyst, presenting thoughts about the impact of this technology, urges that there is "a need to understand the broad impact, off-screen as well as on, of a new culture of simulation… a reconfiguration of what it means to be human… and how we experience ourselves in relation to other people" (Hanlon, 2001, 568).

Initial research indicated that users quickly discarded their offline selves in online relating (Turkle, 1995a), with users preferring to play-act at being someone else or acting out negative impulses (Zhao et al., 2008). However, more recent research has shown that users' offline selves carry over into online identities (Yurchisinm et al., 2005), and OSNSs such as Facebook aid this process. When aspects of an individual are known to others

offline it is referred to as nonymous identity. These offline-based online relationships are described by Zhao (2006) as "anchored relationships". Zhao et al. (2008, 1818) state that: "nonymity can be established even in a fully disembodied online environment through the use of, say, institutional email accounts which link a user to the account provider that will ultimately hold the individual responsible." Muise, Christofides and Desmarais (2009) question what impact this new social openness has and might lead to, maintaining that by design, Facebook is redefining what is public and what is private.

2.9i The Impact on Social Rules

In the purely face-to-face world, there were sets of social rules and norms that governed social life, and which were based on particular contexts (Goffman, 1969/1972; Hochschild, 1979). To navigate this social world, individuals would utilise "desirable fronts" (Goffman, 1969), or in other words, socially appropriate versions of ourselves. If one were to not respect these social norms and present oneself and one's feelings inappropriately in a specific context, there would then have been some kind of social sanction(s) levied upon the offender (Goffman, 1972; Hochschild, 1979). However, as has been previously explored (in Section 2.2 and 2.8i), in an online environment we feel much freer without some of the social barriers that keep us "in line" in face-to-face settings. What implication does this then have on our social reality, and what impact, subsequently, on our identities? Again, these questions are beyond the remit of this present study; however, they are nonetheless relevant considerations to hold in mind when exploring the social and psychological implications for users of OSNSs.

2.9ii Presentation of the Self on Facebook

As explored and succinctly described by Zhao and colleagues (2008, 1817):

> Identity is an important part of the self-concept. Self concept is the totality of a person's thoughts and feelings in reference to oneself as an object (Rosenberg, 1986), and identity is that part of the self 'by which we are known to others' (Atheide, 2000, 2). The construction of identity is therefore a public process that involves both the "identity announcement" made by the individual claiming an identity and the "identity placement" made by others who endorse the claimed identity and an identity is established when there is a 'coincidence of placements and announcements'. (Stone, 1981, 188)

By this understanding, it then becomes clear that Facebook, which consists of an individuals' profile being constantly monitored by peers (Boyle and Johnson, 2010) provides an environment in which individuals make self-disclosures or "identity announcements", which are then free to be either corroborated or dismissed by others, thereby establishing one's identity.

Facebook users are described by Zhao and colleagues (2008) as designating their identities implicitly – by "show rather than tell". This can be demonstrated through the interests they declare having, the groups they join and the comments they make. Through using this alternative mode of communication and method of self-presentation, individuals can take more time into which "self" they put forward (Boyle and Johnson, 2010). Explored further is also the possibility that online, even in nonymous environments there is the tendency for some individuals to display "hoped-for possible

selves" (Yurchisin et al., 2005). "Hoped-for possible selves" are socially desirable identities that an individual would like to establish, and believes can be established, given the right conditions (Zhao et al., 2008, 1519). On Facebook, users may stretch the truth, or possibly allow themselves to explore interests that were previously unknown offline, in some cases potentially misrepresenting themselves somewhat for the sake of social approval (Peluchette and Karl, 2010). In traditional offline environments, the actualisation of hoped-for possible selves can be impinged upon by aspects of one's physical presence, such as appearance, shyness, etc. However, the nonymous environment presents individuals with the opportunity to actualise these identities, which might be unattainable in offline face-to-face settings (Zhao et al., 2008). It is also noted, however, that Facebook does not only consist of those displaying socially desirable profiles: Facebook encounters are mediated, and the technological mediation can create a sense of freedom that encourages the limited expression of some type of "hidden selves" (Suler, 2002), which are more commonly associated with more anonymous online situations. However, Zhao and colleagues' (2008) findings did indicate that there was a tendency for Facebook users to be very wary of others, and sought to ensure they were conforming with perceived social pressures. They conclude that:

> identity is not an individual characteristic; it is not an expression of something innate in a person, it is rather a social product, the outcome of a given social environment and hence performed differently in varying contexts… "True selves", "real selves", and "hoped-for possible selves" are products of different situations rather than characteristics of different individuals. (Zhao et al., 2008, 1831)

As far back as the 1920s George Herbert Mead (1925), a prominent philosopher, sociologist and psychologist, argued that identity is established through communication, the product of society and social interaction. Christofides, Muise and Desmarais (2009) explore how users of Facebook disclose because they seek an identity that will provide them with greater popularity, confirming that identity was a social product rather than an individual construct. Furthermore, users of OSNSs may also be prompted by being very much aware of how others (friends, colleagues, etc.) are monitoring their profiles and the way in which they are presenting themselves, and therefore feel pressurised to conform with the norms of these groups (Donath, 2007; Liu, Maes and Davenport, 2006). Walther et al. (2008) would also suggest that aspects of someone's identity would also be construed by others based on the "company they keep", made easily accessible on Facebook through a user's list of "friends" being available for all to see.

In further exploring how OSNSs impact upon the creation of identity, it seems pertinent to explore how Facebook provides a different venue through which self-presentation is possible. Caplan (2007) explored social anxiety and the resulting desire to show oneself in a positive light to others. Towards this aim he suggests that "in order to increase their perceived self-presentational efficacy, socially anxious individuals are highly motivated to seek low-risk communicative encounters" (Caplan, 2007, 235). Owing to online environments providing a "less risky" social environment, OSNSs may really present an opportunity for those who are socially anxious to present their true selves. In exploring the findings of prominent social psychologist Erving Goffman, Magnuson and Dunedes (2008) reflect on his understanding that each of us displays a "social portrait" of the self which is intended for consumption by others. This raises questions about exactly which

"self" is actually being presented on Facebook. For some (e.g. the socially anxious) as described (p 16), OSNSs provide a more comfortable environment in which to present perhaps their social portrait for consumption; for others, especially those who have always known an online world, there must be more confusion about the divisions between a private self and the one meant for consumption. Interestingly, the findings of Magnuson and Dundes (2008), in exploring how OSNSs are bringing about an entirely new method for self-presentation, mirrored more traditional findings suggesting that gender roles are also upheld on OSNSs, with females being more dependent on others for their sense of self. Furthermore, Hargittai (2008) has shown that social demographics and social circumstances such as gender, race, ethnicity and parental educational background are all associated with use and choice of OSNSs. This suggests that even the venue for engaging online carries with it implications for identity. This potentially suggests that, similar to offline settings, divisive factors are still apparent, despite the view of the internet breaking down traditional barriers to communication and expression.

2.9iii Developing an Online Identity and Developmental Stages

For many, many millions of Facebook users and those soon or yet to become users, they are still in a developmental phase of their social and psychological development (Steinfield, Ellison and Lampe, 2008). Making reference to the work of Arnett (2000), who has labelled the time between the ages of 18 and 25 as a phase of "emerging adulthood", Steninfeld et al. (2008) suggest that this is an important time which involves heavy focus on an individuals' development of "long term social skills, including those critical for self-dependence, career orientation and relationship maintenance" (435). As

explored by Vasalou, Joinson and Courvoisier (2010), Livingstone (2008) observed that younger teenagers made use of OSNSs in egocentric ways, and through the process of maturing, their identities were enacted through their social connections with others. The use of photographs widely utilised on Facebook, and in fact built into the design, creating feedback channels to elicit participation from a user's social group, are felt to be "ideal candidates for the expression or co-construction of social identity" (Vasalou et al., 2010, 8). Steinfield et al. (2008) note that others within this field have suggested a need to understand and explore the impact of "new media", and particularly OSNSs, upon this stage of development. As further stated by Steinfield et al. (2008), "despite the plethora of research on internet use in general, research examining the complex relationships between psychological well-being and use of online social network services is scarce" (436).

Ultimately, the consequences of technology upon our social lives are difficult to predict, as in many ways, with or without the technology, the question of what it is to truly be oneself is by no means a simple question (Baym, 2010). There is evidence that online content about each of us is now being used by many to assess with whom they should be friends, whom they should date and even who should be employed (Weisbuch, Ivcevic and Ambady, 2009). The notion here is that this information actually allows us to accurately predict how a person will be and behave (Weisbuch et al., 2009). It used to be that we made these impressions in real time, and thus it could be argued that the spontaneity and sense of urgency established in a face-to-face meeting also led to the "real us" (i.e. warts and all…) being presented. Facebook profiles, or other OSNS profiles, allow the owner potentially to meticulously construct their image and identity on their

site (Weisbuch et al., 2009). Many questions still exist about how this impacts upon our constructed senses of self and our impressions formed from information collected in this way. Baym (2010) states that the emergent way in which technology interacts with our social life is a process continually in motion, and given in particular the rate at which things are moving, we might only ever be able to glimpse a fleeting moment of that process. Professor Susan Greenfield suggests that usage of the internet and the many fast-paced functions available may even be altering the development and structure of the brain. The plasticity of children's and young people's developing brains rendering them particularly vulnerable (Greenfield, 2008). However, while Professor Greenfield shares many views publically about her concerns regarding young people, modern technology and online social networking, she does not present her work within peer-reviewed publications, making her precise hypothesis and grounds for her assertions somewhat tenuous and slightly unclear.

2.10 The Relational World According to Facebook

It has been assumed that a major motivating factor for using the internet is to relieve psychosocial problems (e.g. loneliness, depression, etc.) (Kim, LaRose and Peng, 2009). But there has also been a paradox within the understanding of the internet both enhancing relatedness, while also increasing isolation (Hanlon, 2001). Kim, LaRose and Peng (2009) observed that those with already compromised psychological well-being could utilise the internet and OSNSs to an extreme degree, leading to further disruptions to their well-being, and potentially leading to greater levels of isolation and loneliness (Campbell et al., 2006). Furthermore, Whang, Lee and Chang (2003) observed that a

reciprocal relationship existed between internet use and negative psychological well-being. There was a tendency for individuals to view the internet as an alternative when real-life interpersonal relationships are considered too stressful (Whang, Lee and Chang, 2003). Negative information is often weighed more heavily than positive information in online settings (Walther et al., 2009), as well as a general feeling of "knowing more online" (Parks and Floyd, 1996). Kalpidon, Costin and Morris (2011) found that spending a lot of time on Facebook and having a stronger emotional connection to Facebook were both correlated with low self-esteem in users. Which direction this affect occurs is not clear, does increased Facebook use impact on a user or do users with low self esteem connect themselves more significantly to Facebook? The answer to this question is clearly one that would be highly relevant for the work of Counselling Psychologists. These findings, and others like them, lead us to question what role the internet and our increasing use of OSNSs play within our psychological well-being and relational lives.

However, research about relationality online is very sparse. Parks and Floyd (1996) explore how existing theories of relational development are instantly compromised, or rendered useless, in exploring the online world, as they assume physical proximity. While once relational partners would have taken for granted having information such as physical appearance, gestures, etc. as freely available in face-to-face settings, an individual today, while potentially lacking this social information, now potentially has access to perhaps more information than one could ever want through one's OSNS profile.

2.11 Issues of Attachment

Bonds-Raacke and Raacke (2010) explore the central appeals of Facebook, in that it offers a means of being "in touch", but they also observe that users feel that it gives them a sense of "being connected". However, reflecting on the literature, it leaves this researcher wondering whether the connection they feel is that to individuals or to something the internet and/or Facebook offers as a whole. This is an element that appears to be ignored in many studies within this area. A true understanding of what "being connected" for users actually means is still a very abstract and under researched quality. Anderson (2005, 523) explores a concept of "internet affinity", which is the "degree to which people feel attached to the internet and the sense of importance they grant this form of media." This concept may inform the sense of a possible "bigger" connection than individuals connecting purely with each other. These findings suggest a need for further exploration and understanding regarding the nature of online relating and issues of attachment. The lack of research in this area has been highlighted a number of times (Buote, Wood and Pratt, 2009; Lei and Wu, 2007; Ye, 2007; Tait, 2000). Lei and Wu's (2007) findings suggested that poor paternal attachment could predict pathological internet use (PIU). They observed that in particular, father–adolescent alienation was directly linked to PIU, and that this suggested a lack of security in a relationship to the father. A possible sense of rejection within the relationship was turning children to seek interaction on the internet. Ye (2007) also finds significance in attachment style and online relationship involvement, but makes a further call for much more research being required in the area. More recently, Buote, Wood and Pratt (2009) have explored attachment style and online versus offline friendships, finding that while it

was evident that attachment style did play a significant role in ways in which relating was experienced, results were inconclusive. Zoppos (2009) did discover convincing results that directly related to Facebook use, which indicated that dismissing-avoidant and fearful-avoidant individuals were more likely to be heavy Facebook users. Amichai-Hamburger (2005) also states that adult attachment is a highly relevant personality theory that could provide further understanding of internet use and users. All of these researchers call for more research in this area; and it would again be important that both the complexity of defining relevant, conformable variables and the difficulty in teasing out directions of causality were fully addressed.

2.12 Social Capital

Research has been completed on aspects and effects of social capital which are developed through Facebook (Steinfield, Ellison and Lampe, 2008). While the phrase "social capital" has been seen as difficult to define (generating different definitions across disciplines), there is a certain level of consensus; and for the purposes of this discussion, it will be assumed to mean the collective value of one's social network, and the benefits one then receives from those relationships (Lin, 1999). As described by Steinfield and colleagues (2008), inherent in the adequate psychosocial development of young adults, there is a significant importance in building relationships as well as social capital. The nature of Facebook, generally having users who amass large numbers of friends on the network, and with many of whom they have little to no direct contact, led Steinfield and colleagues (2008) to specifically explore "bridging social capital" – which refers to "weak ties". Facebook enables users to increase the number of weak ties they hold, as the

design and format of Facebook is well-suited to easily maintaining these ties (Donath and boyd, 2004). Steinfield and colleagues (2008) further observed a relationship between users' use of Facebook and increased bridging capital as well as self-esteem. As they state,

> the way in which Facebook might facilitate communication, especially in initial social interactions, and perhaps mitigate fears of rejection may further explain why lower self-esteem students appear to gain more from their use of Facebook than higher self-esteem students.
>
> (Steinfield et al., 2008, 443)

Lewis and West (2009), in their own findings about the "weak and loose ties" seemingly maintained through Facebook, felt that these represented a security blanket for users. Users felt that there was always an opportunity to "check in", seeing others and ensuring they weren't missing out on anything, which provided constant reassurance (Lewis and West, 2009).

2.13 Information Overload – Leading to a Psychosocial Shift?

Facebook also provides synchronicity to interactions amongst its users, which have been found to make interactions feel more personal (O'Sullivan, Hunt and Lippert, 2004). However, this atmosphere of connectedness and access also dictates a state of "perpetual contact" (Katz and Aakhus, 2002). Baym (2010) draws attention to how our interaction with all of this instantly and readily available information is affecting us. She quotes memory expert Dr Tracy Alloway's take on this engagement with information

overload and her assertion that our attention spans are diminishing as a result. Similarly with this concept of everything being at our fingertips, without the need for a greater level of attention span, Baym (2010) has explored how community sociologist Barry Wellman has long investigated this social transformation of our communities. Instead of tight-knit communities, we are all now at the centre of our own personal communities (Wellman, 1988; Wellman et al., 2003).

There also seems to be an obvious shift in the way younger generations view issues around relating to others. Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin (2008) observed that a large majority of Facebook users choose to have most of their profile completely open and publicly available, especially amongst younger users. The evidence seems to point to the fact that the younger generation, especially those who cannot remember a world without the internet, are far less concerned about privacy than previous generations (Peluchette and Karl, 2010). Furthermore, it has been observed that younger generations are not only not as concerned about their privacy, but that they actually feel the need to broadcast themselves (St. John, 2006). Similarly, the design of Facebook encourages a "no secrets" approach, with almost all users being updated with any activity made by their Facebook "friends"; as jested by Ellis (2010, 37) (making reference to the aforementioned *New Yorker* cartoon), "on Facebook everybody knows you're a dog". This is not a surprising trend, given the ongoing social shift towards reality TV and the resulting "Z list" celebrities being created through this means. This degree of "stardom" is seemingly viewed by many as a coveted way of life that being on Facebook provides to a certain degree. However, there is the sense that what's important might be becoming

lost amongst a constant supply of information, helpfully provided for all users of Facebook through their “newsfeed”.

2.14 The Power of Humanity Reigns?

The potentially outdated research conducted by Walther (1992) is widely accepted as encouraging the assumption that online relationships develop similarly to those offline. Walther suggests that regardless of a place of meeting, people are motivated to reduce uncertainties about others and to discover areas of similarities, although, like others, he states that relational development occurs more slowly online than in face-to-face settings. In seeking to explain relational development online, he devised the Social Information Processing model (SIP). Walther (1996) also proposed a theory of “hyperpersonal communication”, which allows for people to overcome the limitations of face-to-face interaction, in favour of an online setting which, allowing a certain amount of greater freedom, will also lead to the development of close relationships relatively quickly. However, this research was completed long before the days of Facebook and yet Walther’s research (1996) is still frequently quoted and taken for granted by many researchers that while slower, the relational process will ultimately follow typical face-to-face rules. Facebook is a much different space than the internet in general and it feels that ignoring the possibility that the relational process might be affected and that the interaction of individuals may be more of an evolving and emergent process, touched upon by Nancy Baym in her recent book. Baym (2010) reflects that self-disclosures online appear to be crucial in the process of establishing relational partners in online settings.

Barak and Gluck-Ofri (2007) suggest that perhaps what it is to be human remains the same, even with the complications of the online environment:

> The findings support the notion that common psychological rules apply to cyberspace although textual communication on the internet... is typically casual, offhanded, spontaneous, and instinctive…. [I]t seems, in this context, that basic human nature and perhaps the personality of people and the patterns of personality dynamics predominate in people's actions, regardless of the nature of the environment, whether real or virtual. (ibid., 414)

Baym further explores how users of OSNSs are integrating this way of relating into their everyday relational lives, further stating that "relational partners have to negotiate how they will use media with one another and what that says about their relationship" (Baym, 2010, 149). There appears to be somewhat of a default response and approach from academia in lieu of limited research, that there is little significance in online relating being different to face-to-face interactions; an assumption which may not be correct. There is still a tendency to compare online versus offline; however, with increasing engagement in online networking and socialising, it may be much more prudent to consider online networking as more integral to people's worlds as it becomes more and more integrated in everyday life – considering it not as a separate entity, but instead acknowledging the role it plays within our relational interactions.

2.18 Relevance for Counselling Psychology

While significant debate exists regarding the advantages and disadvantages of our increasing engagement in online social networking (and specifically within the world of Facebook), it would seem less pertinent to explore how this method of interaction and relating is like or unlike face-to-face contact. Like the written word and the telephone, this communication medium has arrived, and it is being used actively and increasingly by a burgeoning number of the world's population. The research reviewed above indicates that the impact of this form of communication, the impact on our sense of self, our understandings of others, potentially our brain development and our social and psychological worlds are being challenged and even altered. However, research examining the actual relational process, user attachment behaviour and the experience of being on Facebook are not being adequately focussed on, or acknowledged, especially within the discipline of Counselling Psychology as well as within similar psychological disciplines. As has been suggested by numerous authorities within the field over the last decade, more research into this inevitable force that exerts itself upon our social and psychological selves is urgently needed. Within a Special Edition of the *Counselling Psychology Review* (2009b), "Technology and Counselling Psychology: Theory, Research and Practice", Counselling Psychologists have begun to explore this topic. However, this special issue only focused on practical applications such as online therapy, research techniques and the use of the telephone in therapeutic work. There was a notable omission of any understanding of how the clients of Counselling Psychologists (or even Psychologists themselves) utilise, and are affected by, technology, and specifically online social networking. It would therefore seem necessary, even urgent, for Counselling

Psychology to forge some deeper understanding of how this new technology might be impacting upon us all. In considering these questions, not from the position of whether this is a good or bad development for humans and Psychology (already these questions appear to be irrelevant), this technology is almost certainly here to stay in one form or another. The argument that as humans we will adapt and the tendency for many academics to quote Walther's (1996) landmark study appears to be missing an opportunity to try to understand the actual experience of Facebook. It seems a contradiction, that as relational based therapy increases in popularity among many disciplines of psychological therapists and especially Counselling Psychology (Stern, 2008) that the relational environment of online social networking is effectively being ignored. It is therefore the present research's goal to begin to explore how Counselling Psychology, our approach and our services, can be included within and take into account in this cyber arena, especially for the linked-in generations to come.

3.0 Methodology

Introduction

This chapter provides a general overview to clarify why the grounded theory method was chosen, and how it supported the aims of the research. A brief overview of the actual process involved in implementing grounded theory will then be reported. This will be followed by an account of how the research process developed within this grounded theory study.

3.1 The Research Context

This research aims to explore the experiences of Facebook users, and how this relatively new way of online relating may be impacting upon them and their relationships. The process of interviewing participants using unstructured interviews, allowed them to share their personal experiences and insights into this topic. By drawing on the "real" experience of Facebook users within this area, the intention was to illuminate potential areas of relevance for the client work of, and further research conducted by, Counselling Psychologists. In order to achieve this aim and to process this data, an inductive methodology was sought to attend to all aspects and nuances of participants' experience. Qualitative methods are now being utilised much more frequently within the discipline of Psychology, in part because they support research into areas of exploration and meaning-making (Dallos and Vetere, 2005). Grounded theory (GT) is an inductive methodology, an approach which ultimately reaches a tentative "grounded theory" hypothesis based on observations, as opposed to deductive methodologies which begin with an established

theory and hypothesis. Through this inductive process, data is collected and constantly compared until patterns are apparent and categories emerge, culminating in a theory grounded in the data. Grounded theory, simply stated, "is the discovery of what is there and emerges. It is NOT invented" (Glaser, 1998, 4) or forced by the researcher. The aim of GT is not about testing a hypothesis, but to be directed by the data itself, as described by Glaser (1998, 11), "Grounded theory is well suited to discovering the participant's problem and then generating a theory accounting for the processing of the problem".

3.2 Rationale for Choosing Grounded Theory

Grounded theory increases flexibility within the research process, providing a greater possibility for following up emerging leads within the research area. This allows for a greater degree of focus than might be achieved using other methods, without the need to sacrifice detail of analysis (Charmaz, 2006). These qualities make it well suited to the exploratory nature of the current research. This approach therefore stood out, due to the minimal amount of previous research in this area and the desire of the researcher to stay as close to the actual experience of participants as possible. A strategy which was felt to be most appropriate for gaining further insight into user experiences with Facebook to best enhance further understanding for Counselling Psychologists. As described by Dallos and Vetere (2005), grounded theory may be utilised when the researcher's aim is to develop middle range theories that provide further explanation of an under-theorized area of human experience. Grounded theory also allows the researcher to develop a progressive hypothesis, and to keep their own interpretative activity at bay until the analysis stage, enabling more of a free flow of participants'

experience to inform the direction of the research. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is a similar method that utilises interpretative theme analyses (Dallos and Vetere, 2005). However, with a focus more centralised on interpreting the points of view of both participants and researcher and connecting themes with existing literature (Dallos and Vetere, 2005), this method would not have supported the level of exploration or theoretical sampling process that this study demanded.

3.3 Rationale for Using Social Constructivist (Charmaz's) Grounded Theory

Grounded theory was first developed in the late 1960s by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, with their seminal publication *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967). Glaser and Strauss were sociologists seeking an alternative to a "predominantly rational approach to theorizing in sociology" (Rennie, 2001, 32). After their initial collaboration, Glaser and Strauss began to differ on their aims, principles and procedures of the GT method. It therefore becomes prudent to be specific about which GT approach was followed in this study. For the purpose of this research, seeking to form as an emergent strategy as possible, Charmaz's (2006) social constructivist approach to GT was utilised. Constructivism assumes a uniqueness to each individual, their needs and background and researchers are encouraged to hold this in mind (Wertsch 1997). Constructivism therefore lies within the "interpretive tradition" (Charmaz, 2006). This approach was chosen to highlight potential new areas of interest within this under-researched area. The aim is for complete interaction with the data, though it is acknowledged that the researcher does not exist in a social vacuum (Charmaz, 2006). Instead, the subjective interpretation of both the data, the researcher's experience with participants and any

experience or material with which the researcher comes into contact relating to this area of study were all necessary and given a place within the analysis of the data. As Charmaz describes: "A constructivist approach means more than looking at how individuals view their situations. It not only theorizes the interpretive work that research participants do, but also acknowledges that the resulting theory is an interpretation." (Charmaz, 2006, 130)

3.4 Reflexivity

Multiple realities can be anticipated when using the constructivist approach, because data and analysis are considered as social constructions (Charmaz, 2006). It is therefore understood that the resulting theory is contingent upon the researcher's own views and situation within the area of research. As Charmaz describes: "the theory *depends* on the researcher's view; it does not and cannot stand outside of it" (2006, 130). The process of Memoing (as outlined in Section 3.5iii) allowed the researcher's thoughts to be captured for use within the analysis and ongoing process of the research. However, a reflexive process of interpreting the researcher's own thoughts and meanings, as well as the interpretations and understanding regarding what participants bring to the research, were also significant aspects within the research method. It was vital that all aspects of the research were considered as very much indicative of the location and time out of which they emerge, but equally so, as unique to the researcher's own interpretation of actions and meanings. Limits to transferability in relation to researcher process and the study as a whole will be explored in Section 5.0.

3.5 Grounded Theory Procedure

The following description presented here in Section 3.5 is a general overview, but it also serves the dual function of being representative of the actual approach I employed in the research process itself.

3.5i Sampling

The process of GT incorporates a series of guidelines, and it is felt that it is important to view them in this way rather than as formulaic rules (Atkinson, Coffey and Delamont, 2003), in keeping with the emergent nature of GT. In the first instance, initial sampling is utilised in which participants are recruited based on meeting the criteria of being Facebook users, and having undergone counselling/psychotherapy. Within this approach, it is impossible to "know" at the outset what themes and categories will emerge; instead, that this can only be achieved through the coding process and the comparative methods used when analysing data (Glaser, 1998; Charmaz, 2006). GT constitutes a unique process which relies on the process itself to indicate how, and with whom, the research should proceed. Following this initial purposive sampling strategy, a "theoretical sampling" method is employed. As Charmaz describes, "the purpose of theoretical sampling is to obtain data to help you explicate your categories. When your categories are full, they reflect qualities of your respondents' experiences and provide a useful analytic handle for understanding them." (2006, 100) That is to say, the theoretical sampling strategy directs the ongoing recruitment of participants, allowing for further and deeper exploration of the themes/categories that have emerged within the analysis of the data. This allows for the strengthening of the emerging theory by defining the

properties of the categories, and how those mediate the relationship of category to category. Theoretical sampling is emergent, in much the same way as the theory and method of GT (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

3.5ii Coding Process

3.5iia Open Coding

The coding process is a very crucial process within the GT approach, and begins immediately following the transcription of each interview. This process allows for very early data to be separated, sorted and synthesised (Charmaz, 2006). The first stage of coding is known as "open coding", this process involves a line-by-line analysis of the data – breaking data down into distinct units in an attempt to identify key words, phrases and actions (Charmaz, 2006). Coding is completed with a focus on the "gerunds", referring to a verb's action noun. This process of using gerunds in coding directs the researcher to focus on actions and processes (Glaser, 1998). Focusing on actions dictates that the researcher sticks to the actual data (Glaser, 1978). Thus, this process improves and opens up the capacity for sequences and processes to emerge from the data (Glaser, 1998).

3.5iib Focus Coding/Constant Comparison

"Focused coding" follows the open coding phase. Within this stage, emphasis is placed on synthesising larger "chunks" of data and/or honing in on open codes that are found to be frequently appearing within the data (Glaser, 1998). This analysis leads to patterns and possible new codes, with a general move away from the concrete and towards more abstract summaries. Subsequent interviews are coded in the same way, always keeping in mind the interviews which have come before them and the ideas beginning to emerge.

This process is part of what makes up the "constant comparison method" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1998). Furthermore, this process involves comparing interview statements and incidents both within an individual's own interview, as well as amongst different interviews. It is also important to note comparisons between data collected early in the research process and that which comes later (Charmaz, 2006). Of particular interest, may be codes that differ in process, action or belief, especially when related to the researcher's own experience or observations. As Charmaz describes: "your observations and ideas do matter. Do not dismiss your own ideas if they do not mirror the data. Your ideas may rest on covert meanings and actions…. Such intuitions form another set of ideas to check." (Charmaz, 2006, 54) Thus, the researcher aims to take their own meanings, assumptions and "taken-for-granted understandings as merely one more view amongst many" (Charmaz, 2006). This strategy helps the researcher to gain greater awareness of how and when their assumptions or ways of interpreting meaning may be occurring within the process.

3.5iic Core Categories

Focused coding leads to the creation of categories, based on codes which have been identified as having significance or which are based on more common themes that are forming patterns amongst codes (Glaser, 1998). These categories are based on abstract and/or theoretical concepts, and this process further moves the researcher towards the defining of each category's properties (Glaser, 1998). Through this process, one or more of these categories may begin to appear and emerge from the data, and may be connected in various ways to a number of different emerging categories. These become "core categories", which need to be carefully identified, as drawing these out too

prematurely within the process could have a significantly negative impact on the research by limiting the openness for new concepts or themes to emerge (Glaser, 1998). This process can be aided by the researcher saturating these categories as much as possible through further sampling, and increasing the volume of data collection around this concept/category in order to further expand data surrounding key themes (Glaser, 2004). This process could potentially involve re-interviewing earlier participants (Glaser, 1998; Glaser 2004; Charmaz, 2004). When it is clear that one category (the core category) is relevant to and encompasses the basic social process occurring within the key emergent themes, this is then the grounded theory. In other words, the way in which categories are linked is the core category and the conceptual framework for the resulting theory (Charmaz, 2006).

3.5iid Selective Coding/Delimiting

If more than one core category emerges, Glaser recommends only focussing on one at a time. When a core category has been identified, "selective coding" focuses only on the data which relate to this core category (Glaser, 1998; Glaser 2004). Coding is focused on the core category, other connected categories, and the properties of both. "Subsequent data collection and coding is thereby 'delimited' to that which is relevant to the emergent conceptual framework" (Glaser, 2004, 56). This process continues through continued theoretical sampling to support the emerging directions of the core categories, until so-called "saturation" is achieved (see Section 3.5iv) (Glaser, 1998; Charmaz, 2006).

3.5iii Memoing

This is a record of the researcher's process and analytical thoughts they record to themselves throughout the data collection period, and onwards throughout the coding process. Taking a fluid form, and encouraging a "stream of consciousness" approach, the memoing system develops a series of notes to oneself about possible developing ideas and developing categories, relationships between categories, etc. (Glaser, 1998; Charmaz, 2006). This is an important stage in the GT approach, as it prompts the analysis of data very early in the research process, enabling the identification of emerging themes, as well as providing a resource which is available at a later stage in the research process when mapping out the emerging theory (Glaser, 1998; Charmaz, 2006).

The concept of memoing is central within the GT approach, because it enables fleeting thoughts and ideas to be captured. Ideas are delicate, and the researcher will at all times have access to a notebook in which to record these thoughts and ideas, as they might otherwise become lost (Glaser, 1998).

3.5iv Saturation

This stage is reached within the GT process once there are no new themes emerging from the data – for instance, when interviews are no longer yielding new information about a category from what has already been established within the collected data (Glaser, 1998; Charmaz, 2006). Put another way, "one keeps on collecting data until one receives only already known statements" (Selden, 2005, 124). Furthermore, categories are seen as saturated if there are no more "sparks" eliciting new theoretical insights (Charmaz, 2006).

Thus, if saturation has been achieved, coding will then cease for this particular category. Care must be taken by the researcher not to assume that a repeated story signifies saturation, but instead puts emphasis on the process of treating categories theoretically. As further articulated by Glaser, "Saturation is not seeing the same pattern over and over again. It is the conceptualization of comparisons of these incidents which yields different properties of the pattern, until no new properties of the pattern emerge." (2001, 191) However, the process of saturation has been said to be somewhat vague and difficult to define (e.g. Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006), a concept "hotly debated and little understood" (Mason, 2010, 1). Saturation within this study was confidently deemed to have been achieved, as throughout the process of data analysis and implementing the constant comparison method, there was a considerable level of consistency in participant statements; and as the focus of the interviews narrowed to follow the key themes, this became progressively more apparent, to a point where saturation was conclusively evident.

3.5v Integrating Literature

GT is an emergent process, and therefore literature is only accessed and thoroughly examined once it is found to be relevant to the emerging concepts, themes and categories (Glaser, 1998; Charmaz, 2006). A review of literature is often necessary for preparing a research proposal, and a partial review of literature can be completed in order to provide some basic guidance and define a substantive area of interest. The concern within the GT method is that delving into research before commencing data collection could mean that data is seen "through the lens of earlier ideas... known as

'received theory'" (Charmaz, 2006, 165). Adopting a critical stance towards previous research, ideas and theories enables the researcher to find their own way within the topic. Similarly, literature is also not given the same level of priority as it may be in other forms of research; instead it is treated with the same status as all other data within the study (Glaser, 2004; Charmaz, 2006):

> To undertake an extensive review of literature before the emergence of a core category violates the basic premise of GT – that being, the theory emerges from the data not from extant theory. It also runs the risk of clouding the researcher's ability to remain open to the emergence of a completely new core category that has not figured prominently in the research to date thereby thwarting the theoretical sensitivity.
>
> (Glaser, 2004, 46)

Instead, relevant literature is utilised as another source of data within the constant comparative analysis process, and literature must only be considered "once the core category, its properties and related categories have emerged and the basic conceptual development is well underway" (ibid., 2004).

3.5vi Theoretical Sorting/Write-up

Memo sorting provides the substance for creating a written piece of work. The keeping of the progressive series of memos throughout each analytic phase has allowed the analysis of data to become progressively stronger, precise and more theoretical throughout the process (Charmaz, 2006). Furthermore, memoing has allowed for deeper reflection about the relationships between concepts leading to core categories being

discovered, and within the sorting phase the connections between categories can be further compared at an abstract level (Glaser, 1998; Charmaz, 2006).

> Once the researcher has achieved theoretical saturation of the categories, he/she proceeds to review, sort and integrate the numerous memos related to the core category, its properties and related categories. The sorted memos generate a theoretical outline, or conceptual framework, for the full articulation of the GT through an integrated set of hypotheses. (Glaser, 2004, 66)

Sorting at this stage can be time intensive and it is imperative that there is flexibility for experimentation for putting this fractured data back together (Glaser 2004; Charmaz, 2006). Sorting can begin anywhere; as Glaser describes, sorting "will force its own beginning, middle, and end… trying conceptually to locate the first memos will force the analyst to start reasoning out the integration" (Glaser, 2004, 72). Continuing to compare categories whilst sorting memos aids in the process of refinement, and allows for categories to be seen more clearly (Charmaz, 2006). It is therefore imperative that sorting is completed by hand and not on a computer. This allows not only for complete flexibility in moving memos around, but it also means that the "big picture" can be visible to the researcher (Glaser, 2004; Charmaz, 2006). When finding an arrangement that looks potentially promising, this should be recorded in diagram form. Diagrams provide a visual representation that can be vital within the GT process (Charmaz, 2006). This process can be thought to be achieved when "the theory thus explains sufficiently how people continually resolve their main concern with concepts that fit, work, have

relevance and are saturated" (Glaser, 2004, 74). Once this process is complete, this pieced-together framework represents the first draft of the research.

3.6 Research Method for Present Study

3.6i Recruitment

Initial interviews sought users of Facebook through the creation of an online Facebook group which users were able to join and/or view contact details/instructions in order to volunteer themselves for participation. The Facebook group was able to be found by users of Facebook interested in research or who performed a search about relationships. The Facebook group was also highlighted to the researcher's Facebook contacts, and their contacts (and so on), which gave the group greater exposure. The Facebook group contained all of the information included on recruitment posters and information sheets (see Appendices 1 and 2), and from this information, potential participants were then able to contact the researcher. Facebook users were also sought through advertisements placed around Roehampton University as well as within other local universities and health centres.

Would-be participants contacted the researcher by email and were sent and asked to read the study information form (Appendix 2). If, following receipt of this and being offered the chance to ask the researcher any outstanding questions about the research or research process, participants were then sent the consent form to be signed and returned by email for email interviewed participants, and at the time of the interview for face-to-face interview participants.

3.6ii Description of Sample

Fourteen participants were recruited for the study. Of these, eleven were conducted in face-to-face interviews and three were conducted via email. The age range of participants was between 19 and 39 years, with a mean age of 27. There was a gender split of four males and ten females; two of the male participants opted for an email interview and only one female participant opted to be interviewed via email. Interestingly, participants consisted of a wide range of nationalities, being either first- or second-generation immigrants. Three participants were of British origin, and the remaining seven participants, while British nationals, had either themselves originated from locations across the globe, or their parents had done so.

All participants were asked how many friends they had on Facebook, and responses ranged between 50 and 3,000, with a mean of around 445 friends, and a median of approximately 188. In light of Dunbar's (1992) research, which led to a consensus on the number of people one can actively hold a meaningful relationship with within one's social circle, it is clear that a number of participants (and many Facebook users generally) have a number of "friends" on Facebook with whom they are unlikely to hold any meaningful relationship. However, interestingly, regardless of how many Facebook "friends" participants claimed to have, all reported that there were only between 5 and 15 that they actually considered as close friends and saw face to face on a regular basis (or in many cases, saw at all face to face).

3.6iii Interview Process

In the first instance, unstructured interviews of 1–1.5 hour's duration were conducted with participants. Interviews flowed from one broad question: "Tell me about your experiences with relationships on Facebook." Subtle, sensitive, gently probing questions were then used to help deepen the interview, with the follow-up question: "Are there any related issues that come to mind as you discuss this?"

Within the initial (and subsequent) interviews it was observed that age did not appear to be a factor in participants' presenting with different thoughts/content within their interviews. Age was therefore not considered in the selection criteria for participants. Within the early interviews, participants also did not discuss issues relating to their own therapy, therefore the requirement of participants having had their own therapy was not continued as a requirement for participation (however, all participants had in fact undergone their own therapy). Interviews became more semi-structured in order to accommodate and explore emerging themes.

Some of the emergent questions included:

- Asking participants to reflect on the definition of friendships and what defines friendship, and how this then relates to their feelings of all connections on Facebook being labelled as "friends".
- "What does it mean to have your life accessible to others?"
- "How does your use of Facebook compare to others you know?"
- Using probing questions to explore in greater detail participants' experiences with what it is they seek from Facebook.

- Asking participants to explore any issues raised from the questions above, and any related issues in greater detail.
- Asking users if they had considered leaving Facebook

The researcher was also aware of other underlying themes that were more relational in nature (and which will be explored in Section 4.0), which were therefore continually noted and highlighted in the researcher's memoing process, and explored in greater detail when appropriate and possible in the interviewing process. These more relational elements were also utilised in the constant-comparison aspect of the GT approach, and were utilised throughout the ongoing collection and analysis of data.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

There were several potential ethical issues in the study, mainly concerning the prospect of using participants whom the researcher did not meet in person. Therefore, particular emphasis was placed on ensuring a thorough dialogue with potential participants before their accepting to participate in an online interview. According to in-depth email interviewing guidelines devised by Meho (2006), in order to manage the potential for participants to engage in greater levels of self-disclosure in an online setting, copies of the interview questions were sent to participants with first contact, along with all other consent information. This procedure helped to minimise the potential for the participant to get "caught off guard" by a question in the study, and helped the participant to make a more educated decision about whether their participation was appropriate for them.

Equally, it was impossible to know at the outset what direction the interview might go in once a participant began discussing their experiences. Therefore, all potential

participants were directed to the "potential difficulty" section of the information sheet, which emphasised that the interview may bring up some distressing feelings. Furthermore, participants were encouraged to email the researcher should they have any questions or concerns about their participation at any point during their involvement in the study. The debriefing form (Appendix 4) supplied to all participants included full and complete details of counselling and psychological support services. Participants were also made aware that should they need to speak with the researcher, they could contact the researcher at any point. It was made clear that it would not be appropriate for the researcher to engage in any lengthy support, but that she could speak briefly by telephone, or communicate via email, to help them identify the most appropriate service for addressing any distress brought up by their participation.

As addressed within the BPS Guidelines (2007) around conducting research online, there are several potential issues to be faced within using email interviewing including:

1. Verifying identity	5. Withdrawal
2. Public/private space	6. Debriefing
3. Informed consent	7. Protection of participants and researcher
4. Levels of control	

Expanded details of these issues and how they were accommodated can be found in Appendix 5.

4.0 Results/Discussion

Introduction: The Research Experience

It is important to begin by conveying something of the emotional experience of, and the complexity generated by, researching this area. This experiential data is both an indissoluble aspect of the data gathering and analysis process, but is perhaps also symptomatic of, and a commentary upon, the nature of the cyber-world into which the researcher was entering. Throughout the data collection and analysis process of the research, powerful and seemingly contradictory themes were consistently emerging. The very process of opening up a conversation with participants about these issues led to consistent feedback that talking about Facebook was something they hadn't realised they needed to do. Participants expressed a deep sense of relief for having spoken about their experiences, and in many cases they were completely taken by surprise and bemused by all of the content they had unexpectedly shared; as one participant exclaimed: "Wow… all that came tumbling out!!!". The role of researcher, being the container of participants' accounts and their emotional content, was subsequently very powerful and potentially overwhelming. This perhaps reflected, at least in part, the very experience that the internet and online social networking provides to users. Within the research process, the powerful experience of repetitive themes emerging with such rapidity suggested that this research would not be short of data. However, much like the seemingly limitless possibilities that the internet and social networking offer, so too was the overwhelming experience of trying to find one's feet in the evocative flood of information and the giddy excitement of all that was emerging.

The timely and laborious process of diligently documenting, sorting, comparing and playing with key ideas presented a challenging journey for the researcher. Each idea, the next seemingly more "unbelievable" in its suggestion, depth and existential question than the last, generated ongoing intrigue around the initial guiding question of "What is going on relationally on Facebook?". The emergence of contradictory content and experience was pervasive.

This process had begun even before the research had got off the ground. Firstly, proposing the very idea of the research within the University, was met with seemingly polar opposite responses, that either it was a fascinating and exciting area for research, or the more frequently encountered view that it was inappropriate for doctoral research within Counselling Psychology. In much the same way that participants had expressed surprise at how much they had to say on the topic of Facebook, it has continued to prove to be an area that elicits powerful feelings, and virtually everyone certainly has strong views about it (For more discussion on this see Section 5.1).

4.0i Research Process relating to the GT Method

There was inherent difficulty in being immersed and developing a theory grounded in my own subjective experience of participants' experiences. Being a user of Facebook myself meant that often I could relate to issues discussed by participants. Attempting to stay with participants' own feelings and being aware of where my own experience and beliefs sat amongst others' stories was challenging. This theme of comparing oneself to others was also frequently observed within my own memoing process, I identified this pull within myself as well as its occurrence within interviews regarding the strong need of participants to have shared experiences.

I reflect on this experience by describing it as a constant push and pull; for experiences to be labelled as either "good" or "bad" and to have this corroborated by another (me). This drew my attention to consider the possible projective identification (Ogden, 1992) that might have been occurring, both within the interview situations, as well as in Facebook interactions themselves. The internet as a "new communicative technology" is destined to be subjected to situations where some argue for and some against its virtues. It also must be considered that within the internet and all its functions and uses there is actually something of opposing and contradictory elements in its very process. This concept is perhaps corroborated by Katz and Rice's (2002) argument for the love/hate ambivalence that the internet can trigger in users. I note that within the method of this research, the GT approach boldly states that final analysis must certainly *not* be completed on a computer screen, but by hand (Charmaz, 2006). This bias within the methodology is ironic, perhaps, when the study itself seeks to understand the meaning of

being online. It also emphasises the difficulties of remaining outside of the pro or con "camps".

4.0ii Data Collection Process

It is pertinent to comment on the process of the interviews themselves and the variance found between email and face-to-face interviews. While face-to-face interviews yielded very rich amounts of data for analysis (an example of a face-to-face interview can be seen in Appendix 6), email interview participants were found to be more concise and less descriptive in their answers to the researcher's questions (an example can be found in Appendix 7). I observed that all participants struggled to varying degrees with the issue of when they felt the interview should end. Face-to-face participants at times stated that "that was about all" they had to say, only to then continue to find other avenues to continue discussing. In face-to-face interviews, the researcher often experienced the necessity for great care in the process of slowly winding down the interview in a gentle and containing fashion. This process was somewhat reminiscent of clinical work, and preparing the client for leaving the room at the end of a therapy session. The researcher's experience of this process in the email interviews was therefore very different, without any face-to-face cues about how the participant was feeling. All three email interview participants appeared to show this same ambivalence towards ending the interview, but this manifested differently, perhaps due to the medium being used. The email participants would stop responding, or stretch out responses over a long period of time. The one email participant who had made the best "ending" through his continued participation in terms of the wind-down of the interview, then left the interview "open-

ended" in the final exchange by sending a message after the debriefing form had been sent and returned – a message which stated: "I can't think of anything on top of what we've discussed…. I'll have a think about it while having a run later tonight! It will take my mind off things!!" This phenomenon of evaded endings is in line with uncovered themes in participants' experience on Facebook, which is further discussed in Section 4.4i.

4.1 Method of Analysis

Charmaz recommends that in order to most effectively begin to engage with interview data in grounded theory, line-by-line coding, utilised as a "heuristic device", allows the researcher to see the data in a unique way (Charmaz, 2012). Following this viewpoint, the process I undertook included labelling/coding each line of data with an appropriate "gerund" within interview transcripts. Charmaz (2006, 2012) maintains that line-by-line coding allows the researcher to actively engage with the data and begin to conceptualise it. She describes coding as a process which relies on interaction between researcher and the data, for maximum mental and physical action during the coding process. Using "gerunds" (the noun forms of verbs) "builds action right into the codes", allowing processes to be seen that might otherwise not have been detected (Charmaz, 2012, 5).

While most qualitative researchers code for topics and themes, grounded theory differs in this approach by coding for actions and meanings with gerunds beginning this process. I therefore set about coding each line of data (not each sentence, topic or idea) specifically focusing on actions and processes in each line of data and using the gerund to reflect these. As Charmaz (2006) suggests, this enabled me to start my analysis from the

perspective of my participants. Early on in the process frequently occurring gerund codes seemed to become apparent within the coding process, with codes such as: “sharing the good/bad on Facebook”, “feeling confused”, “uncertainty about time”, “qualifying self”, “not knowing”, “looking for confirmation/shared meaning” (this code in particular was also apparent within the researcher’s memoing process, a process and need which often seemed both apparent to the researcher within the interview process and hidden in the consistent tendency of participants to follow statements with “you know” – something that the researcher did not pick up during the interviews, but rather during the transcription stage), “questioning self”, “judging others”, “making assumptions”, “comparing self to others” etc. (Examples of open coding in can be found Appendices 6 and 7.)

The gerund codes reflect my interpretation of the “actions” apparent within each line of data at the time of the analysis process. The key codes (outlined in Appendix 9) are those which stood out (both in terms of their frequency [see Appendix 10] and feeling of significance) in the initial open coding process, and then began to help direct the ongoing analysis of the data. As Charmaz puts it:

> Coding is partial and you can always go back and re-code the same material. Similarly, grounded theory guidelines lead you to check to see if your codes hold up empirically. A code that you treat as a tentative category must account for other data as well. You test the robustness of this category with other data. Such checks are an integral part of grounded theory, logic and practice.” (Charmaz, 2012, 8)

Using an iterative process, themes that seem to be worthy of further exploration, can be raised in subsequent interviews (Charmaz, 2006; 2012).

This process was followed by a phase of more focussed coding, in which larger sections of the transcripts were examined and coded, using a similar method as discussed above. However, in contrast with the openness of the line-by-line method used in the first instant, gerunds and already-established "key codes" were always held in mind and compared with gerund codes and interpretations of interview transcripts. This process helped to highlight where more data was required in order to define developing themes. A theoretical sampling process thus enabled increasingly focused questions to be asked, in order to seek data to "fill in the gaps". As Charmaz describes, "It [theoretical sampling] builds systematic checks into your analysis" (Charmaz, 2012, 11). This constant seeking of data to compare with existing data led to key gerund codes being expanded into categories that had been fully explored through the increasing focus of interviews questions.

During all parts of the research process, but particularly during this stage in the coding process, I was diligent at jotting down ideas, questions, thoughts and concepts that were emerging as I was engaging and exploring within the data, a process referred to as memoing. This process helped me to further question codes and data analytically, and allowed greater ease of constant comparison of data. In the face of having many interesting and intriguing codes and themes developing, I utilised the strategy of having key codes and themes written on individual slips of paper all over a table; I would then try to cluster ideas in order to help me to begin to organise my material into categories (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) advocates the process of working with data in a visual and creative way. This approach supported the active nature of the analysis, as well as allowing for greater ease of constant comparison and generally helping me to view the

data in creative and new ways. This method provided a good means for seeing where more data was required which was then sought in ongoing interviews. Within this process of saturating categories appearing in the analysis, a core category began to emerge from the patterns forming amongst these focused codes/themes (see Appendix 9). By constantly "playing" with the data visually, I was able to really test out whether particular codes and themes could adequately stand as categories. As Charmaz describes: "Categories explicate ideas, events, or processes in your data – and do so in telling words. A category may subsume common themes and patterns in several codes" (Charmaz, 2006, 91). Theoretical sampling at this stage further enabled me to more fully define the core categories, and settle on one central overriding theme and the four sub-themes (i.e. The Main and Key Themes – see Appendix 9).

Many themes and codes appeared to me to cluster together and support variations of the theme of knowing vs not knowing; this led to the category of "Assumption Making vs Uncertainty". Similarly, themes began to cluster together that emphasised the extent of the emotional interaction by participants with Facebook and the strong opposing feelings apparent within their use of Facebook; thus emerged the "Emotional Depth" category. Furthermore, themes relating to the closeness and distance created by using Facebook and the conflicting feelings about this experience led to the development of the "Exposure" category. Again, the consistent codes, themes and language used among participant interviews also began to cluster together to suggest uncertainty as well as a level of reliance relating to the relational context of their use of Facebook, which helped define the "Relational Needs" category. Finally, themes that highlighted the complexity

of participants' experience on Facebook and their feelings about Facebook itself led to the category of "Addiction and Exploitation". (See Appendix 9.)

The theme of uncertainty surrounding this topic was mirrored within the research process itself. This was frequently experienced in the very process of engaging with potential participants, and their wavering over whether they wanted to participate in an email or face-to-face interview. Likewise, through the recruitment process, several would-be participants expressed an eager interest in the subject, and wrote at length, elaborating on their extensive experience relevant to the research topic, but then questioned whether they were "what I was looking for", or assumed that they wouldn't be helpful. As a researcher, the constant theme of conflict and contrast throughout the process slowly led to a conceptualisation within the findings of conflicting themes. This theme of opposites while present and suggested within the literature review at various points (Kraut et al., 1998; Hanlon, 2001; Ben-Ze'ev, 2004) (literature collected in unison with participant interviews), was surprisingly not wholly apparent to the researcher until her final formulations of the emerging grounded theory, suggesting that constant equal and opposite forces were rife within many aspects of the internet and data within the study.

4.1i Presentation of Results and Discussion

For the purposes of presentation and to keep the meaning of the categories and their significance contained, the discussion of results has been interwoven with the presentation of the results. How the results relate to literature follows the description of

each category . This process of reporting allows easier access to the implications and meanings of the results (Baumeister, 1999). This method is transparent, enabling the reader to follow the grounded theory as the researcher uncovered it. This process has been used increasingly in qualitative studies (Roblyer et al, 2010; Krasnova, et al. 2010; Back, et al. 2010; Taylor, et al. 2010; Tang, 2009; Lewis and West, 2009; Ye, 2007; Scott, et al. 2006). Furthermore, the five categories are presented as one "key category" and four sub-categories. As the key category was apparent within all of the remaining categories, it was decided that this would be the most appropriate and descriptive way of presenting the emergent theory.

4.2 The Five Facebook Categories … – One Key Categories and Four Sub–Categories

(See Appendix items 9 and 10 for Key Themes supporting the Categories and Theme Occurrence Tables)

The Key Category	***Knowing (Assumption Making)* VS *Uncertainty***
Sub-Categories	1. ***Emotional Depth****: FB as a Superficial experience* **VS** *FB as a Profound experience*
	2. ***Exposure****: Great, we can see each other* **VS** *OMG, we can see each other!*
	3. ***Relational Needs****: I need you here, do you know what I mean?* **VS** *Who are you? What are you doing? Do I care about you?*
	4. ***Addiction and Exploitation****: I love using it!* **VS** *Is it using me?* ***VS*** *What is it?!*

4.3 Category One - Key Category

Knowing (Assumption Making)* VS *Uncertainty

This key category was pervasively expressed and experienced, and has currents running through all of the following sub-categories. It was expressed within all research interviews (as well as manifesting within the research experience itself, as described in Section 4.0 and 4.1).

Participants were found to comment repeatedly on various "known facts" as deduced from their time and interaction on Facebook. The code of "making assumptions about others" was found to be pervasive, and was variable in extent. For instance, some participants experienced varying degrees of others' assumption-making about them through Facebook content:

> "Yesterday someone thought that I was married to someone else because we had the same surname! And she just asked me, are you married to x and y, and I was like NOO!, why??! And she was like, well, you guys have the same surname and I was like, no… I just changed it, 'cause of that privacy thing." **(INTERVIEW 2, p. 3)**

> "Like, if they know you're at some university and doing this, 'cause you know you can put down which year you graduate, they'll be like, oh well, she's going to graduate in this year and oh, she'll probably do this and they're sort of like that. I don't know, I don't know how to describe it, the like, you know, have to know everything about you, like ins and outs… they'll probably even look at my friends' list, like what type of friends I've got and maybe what type of people I hang around with, and then they'll probably start labelling me as in, oh, she's that type of person, like, just hangs around with those sorts and maybe does this and things like that." **(INTERVIEW 1, p. 13)**

Similarly, "light-hearted" experiences of making assumptions about others through Facebook content were also described by various participants, providing evidence for just how rapidly and pervasive this assumptive process was. The following participant, having

the experience of a good friend attempting to set her up on a blind date, did her research first through Facebook:

> "A friend of mine said, ah, there's a really, really nice guy that I want to introduce you to. And then she was showing me on Facebook and his profile picture was of Snoopy! So I thought, no! [*laughs*] There's something wrong with him. You know…. But no, but he's amazing! [*Her friend says*] Forget about it…. So, I think, this is weird, I mean, before you met a person and then you found out that he liked Snoopy, you know, and how much." **(INTERVIEW 7, p. 17)**

This process was summed up succinctly by another participant:

> "It's just… that's the new, that's what creates the image of someone these days. It's Facebook, not actually seeing the person in real and taking them for who they are. Now people make the image using Facebook." **(INTERVIEW 3, p. 18)**

At one level, the comments made by participants regarding how they felt they were being assessed or were assessing through Facebook felt harmless and relatively "superficial". However, in terms of the above-described incident of another jumping to a conclusion about a changed name, it has been equally apparent that perhaps there could be more serious outcomes resulting from assumptions comparable to this one being made. This has been evidenced through media coverage, regarding the extent that relationship status and the impact that other assumptions made through or Facebook can have on life offline (Erwin, 2009b; Steele, 2009; Tossell, 2009a).

4.3i I Know you More?

The experience of participants also seemed to support the view that perhaps there was something more to their expressed assumption making. As articulated by one participant regarding the role of Facebook towards knowing about others:

> "P: It's just, it [Facebook] creates a different image.
>
> R: And I suppose if you didn't have them on Facebook, then you….
>
> P: I would think that they were just the same people, I wouldn't really know. But I think like everyone, everyone can make their own, has their own head-set of how they're going to be, who they are, kind of thing. Some people keep the wrong image for me personally, and some give the right image, if that makes sense." **(INTERVIEW 3, p 3)**

The level of importance ascribed to Facebook (and the subsequent assumptions made through it) were central in many of the dialogues with participants, put most succinctly by a couple of participants:

> "The only reason I know, is because of Facebook. Ya, Facebook…. Facebook gives you a BIG insight into everybody's lives." **(INTERVIEW 4, p. 20)**
>
> "It [Facebook] is just a way to know everything about everyone!" **(INTERVIEW 7, p. 11)**

Further generalisations and assumptions made by participants regarding the power that Facebook provides in offering insight into others' lives echoed a more traditional social experience that was occurring within the realms of Facebook. As one user describes:

> "[A]nother thing that applies is, um, that all the good-looking people and stuff have, like, thousands of friends. And you get people, like average people, they just keep it limited and stuff. And it's just really like, the outside world, where the pretty girl in the class, everyone will approach her and just want to get to know her just 'cause she's pretty. And then her personality is a bit stinky and stuff, but everyone's willing to ignore that factor." **(INTERVIEW 3, p. 16)**

In this latter experience, this participant, and others with similar impressions as deduced from others' behaviour or portrayal of themselves on Facebook, led to significant feelings of anger and aggression being expressed vividly in the interview. The level of expressed emotion and intensity apparent within the interview was often perplexing as in some

ways, it was clear that the participant did not have "proof" of their suspicions, and yet the degree of their assumptions and the subsequent meaning attached clearly indicated the significant impact on participants. As perhaps aptly followed up by the above participant in her interview:

> "Sometimes you don't even know the person, but you'll be talking about them, like oh, she thinks she's so much, she thinks all that of herself, he thinks he's like, God's gift, or whatever. But they don't actually know the person. It's just how they've seen them on Facebook. So it's like, it's really weird, it's powerful." **(INTERVIEW 3, p. 18)**

Further highlighted by participants was the tendency to jump to conclusions using whatever available (or unavailable) information they had from Facebook:

> "I'm guessing there's things that she doesn't want me to find out, rather than me not wanting to because I know I don't have anything to hide. But I know, for example, that she might have her own secrets that she doesn't want to share with me, even though her Facebook profile is, like, public, like if you add her, you can go on her profile. But I'm guessing that she doesn't want me to find out things about her." **(INTERVIEW 2, p. 5)**

Participants were further observed to be making assumptions and extracting meaning about what they saw occurring on Facebook and how this might define others in various ways. However, this also seemed to be an area in which there was confusion regarding what was factually reliable in the process of finding out about "friends" through Facebook. In one interview, the participant stated within a few breathes, first, that she didn't think that Facebook provided insight into her understanding of others: "I don't think I've learnt anything about them, um, no, I don't think so" **(INTERVIEW 2, p. 15)** – only then further to state:

> "If you take into consideration, like, they're status updates… because it says what they're doing and I think in a way they update - it might say something about their personalities, or, like, the pictures they put up, or the, I don't know, the groups

> they join says, I mean, if you join a group then it applies to you. So… you can learn more about them, I guess?" **(INTERVIEW 2, p. 16)**

However, the process of making statements that suggest or assume an implied meaning and understanding being deduced through Facebook again seems to be in tension, even dissonant with a general "unknowing" or uncertainty in the language used when expressing such a conviction. In the course of thinking about their involvement with Facebook itself, participants would often simultaneously articulate a combination of knowing and also not knowing, as evidenced in this excerpt:

> "I think when I'm on Facebook, I don't know how, but we seem to have more things to say. I don't know how, I think maybe 'cause… I don't know how actually." **(INTERVIEW 1, p. 7)**

4.3ii The Issue of Time

Participants also appeared consistently to struggle with the concept of time, failing to be able to pinpoint when events on Facebook had occurred. When I asked each participant how long they had been on Facebook, they struggled to remember. They often tried to connect this information to 'real life' events as a way of remembering. Clarity about when events occurred on Facebook was difficult to ascertain.

One participant, in describing her "most traumatic event", a very significant experience in which she was devastated and humiliated (and highlighted on Facebook), could not seem to recall when this had occurred. At different times within her interview she made reference to the event, which suggested that it might have happened anywhere between a few months previously to over a year previously. Even when asked directly, she was unable to recall when it was that this particular experience had taken place. This suggests a significant lack of ability to retain a "real world" sense of factual clarity,

comparable to that observed when participants had sought to recall when they had joined Facebook. Perhaps with all that the internet offers and the almost limitless information available at our fingertips, it is no longer necessary to retain certain information, as it is easily "checkable" if and when the information is required. This suggests, then, that perhaps there is far less of a need to hold on to any information in the age of instant access/availability, reinforcing Professor Susan Greenfield's (2008) assertion and discussion about the potential impact of using technology upon our brains and functioning, leading to a "reduced capacity" attention span.

Various levels of uncertainty were also evident amongst participants and their interactions with "friends" on Facebook, with a prevailing sense of not being sure about what was happening when Facebook became involved. As described by one participant:

> "I don't really know what happened, I think we just got into some sort of argument or something, and, and, that just happened….. I think we… I don't know what happened, we just had a little argument and then on the same day I think that we had the argument, she must have gone on Facebook straight away and put something on there saying how, I think, like trying to make a generalised comment, but I knew it was sort of directed at me." **(INTERVIEW 1, p. 7)**

This example also highlights the tendency for uncertainty to be combined with a sense of knowing and assumption-making that another's comments of Facebook must be directed at or intended for them.

4.3iii Findings in Relation to Previous Research

The theme of assumption making was highlighted most powerfully in what participants were stating in terms of their interactions and decision making about others online. The theme of uncertainty was perhaps more subtly implied. The frequent and consistent use

of “I don’t know”, “I think” and other qualifying statements throughout the interview process with all participants suggests the more implicit nature of this more underlying theme. This sense of uncertainty or unknowing stands in complete opposition to the bold and at times aggressive assumptions participants were observed to be making regarding their Facebook “friends”.

Parks and Floyd (1996) argued that the internet provides users with a general feeling of “knowing more online”, which was clearly observed and stated explicitly by participants. This online assumption-making behaviour was observed by Buffardi and Campbell (2007), Young and colleagues (2009) and Tom Tong and colleagues (2008), in which participants were found to be making accurate judgements and assessments of others based on online information. However, there is perhaps a significant difference in making judgements about the character or personality traits of others within this virtual environment, as opposed to the frequent assumptions observed in this study of participants drawing conclusions about aspects of relationship and/or implied meanings of relating. Back, Schmukle and Egloff (2008) argued that users would find ways around changing interpersonal environments in order for individuals to reach the correct assumptions about others. Conversely, as Frankel and Sang (1999) observed that while online, users are much less likely to detect deception than in offline settings.

The degree of change that has been occurring within the online world, and with the rapid expansion of Web 2.0, may suggest that this is a process that individuals, and certainly the participants within this study, appear to be struggling to keep up with. Despite whether or not users of online social networking have established reliable processes to accommodate their online interpersonal experiences, it was observed by Weisbuch and

colleagues (2009) that online assumption making is being considered to lead to "the truth".

Therefore, might this theme of uncertainty that was rampant amongst participants be suggestive of their uncertainty about the way in which they engage and make assumptions about others, and about the meanings of relational information? The assumption appears to have been made that since humans are known adaptors and can adjust to their environment, ways of adopting this new communication tool and the social and psychological implications are certain to follow. However, as recently discussed in a BBC documentary/commentary (January 30, 2010): "The Virtual Revolution" presented by Social Psychologist Dr Aleks Krowtoski, the human race has not seen such a shift in communication and the accompanying cultural significance in over two centuries. The speed at which this social connectedness and all its implications have spread worldwide has been unprecedented. There are perhaps many societal aspects at play that are outside of the domain of this present study. However, the category uncovered within the findings of this research indicate the prevalent battle amongst users of Facebook who feel both a greater sense of knowing and complete uncertainty about that which they "know". This researcher maintains that this medium may or may not be something that will just be "worked out" quickly by users, and that this is very significant to the work of all psychologists. Counselling Psychology, a division of psychologists finely attuned to the relational world and engaging in relational work with clients, would therefore be aptly suited to further explore the potential impact of Facebook. This is relevant, not just for understanding what may be occurring within the

lives of many of our clients outside the room, but also becoming increasingly important for working relationally within the room.

4.4 Sub Category One: Emotional Depth

Facebook is a Superficial Experience VS *Facebook is a Profound Emotional Experience*

There was a general underlying sentiment amongst participants that no matter what happened on Facebook, it was "no big deal". There was a definite and pervasive theme (and judgement) that was consistent amongst all participants, that those they observed using Facebook frequently were clearly shallow/superficial people. Furthermore, several participants stated and reflected upon the obvious status symbol of having lots of friends listed within one's profile page, and the fact that this was visible to others as being very significant. As one participant explains:

> "And it's all about how many friends you have and people upload, like girls in particular, will upload, like, really raunchy photos of themselves. Just so that a guy will add them and like, and like it looks like they know so many people. And I just find that really stupid." **(INTERVIEW 3, p. 2)**

Another participant describes how she often deletes those who are not living up to her superficial needs and use of Facebook, as well as highlighting the limited nature of some of the relationships held within her Facebook circle of "friends":

> "If I don't know them that well and they never do anything that makes me laugh or that I find interesting or I want to be nosey about, then I delete them basically. It's kind of, like, entertainment, ya, it's entertainment for me. Ummm, yeah, I think that's, that's it." **(INTERVIEW 8, p. 17)**

However, the prevailing category of certainty vs uncertainty continues within this theme, as evidenced by another participant in her reflections of the role Facebook plays in her life:

> " I think that Facebook has taken over everybody's life. Some people might not realise it, but I think it really is getting quite important by the day, especially as it's getting so many headlines in newspapers. Or like, people just talk about it all of the time. It's like, oh, have you seen my new status, have you seen this new group on Facebook; it just feels like my, like, at the moment really matches up with that group on Facebook. I feel like everyone's life is related somehow to Facebook." **(INTERVIEW 2, p. 14)**
>
> This statement is then closely followed by her then musing:
>
> "I don't think there's like a HUGE impact that needs to be taken seriously." **(INTERVIEW 2, p. 14)**

Interestingly, this latter sentiment was rife amongst many participants. There appeared to be a constant pull between statements that suggested Facebook was having a massive impact upon their life, versus a tendency to try and downplay the impact (especially the negative experiences). Thus, there emerged another category that, on one hand, the common suggestion was that Facebook was a superficial space, while on the other, several themes emerging from the data suggested that a much more profound experience was occurring for participants on Facebook. This process in particular was experienced by the researcher as very reminiscent of therapeutic client work, with the "push and pull" of the client as, on the one hand, they explore painful memories from childhood and about parents, whilst another part of them glosses over this experience and instead denies the latter memory and any clear emotional experience, instead insisting that "I had a good childhood". The theme was heavily questioned and documented in the memoing process, accompanying the data collection phase of the

research, including the question of: how were participants actually relating to Facebook itself?

Following from the previous series of excerpts, this particular participant described her experience on Facebook further, and continued within this theme to suggest that perhaps Facebook does hold something of a more significant place in her life:

> "I think, like, people have just said that Facebook is just this thing that's going to last so long…. But I think there's always going to be, like, we'll have to have, like, a website, like, a social networking site that people feel they have to go on every day." **(INTERVIEW 2, pp. 14–15)**

Further exploration of just what Facebook is, and what it provides its users in psychological terms, will be explored further (in Sections 4.6 and 4.7). In terms of defining the role of Facebook and the associated meaning that its users place on it, the data overwhelmingly indicated that much like the experience of participant 2, there is a tendency to dismiss its importance, while also clearly describing it as something one could not imagine being without. This feels somewhat profound, given that the average amount of time that participants had been members of Facebook was approximately two years.

Certainly, one thing was clear – that despite some support for the outward appearance of Facebook as a superficial, narcissistic popularity contest, there were most definitely many genuine and sometimes profound emotional experiences involved for the participants in this study. The following excerpt highlights this constant conflict expressed by participants between the real experience of being on Facebook and the feeling that Facebook is not to be taken seriously:

> "I think it does give people, like, difficult situations because not… I don't know, I've realised not everyone is comfortable, like, or knows what to do, it's like, do I accept, do I not, it's the whole, will it make it awkward and everything. 'Cause people take it to heart. Like sometimes I think if you decline someone they'll be, like, OK, whatever, why'd she do that? And people take it too seriously, I find." **(INTERVIEW 3, p. 12)**

The sense of whether to think of Facebook as merely a superficial entity, as opposed to a meaningful one, was difficult for many participants, and it felt as though this definitional uncertainty was in part caused by the constant conflict and sometimes overwhelming experience that were aspects of the emerging picture of Facebook throughout this study. While these days, Facebook is now commonly considered to be somewhat ordinary and its use to be nothing more than a wide-reaching social tool, participants were clearly also wrestling with the fact that their use of it was eliciting powerful experiences and feelings. As one participant attempts to make sense of her experience:

> "Why do you feel so rejected or so, ya, not loved and sort of abandoned because of all this on Facebook?…." **(INTERVIEW 7, p. 10)**

> "I mean, if it's happening on Facebook, that's because it's human, it's, it's, it's, it might happen in other ways as well. But I think on Facebook it's like condensed. The whole… this whole thing, OK, you know, envy, jealously…." **(INTERVIEW 7, p. 13)**

Another participant was surprised when she reflected on her own use of Facebook, and how she used and what she chose to share through her status updates:

> "I suppose I just wanted to shout and let people know that I was really, really angry. But I never put on there when I'm… really happy or really sad. Or anything like that, it's more I express anger on there, I don't know why that is… I've only sort of figured about it and realised that...." **(INTERVIEW 8, p. 3)**

Furthermore, the significance of Facebook is also highlighted by participants who describe the sense of security (or lack thereof) that Facebook provides:

> "And I can feel, I guess it's that security of people care for me and have taken the time to communicate to me….";
> "I can be disappointed when people haven't emailed me for a while. But maybe the fact is I'm just disappointed with not having connections with certain people and it's kind of a distraction or a blanket… uhm, with Facebook." **(INTERVIEW 5, p. 7 and 14)**

The description of Facebook as "a blanket", in a sense a *security* blanket, conjures up a significant image of Facebook as a Winnicottian "transitional object" (Winnicott, 1951), holding a meaningful place in this participant's use. Whitty (2003) has explored how the apparatus involved in going online (a mouse, keyboard, etc.) may represent transitional objects for internet users entering cyberspace. With the cyberspace world of five to ten years ago and the current evolving era of Web 2.0, the age of social networking has arguably transformed cyberspace significantly, and these issues likely merit revisiting.

4.4i Re-negotiating Emotions

A further theme uncovered in the present study, and providing further evidence of Facebook as a profound space, was the observable process of participants re-negotiating their emotions within the realm and interactions created on Facebook. Perhaps most notable and questionable from a psychological perspective was the now seeming non-existence of loss or endings, which, at the margin and in psychoanalytic parlance, one might term *a technology-mediated phantasy of the denial of death* (Langs, 1997). One participant spoke at length about a relationship which she had been in, which she felt was very publicly displayed on Facebook (and with which she was not always comfortable); when the relationship ended, her ex quickly became involved with a new partner and was even more public on Facebook with this new relationship, which the participant then struggled to observe. However, she also explored how the world of

Facebook and the world outside of Facebook seemed to hold different experiences regarding the management of raw emotions, as well as the process for seeking closure:

> "I hadn't had closure yet for the relationship… and… VOILA!… he was in a relationship. And he used, they used Facebook as the way of... putting it up, really public. So I found out that he was in a relationship because of Facebook, not because he told me…. on Facebook they are a couple, they are in love. But underneath, underneath the table, he sent me an email saying that he's still thinking about me and that even though he's in quotations, 'a relationship', umm… he was still, sort of thinking whether… and I thought this is the most weird thing. What's going on, on Facebook then? Why?? And I said, you're not in a relationship, you are 'in a relationship', you know, but you know, he had to explain himself more, that he had to commit himself, because he wasn't sure, he, he didn't have, he didn't allow enough time for him I think to process, or to heal, or for closure." **(INTERVIEW 7, pp. 4–7)**

Meanwhile, another participant also considered what it meant that all are seemingly for ever available on Facebook, and the impact this had on her and her behaviour:

> "I do use it to spy, I kind of get a bit of a thrill about spying on Facebook, actually, I quite, it kind of feels a bit naughty. And… it's a bit, you know, I know I shouldn't, kind of thing, and I know what I think, why am I, why am, why do I feel the need to spy, especially as, it's really in relation to ex boyfriends. I think really, it was eight years ago now, why are you still thinking about them, you know. Um, and it sort of makes me think, oh… you know, have you not let go?" **(INTERVIEW 8, p. 24)**

While not expressed explicitly within the findings of this study, the widely debated issue that even after death, users of Facebook continue to "exist" and friends of the deceased are able to "interact" with them by writing on their wall, or perusing other content on their profile, does suggest that the issue of loss and endings on various levels has taken on an entirely different meaning (or, perhaps, has been shorn of meaning?) in the world of OSNS.

4.4ii Findings in Relation to Previous Research

The above findings indicate that amongst the users of Facebook interviewed, while superficial aspects of the medium were raised, clearly their descriptions suggest that much more significant emotional experiences were also occurring. This phenomenon has been addressed in the media (Tossell, 2009b). Muise et al. (2009) have suggested that the level of ambiguity in the information transmitted within Facebook often resulted in users expressing elevated emotional reactions, which could be based on either real or imagined (projected) meanings/understandings. In relation to the discussion for the previous category, whilst users of Facebook indicate clear uncertainty about what exactly was transpiring within their relational interactions with others through this medium, they felt certain of the strong reactions it was eliciting within them, which they were found to be equally unable to explain.

The researcher observed that quite primitive reactions appeared in response to engagement with Facebook. Consistent insistence that Facebook is 'all good' raises questions about attachment issues (see Section 2.11). Kleinian concepts such as splitting and the paranoid schizoid position will be connected and discussed in Section 4.6ii. The attachment to Facebook appears to bind quickly, as many participants have been Facebook members for less than two years.

Similarly, as highlighted in some of the above quotations and further expressed by various participants, there was the suggestion that part of them expected Facebook to leave or fade away, also suggesting that perhaps this might be an example of users relating to Facebook with preconceived expectations of this "attachment entity" or pseudo/substitute "attachment figure". In the current research, the issue of attachment

and the internet, having been identified as being distinctively lacking in studies to date, it certainly seems to be an area requiring far more investigation. While Anderson (2005) suggests the existence of a relationship between people and the internet as an "internet affinity", in terms of feelings of attachment, this is not a concept that has been further extended empirically in other possible areas of psychodynamic or psychoanalytic understanding. This research is based on perceptions of the internet more generally, and was not specific to the unique environment of Facebook or other OSNS. Certainly the emotions and emotional experiences reported in the current research supports the contention that very profound experiences are occurring on Facebook, with little understanding from academic research or the participants themselves about what exactly is occurring. Further learning in this area could be extremely significant, enabling a greater understanding of this complex field, and being very relevant for the ongoing work and training of Counselling Psychologists who are very likely to be encountering these issues in their case and clinical work with increasing frequency (Taylor et al., 2010; Daniel, 2008).

The further phenomenon of a perceived and experienced reduced sense of loss is also pertinent when considering the psychological implications of Facebook. This experience of always having access to those "lost", either by emotional circumstances or even by death, suggests that further understanding is required about the impact of such a "denial" of loss or the possible resulting inability to experience loss. This view is further supported by the very medium of Facebook and the internet, on which all material shared has a certain permanence to it, in the sense that even once "erased" from view, it may still be accessible at any later date. This means that even that which one may want

to lose or forget may not ultimately be losable – thus having very significant implications for future generations, having a wholly recorded past that follows them throughout their lives and beyond.

4.6 Sub Category Two: Exposure

Great, we can see each other* VS *OMG, we can see each other

What does it mean to be seen on Facebook and to see others? Themes thrown up within this study seemed to suggest that this was also an issue of uncertainty, both with regards to knowing what actually was or was not public, as well as regarding participants' actual feelings about this real or assumed "exposure".

As has been echoed within media coverage (e.g. Steele, 2010; Attewill, 2009; Hartley, 2009), participants also struggled to grasp the privacy settings and procedures on Facebook:

> "I have noticed that if you are an actual, um… person that's actually on Facebook I do know that you can actually somehow see your actual profile, like someone else's profile without being friends with them, 'cause I know they changed the settings to that, I think. Before, you couldn't do that, but now you can do that. But, ya, I don't really mind about that either." **(INTERVIEW 1, p. 15)**

This excerpt also highlights the level of uncertainty about privacy settings on Facebook, which was also frequently expressed by participants. In the face of this confusion, the fact that the participant isn't really unduly bothered or concerned about their privacy or the potential of "being seen" is also interesting to note – reminiscent, even, of the kind of infantile "fort/da" game that Freud discussed (Freud, 1920). This aspect of not entirely having control over their Facebook account is an issue further explored in Section 4.7.

The confusion and general muddle regarding participants' feelings about the boundaries around privacy, and about whether they are happy to be "seen" or "not seen", is perhaps best illustrated through the constant conflicting accounts expressed by another participant (**INTERVIEW 2**):

> "I've had issues, with people like going into… going through my profile. So, like, especially with that new privacy thing on Facebook. I've changed my surname and I've changed most of my privacy details…." **(p. 3)**
>
> "I do put a few pictures of me online, but sometimes I have issues with it and take them off, then I put them back on, take them off, put them back on." **(p. 7)**
>
> "I don't like putting pictures up of what I've done through the holidays, or when I went out, what I did. I don't think it's appropriate for Facebook." **(p. 7)**
>
> "When you're on Facebook everybody else can see what you're saying anyway. So, it doesn't really matter. It's not like you want to say anything private anyway, so…." **(p. 10)**
>
> "I do send private messages on Facebook, I do actually. But it's not too many…." **(p. 11)**
>
> "When you sort of write something on somebody's wall, especially with the new function on Facebook where you can tag others, or where people just come and find it. I think that's like easier sometimes. I think it's useful too." **(p. 11)**

This account is an example of what was common amongst participants when exploring what was or wasn't appropriate for Facebook, and also clearly highlights the ambivalence (a theme that will be further explored in Section 4.7ix) or even confusion about whether being seen is ultimately "good" or "bad". In general, the positive side of being seen was described by participants as being useful in creating more of a social environment and a feeling of connection through the site:

> "' [C]ause I enjoy, you know, I just want people to know what I'm doing, really." **(INTERVIEW 8, p. 15)**

However, questions also arose from participants questioning whether this was a positive experience, and whether it in fact left them feeling more connected or not:

> "You can put photos of yourself and share it with all of your loved ones quite easily because you just put it up and then they can all look at it. And vice versa, ahm, but there's a double side of that as well, a negative side because, ahm, you know, I can't…, doing it that way you don't just send photos of a special occasion to close family or, you know, you know, Sarah Magoo who you went to primary school with can also see these photos. And they might not have as much of a use to go through those photos, but they still can." **(INTERVIEW 5, p. 8)**

There also appeared to be a fine line between what was appropriate and in keeping with the positive social environment of Facebook, and what was not. Within this theme of what was appropriate, the key issue of assumption-making that runs rampant on Facebook also came into the frame once more:

> "Sometimes if I write something on someone else's wall, you'll get someone else jumping in, it will make it like a…five/six way convo, like that. But um, usually it's amongst each other. But some people will read it and they'll be like, oh that's so funny…da, da, da like that….That is positive as well, but it can be negative as well, because it's like, you never know how many people, like who's reading your comments…." **(INTERVIEW 3, pp. 20–1)**

> "…It caused, like, a big argument and I was, like, why are you arguing with me? Over something that was just meant as a JOKE? And she says, oh, it doesn't look like a joke? And I was, like, ya, well… it's supposed to be a joke and it, like, wasn't written to you anyways, so… why have you been reading? ...It shows a lot that things can get misinterpreted." **(INTERVIEW 3, pp. 21–2)**

The nature of Facebook is that "all is public" and that users often post certain information intending it for a certain (and often very limited) audience. However, posted information is almost always available to the wider audience. This theme of material being seen by

perhaps those for whom it was not intended was also accompanied by expressions of paranoia, alarm, surprise and feelings of being mortified by what others were now able to, or potentially able to "see" through Facebook. As participants describe:

> "…she might have gone and told someone else and then that person would tell the other person on Facebook, and then obviously it would have been a ripple effect and everyone would know it." **(INTERVIEW 1, pp. 4–5)**

> "On Facebook we saw a comment that he'd written, it just made me feel like an idiot… because everybody else saw it…. It was a shock to me, because it was about me." **(INTERVIEW 4, p. 4)**

> "[Y]ou know, I know them so I've accepted to be their friends but, ahm, we don't have contact and then forgetting that they're there…. (*6 seconds silence*) Sort of forgetting that, forgetting who's got access to, you know, your wall posts or whatever else." **(INTERVIEW 5, p. 4)**

> "[I]t was, it was really painful because it was, it's not only the idea of him, blah, blah, blah [*having a relationship with someone else*] but it's Facebook – public, everybody knows, you know. He was with ME, all over the place and now he is with her all over the place and it's like it's there, with Facebook it's public, it's virtual, it's the internet." **(INTERVIEW 7, p. 5)**

> "I don't like it, because then you break up and then [*name*] is not in a relationship, [*name*] is no longer in a relationship… [*name*] is thinking about… you know? And then you put that status for everything! [*Name*] is very sad about her failed relationship…! [*Name*] is jealous… you know?! Otherwise, what, you put what you want on your status, not what is real." **(INTERVIEW 7, p. 14)**

> "[Y]ou say you're 'in a relationship' with someone and everyone sees that and then he splits up with her, or she splits up with him and then you get this big broken heart coming up on the screen! You're going through enough as it is, without that, like, neon sign going online. And now everyone can see that your relationship hasn't worked out." **(INTERVIEW 8, p. 5)**

> "It came to light that there was this application that you could click and find out who'd looked at your profile. And one of my friends just had a complete mental breakdown, 'cause she'd been looking at the profile of this guy she, she'd told him

> that she never wanted him to contact her again… if they found out that I'd been looking, I'd be like, I was just like oh my God… you know…." **(INTERVIEW 8, p. 23)**

This last excerpt also leads into another theme, expressed among participants; that many felt that the temptation of looking at others was too hard to resist. Several participants described the process of looking at others' information as feeling voyeuristic, a process which all described as being compelling and almost unavoidable, and which is further explored in Section 4.7:

> "It feels like stalking sometimes, you're sort of, uhm, voyeuristic, is that the word maybe? – I don't know. Sort of… looking at people from afar, looking at their photos…." **(INTERVIEW 5, p. 5)**
>
> "I wasn't keeping in contact with, like, most people, and now all these new friends have approached and it's nice to see how everyone's been doing after. But, I don't know, I just think it's, like, too stalkerish…." **(INTERVIEW 3, p. 3)**
>
> "It's just… it's to spy on your life basically. Instead of sneaking around in real, they can do it via Facebook now…. **(INTERVIEW 3, pp. 9–10)**
>
> "...you sort of think it's pretty harmless but, you soon start to feel, I soon started to feel a bit, a bit sort of like maybe actually, you know, maybe I shouldn't be doing this. It just felt a bit too intrusive sometimes. Like, it's ok, no maybe not!" **(INTERVIEW 11, p. 11)**

Participants reflected on this voyeuristic tendency which they felt accompanied this ability to "see all" on Facebook. At other times, however, participants experienced distress at what they saw due to the level of exposure Facebook provides, but which they had not actually sought to see:

> "He had, he with a, he was in a relationship. And he used, they used Facebook as the way of... putting it up, really public. So I found out that he was in a relationship because of Facebook, not because he told me, not because, my, somebody told me…. My sister showed me, OK, look, they had like, you know, a

> million pictures together and… and the comments he would make there, probably he was doing that to hurt me." **(INTERVIEW 7, p. 4)**

Within this process of looking and being able to see others, participants also expressed feelings of uncertainty as well as assumption-making behaviour towards what they saw and subsequently "knew" as a result of what could be seen through Facebook:

> "I looked on Facebook. He was there and it was public, so I knew everything before I met him because of Facebook. I thought this, this is insane! Because beforehand, you only had a phone number, you only had a name…."
>
> "So when somebody has his entire profile public… I don't know I, there's, there's no mystery there, it's like, you know, you've chosen to put it completely public and everything, anyone, ANYONE from ANYWHERE could access your information and I don't find that very sexy! Or attractive, or appealing, or even healthy." **(INTERVIEW 7, pp. 17 and 19)**

One last issue raised within this topic that participants spoke about was their uncertainty around what and how much of them was publicly available, and where the division then was between their professional and personal lives. One participant was clear about their concerns in this area from the outset of the interview (expressed within the initial question about whether or not they felt comfortable to disclose their age), indicating that possible exposure online was a major area of concern:

> "I am OK telling you, but I don't disclose my age or real name. I am aware of the confidentiality thing around being a therapist and not wanting to compromise myself. I may come off FB at some point in the future if this became a possibility." **(INTERVIEW 10, p. 1)**

Another participant also expressed both uncertainty and concern about the implications of being on Facebook for professional life, and the potential unavoidable collision of personal and professional realms:

> "My profile's got, uhm, got photos from different parties and different things, ah… it just made me aware of, you know, you know, as a professional, in a professional capacity, what does it mean that I use Facebook? And who can access it and… not that it's happened, but what would I do if, uhm, if a client did sort of contact me via that way or was able to, if I didn't have my security settings strong enough, different pictures of me drunk or whatever else." **(INTERVIEW 5, p. 3)**

> "It's the sign of the times and professionally… I didn't want people in my professional life to have access to my personal life in that way, in a way that I don't have control over." **(INTERVIEW 5, pp. 15–16)**

Another participant had experience of this occurring, both in terms of experiencing the wariness about the potential to be caught out by being "seen" by the wrong people and thus curtailing her use and content posted on Facebook:

> "I've moved to this new job; there have been a couple of times where I have, you know, been frustrated and fed up there, and I have been wanting to put on Facebook, I can't wait to get out of this crappy new job, you know, um, but I haven't done it. Um… because I suppose I'm worried or I, I don't want anything, getting back to anybody at work how I feel." **(INTERVIEW 8, p. 7)**

This participant further explored her experience of shock and surprise at realising that she was in fact more exposed than she had thought:

> "I turned up on my first day [of work] and Facebook photos and a Facebook photo of me had been put up in the staff sheet to say who's who! And I was, like, where did you get that photo from? And they were all laughing saying, 'on Facebook'. But I was, like, how? Because I knew that my privacy settings were friends only and then I discovered that friends of friends could access, could look at photos, and I really did not like the fact that my new employers had looked at all my photos on Facebook. I was really not happy about that, I thought it was a big invasion of my privacy, and since then I went straight home and turned everything to 'friends only'." **(p. 13)**

Due to this experience, exploration of how to feel "safe" and aware of what was available was explored as something of great importance to her and amongst other participants.

However, this same participant goes on to state, conversely, how difficult it is to truly live without 'being seen' or by not being available through Facebook:

> "At one point I had it, you couldn't even search for me. I wouldn't come up in any searches. But then, I met people and they, like, you know, I said oh yes, I'm on Facebook, you know, we can, let's, you know, be friends; and then they couldn't find me, so I was, like, OH GOD! And then I sort of had to think, well, maybe I should make myself available on searches." **(p. 13)**

This dilemma presents the core of this category, that while the thought of being seen in one context seemed hugely problematic for participants, equally, the thought of *not* being available to others was equally distressing. This theme will be further explored in Section 4.7iv in terms of the subsequent issues of control apparent in the inability of participants to leave Facebook.

4.5i Findings in Relation to Previous Research

The aspect of "needing to be seen" suggests that there is considerable social and cultural importance involved in terms of being seen to be on Facebook. Being connected to one's social group and the need for popularity are key (Christofides, Muise and Desmarais, 2009), and that the benefits of this were thus balanced with participants' negative experiences of being exposed. Baumeister and Leary (1995) have also highlighted the fundamental human desire of needing to belong that may also be relevant when considering this theme.

Generally speaking, research regarding developing privacy issues has indicated that despite the degree of media attention around privacy concerns, that internet, and more specifically Facebook users, show limited concern (Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin, 2008;

Ross et al, 2009; Peluchette and Karl, 2010). However, there is arguably a difference in being concerned about the privacy of personal information and details and a more profound experience of "being seen". As well as raising questions about the psychological implications of users becoming mini "celebrities" that are holding Facebook accounts, knowing that they can be seen and giving them the opportunity to present themselves in favourable ways. As explored by Park, Jin and Jin (2011), users are consciously or unconsciously aware of disclosing personal information. While reciprocal self-disclosure could lead to greater levels of intimacy, the authors make clear that Facebook is not a setting in which truthful or deep relationships can be sustained.

Boyle and Johnson (2010) highlighted that users have more time and opportunity to decide which version of themselves they want to appear on their profile. Interestingly, a difference noted within the collection of data, consisting of both face-to-face and views, did seem to suggest, at least at an observational level, that content seemed to vary between the two media. The language used in face-to-face interviews generally highlighted the process each participant was going through to articulate their thoughts. Often the process was "messy", with qualifying statements, signs of confusion, etc. Conversely, email interviews were much more "to the point", with various degrees of uncertainty absent. However, also in this "efficiency", feelings and depth of thoughts were also significantly absent. The times when this was less so were observed by the researcher to occur when email responses from participants came in quick succession, immediately following emailed questions. It was as though, when given the time to respond, email participants had potentially edited out all the "messiness". Or perhaps arguably they had edited out their more authentic and undefended thoughts and

expressions, feeling that more succinct, but ultimately un-revealing and "shallow" information was more desirable. Further reflection on the process of the email interviewing is discussed in Sections 4.6 and 5.3iv.

Facebook is perhaps unlike email, which has a fairly obvious intended audience, in the form of the recipients chosen to receive such a communication (although it is not always reliable in this way). Within Facebook, as explored by Peluchette and Karl (2010), the assumption is often made that no one else will be looking, other than those expected. This perhaps suggests yet another area in which users' emotional understanding and expectations have yet to catch up with the actual reality of online social networking. This is a reality that is beginning to take on new and more important significance in society (as evidenced by the so-called Enterprise 2.0, which seeks to utilise Web 2.0 technologies within business settings and ventures). Within it, there becomes a need for new emotional and practical evaluations and sets of rules for existence in this ever-expanding world of freely available information and connectedness.

This issue is clearly relevant to the psychological position and emotional stability of individuals, and important for psychologists to note regarding their perception and awareness of current and prospective clients. However, as a profession, this blurred line between personal and professional, of "being seen" and with increasing amounts of information being available freely to a potentially worldwide audience, also has tremendous implications for practising CP's and other psychologists. The very recent studies examining some of these practical concerns (Lehavot, Barnett and Powers, 2010; Taylor, McMinn, Bufford and Chin, 2010) have begun to explore this issue. However, this is an area which clearly needs much more reflective consideration within both

Counselling Psychology, and within the Psychology field more generally: attention and further consideration which may help contain and direct the future work of counselling and other psychologists within this Web 2.0 (and beyond) reality. Further work in this area also holds the potential to open considerable opportunities for much greater dissemination of our expertise, as well as aiding societal awareness of the role and function that Counselling Psychologists do and could further play in our society.

4.6 Sub Category Three: Relational Need

> ***I need you here, do you know what I mean?* VS *Who are you? What are you doing? Do I care about you?***

This category incorporates a very perplexing collection of experiences both as described by participants' experiences on Facebook, as well as encompassing part of the experience of the researcher within the interviews themselves. The phrases "do you know what I mean?" or "d'ya know?" or "you know?" etc... were observed to occur consistently in all face-to-face interviews with participants. It began to emerge that both in their description of interacting with Facebook and within the interviews themselves, participants were continuously seeking confirmation from others (including from the researcher herself). Confirmation of empathy, understanding, shared experience, and so on – all appeared to be sought almost constantly by participants. Interestingly, this was not something that seemed to occur in email interviews (except for one comment made by one email participant, stating that "It would be interesting to know your thoughts on it…", which the participant made regarding a particular issue; and this was interpreted by the researcher as though the participant was seeking reassurance of something shared [much the same as was apparent in face-to-face interviews]). However, generally

speaking this phenomena did not occur in the email interviews and as such, perhaps this is to be expected, as it is consistent with existing research (Weisbuch et al., 2009) on online communications (i.e. allowing for greater user control and nothing happening "in the moment"). Instead, there is subsequently the opportunity to put our "edited self" forward, rather than a more genuine and perhaps the less defended, clumsy version.

As this phenomenon began to emerge more and more clearly throughout the transcribing and analysis process, it is also interesting to note that even when the researcher attempted to listen out for this "request for confirmation" in face-to-face interviews, it transpired that it was not possible to hear this "on the spot". Only after transcription did these thrown-in affirmative phrases become apparent, and equally, so did my own encouraging responses of support or confirmation. The initial lack of awareness of this ongoing and prevalent process, and the fact that it appeared not to be detectable, even when being specifically listening out for, suggests that there was a much deeper and unconscious process occurring. One in which the need to seek and provide a sense of a shared experience was strong among both the participants and myself; for as an increasingly engrossed user of social media myself, this certainly impacts upon the researcher in a seemingly comparable way.

It was apparent that participants were looking towards their Facebook "friends" to provide a sense of understanding, belonging, checking out of their feelings and getting a sense of confirmation, in much the same way as was emerging from their interview transcripts and relating with the researcher:

> "I think that does bring people together in a way because it's, like… you know, you think you were the only weirdo that was doing that thing, and then all these other people are doing it as well, it makes you feel, like, a bit better." **(INTERVIEW 3, p. 23)**

> "I have to make sure…'cause things like, that like …you can see stuff, but it may not be true, it could just be what YOU see. D'you get what I mean, like? **(INTERVIEW 4, p. 3)**
>
> "I guess it's about knowing that I'm OK and that people care for me and ahm… people think about me and respect me." **(INTERVIEW 5, p. 7)**
>
> "I got some comments back and it was nice. I felt, like, people were acknowledging what I'd done. You know…." **(INTERVIEW 8, p. 2)**

The pervasive and powerful emerging theme that was highlighting the role Facebook friends play for participants also highlighted the growing question implied within the data of who these "friends" actually were. All participants reported to have between 5 and 15 "friends" on Facebook that they considered to be close relationships and saw regularly in face-to-face settings. The remaining members of participants' "friends" list became a concept which the researcher came to think about and subsequently labelled as "The Others" or "Others". This group most likely represents what Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007) described as "bridging capital", those with whom users are not close, but that serve as "weak ties" and *potential* individual sources of practical support. The role and purpose of these "weak ties" are further described by Ellison et al. (2007) as not serving as any kind of emotional support. The findings of the present research, in contrast, suggested that the role of "The Others" appeared to be very significant to participants in terms of their emotional engagement with and use of Facebook. Perhaps, there is a distinction to be made between users of Facebook seeing these "weak ties" as individuals, versus "The Others" as more of a single entity. As a whole, participants appeared to seek understanding from these "Others", and felt a need to have a sense of closeness to them, yet they didn't really know who these "Others" were as individual people:

> "When I wasn't actually, like, logged in, signed up to Facebook, when I was off it, I did find it a bit weird, like, I don't know… I don't know, it's this weird sort of thing when you're, like, on it, you think you're somehow, like, having… there's some kind of friendship/relationship going on there. Even though you're not on it constantly and even though you, like, and I don't even really see some of the people on there anyway, like, outside it. I don't know, I just feel, like, I've still got that relationship with them. I don't know HOW, but that's the feeling I get on it." **(INTERVIEW 1, p. 20)**

All participants described this category of friends that the researcher has defined as "The Others" as those mainly from their past with whom they no longer kept in contact, and/or as random acquaintances that they may or may not have even met face to face, etc. Many described the process on Facebook of the provision of lots of reconnections that then subsequently fizzled out shortly afterwards, yet with the "friend" remaining on the list:

> "It's kind of weird as well because… you're sort of, I don't know, I've been able to catch up on, you know, guys, you know, from school that I got on well with uhm… who, you know, are…, it's nice to know from Facebook that that's what they're up to now; they've got a family now or whatever and, you know, and initially accept their invitation, or they accept yours, you'll have a bit of 'how's things?', but then the reality is that for most of those, those friends that you've got, you know, uhm, you don't have any regular sort of contact. Uhmm… and sometimes I'll forget that there's certain people that I've accepted to become my friends and then I'll realise that I've forgotten them and that can be a funny feeling sometimes. Knowing uhm, ya, I've forgotten." **(INTERVIEW 5, pp. 3–4)**

> "What I enjoy are… keeping, keeping in touch with people through, who I went to school with, who I never have spoken to since, but I quite like seeing what they're doing…. You know, because I'm not actually in touch with them at all. Just we're 'friends'." **(INTERVIEW 8, p. 1)**

> "The majority of the people are just like old, you know, school people, who I…, are not even acquaintances. We had, like, you know, we were in the same class at school, that sort of thing. And there's no way I would ever get back in touch with them, you know. " **(INTERVIEW 8, p. 10)**

There was further description by participants that there was something very particular about these Facebook "friendships" or "Others", in that they belonged exclusively within their Facebook experience only; and as one participant described, there was a reality to feeling as though those within her "Others" category were truly not a part of her real-world life:

> "…but then when you see them in real life they won't even say 'hello' to you. And it's like, well then, why did you even add me?... But, you know what I mean, you'll put me on your account, but you won't say 'hello' to me when we're face to face or whatever… it is more people in the past, like… they just, um…. If it wasn't for Facebook, I guess I'd never…, I'd probably be in contact with one girl only from the past." **(INTERVIEW 3, p. 4)**

Another participant described the support she feels from others on Facebook, but without really indicating a need or desire to know anything about where or from whom that support was actually coming from in the sense of more traditional "real world" or face-to-face knowing about someone:

> "But I think it helps also to meet other people, like, for example, I know that there was this girl. Like, I didn't even know her, but, like, through friends, we have so many friends in common, that we just decided to add each other and, like, now, I speak to her, like, every day, even though I don't really know who she is…. We have a common link and I know that she used to go to another school that is the same as a lot of people that I know. So I don't have to worry about whether she's real." **(INTERVIEW 2, p. 2)**

This latter sentence can, of course, be heard in more than one way! – and it is difficult not to wonder about what it might be saying unconsciously about the whole Facebook medium as a (non-)relational milieu.

There was also a pervasive theme amongst participants that the use of their status updates would provide them with a sense of reassurance that others cared for them, and this seemed to be achieved whether or not they got responses from others:

> (On recalling the messages she did receive on updating her status to say that she was feeling unwell)
>
> "I hope you're feeling OK, I hope you will get better soon, just like lots of encouragements and ways that I could feel better, like remedies and stuff and what I could be doing. And people just saying that I need to rest. And yes, I know! Thanks for telling me…. It's NICE! I think that was the reason I was sharing it." **(INTERVIEW 2, p. 16)**

It was clear, that while some described gaining seemingly mundane support around issues such as being sick and so on, participants also clearly stated a much greater level of emotional depth of support being achieved through their shared feelings with "The Others", that perhaps even felt more comfortable or safer to share with this loosely acquainted group than with close friends or family:

> "It was just an outlet for me because I guess I had… had my friends and family to talk to, but I think I just wanted to shout and, almost, if I had had a punch bag next to me, if I had had a punch bag next to me or Facebook, I would have, you know, it's that kind of ohhh, I just need to, you know." **(INTERVIEW 8, p. 7)**
>
> "It comes out more strongly on Facebook. Um, it's a kind of impulsive thing that… I don't know why, I really don't know why?!... I feel the need to do it. Um, I will then, it's… I think, um… it's partly wanting somebody to, to say what's the matter?" **(INTERVIEW 8, p. 6)**

In this latter comment, the relatively unconscious emotional security needs and needs for nurture that are commonly (and perhaps unsurprisingly) played out through the medium are very apparent.

Participants were not only relating to "The Others" purely as providers of general confirmation and emotional support. Paradoxically, participants were judging and comparing themselves (usually negatively) against "The Others", leaning towards idealising what they could see within the Others' lives compared to their own, while on the other hand participants were also criticising and judging "The Others" as they saw their use of Facebook – reminiscent, perhaps, of a somewhat regressed (Kleinian) paranoid-schizoid mode of relating (Klein, 1946). This resulted in "The Others" holding a perplexing position of "I need you to be there for me" and being of great importance to participants, whilst simultaneously also being accused of "I don't know what you're doing on there, why are you there?", and being completely devalued and often mocked for being perceived as doing ridiculous things, as deduced through their Facebook behaviour or posted content.

The following excerpts offer brief examples of the deluge of assumption-making and judgemental comments that participants freely expressed throughout their interviews regarding the use of Facebook by others:

> "I do notice some of my friends who do have Facebook seem to post every single moment of their life and I don't really, I don't know, I just don't personally see, I really like doing that stuff. I just find that really weird, like kinda not… sha.. shallow but, like, it just makes me think that they're like just so obsessed with Facebook. That that's what they always do." **(INTERVIEW 1, p. 21)**
>
> "And I just find it, like, you know, there's certain guys who use Facebook a bit too much and I just find, like, it's a bit weird, like I'm used to guys not caring about it. And just… you know, nowadays there's even guys who are becoming as vain as girls do on Facebook and are putting up as much pictures as girls do…." **(INTERVIEW 3, p. 15)**
>
> "Feeling uncomfortable with… you know, certain friends who always update their status. Uhm… it feels like they're… attention seeking or, uhm… or wanting to…

sort of share themselves, with, you know, with the rest of the world…." **(INTERVIEW 5, p. 5)**

"Why are you doing this, why are you using Facebook for this? " **(INTERVIEW 7, p. 5)**

"… I don't know, I just feel when something is so public and so out there that there must be an emptiness inside. What is going on? Why do you need that? Why do you need to tell everybody? Because you're unhappy in yourself, and that's why you have to put everything happy on the outside?" **(INTERVIEW 7, p. 7)**

"People who have, sort of, 300 people, they seem to have no problem with making public, you know, their lives. And, and they update all the time. And I just think, why are you…, I suppose I question sometimes, why, why, why do you feel the need to update so much? 'Cause I don't have the need to do that. But then I know, you know, that, I think, maybe they, um, mmm, I don't know, is it to do with loneliness?" **(INTERVIEW 8, p. 11)**

"And I do think, what's missing, what's missing in your life that you're so ahm… ah, addicted to, having to tell everyone what you're doing? All the time, or… I don't know. So ya… and other people who don't update at all, I just think… oh, ya, you're probably thinking, you don't want to, ah, aahm, you know, you sort of feel like you're a bit too good to, to spend, you know, to sort of do that, you know what I mean? I interpret it like that." **(INTERVIEW 8, p. 11)**

"I don't want to judge people… as everyone is entitled to do what they want in their spare time. But I do think it's a little sad when people spend more time on there than actually speaking or seeing their friends." **(INTERVIEW 9, p. 5)**

"I don't think my use compares to millions of others on there. Some friends seem to post everything and anything on there and it generally rules their life." **(INTERVIEW 9, p. 4)**

"Some of my friends are on it literally every day and log on every aspect of their life on it, and I don't quite identify with it, I find it quite bizarre. Um, I certainly wouldn't want to do THAT." (**INTERVIEW 13, p. 2)**

"I don't quite know what, it, what it gives the people who access it every day and for hours, I really don't know, it's something alien to me." (**INTERVIEW 14, p. 12)**

Each participant seemed to seamlessly fill in blanks about others, boldly making statements that were issued and assumed to be "fact". Much of the time this was a process which occurred without recognition from the participant that they were making an assumption based on limited information. Other times, this process was often expressed as "I don't want to judge him/her, but...." This statements suggested that this was a somewhat uncontrollable experience, even when it was acknowledged to be occurring.

4.6i Frequency of Use

A common theme that appeared within this area was the amount of time participants observed other users to be using Facebook. One might question how often the participant was on Facebook themselves in order to make this judgement of others. All participants were asked to report how often they logged on to Facebook, and also how much time in a week they spent actively engaged with Facebook. Seven out of the ten participants reported logging in daily, with many making reference to the fact they would log on more than once, or in some cases would always be logged in while at a computer. Two participants admitted to checking every other day or a few times a week, and the final participant reported logging in once a week. The amount of time that participants reported spending in an average week actively engaged with Facebook was reported as between one and fourteen hours a week, with a mean and median of six hours amongst all participants. It should be noted that the process of coming up with the number of hours spent weekly was generally an interesting process to observe in those participants who were interviewed face to face. Many attempted to answer this question by first

working out how long they spent each day and then multiplying this by seven; however, in most cases, the alarm they appeared to experience at the size of their subsequent calculation meant that many times, their daily total multiplied by seven was then reduced by a significant amount: a process that would have gone unnoticed in an email-interview only study.

As well as judging other users of Facebook, there was also evidence that at times, participants also had the tendency to compare themselves against "The Others", and to see them in a much more favourable light:

> "[I]t was this sort of sense of loss and look at these beautiful pictures, people are doing great stuff and, you know, and then I would come to my flat and my flatmate would be looking at her ex boyfriend's pictures and all the people with babies, and you know? So… the life that you can't have. It's all about what's outside and what other people are doing." **(INTERVIEW 7, p. 12)**

> "[W]hen I split up with my last boyfriend, it was…, I, it was really difficult, I found it very, very difficult to be on Facebook and I actually deactivated my account. Because I felt that… my life wasn't working out the way I wanted it to work out and I didn't want it to be that, you know, I didn't want my life to be online so people could see it…. I felt it was, that I had failed. You know… because all my friends were getting married, and you know, wanting to have children, they all wanted, they'd bought houses and they were living with boyfriends and I was on my own. And I felt huge pressure on me, the fact that I wasn't, like, and my relationship had failed, and I found it very difficult, like, being on Facebook." **(INTERVIEW 8, p. 4)**

A participant discusses the moment when some of her assumptions created through Facebook (about a couple) were shattered when she saw these "friends" by chance in the flesh:

> "There's this couple that are on Facebook and are this, you know, AMAZING and every time they put something it's, you know…and I made up in my mind this

> amazing couple, I don't know that there was something unique and special about them and then [one day while out] I turned around and it was them… they were having an argument… I hadn't seen them for ages. And they seemed so real, so… you know, these pictures that you make up in your mind because of Facebook and then you realise, this is stupid! It's completely stupid… you've created this idea of some people because of Facebook and they're in the same place as you are. In the same sand, walking in the same place and going probably in the same direction, you know?… so it's me torturing myself looking at pictures and thinking ohhhh…." **(INTERVIEW 7, pp. 13–14)**

Facebook thus appeared to provide a free space for participants to make projections on to others; and in the same way that they made assumptions about "Others" having negative attributes, participants would also project good aspects into others as well. The good is in them, not me.

4.6ii Findings in Relation to Previous Research

There was a persistent commentary within this section on what it meant to participants to know that others are "out there" and who can offer support. Online meeting points have been found to offer users a sense of attachment, as well as feelings of belonging and solidarity (Orgad, 2005; van Uden-Kraan, et al., 2008). However, within these studies, the focus was on points of meeting, usually specific online groups with the central focus of connecting those with a similar issue or concern with those experiencing the same issue or circumstance. On Facebook, it is not the same as an online support group for grievers, or wives of soldiers, and so on; there is a sense on Facebook that any and all issues can be addressed or supported by "The Others". Belonging to Facebook, and most importantly checking Facebook, has become a part of the majority of users' daily routines, as evidenced in this study as well as observed by Pempek, Yermolayeva and Calvert (2009). Sheldon, Abad and Hinsch (2011) found that those users lacking in

"relatedness" use Facebook more as a coping strategy, suggesting that they are clearly getting something from it. This seeking of validation clearly offers the user a positive outcome, as well as offering users a general feeling of being connected (Bonds-Raacke and Raacke, 2010) – with previous research findings (Valkenburg, Peter and Schouten, 2006; Steinfield et al., 2008) also suggesting that positive feedback received through the site did provide enhanced feelings of self-esteem and well-being. However, this support is gained mostly from 'unknown' or 'uncared' about Facebook friends. This contradicts the value and purpose of these 'weak ties' (Steinfeld, Alison and Lampe, 2008) and warrants further exploration. These questions also bring to mind the work of Ben-Ze'ev (2003, 2004, 2005) and his concept of "deattachment", with users experiencing the category of having close "intimate" levels of sharing online with those not wholly, but essentially, complete strangers, and with this presumed "virtual intimacy" leading to users further assuming their similarity to others online (Krasnova, et al, 2010). Furthermore, Sheldon, Abad and Hinsch (2011) further describe how going on to Facebook may help people feel better, but that ultimately its use does not address a person's underlying relational difficulties, it serves as a distraction only. As they argue, "a person who is suffering in the real social world will probably not solve his or her problem by retreating constantly to Facebook" (ibid., 2011, 12). Similarly, Lin and Lu (2011) suggest that enjoyment is the most important motivating factor for determining Facebook use. This may suggest that those in need of distraction or a coping mechanism can be drawn in by the inherent "enjoyment" Facebook brings to them. Therefore, Facebook can become a coping mechanism for those in need of psychological/social support, and this can then act as a motivating factor for excessive use.

The widely described “uploading” of thoughts and feelings, as described by participants, may suggest that by virtue of posting this information and not having it contested (and certainty if corroborated by “friends” making positive comments), this essentially enacts the “warranting principle” as discussed by Walther et al. (2009), as referred to in the literature review, p. 39. By the very structure of Facebook, in calling all of a user’s contacts “friends”, there is an implied closeness assumed within the very design of the system, with the designer(s) no doubt having carefully chosen the emotion-imbued language with which the system’s taken-for-granted discourse is then created and institutionalised. Perhaps in this situation, rather than this warranted information being used by others as proof of one’s personal characteristics, as originally discussed by Walther and colleagues, it may instead be being used by the users themselves. In the quest to feel justified and supported, as though their feelings have been “mirrored back to them”, this seems reminiscent of a process similar to “mirroring”, as posited within psychodynamic developmental theory (Stern, 1977; Trevarthan, 1979; Winnicott 1967), with Facebook and “The Others” offering its users what they deem to be a “true self” reflection.

In fact, there appear to be several areas which suggest that users’ relating with Facebook could be better understood and explored using psychodynamic theory. In a previous section (Section 4.4) a participant (pg 93) actually described Facebook and what he gets from it as a “security blanket”. Lewis and West (2009) postulated that the “weak ties” with which Facebook provides users does appear to act as a security blanket for users. However, the question seems to be arising as to whether Facebook has a tendency to

draw users with more primitive and unconscious processes, or whether it actually elicits this (further explored in Section 4.7 and 5.1i).

As previously alluded to, users' behaviour on Facebook appears to reflect a Kleinian perspective of the regressed paranoid-schizoid position, with elements of splitting frequently apparent, with users seemingly viewing situations or people on the site as either all good, or all bad. Also evident are further signs of participants' projecting on to others (in the form of mocking and judging others), with attempts to eject the "bad". Within the paranoid-schizoid position as posited by Melanie Klein, one of the key aspects fostering the position to be maintained comes in the form of anxiety and the subsequent fearing of the ego's annihilation (Klein, 1946). This concept also raises thoughts about the design and use of Facebook, and the persistent need for confirmation. One marked tendency seems to be that of users using the site in ways that suggest very child-like interactions of the variety: "look at me, Mummy", "can you see me?", etc. This suggests that users face deeper existential questions in their use of Facebook. This tendency to need to be seen and to experience confirmation from others suggests perhaps that users are also seeking to ensure and confirm their own actual existence, let alone their fears of annihilation. Perhaps further still, the difficulty for users achieving a more mature 'depressive position' whilst on Facebook lies in their (at times) perceived omnipotent power on the site, and that they need not have concern about *actually* destroying the other as outlined by Klein (1946). As discussed by various participants, it's all too easy to delete others from one's profile (incidentally, the only action on Facebook that isn't announced to all), making the user truly powerful and with their fleeting whims of

destroying (erasing, wiping out) the other going unnoticed, and normally without any real relational consequences.

It seems clear that there are most certainly areas of psychodynamic significance within the "walls" of Facebook. The question, this researcher feels that is of considerable importance for the work and understanding of Counselling Psychologists is whether Facebook (and possibly other online social networking systems) are actually eliciting this kind of primitive psychic functioning. This seems potentially to be the case; and the implications for individuals' relational selves, as these technologies and means of connecting become ever more pervasive and are engaged with at ever younger ages, suggest that much more theoretical exploration is necessary in this area for the work of Counselling Psychologists, and also all other psychotherapeutic professionals.

4.7 Sub Category Four: Addiction and Exploitation

I love using it!* VS *Is it using me? VS What is it?!

Finally, the reoccurring theme that Facebook was easier and played a useful role in participants lives, also appeared to be combined with issues and emergent themes suggesting that, in reality, participants were very uncertain about what Facebook actually was and, furthermore, expressed concerns that in fact, they were not actually in control of their use of Facebook at all, suggesting there was also an emergent theme that Facebook was *using them*.

4.7i Commercial Considerations

This theme stands in contrast to various research studies that have suggested the tendencies of Facebook to appeal to, and provide a platform for, more "narcissistic" personalities. In many ways, the reality of Facebook seems to be that users are essentially themselves being "used". A*n illusion* of communicative "freedom", instead of merely using a service, and with a narcissistic "message" that the entire focus is on them and their own personal gains. The media has reported on this theme of power which Facebook holds over its users and general powerful presence in society, one which few challenge in any way (Smith, 2010; Spanier, 2010a; Spanier, 2010b; Erwin, 2009a; Khan, 2008; Scruton, 2008). Facebook is a business, and while an in-depth examination of the business approach of Facebook is outside the remit of this study, a basic exploration of the impact that the business design has on users is certainly relevant when considering the theme of participants' feelings of control and their use of Facebook. This latter would need to include an analysis of any manipulative intent of those who designed the system and who invented its very particular discourse. Facebook's monetary value is currently estimated to be roughly $100 billion (Forbes, 2012).

Facebook collects information about users from seemingly any available source in efforts to better target its advertisements, and in this sense to turn its users into a commodity, leaving them vulnerable to economic exploitation. The amount of freely given information that users provide to Facebook in terms of their profiles, their web searches, their address books, etc. is vast. Facebook's privacy policy states that: "We use your profile information, the addresses you import through our contact importers, and other relevant information, to help you connect with your friends, including making suggestions

to you and other users that you connect with on Facebook." In stating "other relevant information" it is completely unclear as to what this could mean, and suggests that users could be providing Facebook with much more than they are aware of. What information Facebook collects and/or holds about users is by no means transparent.

Concerns are often expressed about the privacy of users as consumers; however, these concerns are not entirely relevant. Facebook users are not really consumers, they *are* in a sense "the product", with the users there to be sold and used for financial gain. The vast majority of the focus of research and publications regarding Online Social Networking, and Facebook in particular, is addressing how to harness this system of information to provide business, companies and individuals with more financial gain from what is available from Facebook. (How to get Facebook users to "LIKE" your brand, etc…) The scope of this research does not extend to a deep exploration of the technical process of gaining consumer and business potential from Facebook users' personal profiles. However, it seems necessary to at least name this significant angle and aspect of involvement with Facebook, and to consider how this may contribute to psychological feelings of certainty and of containment when seemingly, for most users, and certainly for the participants in this study, Facebook is exclusively about personal connection; and the bigger commercial picture and context is not one that is consciously considered. This *psychosocial* aspect of Facebook is certainly one that Counselling Psychology is perhaps uniquely placed within the Psychology field to explore, from a critical perspective.

Facebook as a social tool, does possess a certain 'Big Brother' quality; however, the more insidious and often hidden business perspective which is increasingly becoming apparent through Facebook also needs to be considered. Since Facebook began, the scope of to

whom one's information has been available has grown exponentially. At first, for Harvard students, posting one's information would be seen only by other Harvard students; then this expanded to other "Ivy League" Universities, and this expansion has further continued to include all areas of the globe. In a sense, the number of viewers (and the value of Facebook commercially) has grown so quickly that the true level of exposure that now exists on Facebook is not something that users are remotely aware of.

4.7ii It makes things easier…

So, on one hand participants expressed the feeling that Facebook, and the various functions and processes in place as part of the design of Facebook, really enhanced their lives, and that their use of it had a very positive impact on their lives and their ability to communicate with others:

> "I just found it much easier to speak to people sometimes through Facebook 'cause I know, like… by ringing I have to… I don't know… ya… it's just much better, and also when you do the chatline thingy, I just find it easier to talk to people and keep in contact with them and, ya…. And also, not just that, but when, like, someone puts a topic or something up, then everyone else will talk about it and then that's how I'd keep in contact with other people that I would never really keep in contact with." **(INTERVIEW 1, p. 6–7)**

> "I mostly go on to the statuses and just, like, comment on those. Or, like, post on their walls… something important. I've come to realise, though, that basically it's quite important. It really helps for keeping in touch with all the people." **(INTERVIEW 2, p. 1)**

> "When you sort of write something on somebody's wall, especially with the new function on Facebook where you can tag others, or where people just come and find it. I think that's, like, easier sometimes. I think it's useful too." **(INTERVIEW 2, p. 11)**

"With calling, I don't know, you don't have so much to talk about, whereas if you just go on Facebook, you can just ask them and see how they are for quite a while. I don't know, I think it's easier, Facebook is easier than, like, calling." **(INTERVIEW 2, p. 18)**

"I think the positives, is [*sic*] that it helps people keep in touch and it, for some people, it does make life easier because now, that's the way they get their message across, because you can, like, upload it from your phone and stuff. And the message will come to you like that as well, so it's, like, a new way of texting, I guess. Or like, the new way of meeting up with someone, even." **(INTERVIEW 3, p. 7)**

"I don't think anybody would be as close to anybody else if there was no Facebook. It makes us so close to their lives and everything. Facebook helps you understand about people's lives and everything like that, with the groups and the statuses, you KNOW what is going on in somebody's life. Facebook helps." **(INTERVIEW 4, p. 20)**

4.7iii …But is it that great?

However participants also expressed how these "advantages" also pose potential concerns and, therefore, there was a lot of uncertainty expressed about the possible implications of communicating in this way:

"I don't know… just felt really angry with her, that she couldn't say it to my face, that she had to use… 'cause when we had the argument, she didn't really actually SAY anything, she was just, like, well… just tried to, like, shut it off and just, like, well, I don't care. And then obviously after the argument she went on to Facebook and said something like that and I was, like, well, if you's really that angry with me and had a massive issue, well then she could have just said it TO me, rather than going off and putting it on something else, trying to, like… personally, I felt that was causing a bit more trouble then what we had anyway, she didn't need to do that at all." **(INTERVIEW 1, p. 5)**

"It's just people, like, they depend on it too much now, I think. Like, it's been good for people because it helps them keep in touch, it helps you socialise… but it's not the best way of socialising. Like, nowadays people, they relay too much on the computer to socialise. And when they see each other face to face… it's a bit like… there's, like, no conversation because they've been saying so much the night before or whatever." **(INTERVIEW 3, p. 1)**

> "Feels like it's trying to fill a need for friendship, uhm… needing, ya, like, attention from others, ahm, but it not being a fulfilling or real, uhm, real thing." **(INTERVIEW 5, p. 13)**
>
> "It's always the same people (*laughing*) updating. And I think, sometimes I think, oh this is boring, you know? Really boring. Often when I'm on Facebook I think, this is SOO boring." **(INTERVIEW 8, p. 15)**

This theme also further highlights the tendency for assumption making and judgements of others, which were so pervasive throughout the study and participant accounts.

4.7iv Leaving Facebook

In relation to the theme of Facebook in some sense controlling people, perhaps the most pervasive issue brought up by participants was in their thoughts about leaving, or actual attempts at leaving and coming off, Facebook. One participant, who had described lots of complicated issues arising in her life as a result of her time on Facebook, responded in a way that seems to corroborate the issues raised within Section 4.6 and the quantifiable function that "The Others" serve, and the role it plays in her inability to break free of the site:

> "R: Do you ever think of leaving Facebook because of these concerns that you have?
>
> P: No… I don't. I don't know, I feel that if I leave Facebook then I'm not in contact with, like, quite a lot of people. Even though I don't see them outside of Facebook, I just feel like such a relationship with them, so I don't really want to do that." **(INTERVIEW 1, p. 16)**
>
> The idea of coming off Facebook was described as extremely difficult to achieve, and confusing to think about and explain; while for others, it was something they hadn't really ever considered:
>
> "Cause ya, I don't know why, I just, it just doesn't really occur to really leave it…. Actually I did before leave it, I think that was because, um, I just found I just kept on going on and I was quite sort of obsessed with the whole Facebook when I first

started out. I did delete my profile, but then I made it again afterwards. And then I wasn't so, like, caught up with it, like going on Facebook all of the time." **(INTERVIEW 1, p. 16)**

"I really wanted to deactivate my account for quite a while, but I realised that if I do, there's some people that I might lose contact with. Or like, events that I might not be able to see, or other stuff like that, ya… I actually already deactivated it once, but I think I lasted only about three days, then I felt, like, completely lost and cut off from the world." **(INTERVIEW 2, p. 12)**

"…everybody was crazy about Facebook. Everyone was talking about it constantly and I was, like, I'm not bothered… I'll just deactivate…. And then I went back on because it was summertime and I was really bored… then I went back off again because I was just starting uni. And uh, ya, I didn't want to be on there, but then I did reactivate and I've been on there ever since. But now I'm just on there because I can't be bothered to deactivate…." **(INTERVIEW 3, p. 17)**

"For some reason I just don't want to get off of Facebook, so I just stay on there." **(INTERVIEW 4, p. 15)**

"I think, well maybe I could just come off Facebook… but then I don't actually sort of follow through with that sort of idea because, ahm… well, because then there would be people that I would lose contact with…. I guess I feel like to stop Facebook would be, being honest with myself that 70 percent of my friends aren't really my friends and what's the point, there's no meaning to it." **(INTERVIEW 5, p. 12)**

"I have seriously thought about coming off Facebook as I think I could keep in touch with key people without it.

R: What stops you from coming off Facebook?

P: To be honest… I don't know really. If they closed the site down tomorrow, it wouldn't matter to me in the slightest (as long as I could copy and paste a few e-mail addresses first)." **(INTERVIEW 9, p. 6)**

"[I]t just brings to mind that, that phrase, is it like 'Facebook suicide' or something. You know, sort of cutting yourself off from people. Um, I read something like that..." **(INTERVIEW 12, p. 23)**

The next excerpts from one participant epitomise the conflict that participants expressed and the almost constant contradictions observed within the content of what they shared on this issue:

> "Oh my goodness, it's just a disaster, so I did think, right I, I'm going to get off it. But what stopped me was, I don't want to lose that touch with, the contact with my family that I have on there, because I really, really like that and it makes me feel close to them and also um, I just really like the ability to um, as I say, contact people really easily, arrange to meet them, share photos and just generally… keep in, keep in touch with people who you just wouldn't normally speak to…." **(INTERVIEW 8, p. 23)**

> "….I would never at the same time want to be friends with them because I don't want that, you know, I don't really want to be part of their lives, or for them to be part of mine any more. So, I suppose it's just, having a quick look! But then not having any more contact, you know…." **(INTERVIEW 8, p. 24)**

> (And yet while earlier reflecting about her contact with her family on Facebook)
> "…my middle brother does no, doesn't do any status updates and he doesn't put up any photos online, so no. He doesn't, he just, I don't know why he uses Facebook, but, but, I don't get anything out of him through Facebook. Uhm, my youngest brother, he does do status updates occasionally, but again, he reveals nothing. So, I wouldn't say I get anything from them at all through Facebook." **(INTERVIEW 8, p. 18)**

The sense of confusion and uncertainty is persistent. This example from one participants' interview is representative of other participants' interviews as well as the research process itself, that left the researcher grappling with contradictory statements and themes.

4.7v Is it Addictive?

A further key issue with users, and their feeling as though they weren't quite in control of their Facebook use, was described in terms of its addictive quality, both that which they

had experienced themselves as well as what they observed in others. Observations about others led to further assumption-making about others, but also aspects of uncertainty. In comparing themselves to others, participants shared the feeling that perhaps they in fact were missing something, or that perhaps everyone else knew something they didn't....

> "I just found I just kept on going on and I was quite sort of obsessed with the whole Facebook…. Ya, too addicted to it, 'cause I noticed, like, when I logged on to the internet I'd like somehow go on to Facebook, without realising that maybe I should just do my work, or things like that." **(INTERVIEW 1, p. 16)**
>
> "I just find that bit weird. Not weird, but I just don't see any reason for why people do that because I find that quite, um, well that's just their life. And I find that a bit weird, and some of them are just literally on it 24/7 and I'm not like that, and I find that, like, what do you do on there that you're on there all of the time, like, what is it you're doing, like, maybe what am I not doing? I don't know, I don't know what I don't know what I could do on there." **(INTERVIEW 1, p. 22)**
>
> "But Facebook, I don't know, I just feel like I HAVE to check it….
>
> R: Can you say a bit more about that feeling?
>
> P: I think… I don't know… I think it's an addiction… I don't know, I think, ya." **(INTERVIEW 2, p. 13)**
>
> "… I can understand why people get really into it because it's… I don't know, it's such a, like it's really addictive, but just for the sake of being addictive, it's not even… It's addictive for no reason. But um… how do I feel about it? I just think like… give up! Like, there's no point, you've gone off it, if you're, like, that addicted to it go back on it. No one really cares." **(INTERVIEW 3, pp. 27–8)**
>
> "I had to do sort of like a therapy like AA – you're not going to drink today! You are NOT going to go on his profile! You're not going to see them – one, because it's not good for you. And then also because it's not real, another fake part comes in." **(INTERVIEW 7, p. 7)**

Even without feelings of addiction, participants expressed feeling a sense that their control over their actions was taken away while on Facebook, and they couldn't really understand why they were doing what they found themselves doing while on there:

> "…newsfeed initially and then… but then I click on, you know, on their photos and it takes me to their page and then something will be in their photos, someone will have made a comment who I know, and that triggers me thinking about them and I'll go to their page, ah… I never… ahm… I never go on thinking, oh, I want to check someone's page…. Sometimes I can feel more voyeuristic than other times, like I'll check out people I know, or those I'm close to, and then other times ahm… just, you know, someone who I don't know so well who I haven't really had contact with at all, I'll check out their photos and then, especially when I've got other things to do, I'll go, 'what am I doing?'. I don't know anyone in this photo. Um… in any of these photos…." **(INTERVIEW 5, p. 11)**

> "I use the chess package a lot and indulge in Vampire wars (I don't see the point in this but it keeps me away from studying….)." **(INTERVIEW 10, p. 2)**

4.7vi Facebook in control all of the time?

As well as in some instances, it wasn't just about participants' actions being "controlled" while on Facebook. Behaviour off of Facebook was described as being dictated by the process of belonging and participating in life on Facebook:

> "Like, you know when you go out these days, it's a common thing to discuss Facebook, I mean people will just discuss it, like they're discussing a random day out with friends or.... You know, like, not that I go clubbing and stuff, but I've had that with people taking so much pictures when they're clubbing, that they're not actually enjoying themselves for the whole night, they're just too busy taking photos." **(INTERVIEW 3, p. 6)**

Participants also described how their use of Facebook caused almost a sense of urgency that they described as controlling their actions and use of the site. A common feeling that this was being driven by a need they felt to be "in contact" or to "have to know/see" if anything new had happened:

"I found that I would never really concentrate properly because I kept on thinking that maybe, I don't know, maybe someone was going to put something on my wall and maybe I should respond, maybe I need to respond to it, or something is going to happen like an event thing that I need to know about. So, I never really concentrated properly on my work...." **(INTERVIEW 1, p. 17)**

"I really feel the need to go on and check, even though I know there won't be much going on. It's just maybe someone's written on my wall, or, I don't know, put up a status that I need to see, or someone's sent me a message, even though messages don't really happen much…." **(INTERVIEW 2, p. 13)**

"I'm just on there mainly for the sake of it. Because I've got a habit of going on there and I'm always on it." **(INTERVIEW 4, p. 14)**

"Whenever I do my work, my Facebook is also plugged in, I find it distracts me a lot. But I just leave it up, in case someone needs to get in contact." **(INTERVIEW 4, p. 17)**

"And, and that's why I think Facebook also can be a bit… horrible. Because you end up, like, in this case, finding out things, or looking at pictures, just to, you know, masochistic… like every day I would go on his profile book. EVERY SINGLE DAY. To see whether something NEW, she had said something or, you know." **(INTERVIEW 7, p. 11)**

4.7vii How Does Facebook Work?

Further issues expressed by participants of feeling "without control" related to their sense of not understanding some basic functions of how Facebook operated. One participant spoke at length about feeling that she had done everything possible to make her profile safe and secure and that this meant she was in control of who was seeing what. However, when I reflected what she had been saying, there was a contradictory response:

"R: So, you feel that having the security settings as you have them, that you are safe.

P: I actually don't feel safe. I don't know um.... Even though I have my security settings set quite high, as in it's just friends, I still somehow think that maybe, somehow, some… you can just get on to it, I don't know how. But I just don't feel that secure, really not that much, no…." **(INTERVIEW 1, p. 15)**

Participants' further uncertainty, as well as at times stronger feelings of being suspicious and untrusting of the site, were also uncovered in this theme:

"I think it's quite tricky, the fact that they say what are you thinking up at the top in that box…. They trick you, well, not trick you, it's just well… I don't know, I think they, like, ask people, ya, they are asking you what do you feel like, what are you thinking… and then you just fill it in there.

R: And you feel that's tricking you?

P: I don't know, I think it's just… I don't really have a reason for thinking that." **(INTERVIEW 2, p. 17)**

"Like, I know you can make your profile private, but… it still doesn't mean anything." **(INTERVIEW 3, p. 8)**

"Facebook feels dangerous in a way…." **(INTERVIEW 5, p. 2)**

4.7viii What is It?!

This final category has thus far highlighted the process experienced by participants of experiencing further themes of assumption-making and uncertainty about whether Facebook ultimately leaves them feeling in control or out of control. However, through the process of participants making many judgements and assessments of Facebook and implicitly questioning their use and what was actually going on, what were they getting from Facebook? There also appeared to be a more explicit questioning of exactly what Facebook is:

"It's weird, though, because there was, like, MySpace and stuff and all that sort of stuff before Facebook, but it wasn't… it didn't have the effect that Facebook has, in people's lives. I don't know." **(INTERVIEW 3, p. 22)**

> "Is that the new world? That, that's the new way we socialise, not actually seeing each other face to face? And we just speak, like, through the internet." **(INTERVIEW 3, p. 26)**
>
> "It feels like an illusion. Of, of connectedness…." **(INTERVIEW 5, p. 8)**
>
> "It was more like, what is this Facebook about? Because, yes… it's not like an email, it's different. You know, that relationship, the way we think about, ah, the way we relate with people with, on Facebook. It's completely different from emails, face to face, or it's trying to be, like, face to face, therefore it's… it gets, I don't know, in the middle between reality and... nothing." **(INTERVIEW 7, pp. 3–4)**
>
> "I do think that Facebook is changing and it has changed …a lot of things. Or maybe somehow change or highlight, highlighted things, you know, it's like making it much more obvious. Things that were already happening…." **(INTERVIEW 7, p. 24)**
>
> "I think that's, it's like, it's become such a monster now Facebook, hasn't it?" **(INTERVIEW 11, p. 3)**

This type of reflection on Facebook was persistent. Given most of the participants were left questioning their process of engagement as well as the very entity of Facebook this suggests that something in the relational experience of Facebook was confusing for participants.

4.7ix Findings in Relation to Previous Research

The overriding theme of uncertainty versus assumption-making and knowing continues to weave itself into this final category. The many questions raised by participants about the process, meaning and psychological implications of Facebook feel as though they far outweigh any significant understanding gained. Participants express that it makes their lives easier and this is described as a benefit, a finding also reported by Pempek and colleagues (2009). However, this notion that easier signifies better is clearly challenged in other statements made by participants. The resulting category about exactly what

Facebook is and what it actually provides, may be reflected in the more general research, in terms of the paradoxical nature of the internet as a whole, both enhancing relatedness as well as increasing isolation (Hanlon, 2001). This was further highlighted by Katz and Rice (2002) who argued that the internet is both enabling and disabling, raising questions about how users balance feelings of love and hate. There has been further evidence presented regarding the resulting polarised thinking that the internet is both "good for me" and "bad for me", suggesting a theme of ambivalence (Campbell, Cumming and Hughes, 2006).

Perhaps some of the confusion lies in the fact that the internet has been found to offer a sense of security (Barak and Gluck-Ofri, 2007), with Facebook further being found to be the most trustworthy online social networking venue (Fogel and Nehmad, 2009). Is it that this sense of security lulls users into a false sense of security and that they don't actively question aspects of their involvement online? Participants commented to varying degrees about the "unwritten rules" of Facebook, with the distinct notion that everything is always implied, rather than known or recorded. Tang (2009) argued that online environments tend to decide and create their own unwritten rules. However, in an atmosphere of constant change and only vague guiding principles and rules, it seems that users, with their guards down and their minds open, are thus left vulnerable.

Matute and colleagues (2007) examined how individuals attribute positive outcomes as being brought about by their own behaviour. These findings might suggest that users attribute "good" outcomes and characteristics upon themselves and that the "bad" comes from elsewhere. It is very revealing, perhaps, that the phrase "it ***makes me feel…***" comes up again and again within the interviews with participants. This choice of language

is indicative of a 'victimhood' mentality (Hall, 1993), where experience is assumed to be entirely determined by the external environment – which might, again, suggest a Kleinian-type understanding of the relational dynamics that are arguably triggered through the medium. However, whether this is something that *the medium itself* helps to generate, or whether the kind of people who are drawn to the medium *already* have this kind of relational propensity, is open to debate; but it certainly appears to be further reminiscent of a paranoid-schizoid form of functioning. Perhaps, at the very least there is the likelihood that the medium itself does exacerbate it, if not actually creating it. While a greater exploration of the 'victimhood' mentality or archetype (Hall, 1993) is not within the remit of this study, there does seem to be a clear prevailing feeling that the users of Facebook feel "done to", and that this would therefore be an area in which much more research and exploration could be well placed.

Perhaps this is related to users' description of comparing of themselves to others on Facebook. Gonzales and Hancock (2011) identified how Facebook is both enabling of self-esteem (through the freedom afforded by selective self-presentation), but that comparing self to others, which is rampant on Facebook, can lead to reduced self-esteem.

It can be argued that the medium of Facebook holds an engaging power. When considering the work of Walther, et al. (2009), in terms of the warranting principle (referred to on p 39), the provision of unspoken corroboration allows users to feel effectively as if they "know more" about others. This mysterious and potentially "magical" power regarding what Facebook can offer appears significant. A good example of this comes from a very recent addition to Facebook, a function called "See Friendship". It has been designed to allow users to "see more" about their friends, or friends of

friends. It basically summarises all interaction and available data that Facebook holds on two individuals. Facebook groups set up in support of the new application are littered with comments to the tune of "I LOVE it! It's awesome! How do they do that?"

This sense of enlightenment and enjoyment that users gain from what Facebook offers also contain aspects outside of their control. Above on page 129, a participant states of Facebook: "…it's addictive for no reason"; this seems to be very revealing, and highlights the nature of this medium and its impact on awareness and consciousness. The resulting sense of disconnection between what people know and experience, and their clarity about this, seems perhaps to be fundamentally undermined. The sense that they do not know what is going on and that whatever is going on is outside their control was further highlighted above by another participant reflecting: "I don't know, I don't know what I don't know what I could do on there." This seems to signify the constant theme that is symptomatic of the whole Facebook experience. With all of these unanswered questions and so many people increasingly engaging in online social networking environments, there is a clear need for greater understanding of the complex psychological meanings, and for Counselling Psychologists, along with other psychologists, to keep up with these big questions, and the latest relevant research findings.

4.8 The Grounded Theory – The Complicated Relational Experience of Facebook

This research has sought to gain insight into the nature of the relational experience of Facebook for its users, interrogating that experience in a way that is of direct relevance to Counselling Psychology practice. The conceptualisation of the key categories in terms of the often opposing themes that users' accounts display enables the true complexity of this relational experience to be highlighted. The data suggest that Facebook perhaps either elicits or creates very confused behaviour amongst the participants of this study when trying to think about their use of Facebook. Users appeared to be mostly consciously unaware of their difficult feelings of ambivalence about Facebook and their relational experiences while using it. Participants felt close to the process taking place on Facebook; their use of Facebook also appeared to leave them feeling quite emotive, and many had very strong opinions on the subject of Facebook that they were eager to share. All participants placed emphasis on the role of the "Others" (which suggested perhaps a type of dependence, or even addiction). More generally, our reliance or dependence on technology as a society on the whole is becoming an increasing concern (Baym, 2010; Buffardi and Campbell, 2007; Donath and boyd, 2004), and Facebook is just one facet of this issue (Rosen, 2012). However, there seemed to be more depth within the data than simple information overload which is so prevalent in this "connected" age. The emphasis on the role of the "Others" (as labelled by the researcher), being used apparently by participants as a support system, also highlights a kind of impulsivity (as raised by Mottram and Fleming, 2009) with participants relying on "Others" who they themselves described mainly as people virtually unknown or not cared about, but who also appeared to play a very important role for the participants.

This seems to point to a complexity inherent within the participants' experiences on Facebook. Research related to the relational aspects of Facebook, especially from a Counselling Psychology perspective, is currently non-existent. Relationally speaking, the data suggests that Facebook may be providing an environment that offers some differences to traditional face-to-face relating that can be challenging for users fully to understand, specifically their ability to discern what is positive and negative within this experience. Whitty (2008) suggested that cyberspace may potentially offer a psychologically beneficial space. This element may, to some degree, be supported through the current research findings (as well as others – Pempek et al., 2009; Daniel, 2008; Steinfield, Ellison and Lampe, 2008; Barak and Gluck-Ofri, 2007, etc.), indicating that in various ways this could be possible. However, online-social networking, and Facebook in particular, offers a unique online space. There is evidence within the current research that, at times, Facebook does not appear to be acting as a beneficial psychological space. Thus, this study found that, in many instances, belonging to and engaging on the site leaves participants feeling confused, angry and generally unsettled (among many other emotions which were found to be felt, with varied levels of intensity).

Participants were observed to be drawing conclusions about aspects of relationship and/or implied meanings of relating, with it being apparent that assumptions made on Facebook led to the truth (a similar finding also found by Weisbuch, et al., 2009). And this knowing vs not knowing was prevalent within all data from the study. Furthermore, the prevalence of deep emotional reactions being elicited within participants while

thinking about Facebook, and within their time on Facebook, was indicative further of the significant, but complicated emotional reaction amongst participants.

Thus, in summary, this study could be said to have found three main implications regarding Facebook and its relational implications. First, there are potential implications for clients – i.e. in terms of the impact of Facebook upon their relational selves. Secondly, there are implications for Counselling Psychologists and other psychologists; i.e. in how they understand the impact of Facebook on clients as well as their own professional issues in terms of how they work with users of Facebook and how they conduct themselves in online social networking situations. Thirdly, there are implications for therapeutic relationships; i.e. how a Counselling Psychologist understands the potential relational issues raised by Facebook in users, and what role this understanding might play within the development and maintenance of effective therapeutic relationships.

4.9 Using the Internet and Social Networking in Psychological Practice

Levahot's work (2009), as examined in Levahot et al. (2010), indicates that perhaps there is also another potential dimension for working therapeutically with internet users. It is suggested that

> recognizing clients' online behaviour as part of a class of behaviours that may be relevant for treatment provides the psychotherapist an opportunity to examine its function…. [W]hen viewed as clinically relevant behaviour, the client's online behaviour may be used strategically in psychotherapy to help clients reach

> therapeutic goals. When online behaviour is not recognized as such, it is a missed opportunity.
>
> (Levahot et al., 2010, 162–163)

danah boyd, a social media researcher, explores on her website the suggestion that social networking may be being used by therapists. The suggestion is made that one particular therapist watches a client using Facebook, to help provide insight into her relational world. While boyd states that she is unsure about the validity of this information she has received, and while this kind of therapeutic activity would need careful thinking through in relation to its ethical implications, appropriate therapeutic procedure and so on, it certainly raises questions about what can actually be gleamed from Facebook and whether it might have a place in therapeutic work within the not-so-distant future.

Levahot et al. (2010) discuss where a line should be potentially drawn regarding psychologists making use of a client's online behaviour for the therapeutic process. This issue was raised based on their observations of increasingly common behaviour amongst trainee psychologists. It was becoming apparent within their study that trainee psychologists (especially those of a younger generation) were not thinking twice about seeking whatever relevant information might be available through online channels regarding their clients, and in particular looking at Facebook. Levahot et al. (2010) warn that this process of seeking information without the consent of the client and "behind their back" carries all manner of ethical questions, as well as potential concerns for the therapeutic relationship. They found that trainees engaging in this type of behaviour were doing so under the guise of "knowing or finding out the truth" (ibid., 2010). However, as discussed by Levahot et al. (2010), research by Kelly (1998) indicated that a

significant number of clients do keep secrets from their therapist, and that this secret-keeping was, in fact, a significant predictor of positive factors in the therapy (a view which is consistent with Winnicott's notion of the 'core self' – Winnicott, 1963/1965). Furthermore, it highlights the tendency for information online to be presumed to be "more real".

Lehavot et al. (2010) discuss their amazement that there has not been more focus on this issue, and make a strong statement about the importance for psychologists of any age to understand how OSNSs are being used. However, there is also the notion that supervisors traditionally available to support the clinical and ethical practice of more inexperienced psychologists are perceived as having a lack of knowledge in the area of OSNSs (Taylor et al., 2010). In many cases, this is indeed the case, and therefore "psychologists with the least amount of professional experience will be facing some of the most complex situations regarding the distinction between professional and private information" (ibid., 157).

4.10 Implications for the Practice of Counselling Psychology - Blurred Boundaries – Personal versus Professional Societal Issues

As online social networking sites (OSNS) and the social reality that accompanies them continue to spread around the globe, it is becoming apparent that the workplace is now entering the frame. The issue of Private vs Public then also becomes Personal vs Professional. Whilst the phrase "Web 2.0" encompasses our networking and sharing

online, the phrase “Enterprise 2.0” describes efforts to bring technologies like OSNSs into the workplace (Giles, 2010).

Research by Peluchette and Karl (2010) examines the nature and content of material posted on OSNS profiles. They observe that Facebook users do not anticipate the interpenetration of their personal and professional lives, despite the frequency of employers monitoring and checking employees or would-be employees. They suggest that:

> this reckless tendency to post anything and everything on one’s profile is in part due to students’ perceptions that the likelihood of anyone other than fellow students or recent alumni seeing their posting is remote… yet evidence suggests employers are looking. (Peluchette and Karl, 2010, 30)

Complications involved in the use of Facebook, e.g. for teachers walking the tightrope between appropriate personal/professional boundaries on OSNSs, are also being highlighted (Maranto and Barton, 2010).

There are indications that things may change and move rapidly, whilst the management of this personal/professional divide remains unclear. Smith and Kidder (2010, 1) suggest that:

> Facebook’s own policies suggest that an organisation may face legal challenges if it considers an applicant’s Facebook page as part of the selection process. Just as importantly, there are ethical issues – in particular, an individual’s right to privacy – which must be considered.

However, this area is just beginning to unfold, with references in the media gradually becoming more and more prevalent.

This uncertainty could be described as a pervasive 'blurring of the lines'. Equally the sense that users of online social networking have not entirely thought through their involvement and the possible personal and/or professional implications indicates that this is an ongoing and potentially growing concern for users. There have been clear examples in the media of situations where this process of information falling outside of its intended audience has resulted in varying outcomes, from embarrassment, to job loss and even leading to murder and suicide (McGuinness, 2010a, b; Steele, 2010b; Anonymous, 2010; Perrie, 2009).

The impact of Facebook on users' personal and professional relationships may include the creating of dilemmas, potentially traumata, which clients could well be presenting to Counselling Psychologists.

4.11 Reflection on the Process of the Research Itself

A frequently discussed theme within this research, has been the reflection on the process of the technology continuing to move and change with little or no time for users to "catch up". So too, was the process of compiling this research. This is perhaps somewhat reflective of the fact that the eventual timescale of the research which was somewhat outside of the researcher's control ended up being shorter than expected and encompassing a general feeling of "being rushed". This experience, and the wish to have more time to process and reflect upon all of the issues raised and explored, have been

recurring concerns for the researcher. Yet perhaps this is also reflective of the subject itself. As previously commented upon, Roblyer and colleagues (2010) stated that research in this area can never offer more than a snap-shot in time. The resulting feeling of never quite getting enough time to incorporate all of one's thoughts and ideas is perhaps symptomatic of this fast moving medium itself. This is evidenced by the increasing stream of new media stories and academic material alike that are appearing with increasing frequency, but which cannot be incorporated within this piece of work. And so there is a resulting feeling of chasing, trying to keep up with a powerful crashing wave running away from where one is, which one knows will not stop, and yet which one will also never catch. This analogy is also representative of the world of technology, and perhaps also in relation to the present research and the potential psychological implications that are raised.

5.0 Evaluation and Transferability of Findings

The exploratory nature of this research has perhaps resulted in far more questions than answers. Given the partly exploratory aim of the research, the choice of methodology was well suited in order to allow the research to develop and take on its own direction, within the subjective context in which this occurred. The following chapter will explore and critically evaluate the process, findings, approach and transferability of this study and its results, and more importantly, the potential implications of these findings for Counselling Psychology theory and practice. Suggested directions for further research will then be outlined.

5.1 Evaluation of the Research Process

Initial concerns were expressed by some (but not all) research authorities in the University (see Section 4.0) regarding the research's distinctive relevance for Counselling Psychology. As a result, it was necessary for the research area to be stoutly defended throughout the research process.

The tendency towards alarm which frequently accompanies "new" societal and technological constructs has already been explored (see Section 1.4). For those "stuck in old ways" and afraid to upset the balance of their own position and where they feel in control, the idea of thinking and doing things differently can be a profound challenge to their sense of security. New technology thus has the potential to bring a sense of hesitancy from an older generation, with worries of being made obsolete as a younger generation ventures forth with means and methods unfamiliar to them (though perhaps,

with Facebook becoming a venue for both the young and the old, age is less of a factor). The downplaying of the importance of such technological and communicative issues and their relevance within many disciplines of study is apparent. It certainly seems that the discipline of Psychology is very much afflicted by this very pervasive view: a view which is perhaps dramatically evidenced by the recent publication of an international collection of 29 prominent researchers combining their expertise to explore key areas of internet research (Hunsinger, Klastrup and Allen, 2010). Described as the first of its kind, academic perspectives are used to explore the impact of the internet, and include issues of law, language, aesthetics, sociology, multicultural issues, politics, activism and so on…. None of these contributions expressly covers an explicitly *psychological* account of the role that this rapidly evolving technology has in people's lives. Similarly, a very considerable proportion of publications about online social networking, and about Facebook in particular, focuses on issues of business and commerce, looking for instance at how Facebook can be harnessed and used for personal or corporate gain.

Initially, the researcher was wishing to find an area of study that she considered interesting, and which also presented an opportunity to research a topic that was "current" in the field. The researcher's own experiences on Facebook, and her awareness that Facebook was quickly infiltrating people's lives in modern culture, led her in the direction of social networking. This personal observation, in combination with increasing anecdotal indications that clients were presenting more regularly with a range of issues relating to the use of Facebook, and the central focus in Counselling Psychology training on working relationally with clients, together led the researcher to question the experience and impact of Facebook from a relational standpoint.

Another topic of consideration included examination of the process of online therapy and the establishment of online therapeutic relationships. An initial proposal and review of the literature was completed on the latter topic in order to ascertain its possible relevance and interest as a research subject. However, the literature suggested that online therapy was not really condoned or practised by chartered psychologists, and stood as something considered to be quite separate (Barnett, 2005) – different, certainly, from the skills and processes utilised by Counselling Psychologists. Instead, online therapy was at that time being reported as being used more by those with limited training (BPS, 2000). The researcher also felt that the topic of online therapy did not effectively encompass the issues in which she was interested and which she saw a pressing need to examine, which was more specifically related to online social networking.

Also considered as a possible research focus, was the possibility of interviewing practising Counselling Psychologists on their experiences of online social networking topics being raised in their client work. The researcher felt that research examining users' direct relational experience would be more appropriate for gaining greater understanding of the psychological and relational processes involved in online social networking. Speaking secondarily to Counselling Psychologist's was also felt to be missing the central aim of the researcher's interests, given her wish to gain greater understanding of the actual experience of Facebook users themselves, within the context of Counselling Psychology's strong relational approach. This latter area appeared to the researcher to be of potentially greater use, and to warrant further attention owing to the pervasiveness of Facebook at the time, and the dearth of research into it in relation to the theory and practice of Counselling Psychology.

At the time of the research topic being consolidated, Facebook had approximately 50 million users, a number which has now increased by almost twenty times throughout the course of this research being completed. This strongly suggests that social networking constitutes an area of interest whose relevance and importance are increasing with bewildering rapidity. Despite being of broad interest across a myriad of disciplines, the researcher maintains that the social networking phenomenon is of major relevance for and importance to the relational clinical practice of Counselling Psychologists. The BPS guidelines for appropriate 'D Level' research state that trainee psychologists are responsible for: "the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication" (QAA, 2008). Despite there being limited research directly related to the work of Counselling Psychologists, social networking has clearly been shown to be of great importance and significance for the present and future work carried out by Counselling Psychologists (and arguably even more so than for other sub-disciplines of Psychology). Therefore, this research is generating new knowledge at the cutting-edge of the Psychology discipline, which its Counselling Psychology branch is especially well placed to develop and make sense of in a clinically enlightening and useful way.

5.1i Possible findings in relation to Psychodynamic Theory – Is Facebook a Good-Enough Mother?

As a Counselling Psychologist thinking about the data, there are some interesting themes emerging from the findings. Participants' use of Facebook could be said to be either eliciting or creating regressive behaviour (which at one level could be understood in

psychodynamic terms by the observed mirroring behaviour, attachment-like behaviours and the inability to tolerate ambivalence). Their need for, and reliance upon, Facebook and, as this researcher hypothesises, the emphasis on the role of the "Others", suggests perhaps that Facebook may be being used unconsciously as a kind of substitute attachment figure. Overall, the findings suggest that the relational experience of Facebook may be impacting upon users in two distinct ways: first, there is potentially an inter-relational experience of Facebook; and secondly, there is potentially an intrapsychic experience of Facebook.

Inter-relational Impact

- How users view others on Facebook
- Users' expectations of others on Facebook
- How users view themselves in relation to others on Facebook
- Facebook being seen as a valuable relational space

Intrapsychic Impact

- Facebook use highlighting feelings of ambivalence (both conscious and unconscious)
- Users' defensive processes: fantasy, denial, rationalisation, projection, splitting, projective identification
- Users potentially relating through Facebook as indicative of their attachment style

In terms of the present study's connection to psychodynamic concepts, as discussed earlier, Amichai-Hamburger (2005) draws attention to the relevance of adult attachment in providing further psychological understanding of internet use and users. This supports the idea that attachment style may be significant within users' Facebook activities. Zoppos (2009), in testing Amichai-Hamburger's contention, found that individuals who

were securely attached were much more likely to be low users of Facebook. Furthermore, Zoppos's (2009) results also indicated that those whose attachment styles were found to be dismissing-avoidant and fearful-avoidant were much more likely to be heavy users of Facebook. These findings strongly support the relevance of attachment theory when considering Facebook use.

Thus, the current study's proposal that elements of Facebook may actually be being used as a substitute attachment figure requires considerably more theoretical and empirical examination. However, this researcher argues that there is potentially a greater depth of study that could be achieved within this area. This study has uncovered themes suggesting that many strong emotional responses can be elicited within users of Facebook. Further exploration of this process may help to uncover aspects of their inter-personal and intrapsychic selves, which would be wholly relevant for the understanding and practice of Counselling Psychology, as the frequency with which social-networking related issues emerge in clinical casework continues to grow.

Further exploration of the actual relational experience and what is elicited within Facebook users would be highly informative, quite possibly taking us beyond the current understanding of adult attachment behaviour and its impact on usage. Psychodynamic theories which could help illuminate users' use of defensive behaviours and expectations of others (as possible projections of their internal worlds) could be very informative and of vital use for Counselling Psychologists in their work with Facebook and other social networking users. Many commentators have emphasised the lack of psychological theory that has been invoked and examined in relation to online relating (Buote, Wood and Pratt, 2009; Lei and Wu, 2007; Ye, 2007; Tait, 2000), and specifically Facebook (Ryan

and Xenos, 2011). Further research is clearly necessary to try and gain some further and more specific understanding of these relational experiences and processes that occur for users of Facebook.

5.2 Contribution to Knowledge and Implications for the Practice of Counselling Psychology

The undertaking of this study was designed to expand on the limited previous research examining the relational experience of online social networking and how this might relate to the work of Counselling Psychologists. The theory emerging from this study has indicated that there are potential implications for clients (i.e. in terms of the impact of Facebook upon their relational selves), as well as for Counselling Psychologists and other psychologists (i.e. in how they understand the impact of Facebook on clients, as well their own professional issues in terms of how they work with users of Facebook and how they conduct themselves in online social networking situations) and therapeutic relationships (i.e. how a Counselling Psychologist understands the potential relational issues raised by Facebook in users, and what role this understanding might play within the development and maintenance of effective therapeutic relationships). More generally there were also questions raised about the impact that Facebook use has on users and its possible support of or elicitation of more primitive paranoid-schizoid levels of functioning as described by Klein (1946) and other object relations theorists (e.g. Greenberg and Mitchell, 1983).

5.2i Potential Relational Implications for Clients

The discovery of the opposing themes which were found with such prevalence in this study and in users of Facebook suggests one of two possibilities: either there is a significant psychic impact inherent when using Facebook, or Facebook tends to attract those participants who possess a pre-existing level of 'paranoid-schizoid'-type functioning as described by Klein (1946), thereby exacerbating people's already-existing difficulty in tolerating ambivalence. While further study is clearly required to further understand this process, it is clear that users' experience of Facebook will have considerable significance for the work of Counselling Psychologists, not least in terms of the assessment and formulation of client presentations. Some understanding of whether Facebook influences or even possibly generates, more regressive levels of functioning in many clients' lives will offer the Counselling Psychologist significantly more insight into at least some of their clients' presenting issues. Moreover, further understanding of the relationship between Facebook use and psychological well-being could also professionally empower Counselling Psychologists to look more directly at, and even ask clients about, their use of online social networking, providing a clearer indication of their support system and how the meaning of "The Others" may be being used by individual clients. Exploration of a client's use of online social networking may also potentially highlight any particular relational dynamic being elicited or enacted through a client's use of Facebook. Within the therapeutic relationship itself, it is also very possible that the relational issues that emerge in the work itself could sometimes be illuminated through an understanding of the client's relational experience in a social networking milieu.

In the course of the research it was also observed that participants reported feeling a sense of needing Facebook, but also being out of control of their Facebook use, indicating potentially addictive patterns. Greater understanding of the qualities and signs of how this posited addiction to Facebook affects users would also support the work of Counselling Psychologists, both in relevant specific work with clients but also more generally in terms of helping them gain a broad background understanding of social networking's relational milieu and its vicissitudes. For instance, the activities and degree to which each client felt a need to participate on Facebook could provide Counselling Psychologists and other psychological therapists with (at the very least) clues to clients' relational functioning. As already implied above, there may be commonalities, or indeed interesting differences, associated with how a client actually relates to Facebook and how they might relate in the therapy room itself, or in the outside (offline) world. Such differences and/or similarities could very possibly benefit, in therapeutic terms, from being further explored by the Counselling Psychologist. The findings of this research further suggest that users can and often do experience profound and meaningful emotions on Facebook, and Counselling Psychologists can play a key role in enabling the expression and validation of these more profound experiences of clients. By allowing these experiences into the therapy room, clients will be better supported by giving them permission and space to explore and share their experiences from Facebook within a therapeutic setting.

5.2ii Potential Professional Issues for Counselling Psychologists

Many Counselling Psychologists themselves are no doubt users of Facebook, and this study has therefore highlighted that Psychologists themselves will by no means be

immune from the potential themes described in Section 5.2i. Therefore, it can be argued that Counselling (and other) Psychologists need to be open to exploring *their own* use of Facebook, and to critically examining the meaning that Facebook holds in their lives, and what needs it might be meeting for them. Reflection on this issue is crucial, both for Counselling Psychologists' own self-awareness, and also for ensuring as far as possible that they are aware of any meaning or framework of understanding that they might be importing into their work with clients who are looking at social networking experiences.

Furthermore, as recent research has echoed (Lehavot et al., 2010; Taylor et al., 2010), the level of exposure which online social networking has generally provided leaves Counselling Psychologists and other psychologists with important new concerns and potentially new ethical dilemmas, with which psychologists must now contend. The most resounding question that the researcher herself has increasingly heard as an issue causing alarm amongst her colleagues is the difficult situation when a client finds his or her psychologist/psychological therapist on Facebook, and requests to be "friends". This and many other complicated situations are inevitably going to arise as this research has indicated there is perhaps a sense of *entitlement* over online information, as well as sometimes frequent assumption-making taking place. It would therefore seem that if Counselling Psychologists do not have the awareness to provide their clients with space to talk about what happens in their online and social networked lives (including what they may have found out about their own psychologist practitioner online), then there may well be clinically significant issues that are being left at the door of the therapy room.

5.2iii Potential Implications for Therapeutic Relationships

Following from the previous two sections (5.2i and 5.2ii), it would seem that there is a potential for Counselling Psychologists to become unaware of important aspects of their clients' lives, if they do not at least consider, if not encourage, clients to share their experiences of online social networking. It is all too easy for important issues and topics to be considered as taboo, or merely unimportant in therapy settings. As in the previous example, the client who has discovered something about a psychologist practitioner online may not feel that they can bring this to their sessions. The present research has therefore uncovered a need for Counselling Psychologists to ensure that these taboos or potential 'no-go areas' for therapeutic work are not created. Given the rapidly changing and constantly evolving way in which online social networking is being used, it is imperative that this issue does not become something that the Counselling Psychology profession deems to be irrelevant. Conversely, in order to ensure the maintenance and development of solid and therapeutic relationships that are fully grounded in modern culture, keeping up with changing relational "norms" and an increasingly online culture will arguably be imperative for the work of Counselling Psychologists.

5.3 Evaluation of the Research Design and Methodology

Due to the limited resources of the study, the research focused only on the experiences of Facebook users, rather than looking more broadly to include other online social networking sites or applications. While the term "online social networking" is used frequently within this study, the research has been limited to the experience of Facebook

users. Therefore, great caution must be taken when considering whether the results of the current research might have any wider applicable significance for other kinds of online social networking. Thus, while the general and basic purpose of all online social networking is to provide networking and greater connection between users, many of the results of this study are particularly linked to aspects of the specific design features of Facebook itself. Further research into Facebook, as well as on other online social networking sites, and any apparent differences between OSNSs, would be equally important to investigate in future studies. Further qualitative and quantitative research would also allow for more generalisable findings, while the GT method provided an appropriate method for the exploratory nature of this research and the tentative proposing of new theory, this method has limited the transferability of these findings. One key achievement of this research has been to show how the relational and psychological experience of online social networking can be interrogated through careful qualitative research, with the rich data that can be thus generated for reflection and new theory-building.

5.3i Time Issues

While the time available for this research was sufficient to provide ample and rich data leading to saturation, further time allocated to the researcher's own process of reflection regarding the emergent themes and subsequent theory could have been well utilised. Further time would have allowed for a less "stressful" and perhaps, at times, less "forced" process for the research. It was the experience of the researcher that she was often left wanting more time to digest all that was emerging in all its complexity.

However, the nature of the research subject, and the fast-paced development of the medium, may have been reflected somewhat in this process (as has been discussed pg 134).

5.3ii Participants/Study Size

Participants were all living, and working or studying, in London. Within the planning stage of the research, it was estimated that twelve to fifteen participants might need to be sought in order to achieve saturation. In the event, fourteen were recruited, with significantly more face-to-face interviews completed to gain the most rich data. Face-to-face interviews yielded much richer and consistent data than had been expected, which enabled saturation to be achieved.

The recruited participants consisted of a wide variety of nationalities, however Facebook is utilised widely internationally, and it is therefore duly noted that this current study does not represent the diversity of those who use Facebook across the world. Indeed, it would be surprising if there did not exist substantial, perhaps systematic cross-cultural variations in the impact of Facebook on the relational experience of people from different countries and cultures. Moreover, as this study utilised only a small number of participants, it cannot offer a broad enough base from which to suggest that the results could be generalised to other Facebook users. It is suggested here that further research examining the experiences of users of Facebook from wider geographical locations (in what would inevitably be much broader-scale studies) would be imperative in order to ascertain the cultural or geographical status of the current study's findings.

5.3iii Subjectivity

As is the case with grounded theory, the resulting theory has emerged in the subjective context of the researcher's own interpretation and involvement in the research process. It is therefore at least possible that another researcher, using the same method (and even the same participants), would not reach the exact same, or even very similar, results. In order to achieve results that could be generalised to a wider population, more quantitatively oriented research would likely need to be undertaken to clarify the transferable validity of the reported results. This approach would also support the previously discussed limitation (Section 5.3ii), which may enable a greater number and more diverse range of participants to be involved, thus allowing for more generalisable results. Further exploration of the resulting themes (as outlined in Section 5.4) would need to be explored on a much wider scale in order to ascertain any true transferable meaning of the results.

5.3iv Email Interviewing

The use of email interviewing allowed insights into the different types of responses to be garnered. However, this did also result in three interviews which offered a limited amount to the final and resulting theory. This does not mean that email interviewing is not a valid method in some circumstances; on the contrary, it may be very relevant in contributing towards further understanding of online relational processes. It would be prudent for future studies to consider the use of email interviewing in much greater depth. The researcher also believes that the process of email interviewing could have

benefited from having more time and energy invested in learning the process, with possible training in email interviewing prior to beginning the research.

5.3v Limitations of the Grounded Theory Method

Dallos and Vetere (2005) describe grounded theory as developing middle-range theories. The openness that the method affords, to follow what emerges within the process, also means that to a certain degree, the researcher is unable to follow specific avenues if they do not emerge within the data collection. An initial requirement of this study was that participants had undergone therapy. However, it is notable that participants did not raise the subject of their therapy in the interviews. This might reflect the common theme that users felt that Facebook was a superficial entity and that issues related to its use were not "serious enough" for therapy. One participant, a trainee therapist, expressed some hesitancy that the experienced and "serious" minds in the field would not know about Facebook. This sense that clients may have of their own therapist potentially highlights the need for Counselling Psychologists to make this topic one which clients feel able to bring and share in their therapy experience. This may especially be the case since the findings of this study indicate that while the common feeling was that Facebook is superficial, participants also experienced very profound experiences when immersed in it. However, the lack of mention of therapy by participants might also suggest that they did not feel that this was relevant. Due to the method of grounded theory, the researcher did not raise any topic without it being grounded in the themes/content raised by participants themselves; so perhaps the choice of method, and staying faithful to its procedure, may have limited the kind of data that was able to emerge in this realm. Thus, using a more directive method of data collection would have allowed this topic to

be pinpointed and discussed at greater length. This would have resulted in more direct data, which would in turn have provided information about participants' own feelings about the relevance of their therapy in relation to their Facebook use, and whether and/or how their therapy could support their experiences on Facebook. This would have provided a more direct indication of the relevance to the work of Counselling Psychologists; however, it would potentially not have allowed the same sense of openness and free exploration that the grounded theory method afforded, when faithfully followed.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

This exploratory study has uncovered a number of issues which require more research attention in order to support the ongoing work and training of Counselling Psychologists in light of the rapidly expanding use of online social networking, and its key role in many of their clients' lives. The following are the key areas which are suggested as requiring further research:

- Perhaps one of the most important questions raised was in relation to users' attachment to, and perception of, Facebook, as well as the potential for differences in users' use of the site based on their own attachment patterns. This issue is a significant one for Counselling Psychologists, who often utilise psychodynamic approaches with clients and conceptualise client issues in terms of attachment experiences and relational behaviour. Having a greater understanding of how this aspect of their clients' relational selves may be affected, or even possibly elicited by the use of online social networking, is

therefore of great importance for the ongoing clinical work of Counselling Psychologists.

- Similarly, the question of whether the internet and social networking elicits or merely attracts those with primitive/regressive levels of functioning would be an area requiring more significant understanding. This is especially the case for the work of Counselling Psychologists, as inevitably more and more of their current or future clients will regularly be logging on to Facebook. Having greater insight into the potential effects of Facebook use, as well as indicators of what an individual's Facebook use may say about their psychological health, would aid a Counselling Psychologist's full assessment and formulation of their client's presentation and needs. Furthermore, research into other social networking sites, would also help provide clarification as to whether the psychological "experience" is similar to that of Facebook users. Further research could help to establish whether it is Facebook alone that elicits this more paranoid-schizoid level of functioning (Klein, 1946).

- An important theme was raised in the current research suggesting that the use of Facebook requires users to tolerate varied and persistent feelings or experiences of ambivalence. These ambivalent feelings were evidenced by the frequent opposing forces, which were identified as occurring in many elements of participants' Facebook use. Wider and larger-scale further research in this area might enable a more transferable and generalisable clarification of this impact.

This knowledge could then be disseminated more widely within the discipline, and could feature in the future training of Counselling Psychologists.

Within the work of Counselling Psychologists it would be important to be aware of the potential challenges faced by clients and users of Facebook in needing to negotiate what are sometimes exceptionally powerful feelings of ambivalence. Voicing this possibility to clients may enable more clients to acknowledge this struggle, and to utilise their therapy to discuss issues relating to their Facebook experience. The results of this study suggest that this may well be a potentially key issue for the work of Counselling Psychologists, as many participants reported feeling silly in raising these issues as "problematic", given the tendency for Facebook to be seen as, and reported as being, a "superficial" activity. However, participants reported with even greater emphasis the relief they experienced in having been given the opportunity to discuss their experiences on Facebook – another indication, perhaps, that the opportunity to speak about these experiences in therapeutic settings might be very helpful for many clients.

- This study generated data from a small number of British, London-based residents only. As intimated earlier, further examination of more mixed cultural backgrounds and international users of Facebook could also benefit from further research attention. Research covering a broader range of participants could enable greater levels of transferability and understanding in this area. For instance, having a greater understanding of the use of Facebook across more varied cultures and the potential of belonging to the Facebook community, whilst

also belonging to their offline community, could be a meaningful phenomenon to explore. Durkheim (1972) referred to *anomie*, defined as a condition when social or moral norms are confused. How Facebook is used, and the meaning this takes on for users from different cultures, could provide further insight into the psychological implications of its use, as well as issues of belonging and identity.

- Issues in research surrounding addiction to Facebook and the internet in general have already been raised in the literature (Mottram and Fleming, 2009; Whang et al, 2003; Beard and Wolf, 2001). The impulsivity and use of Facebook, which participants often described as beyond their control, has also been highlighted in this present study. However, further research is this area would be of benefit for Counselling Psychologists in terms of their understanding and possible diagnosis of this issue. Furthermore, the aforementioned issue of regressive or primitive forms of relating (in the Kleinian sense) being apparent for users of Facebook might suggest that this is prevalent as a result of users' preference for interaction and engagement in an environment that supports a more paranoid-schizoid level of functioning.

- Further exploration regarding the use and meaning of "The Others" (as defined in this study – see Section 4.6) for the users of Facebook also presents an area which could be very significant in the work of Counselling Psychologists. The use of "The Others" has been understood to potentially act as an attachment-like figure, an entity utilised for issues of self-esteem, or as enabling a more active means for

projection. Clarification of the precise role certainly holds significance for Counselling Psychology. Further research would enable a greater level of understanding of users' perception and use of their Facebook friends that might aid Counselling Psychologists to better support clients who rely heavily upon seeking support and/or making assumptions about these "Others". Similarly, further research in this area may also serve to shed light on Facebook's so-called "addictive" quality.

- A further question concerns the potential social and psychological meaning and implications that might result in users of Facebook being exposed to the world of "celebrity", and even in effect becoming "mini-celebrities" (Burns, 2009; Lawrence, 2009; Jaffe, 2005). This relatively new phenomenon raises further questions about Facebook users' sense of personal identity, and how this process of presenting and understanding oneself is affected through participation in online social networking. This is perhaps most relevant for younger people who have grown up in the celebrity culture, who do not know any other way of relating or creating their identity, and who cannot imagine a world without the current level of connectedness (whether real or chimerical). It also holds significant implications for Counselling Psychologists and other psychologists working with increasing numbers of "Digital Natives" (Prensky, 2001), with the majority of current practising psychologists falling under the "Digital Immigrant" (ibid., 2001) category. Exploring what, if any, this new "cultural divide" could mean in a clinical setting, and in the work of Counselling Psychologists who will be attempting to

understand the full experience of their "Digital Native" clients, would also be a recommended area for further research.

- Further exploration is required into apparent "victimhood" feelings (Hall, 1993) which appeared to manifest amongst participants, and which seem to be enhanced by various aspects of Facebook's design. The power evoked by the role of a victim being assumed by a client is often explored within the work of Counselling Psychologists. Making sense of this relational dynamic often occurs through greater understanding of a client's background and key relationships. If the use of Facebook is in some way exacerbating or even elicits this dynamic, it would be imperative for Counselling Psychologist's to have greater understanding of this process, and to consider this when working with clients evoking this dynamic in the therapy room itself. Furthermore, within the therapy room or within the relational dynamic of Facebook, this sense of victimhood may also suggest the potential of the drama triangle (Karpman, 1968) to be enacted, in which aggressors and rescuers are subsequently uncovered.

- The reduced sense of loss and endings on Facebook which were observed in this study also pose a very significant area for further exploration to support the work and understanding of Counselling Psychologists and other psychologists. The avoidance or dulled significance of loss and endings, evidenced by long-lost contacts being reinstated and permanently observed, could potentially have powerful effects on users' emotional development, and also keying into what

psychoanalytic theory views as the (often unconscious) denial of death (Becker, 1973). Further substantial research in this area would permit greater understanding of the impact upon users, and how this may subsequently impact on their inevitable experiences with loss and death in their offline lives. Such a fundamental question holds relevance not just for Counselling Psychology or the discipline of psychology; for it leads to much deeper philosophical and existential questions about what it means for users to be negating minor and sometimes more significant experiences with loss, and how this could then impair users' future tolerance and experience of loss in their lives.

- What are the implications for Counselling Psychologists considering both their clients' experience as well as their own identity when private and professional selves "merge" online? Issues have begun to be raised in recent studies (e.g. Lehavot et al., 2010; Taylor et al., 2010) examining professional issues for psychologists in societies that are increasingly connected online. Psychologists have long relied upon a certain level of distance from their clients, and held professional and personal boundaries as very significant in their practice. The process of successfully holding these boundaries is being challenged, and further guidance to support the practice and evolving ethical issues related to these changes requires further examination to support both practising Counselling Psychologists, as well as in consideration of future training guidelines.

As psychological authorities with a plentiful range of relational and clinical skills, Counselling Psychologists need to be involved in the "Virtual Revolution". Counselling

Psychologists are well suited and well placed to take on this role, and to develop deeper psychological understanding of the psychology and psychological dynamics of the Facebook experience. It seems essential that at what is a somewhat precarious time in which the discipline is still struggling to find its professional feet and identity (Counselling Psychology Review, 2009a), Counselling Psychologists need to be at the forefront of understanding and engaging with the therapeutic implications of these revolutionising technologies. A further exploration of the above themes would also enable Counselling Psychology to seek out and create more of a professional and "modern" identity, one which would help solidify their role amongst other mental health professionals and enable them to more effectively serve both present clients and those of the future.

6.0 Conclusion

Online Social Networking has evoked a significant change of environment for relational interactions for an ever-increasing number of "users" in societies across the globe. Facebook and other forms of online social networking are fast becoming something of a necessity in daily life. Those involved in this study described it as difficult, or even impossible, to consider living without. This issue was highlighted on a much greater scale recently by a fake news story issued at the beginning of 2011. The story suggested that Mark Zuckerberg felt that "Facebook had gotten out of control" and had announced that it would be discontinued in a couple of months' time. The outrage, but mostly distress and despair, that outpoured from Facebook's users was overwhelming and clear; users could not imagine being without Facebook. As one succinct comment made by a user and left on Mark Zuckerberg's own Facebook page states: "I hope you're not going to do that! Facebook is my window to the world! I am sure not only for me!"

The emergent theory which has evolved in the course of this research has suggested that there are some very significant and observable relational issues that use of this medium highlights for users of Facebook. The current study's newly generated theory has raised important questions about the true interpersonal and intrapsychic impact on users, and is highly relevant for the relational work of Counselling Psychologists. The findings have indicated themes that are unique to communication through computers and the internet, and through online social networking and Facebook in particular. An attempt has been made to explain how this type of relating is different to traditional face-to-face contact, and how this will potentially be overcome by our adaptable human nature (Walther, 1996). However, this researcher feels that something has been lost in this commonly

held belief that as humans, we will adapt and learn to utilise this medium. This is not to say that the purpose or findings of this research should be interpreted as suggesting that there is something "wrong" or detrimental with online social networking. The constant back and forth of arguments that "it" (the technology) offers new positive levels of openness, versus the view that it has dangerous, negative outcomes, is a dynamic common to the launch of any new communication technology (Baym, 2010; Parks and Floyd, 1996). In many respects, these arguments are irrelevant, for online social networking is here to stay. It is also not to say that we will not eventually adapt this technology appropriately to our "relational selves". It is this researcher's contention that the different relational experiences that online social networking offers deserves much greater study and particularly much deeper psychological understanding of the process that occurs and motivates users to participate. The potential implications that have been identified and discussed, regarding the relational implications for clients, professional implications for Counselling Psychologists and further implications for the creation and maintenance of therapeutic relationships are all of crucial importance for the work and training of Counselling Psychologists.

We are certainly in a state of transition, of learning about the psychological impacts and use of this technology. The findings of this present research, which suggests that Facebook users are drawn into complicated emotional states, reminiscent of more regressive ways of relating, are of particular relevance and interest for the ongoing and future work of Counselling Psychologists. By gaining much greater understanding of this interaction, greater support and guidance for therapeutic work with clients will be enabled. Perhaps more importantly, further insight into this process may become vital as

younger generations increasingly become more comprehensively involved in online relating as a matter of course. This study has raised and potentially uncovered significant issues relating to a more psychodynamic understanding of the use of Facebook. These issues which would benefit from further research, could provide much needed support for the work of Counselling Psychologists in the age of online social networking. Further understanding in this area will aid CP's understanding of their clients, improve their own self-awareness, as well as assisting in the building and maintenance of solid therapeutic relationships.

The speed at which online social networking, its use, influence and design are moving and infiltrating life is perhaps the key issue. Participants' experience with Facebook, indicated some sense of bewilderment. Indeed, the researcher (as an OSN user) has certainly not been immune. My own use of and feelings about Facebook have developed and changed throughout the course of this research. Initially, the researcher was hesitant and overwhelmed by the experience of what could happen, and was actually happening, within Facebook's walls (experienced both personally as well as through the experiences of clients). It was this experience which led the researcher initially to be curious about this area. It wasn't long before the experience of reading around the subject, and beginning to hear from participants, left me feeling as though I must get away from "it", the powerful force that is Facebook! Much like some of my participants, I couldn't quite put my finger on it, but it felt dangerous. I remained, perhaps conveniently, with the excuse that I should stay on, to keep informed throughout the course of the research. Interestingly, a number of close friends and family decided around this time to leave Facebook. Their feelings were, however, that perhaps it is in fact impossible to fully

leave. They found that Facebook provided options and email reminders, with tempting messages, instructing them that at a single click of a button, their Facebook page (and all its original content) may be instantly reinstated. This felt reminiscent of participants' experiences and statements from key figures stating that online social networking is here to stay, it's clearly futile to resist it!

Personally, my own process has included intensive thinking about what I get from the sense of belonging and connection (especially as someone who lives away from my country of origin) from belonging to Facebook. I have changed my name on Facebook to my maiden name that is unknown to clients, in order protect my privacy as a Counselling Psychologist. While there is some evidence that psychologists are beginning to consider this particular issue (Taylor et al., 2010; Levahot, et al., 2010), these are considerations which need to be addressed within the discipline wholly in order to best direct our professional ethics and training. Counselling Psychologists are almost definitely going to find themselves working increasingly with more and more users of Facebook or other online social networking sites. This study has raised (see Section 5.0) numerous potential issues which are closely aligned and/or directly related to the work of Counselling Psychologists and the relational conceptualisation which many employ in their clinical work. This research has highlighted that more thorough research is necessary to ensure that Counselling Psychology is kept apprised and able to adapt to changing relational environments.

Psychologically speaking, the unknown, can be considered as dangerous. Many individuals among the clients that psychologists see, cling to detrimental environments, relationships and relational behaviours because to change and enter the unknown is

considered as far more “dangerous“ than staying with a damaging scenario that is familiar (Ingram, 2006). Perhaps this is what also causes Counselling Psychologists and other psychological therapists to hesitate in their acknowledgement of the immense impact of online social networking upon their present and future practice. The impact of online social networking and the initial findings of this study could suggest that fairly substantial change may need to occur in order to support the needs of our clients, our own professional needs and identities and the processes and needs involved in establishing effective therapeutic relationships.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Roehampton University London

ETHICS BOARD

Recruitment information

Title: COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING: The Significance of Relationship Issues for 'Facebook' Users

Thank you for expressing an interest in this research. I hope that the information below will help you in deciding whether or not to take part. If you have any questions that have not been answered here, please do not hesitate to contact me. My name is Caitlin Allison and I am a 3rd year Trainee Counselling Psychologist on the PsychD programme at Roehampton University.

Brief description of this research project.

This research aims to investigate the experiences of Facebook users in order to begin exploring what this experience is like, and how it might affect a person's relationships in general. Also, the research will consider whether users of Facebook who have also had their own counselling or psychotherapy have found that their Facebook experiences have come into play within their therapy sessions. Facebook is increasingly being used by more and more people across the world, and this research is hoping to gain a clearer picture of how this new cultural phenomenon may be affecting its millions of users in their everyday lives, whether through generating more positive experiences or contributing to psychological distress.

What are the potential benefits for you, and for me?

The research aims to learn about the experiences you have had with Facebook, whether positive or negative. Also, by exploring how these experiences were addressed, if at all, within your counselling or therapy, the hope is to gain a better understanding of significant aspects of this form of online social networking and its relevance to professionals working therapeutically with individuals who engage in social networking. There is currently very little research of this kind in my field of Counselling Psychology, so your participation will help add to current understanding in this area. My research findings will be written up in a thesis, forming part of my Doctoral training. You will have the opportunity to see a copy of my final findings upon request.

What will taking part involve?

You must be 18 or over in order to participate in this study. You must also be a Facebook user, and you must also have undergone counselling or psychotherapy. Participation will involve taking part in an interview lasting approximately one hour. There will be a short introduction, and an additional 30 minutes will be set aside immediately following the interview to discuss your experience of taking part in the study and to answer any questions you may have. The interview will either be carried out in person at a convenient location for you or by email. Interviews conducted in person will be audio recorded and then will be carefully transcribed.

Email interviews will be conducted at your convenience, but will need to be completed within 1-2 weeks. This will involve a question being sent to by email and you providing as much information as you wish in response. If further clarification is needed, this will then be emailed to you once more for you to respond. This process may need to be repeated a few times, but in most instances it will involve at most 3-5 emails exchanges.

Any information which could potentially identify you will be removed at this point. The interview transcriptions will then be looked at individually for the main themes that are discernible from your experience. These themes will then be compared to other interviews, and will help lead my investigations further.

The research will subsequently be written up, and may at some point be published in the professional literature, in part or as a whole.

Participation and ensuring anonymity.

Random codes will be allocated to your transcript, and all identifying details (names, dates, places etc) will be changed. Transcripts will only be seen by myself and my research supervisors. Nobody else will have any access to the recorded material, emails, or the details you have given with regard to your contact information or any other personal/identifiable information etc. This material will be kept separate from any identifiable information (contact details, etc.), and will be stored securely. Please be advised, however, that whilst your emails will not be able to be accessed within my computer system, when email correspondence is used email content is sometimes stored by web hosting companies. While the likelihood of this information being accessed is extremely remote, I want to be sure that you are clear about this aspect of your participation.

What difficulties may arise from participating?

It may be a sensitive or difficult experience for you to talk or communicate about personal experiences. You may find, for example, that speaking about your experiences leaves you more aware of things which feel uncomfortable, or brings to the surface issues that you find upsetting. There will be an opportunity to talk with me briefly about any such issues after the interview, and the debriefing information will provide you with details of where you can find appropriate support, if you would like to discuss any topics or issues that arise for you in greater depth. If at any point you decide that you would not like to continue, or that you would prefer that the information derived from your interview not be used, you will be able to withdraw from the study by contacting me, and without needing to give any information about your decision. After the point of transcription, while quotations and particular reference to your experience will be removed or discounted, themes from your interview may already have been used to inform the direction of the research, and it would not be possible at this juncture to remove any influence that your contribution might have made to the research process.

If you would like to participate, what to do next?

Please contact me, preferably by telephone or email. We can then discuss your involvement further, giving you the opportunity to address any questions you may have. We would then agree on the practical arrangements, such as if, when and where we decide to meet. I will also send you the Consent Form, which outlines the research study and which I will ask you to sign and return before we start.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

With best wishes,

Caitlin Allison

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Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator. However if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Dean of School or the investigator's Director of Studies.

Director of Studies Contact Details:
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APPENDIX 2

APPENDIX 3

Roehampton University London

ETHICS BOARD

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING: The Significance of Relationship Issues for 'Facebook' Users

Brief Description of Research Project: This research will explore the experiences of those who use 'Facebook', and what impact this may or may not have had upon their relationships and their experiences in counselling or therapy. Gaining greater understanding of this phenomenon will help to inform the practice and the training of Counselling Psychologists in the burgeoning age of social networking.

Twelve to fifteen participants will be sought for the research. Participation will involve an interview which will be completed either in person (and audio recorded) or through electronic means (email). Face to face interviews will typically last between 1 and 1.5. hours; electronic interviews may require slightly more time, but this will be spread over a greater period of time (up to 2 weeks), and participants will be able to choose a convenient time to respond.

Investigator Contact Details:

Caitlin Allison
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07788580879
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Consent Statement:

I agree to take part in this research, and confirm that I am 18 years or older and am aware that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time. Depending on when this request is received by the researcher, the essence of the interview may have already informed the direction of the research, and it would be impractical at that juncture to remove all possible influence made upon the research. However, in such circumstances all direct quotations and identifiable information will be removed. Furthermore, I understand that the information I provide will be treated in the strictest confidence by the investigator, and that my identity will be completely protected in any subsequent publication of the research findings.

Name …….

Signature ……

Date ……

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator. However if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Dean of School or the investigator's Director of Studies.

Director of Studies Contact Details:
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APPENDIX 4

ETHICS BOARD

DEBRIEFING INFORMATION FORM

Title of Research Project: COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING: The Significance of Relationship Issues for 'Facebook' Users

Brief Description of Research Project: This research will explore the experiences of those who use 'Facebook', and what impact this may or may not have had upon their relationships and their experiences in counselling or therapy. Gaining greater understanding of this phenomenon will help to inform the practice and the training of Counselling Psychologists in the burgeoning age of social networking.

Twelve to fifteen participants will be sought for the research. Participation will involve an interview which will be completed either in person (and audio recorded) or through electronic means (email/Facebook). Face to face interviews will typically last between 1 and 1.5 hours; electronic interviews may require slightly more time, but this will be spread over a greater period of time (up to 2 weeks), and participants will be able to choose a convenient time to respond.

I would like to thank you very much for your time and participation in my research project. I am aware that as a result of your participation, you may have spoken about some difficult experiences, which may have brought up some uncomfortable memories or feelings.

I would like to offer you the opportunity to talk about anything challenging that may have come up for you during the interview. Is there anything that you would like to talk about that came up for you in the course of the interview? Do you have any further comments or questions?

If you think of anything later, I will be available by telephone or email in order to address any questions/concerns that you may have about this research. You could also contact my Director of Studies Dr. Dokter, her contact details are below. Please also contact me should you be interested in receiving a copy of the fully completed work.

Please note that you have the right to withdraw from this study at any time without giving a reason. If on reflection you would like to withdraw your

data from the study then please contact me and I will destroy your tape and interview transcript. Depending on when this request is received, the essence of the interview may have already informed the direction of the research and it would not be possible to remove all possible influence made upon the research. However, in such circumstances all direct quotations and identifiable information will be removed.

Should you wish to discuss any issue that arose for you during the course of the research in greater depth, for which you may need more specialist support than I am able to offer, you may find the following sources of support useful.

The British Psychological Society (BPS), the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) each has a list of accredited psychologists/therapists. You are able to search for individuals that work in a location that is convenient for you.
Their details are as follows:
www.bps.org.uk (tel: 0116 254 9568)
www.bacp.co.uk (tel: 01455 883316)
www.psychotherapy.org.uk (tel: 020 7014 9955)

Or you can call Samaritans 24 hours a day on 08457 90 90 90.

Within Roehampton, the Medical Centre can be contacted (020 8392 3679); or the Student Welfare Officers may also be contacted:

- Digby Stuart: Jo Granger (tel: 020 8392 3204)
- Froebel: Anne-Marie Joyes (tel: 020 8392 3304)
- Southlands: Belinda Stott (tel: 020 8392 3402)
- Whitelands: Ejiro Ejoh (tel: 020 8392 3502)

Thank you once again for your valued involvement in this research project.

This research is being conducted by:

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Declaration:

I confirm that the research interview was conducted in an ethical and professional manner

Name of participant: Signature:

Date:

Researcher name: Signature:

Date:

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries, please raise them with the investigator. However, if you would like to consult an independent party, please contact the Dean of School or the investigator's Director of Studies.

Director of Studies Contact Details:
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APPENDIX 5

Expanded Ethical Considerations

1) Identity

There is an obvious issue around participants' identity when they will not meet the researcher face to face. However, this was not considered to be a significant issue within this study, as the research did not depend upon using a particular demographic of participant. Participants were advised to protect their identity within emails and not to give any unnecessary information to the researcher. As outlined by Meho's (2006) research into email interviewing, pseudonyms should be used in contact, storage and any form of publication. Similarly, any user names, domain names or other personal identifiers were deleted. Although the gender and age of online participants was not able to be decisively verified, this information was requested and it was assumed that participants were not motivated to alter their stated gender identity or age for any reason related to the research, given that anonymity was guaranteed.

2) Public/Private Space

It is important that participants understand the reality of their degree of anonymity when transmitting information via the internet. There are some constraints upon the protection of their data; for instance email content may be stored by web hosting companies. While the likelihood of this material being seen by others is highly unlikely, the participants were informed of these parameters in order to ensure that they fully understood the situation regarding their data.

3) Informed Consent

While online participants were provided with exactly the same formal information as face to face participants, the researcher's opportunities for checking online participants' understanding was more limited. Researcher contact details were always provided on all information and consent forms (see Appendix 1 and 3), in order to encourage participants to follow up with any questions regarding clarity or other concerns they may have. Furthermore, as previously discussed, participants also had their anonymity confirmed and reassured with further suggestion that they did not disclose information or identify themselves in communications with the researcher.

4) Levels of control

Unlike face to face settings, the researcher has little to no control over the environment in which the participant may be responding to the researcher. The researcher encouraged email participants to complete their responses in a quiet and private location, free of undue distractions. While the researcher was not able to ensure that participants interviewed online were monitored in the same respect as face to face participants, precautions such as providing the participants with interview question upfront, providing contact details of support services and researcher contact details were available to participants at all times ensures that potential issues of distress for the client could be brought to the researcher's attention.

5) Withdrawal

Participants were assured that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time which was clearly set out within their consent literature. Once participant material had been transcribed and coded, while quotations and particular reference to their experience could be removed or discounted, their transcript and themes may already have been used to inform the direction of the research, and it would therefore have been impractical at this juncture to remove any influence that their contribution might have made to the research process.

6) Debriefing

Standard debriefing information forms were given to all participants, regardless of being face to face or online. Similarly, details for the researcher were given again, encouraging participants to contact the researcher by phone or email if they needed to. Furthermore, contact details for the Director of Studies and the Dean were also supplied. Participants were also further informed of their ability to contact the researcher in the event they would like to be sent a copy of the completed work.

7) Protection of participants and researcher

Participants were given information regarding their time commitment from the outset of the research (1-1.5 hours for face to face interviews and 1-2 weeks for email interviews). The researcher also relied on participant self-selection, so no pressure was put on would be participants and they only had

contact with the researcher if they chose to. In order to maintain professional boundaries, the researcher used a university based email address, rather than a personal address.

APPENDIX 6

Example: Face to Face Interview

	OPEN CODES
R: What are your main reasons for belonging to Facebook? What have you found to be the main benefits?	
P: Ummm, the benefits I think, what I enjoy are…keeping, keeping in touch with people through, who I went to school with, who I never have spoken to since, but I quite like seeing what they're doing. I suppose it's being, just being nosey. You know, because I'm not actually in touch with them at all. Just we're "friends". So I, I, I the other thing I like it very much for is looking at my friends holiday photos and stuff, just photos and um, also cause I don't live near my family, um, they don't live in London, um it's, it's a good way of just having a day to day idea of what they're doing, including my mum who's now on there so I can see what she's upto. Ummm, it's quite nice because she'll just put little comments on as a status update and I'll know what she's doing. We don't need a whole phone call to say, you know, I'm just doing this or whatever. It's quite nice, it's makes me feel a bit closer to her day to day life…cause I don't live near her so…	Keeping in touch with people Finding people from past and knowing what they are doing Feeling of being nosey Making connection on FB, but not being in touch Just being "friends" Using FB for seeing friends holiday photos Feeling FB provides more day to day insight on family Knowing more about what mother is doing through status updates Looking for confirmation Needing less direct contact, but feeling closer
R: Right, so she tends to update everyday or…?	Uncertainty about time Making judgement about other's FB use
P: Ya, she sort of updates every, maybe every week. She's not one of these people that update's everyday. But, um, often at the weekends she'll update it and ya, I quite like seeing what she's doing.	Liking to see updates
R: How often do you talk to her?	
P: Probably, probably once a week as well um…But sometimes she'll have updates in the week as well.	
R: So has that changed since she's been on Facebook? How often you speak?	FB not having direct impact on number of direct communication
P: Ah, no. No it hasn't, um…but what it has	Using status updates to inform direct

done is given us, I, will sometimes refer to what she's said on Facebook in the week like, she once said her office has been invaded by a wasp's nest! And so, the next time I spoke to her, oh, I saw that you put on Facebook you had this wasp issue at work, I mean, it was, you know, so, it's, could've, sort of stay in touch with each other. Even though we don't talk more… (R: Sure) ...because of it.	communication Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Feeling FB provides a greater sense of being in touch
R: And how do you feel about updates? Do you do status updates?	Feeling use of FB is weird
P: Ya, I do…Umm, it's kinda, it's weird, I kinda go through phases, I'll do updates sort of, um…every few days. But then I will have weeks where I don't have anything.	Inconsistent use of FB status updates
R: Right, so what sort of prompts you to…	Using FB for posting something deemed interesting/out of the ordinary or for very strong feelings
P: I suppose, maybe if I, if I've done something interesting or a bit out of the ordinary, or I have a very strong feeling about something. I will feel the need to broadcast it! (Laughs). But, umm…	Feeling need to broadcast strong feelings
R: Can you think of an example?	Feeling anxious/dreading upcoming event
P: Ya, so… I hadn't updated in a while and then last weekend I did a… I was about to do a (sporting event) on Sunday and I hadn't done any training and I was really dreading it. So I updated on Saturday night saying I can't believe I'm doing this! Umm, I suppose because I wanted to let people know that I was doing it and ah, I suppose for me, it was quite a big thing (R: Sure). And then after I did it, I updated again to say how I got on. And I got some comments back and it was nice. I felt like people were acknowledging what I'd done. You know, so….	Sharing this anxiety on FB Uncertainty about motivation of FB action Wanting people to know Feeling it was something important Updating FB with the result Enjoying receiving FB comments from others Experiencing sense of acknowledgment from FB Looking for confirmation/shared meaning
R: Do you generally get people commenting on your statuses?	Only updating when wanting to announce/felt as though have done something
P: Oh ya, but um… because, I suppose, because I'm, I only update when I've got something to announce or something, I've	Updating with the aim of provoking a response

DONE something…I often update with the view that it will provoke comments back. Um…I will, I don't sort of just say, oh well um, I'm feeling, you know, annoyed today or um, you know, I don't do one's like that. I sort of say more kind of, things that I've done.	Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Feeling a need to be descriptive in updates
R: Right, so it's not sort of teasing people? Sort of wanting them to ask what's up?	Questioning self, feeling bad Updating when feeling furious
P: No, no, I feel really bad now (laughs) the, the only time that I can remember that I have actually, ahm, put stuff on there, it's been when I've been absolutely furious and that was in my old job when my old boss… He was really, really winding my up and I didn't refer to him in my status update, but I did say, I completely let rip on just, you know, saying um… I think I used the phrase, scratching my eyes out (Laughs) and it was just sheer frustration and I suppose it was me wanting people to say what, what's up, you know? But then I thought I can't then put on facebook – MY BOSS IS A COMPLETE IDI, you know… Um, but I suppose I just wanted to shout and let people know that I was really, really angry. But I never put on there when I'm…really happy or really sad. Or anything like that, it's more I express anger on there, I don't know why that is… I've only sort of figured about it and realised that...um…..	Venting frustration and anger through Fb status update Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Questioning self and what can be put on FB Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Wanting to vent anger Wanting people to know about her anger Not sharing happy or sad feeling on FB Only expressing anger on FB Questioning own use of FB New self awareness of FB use Qualifying thoughts
R: And so if you were to think about why you don't really share happy or sad things?	Commenting on others' use of FB Feeling others use FB to promote/boast about themselves Looking for confirmation/shared meaning
P: Ya… The reason, I think why I don't, I find, I have some problems with facebook in the way that… I don't want, some people I feel use it as a way to… promote how great, sometimes, their, it can be seen as promoting how great your live is. By saying…oh um, you know, I'm really happy, I've done this. I, I know that's not probably what they're meaning but I'm very conscious of not wanting to rub it, rub people's noses in the fact, if, things are going well. Because I think often that can be quite hard, I suppose it	Making assumption about the other Feeling conscious about own FB behaviour and how it could be perceived by others Feeling a certain relationship with FB Not wanting others on FB to know about when she's sad Feeling that "friends" on FB are not real friends Feeling only a small minority of "friends" on

reflects how, my relationship with facebook which, I'll, I'll go onto talk about but, um…I don't sort of um, talk about when I'm sad because I feel like I don't want people to know when I'm sad, on facebook. Because the people I'm friends with on facebook, are not real friends. There's only a few that are real friends on facebook and I see them, so I would tell, I would rather tell people face to face who are close when I'm feeling sad and not just broadcast it to people that I was at primary school with 20 years ago. I feel that's more private. But I obviously feel that my anger is not so private and I'm happy to broadcast that to everyone, but not my feelings of sadness. And also not my feelings of happiness for a reason..I feel that um, when thing, when things have not been going right in my life, like say I've been on facebook for like 3 years…I, when I split up with my last boyfriend, it was, I, it was really difficult, I found it very, very difficult to be on facebook and I actually deactivated my account. Because I felt that…my life wasn't working out the way I wanted it to work out and I didn't want it to be that, you know, I didn't want my life to be online so people could see it. Because I felt it was, that I had failed. You know…because all my friends were getting married, and you know, wanting to have children, they all wanted, they'd bought houses and they were living with boyfriends and I was on my own. And I felt huge pressure on me, the fact that I wasn't like and my relationship had failed and I found it very difficult, like being on facebook. There was one particular girl, this is the reason why I don't feel comfortable broadcasting happy things. Is, at the time, just as I was splitting up with my boyfriend, she got engaged. Now this is a girl that I was a secondary school with and I always found quite annoying frankly, but… she decided to um, have, create, she just took all these pictures of her engagement ring and stuck it on facebook saying: "Look at my ring! Look how amazing it is! Oh my goodness I can't wait to get married, oh I'm just SOOO" you know, I just felt she was, REALLY! I just	FB are actually friends Preferring to tell people close and f2f about sad feelings Concern about broadcasting certain personal information to those unknown for many years Feeling anger is not considered as such a private feeling Experiencing difficulty on FB when ending a relationship Deactivating FB account due to difficulties experienced Feeling life not working out how expected it to, and not wanting this online to be seen Feeling of having failed Seeing/comparing lives of others to own Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Feeling sense of pressure from FB Difficulty being on FB Own FB behaviour based on actions of another FB user Mocking other's use of FB Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Feeling that others behaviour on FB Comparing self to others on FB Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Thinking that other could not know of her distress Deciding to make sure that her FB actions would not cause the same distress in others

thought, creating an album on your engagement ring and ramming it down people's faces, that you're getting married and how great your life is and at the time my life was, personal life anyway, was in tatters. I just thought, she had no idea that it, it, you know, I was feeling in that way, but I just found that I just couldn't look at it. I just, so I just thought…there's no way I'd ever do that. Because I wouldn't want to make other people feel like she's making me feel like, like I was a failure. Because I wasn't engaged, I wasn't, you know, moving, doing things, you know, so I just deactivated my account. Uhm…since then I, um…sort of my life got better, I met, met someone new and um, I went back on line and then I got engaged. But I didn't announce it on facebook. I made a point of not doing that because I didn't want to have the effect on people that she had on me. But maybe I wouldn't, maybe that was just me. D'know? But I thought that was really um, I've spoken to other people about that, that reaction to what she did on facebook and they also found it really annoying. (Laughs) So…I just feel that, that…broadcasting great things, I think is seen as, I think it depends how you do it, I think some people, a lot of people I've spoken to, you know, also agree it's a bit, you don't, you just don't want to sort of feel like you're saying: Look how great my life is everyone, you know. And it's a bit insensitive maybe for the few who aren't so lucky or aren't so happy, you know. Umm, so I'm just a bit cautious about doing that. R: Sure…and I get the sense from what you're saying, that if something really important is happening in your life then you will share it with the people you choose….. P: YA! Like when I got engaged I emailed people directly or rang them up! And I haven't ever put it on facebook. And the only time I referred to it on facebook was um, I just stuck the pictures up and just put as a subheading, this was where we got engaged. No one has commented, because	Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Deactivating account due to constant comparison of self to others on FB Returning to FB when feeling achievement of missing parts of life Deliberately not posted info on FB Worrying about impact on others Questioning assumption that others would be impacted upon the same Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Looking for confirmation from others Qualifying Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Worrying about how positive statements on FB will be received Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Feeling need for caution before posting on FB Telling important information directly to those most important Choosing never to put certain information on FB Putting some personal info on FB discreetly Feeling no one comments when a statement isn't made Qualifying Feeling there's a potential issue with displaying relationships status on FB Experiencing issues with relationship status

it's, it's not like a statement or anything. R: Sure. In terms of that sort of publically available information, have you ever shown yourself as being "in a relationship"? That kind of thing on Facebook? P: OH, um YA! I have got, I'm, I have, um….before I got engaged I didn't display my relationship status. Because…I just thought, I don't, I don't want people to know, because the other issue is, which I witnessed with my brother recently...is like, he said, you say you're in a relationship with someone and everyone sees that and then he splits up with her, or she splits up with him and then (laughing) you get this big broken heart coming up on the screen! You're going through enough as it is, without that like neon sign going online. And now everyone can see that your relationship hasn't worked out. And I just thought, I cannot be doing with that and so I just didn't, I just didn't put any relationship status on there at all. But since I have gotten engaged, I have, I have, because I will be changing my name and you know, it's more permanent and it's , it's less likely to break up if you know what I mean? So… R: So you have that you're engaged as your status. P: Ya, so…Yep. R: Something you mentioned a little earlier in terms of um, sharing happy and sad feelings (P: Yes) with friends that are close to you finding that maybe it's just anger that you share on Facebook (P: Ya) I wonder if that anger is also something you share with friends? Or does it come out more strongly on Facebook? P: Ya…it comes out more strongly on Facebook. Um, it's a kind of impulsive thing that…I don't know why, I really don't know why?!...I feel the need to do it. Um, I will then, it's… I think um…it's partly wanting	with close family Concern about everyone seeing relationship status Feeling the FB breakups are insensitive Feeling FB draws attention to painful experiences Concern about "everybody knowing" Not wanting to engage in complications Feeling able to have relationship status displayed when feeling relationship is more permanent Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Experiencing anger more powerfully on FB Impulsivity on FB Not knowing Feeling a need to express anger on FB Looking for support on FB Sharing some feelings f2f with those close Being questioning by sibling about FB behaviour Others feeling concerned by perceived aggression on FB updates Looking for confirmation/shared meaning

somebody to, to say what's the matter? But then I will talk, obviously I live with my finance and I will talk to him if I've had a really bad day. I will talk to him about it, I won't just vent it as a status on facebook. And I don't do it that often, it is infrequent but I am known for (laughing) like… my brother said to me, and I, this has made me actually think, oh really, do I need to, should I be doing this? He just said to me, you're, you're status updates can be really aggressive (laughing) right, cause I sort of said I wanted to scratch my eyes out, um, and, you know and another one, I think I swore in the status update, I'm, you know, f'ing really fed up with this, you know, and ah, he, he did say to me, I find it quite harsh, what you write (laughing) and so, I've kind of thought, right, I don't, I'm going to try, when I'm angry not just to , you know, not just the first thing I do, to broadcast it and it's kind of a release for me to, I suppose, I'm not holding it in, I've let it out there. And it kind of calms me down a bit and I also um…you know, in a way I quite, I quite like um, making people laugh and it's not, it's not, sort of, they're not really, horribly angry statements, it's more just I, you know, I feel like I feel like doing something ridiculous because I am so frustrated. I suppose it's one eye on venting my anger and another eye on making people laugh. And think, god, what's that, what's going on with her? D'know what I mean, so I don't , I don't know, it's, you know… R: I wondering what your response was when your brother sort of said…. P: I FELT REALLY BAD! I though, my god, how must I be coming across?! I was like what am I ah, why have I got all this aggression? You know. And I felt a bit ashamed, to be honest. And I stopped, I made a point of stop, doing it and I actually made a point of asking him a month later, have you been noticing that I haven't been doing any angry status updates? And he went, ya I have. (Laughing)	FB updates impacting on real life relationships FB providing a sense of release Not holding in, been let "out there" Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Hoping to make others laugh Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Wanting to do something ridiculous due to frustration Wanting to vent anger and entertain others Questioning self Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Questioning self portrayal on FB Questioning level of aggression Feeling ashamed of own behaviour on FB Monitoring self on FB Looking for confirmation from other Feeling ashamed Feeling surprised at FB behaviour being commented on Concern for the other Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Unable to share extreme feelings of frustration with friends/family – easier on FB

R: So that made you, even though you described it as being something that quite helpful for you, you became…	Feeling needing to either physically expel frustration or use FB Looking for confirmation/shared meaning
P: I felt ashamed! Because he'd actually commented on it. And he said he didn't like it. Oh, and I felt, I don't want to upset him, he actually said it upset him. But he is quite sensitive. But, you know, I mean, it's not like I did it all the time, it's just, it was during a time at my old job where I was, my boss was behaving like an idiot and I was worried I was going to get made redundant and I was just really frustrated with the whole thing. And um, you know, I just, it was just an outlet for me because I guess I had…had my friends and family to talk to, but I think I just wanted to shout and almost if I had had a punch bag next to me, if I had had a punch bag next to me or facebook, I would have, you know, it's that kind of ohhh, I just need to, you know. But, that, I think that's how it was and like, since I've moved to this new job there have been a couple of times where I have, you know, been frustrated and fed up there and I have been wanting to put on facebook, I can't wait to get out of this crappy new job, you know, um, but I haven't done it. Um…because I suppose I'm worried or I, I don't want anybody, getting back to anybody at work how I feel. Whereas in my old job I didn't care (laughs). (R: Right..) You know…	Holding self back from posting anger on FB Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Feeling concerned about private feeling on FB getting back to work Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Not wanting to be friends with work colleagues Thinking about potential contact amongst friends/ work colleagues Concern about work finding out personal feelings Keeping feelings contained
R: And so your worry is that if you put it on facebook…(P: NOW!) Are you friends with people from work?	Feeling main sources of anger come from work
P: I'm friends with people who know, no I'm not friends with people I work with and I won't be, in this job. But I am friends with people who I used to work with who have contacted people who I work with now.	Wanting a clear separation between personal/work life
R: Right, I see.	
P: And I don't, I don't want them knowing how I feel at this stage so, I'm keeping it very contained within my family and friends,	

without broadcasting it. It's normally work related, when, when I sort of have angry status updates, it's normally frustrations of work. Not friends or family.	
R: And have you had anybody from your current place of work ask to be your friend at all on facebook?	Feeling definite about work/life separation
P: No. no, um..um, no I wouldn't, the way I feel, I just don't, I want a clear separation there.	Inconsistency about friends on FB Feeling of not being able to trust place of work
R: I wonder how you would feel if one of them did ask you to be friends?	Wanting to keep private life separate
P: I'd be like no, sorry, um keeping it, I just want to keep it private. Ya…	
R: That would be ok to do, or that would be difficult?	
P: Ya, I'd just say no sorry. Not, you know, not friends with anyone at work. And ah, I'd probably just say I don't do, don't do facebook with work colleagues, which is a lie, because I've got all my (laughing) previous work colleagues on there. It's just this place I'm, I suppose I'm just, I can't trust them and I, you know, because of that I want to definitely keep my private life separate. So, you know…	Left with feelings of guilt at ended relationship
R: You sort of talked a little bit about it, but um, I was wondering generally about your experiences with relationships on facebook?	Feeling that person was lost Wondering if FB could help repair feelings of guilt
P: Ya. I ahm… the one kind of incident that has happened through facebook is that, when I, when I first ahm…went on there, I had been thinking about trying to find my…Basically I had a, a 3 year relationship with someone when I was 17 and it ended when we went to uni. And it ended really badly. And ever since then I've been, I had been racked with guilt about how it ended and I wanted to say sorry and to say I was young, you know, I'm really sorry it didn't work out, I'm really sorry with how we dealt	Reconnecting with other through FB Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Making assumption about the other not wanting contact Making contact outside of FB Through reconnection able to eradicate guilt Getting confirmation from other Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Qualifying self/meaning

with it. But I had no way of contacting him. So I went on facebook and I wondering, oh, I wonder if he's on there? Because I really wanted to get back in touch with him. And I found him. And he was really shocked, I messaged him and he was really shocked that, you know, I'd gotten back in touch. And I thought initially that he wouldn't want to speak to me. Uhm, but he did. And we started emailing and then we, ahm, started emailing outside of facebook. And, and, basically I was able to say to him, I'm really sorry about what happened and you meant a lot to me and he was really happy that I had said that. He was, had found someone else and I was with someone else at the time. You know, so..it was, you know, it wasn't, wasn't like we, I was trying, you know, to get together, but it was important for me that I made that contact with him. And facebook allowed me to do that, because it allowed me to find him basically. And um, we actually met up and that was quite emotional, you know and everything and we only met once. But it was, it was good to see him and it was good to see that he was doing well and that he was happy and… I felt like we both had to say what, you know, what we had to say and then after that he said to me that, I don't want to continue being in contact with you. And I felt the same because it was awkward, you know we were with other people and, you know, I think we both felt that it was, there was no point dragging up the past and we couldn't really have a friendship. But we acknowledged that we both made up if you know what I mean? (R: Mmmm) And so I haven't had contact from him since, but that all happened the first year I was on facebook, so that's been um, quite a positive thing for me, that I was able to do that. And I wouldn't have been able to do that without facebook. You know, because it allowed me to find him. So…and it was weird because months before facebook came on the scene I was thinking, or ah, don't know what to do, I really want to find him. And then, you know, I found on facebook, so…that's, that's positive, um… I haven't really had any um, I	FB providing only opportunity Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Feeling like there was no point dragging up the past Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Positivity of FB allowing for reparative experience FB providing easy solution Negative experience on FB through break up Comparing self to others on FB, resulting in feelings of failure Feeling that FB magnified feelings already there Looking for confirmation/shared meaning FB doing to FB helping to "watch" other people's lives from a distanec Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Watching/seeing what others are doing Seeing FB "friends" not as friends

suppose the only really negative thing that comes to mind is when I described to you about um, when I split up with my boyfriend and I was looking at this girl broadcasting her engagement with her ring, a close up of the ring, and I then, that for me made me, that made me feel really, really bad, like a, like I'd failed and my life was going nowhere. I'd feel like that anyway, but for me it just made it 10 times worse. So, it was so bad that I decided to leave facebook, so that was, you know, it's done that to me as well. Um, but other than that I just see it as, just a nice way of...keeping…just watching people's lives if you know what I mean? (R: Mmm) In a kind of…from a distance. Uhm…just to see what they're doing and, you know, these are people that I don't see, obviously not my friends, not my friends who I see…	Feeling like majority of FB friends are not even acquaintances, people from the past Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Not wanting to get in touch with them Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Feeling that FB brings out nosey side Enjoying seeing what others are doing Tending not to ask others to be friends
R: It sounds like most of the people on your facebook are people that aren't actually your close friends?	Questioning other about FB use Making assumption about others use of FB
P: Uhm, ya, I mean, I only have a few close friends. Uhm, and, who I, who I see and they are my friends on facebook. Uhm, but the majority of the people are just like old, you know, school people, who I, are not even acquaintances. We had like, you know we were in the same class at school, that sort of thing. And there's no way I would ever get back in touch with them, you know. But I quite like seeing what they're doing, I just, suppose, it's just cause I'm nosey, you know?	Not being friends with someone unknown Rejecting anyone unknown by name/picture Doing cull of FB friends Deleting people based on whether wants them to see hers, or interested in seeing theirs Comparing number of friends to others Concern about those unknown seeing profile
R: And so initially, that's how it worked, one or other of you asked to be friends and then…	
P: YA! That's right! I tend to not ask people to be friends, I mean, I know my brother's got about 300 friends. And it's just, I just think how have you got, how do you know, he probably doesn't know half of them. I will not be friends with someone if I don't know who they are. Um, if I get a friends request and I don't recognise the name or the	Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Comparing own use of FB to others Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Reflecting on others use of FB Questioning others use of FB Looking for confirmation/shared meaning

picture I will just decline it. Um…also, um occasionally I do a, I don't know why, I just do it, I like doing a sort of cull (laughs) of people on facebook. I go through my friends list and I think, do I really want them seeing my life? Am I really interested in theirs? No, delete (laughs). I'm very kind of, I suppose 60, comparing it to all my other friends, it's quite a low number, I just don't want hundreds of people who I don't, no idea who they are really, looking at my page.	Mocking others use of FB Questioning others use of FB Not understanding others use of FB Comparing own needs with others FB use Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Questioning self Feeling that others use may suggest loneliness
R: So it's really about considering who you want actually seeing….	
P: Ya, Ya, definitely. Some people don't really seem to, you know, people who have sort of 300 people, they seem to have no problem with making public, you know, their lives. And, and they update all the time. And I just think, why are you, I suppose I question sometimes, why, why, why do you feel the need to update so much? You know, I don't really…ya, you know…I've sort of got a couple of friends that like about 3 times a day they're updating, sometimes it's just like song lyrics? Or something… and I just think, you, I don't know why? I don't, I don't understand why they need to do that? 'Cause I don't have the need to do that. But then I know, you know, that, I think, maybe they, um, mmm, I don't know, is it to do with loneliness? I don't know, I just….	Concern for others who are perceived as using FB differently Questioning others use of FB updates Feeling others are too attached to FB and not "getting on with life " Questioning what is missing for others who use FB more frequently Questioning self/knowing Making assumptions also for too little use of FB Feeling that they feel better than others Looking for confirmation/shared meaning
R: But it makes you feel about what your feelings are towards them and if their updates alter that….	Questioning others about their lack of updating on FB
P: I wonder if they're ok? Actually, I wonder if they're happy? Sometimes I sort of think, people who, people who update loads and loads of just…nonsense sometimes, I think why, why do you feel the need…to, to keep doing, telling everybody what you're doing? Can't you just get on with your life without telling everyone every 5 minutes what you've just done? I suppose, this may be more appropriate to Twitter really, but people sometimes on facebook they update that	Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Feeling that something is being withheld by others lack of involvement Losing out on understanding/knowledge about the other due to lack of involvement on FB Comparing understanding of those on/off FB

frequently. And I do think, what's missing, what's missing in your life that you're so ahm…ah, addicted to, having to tell everyone what you're doing? All the time, or… I don't know. So ya…and other people who don't update at all, I just think…oh, ya, you're probably thinking, you don't want to, ah, aahm, you know, you sort of feel like you're a bit too good to, to spend, you know, to sort of do that, you know what I mean? I interpret it like that. Like, I've got a couple of friends who just never update their statuses and I think, I know I've spoken to them and like my brother is the same, he just says, he doesn't, he doesn't want to. You know, he just doesn't want to do it. Uhm… and so obviously I don't know what they're feeling or what they're doing at all really. Ahm, so I feel at the same time, you know, I don't have that knowledge about them. Ahm, that I do have about those people who update every 5 minutes. (Laughs) R: It sounds like how they do it, whether they do it a lot or do it a little or not at all makes you feel different things about people? P: YAA! Ya it does, it makes me make judgements about them. You know, I'm not, I think what those judgements are, are more about my own insecurities. Then, actually what's happening. I think it's all wrapped up with my relationship with my relationship with putting information out in the public realm, if you know what I mean, about personal information about myself. I worry that…about how people will perceive me by doing that because I then make judgements about them. So I think, well if I'm making these judgements about them…they must be, might be thinking the same about me. So I've got to be, you know careful how I… present myself. But then, maybe in reality that they'll have completely different views about it and that won't be the case at all, you know. I suppose I'm sort of projecting my own feelings and assuming that everyone will feel the same as I do about facebook. You know, which is again, I think explains why,	Reflecting on FB behaviour leading to different judgements being made about others Feeling judgement are more about own insecurities Feeling that feelings about others on FB are informed by own feelings about making info public Feeling making judgements about others, than others must be making judgements about her Feeling need to be cautious about how self depicted Feeling in reality unsure about others Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Reflecting on process of assuming that others feel the same about FB Concern about making others feel anything negative by content shared on FB Wanting to protect others from own experience on FB Conflict between behaviour wanting to do something and feeling conscious about how it's portrayed on FB Experience of wanting to leave FB because of negative experience Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Concern about being seen as inconsistent/hypocrite Concern about what content could "do to others"

when I got engaged I didn't announce it. 'Cause I didn't want to make people, sort of, unhappy or feel like they're, you know, like why are you, you know, boasting? 'Cause that's exactly what I felt when that girl… did, you know, announced her engagement on facebook. So…	Anxiety about how perceived by others
R: Was there a part of you that was sad that you weren't able to do that?	
P: What? To announce it? Ya, part of me was like I REALLY WANT TO! I just thought NO! Because I'm a hypocrite. I'd be a complete hypocrite. For my own, for myself. And I remember that I had a long conversation with my friend at the time, saying I'm getting out of facebook, I can't believe she's done this, she's so annoying. And she was like, yes I know, I can't believe it either. So then (laughing) then if I tell her and say, oh, I'm engaged, you know, ah, you know, you've just completely went back on what you said. And I just thought no, there's no way I want to, you know… sort of do that to other people.	Only letting friends view content Feeling privacy setting a joke Feeling caught off guard by content used from FB profile Questioning how others accessed information, despite feeling that privacy was safely established Uncertainty about privacy settings Not liking invasion of privacy
R: That goes back to you feeling quite anxious about how people perceive you?	Responding immediately to indication that privacy not set as securely as thought
P: Yes! Definitely. Definitely.	Feeling that profile has been made private
R: And so in light, how do you, you know, sort of structure your profile page, do you have thoughts about…	Reacting strongly at first, but then feeling privacy was too tight, concern about not being found Looking for confirmation/shared meaning
P: Ya, Um, I only let friends, oh, this is the joke…when I turned up at my, when I um, started at (current place of work) I had friends of friends access my photos. Now, um, I turned up on my first day and facebook photos and a facebook photo of me had been put up in the staff sheet to say who's who! And I was like, where did you get that photo from? And they were all laughing saying, on facebook. But I was like how, because I knew that my privacy settings were friends only and then I discovered that friends of friends could access, could look at photos	Trying to find balance between private/public availability of information Feeling very caught off guard by personal material being seen/available to work colleagues Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Not aware of privacy consequences until incident

and I really did not like the fact that my new employers had looked at all my photos on facebook. I was really not happy about that, I thought it was a big invasion of my privacy and since then I went straight home and turned everything to 'friends only'. And I've also, um, made it that it's, you um, you can send me a message and friend request me, but uhm, you know, I've it as private as possible basically. At one point I had it, you couldn't even search for me. I wouldn't come up in any searches. But then, I met people and they, like, you know, I said oh yes, I'm on facebook, you know, we can, let's, you know be friends and then they couldn't find me (laughs) so I was like OH GOD! And then I sort of had to think well maybe I should make myself available on searches, but…that whole experience on my first day of my job of that, I was horrified because I had like pictures, luckily they weren't too bad, but, you know… I just thought, this is, this is awful! Um, so I've, I've, I've tightened up my privacy even more than it was because of that. R: So until then, you hadn't really thought about who could see what? P: Yes! There's no way I would have thought any of my employers would have been able to access my photos on facebook. But then people obviously I know at (place of work) were, are mutual friends of me people I know on facebook and that's how they did it. I didn't say how annoyed I was, I was just like, ok, that's ok, but ya, I just think it's an invasion of privacy. Especially when your bosses…had seen all your photos, that's just, huhhh, you know, I, I think some people would have made a complaint, frankly. But I just thought, I'm just going to let it go, you know. But it didn't, it didn't give me a good first day impression. The kind of people, you know, that would do that, but anyway… So ya, I'm, I'm quite aware of the importance of privacy, definitely. And it's made me, ya, just keeping now, I'm adamant that I want to keep work and personal life very separate. Uhm…cause of that.	Feeling that information was safe Withholding feelings of anger Feeling exposed and invaded Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Comparing self with others Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Experience leading to a bad impression of workplace/individuals Reflecting on importance of privacy Experience leading to insistence on keeping work/personal life separate Feeling intruded upon Feeling judged Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Restricting access to only friends Conscious about meanings behind any actions on FB Looking for confirmation/shared meaning

R: Sure, I can see that, that it felt like a really big…	Conscious of not appearing addicted to or obsessed with FB Looking for confirmation/shared meaning
P: Intrusion! You know, they've formed opinions of you from the photos and it's like, that's your personal life and they don't even know you. And they're your employers and it's just, you know… But yes, that facebook photo is still up in the staff ah, the staff list.	Wanting to share positive/eventful experiences Wanting people to know
R: You were thinking about how you come across on your profile page, does that influence which pictures you put up, or…	
P: Um, ya. I mean I won't, I wouldn't ever put ones of me looking really, really bad on facebook. Um, yeah, so obviously it makes me chose carefully what photos I put up. I try and pick ones where I'm happy with how I look in them. Ya definitely. Ahm…I…yes, limit only friends to look at photos, I limit only friends to see my status updates as well. And, um, I suppose I try not to update my status too frequently because I feel like, if I do that, then , it's just, have I not got anything better to do with my life? D'you know what I mean? So I'm aware of, not appearing too addicted or too obsessed with my online world. Ahm, but what I try and do, when I'm doing something that's, you know, I think's quite good, or exciting, or quite eventful for me, I will, you know, tell people, you know. Um…cause I enjoy, you know, I just want people to know what I'm doing really. So….	Catching up on others through the newsfeed Feeling it's always the same people who update Feeling that FB is boring Worrying about how perceived on FB Mocking other's behaviour on FB
R: And so when you go on Facebook, you say you go on everyday, (P: Ya, ya) I wonder what is it that you do?	Sharing joke with those f2f about those on FB
P: Um…Well normally I, um, look at everybody else's status updates from when I last logged on and see if anything interesting going on.	Questioning own behaviour as "awful" Mocking other's behaviour on FB
R: Is that mainly through the newsfeed?	
P: Ya, just look through the newsfeed. It's	

always the same people (laughing) updating. And I think, sometimes I think, oh this is boring, you know? Really boring. Often when I'm on facebook I think this is SOO boring. And ah, there's one girl actually, she, this is, the other thing that I'm kinda worried about how you're perceived… She lives on her own, I went to school with her and she's always saying (in whingey voice) I'm really poorly, I'm really ill, I'm really miserable. And then she always says, oh, but I am going to go to salsa tonight… Literally her status updates always involve, she's a teacher, it's always about, I've got too much marking, shall I go to salsa, I'm so miserable and ahm…or I'm really ill again. And that, that literally is the theme of her updates. And she updates everyday and then the other day I was just creasing with laughter because she, we, we, kind of, me and my finance have a joke now about what's (name of girl) status update today and we really laugh. And this is, I know it's awful, but it's become, she's become a joke between us about, you know, what's wrong with her today? Hayfever? Mild Asthma? Like you know, because obviously she says that all on her status…ohh, apparently I have mild asthma, you know…. Um, and then um she took, she had redecorated her bedroom and then put the fact that she had this bed delivered and the fact they couldn't build it and it was all broken and I was literally in hysterics at this…but for her it was just not funny um, and then she took a load of pictures of her bedroom, her new bedroom, which was dark purple, with a dark purple duvet, close ups of her bed and all, all on facebook! And I was just WHAT? And then the close up, a wonky close up picture of her light fitting! And I just think, I almost, I was just, it was just hilarious! And in a way, that's my entertainment…People like her, you just think, why are you doing this, why are you…saying you've got mild asthma and, and will you go to salsa? And putting pictures of your new duvet cover on facebook? It's, it's kind of makes me laugh because, because I just think how can you,	Finding amusement from other on FB Finding difference in perceived experience of other and own pleasure Questioning other's use of FB Mocking other's use of FB Seeing looking at others on FB as entertainment Questioning others Laughing at other's use of FB Questioning others' portrayal of self on FB Assumed meaning behind FB behaviour of others Feeling other appears lonely based on use of FB Feeling that behaviour seen on FB fits known information from many years ago Feeling the other has not changed Feeling of knowing best based on knowing other from FB Feeling of having become obsessed with mocked other on FB

how can you portray yourself like this? Do you not see how, how, you're coming across?! You know, so I suppose it becomes entertainment really…	Thinking about what other doesn't know Looking for confirmation/shared meaning
R: How would you define how she's coming across?	Looking for people to laugh at/mock on FB Enjoying looking at others' photos
P: Um, lonely, lonely, and I really feel for her, I really do. She's an old, she's a girl I went to primary school with and I haven't seen in honestly 20 years. And I remember at primary school she was always a bit wet and a bit, I would say sickly as well. D'you what I mean? And she's just turned, she's not changed, she's not changed at all. And um, and I just, we have this thing about she needs, she needs to just…you know, we have conversations about what (girl) needs to do, to make her life better. (Laughing) It's just….	Keeping those on FB that can entertain Keeping those on FB that feel curious about Feeling FB as entertainment Enjoying having family as friends
R: This is you and your fiancé?	
P: Yeah, because of this, this joke about (girl) what's (girl) saying today? And we both said, oh, she needs to do this, stop doing that, you know…It's just weird… how we've become quite obsessed with her. In a kind of funny way. And she has no idea. Because she makes so much of this available to everybody, so, we, ya…it's just become sort of like a joke to us, you know about this. Um…. Just, so that, ya, so I sort of look to it for comedy really, comedy things people have said about themselves or what they're doing. And then photos really. Um…I like looking at people's photos.	Not treating family as entertainment on FB Making assumption of shared meaning Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Expressing different rules for family and those seen as "others" on FB Wanting to protect those close when engaging in similar activities as those mocked
R: So is that generally the criteria for people who escape the cull? Based on how entertaining they are?	Looking for confirmation/shared meaning
P: Ya! So, ya, definitely it is and also, ya, if, if I don't know them that well and they never do anything that makes me laugh or that I find interesting or I want to be nosey about then I delete them basically. It's kind of like entertainment, ya, it's entertainment for me.	Feeling "others" on FB are so removed "Other" as stranger from childhood

Ummm, yeah, I think that's, that's it. I do find that um, I like having my family as friends as well, it makes me feel closer to them, I like, you know seeing their updates type of thing, I see them, I treat them sort of differently, you know…(R: Differently?) I don't see them as entertainment. Like I wouldn't obviously, if my brother put, oh I'm feeling unwell, I've got mild hayfever (laughing) or something, I wouldn't be like, oh my god, why is he saying, you know… I'd be like, oh dear, you know, I'd probably email him and say are you alright?	Feeling FB has brought Feeling a loss of closeness since leaving family home Feeling that weekly "catchups" with family don't allow for smaller everyday events to be shared Feeling it was negative to miss this
R: So you wouldn't, if he were doing the same things, you wouldn't consider him lonely?	Feeling that FB allows more for these things not to get lost Feeling FB provides access to topics that would have otherwise been lost
P: NO! I'd get in touch with him and say how, why, why are you putting pictures of your bedroom up, why are you doing those status updates, I'd just say, you know are you alright, you know what's, I wouldn't think he was lonely I'd be, I'd go, you know and might see him and say what are you doing? But, ya because I don't know (girl), I haven't seen her in 20 years it, it, I suppose she's so removed from me, she's just, just like a stranger from my childhood but, makes me laugh now with her..what she broadcasts online, you know. So….	Making assumptions about the other
R: So you say it's brought you closer with family?	
P: I feel it's made me feel closer, ya. I mean we're close anyway, but it's, it's nice to see, you know, cause a, when I used to live at home and you'd get in from school and you'd say oh, I did this today or whatshername same that…Um, when you speak once a week, you tend to talk about bigger things, you don't sort of, you miss out the daily oh, this was annoying, but 'cause of facebook and my mum will sort of talk about something that's happened in her day, when I speak to her, I'll say, you know, say oh, I saw your comments on that. We wouldn't have talked about that before, because I wouldn't	Feeling that "smaller things" can get held onto when otherwise would be lost Not getting updates from sibling Questioning other's use of FB

have known. She wouldn't have told me and I wouldn't have known about it. R: Can you think of an example of something like that? P: Ahm…well, just like the um, oh ya! I suppose, things like, like that wasp invasion in her office, that, that she probably wouldn't have said anything about…um, she writes, she's writing a novel and she goes to loads of writers classes and um, she…was giving like a reading of one of her poems and she put on facebook that it went well and stuff and…Um…often, say that was on a Monday night and I wouldn't speak to her until the Sunday, probably, because time would have gone by, she probably just wouldn't mention that she'd read a poem out to her group, because we would have talked about other things, you know, more general things and ahm, it, you know, obviously I'd see that and we'd talk about it. So I suppose we talk about much more about, our daily life as well as the bigger, bigger things. R: And in terms of your brothers, is there a more, do you feel you're finding more out about them as well? P: Ummm, my brothers don't do, ahmmm, my middle brother does no, doesn't do any status updates and he doesn't put up any photos online, so no. He doesn't, he just, I don't know why he uses facebook, but, but, I don't get anything out of him through facebook. Uhm, my youngest brother, he does do status updates occasionally, but again, he reveals nothing. So, I wouldn't say I get anything from them at all through facebook. I still meet up with them and email them outside facebook really. R: Right, so you don't ever really communicate with them through facebook? P: No. Only for like saying, do you want to meet up? That's the one thing actually that I've got to say it's really good for. Arranging	Feeling FB does not provide any insight into sibling Needing f2f contact to catch up Using FB to arrange f2f meetings Feeling arranging meetings the "one thing" FB good for Feeling FB is easier Seeing FB as easier Using FB to meet up with friends Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Not feeling as though FB changes relationships

to meet up with people. Because you do just a, one email, one message with everyone copied in and you can click a link and see where you want to go and it's easy just to do, say, if you want to reply to everyone, just, you can reply to everyone and there's, it's all set out, the conversation, it's just really easy to arrange to meet people I find. R: So you use that a lot for… P: Ya, no, I find that really good actually. I think, oh, if I want to meet up with my friends, I do a facebook, er, group message thing to say when are you all free, you know, it's just easy. So that's good I find. R: Is there anything else that comes to mind as we discuss these things? P: I think, d'you know, I think I've covered, covered everything down to my history with it, goods and bads, and what I use it for and what I get out of it, I think I've covered everything so… R: Have you ever found any relationships changing because of your use of facebook? P: Ummm, no, no. I don't, no, not changing. No. Changing in terms of I suppose I got back in touch with someone who was important to me and I managed to resolve something that was a big thing. So that changed the relationship for the better. But since then we haven't stayed in touch, but that was, you know, mutual and I feel that we never would have done. But um… I haven't sort of been friends with someone and then through something that's happened on facebook, we've fallen out, I've never had someone say something about me or put picture up they shouldn't have done and it's all, you know, um…upset someone through that or done, you know, never done that. So…so ya, no luckily that's never happened. R: And you've touched on this a number of times, but I wonder if you could think a little	Feeling that use of FB is different Comparing self to others and wanting to be perceived as not being an over user Feeling as though not revealing as much personal information as others But feeling as though revealing more than close friends do on FB Feeling close friends hardly use FB Feeling as though fall in the middle of average use Mocking others' use of FB Expressing concern about addiction to a FB game

about how you feel the way you use facebook may be the same or different to how other people use it?	Concern about how she sounds
P: Umm, I'd say I…through, most, most of my close friends don't do any status updates. I think I'm the only one that updates my status, out of my close friends. Ummm, but then again, I'm by no means one of the people who are always featured on the newsfeed. When you log in, you know, I'd say I'm about once or twice a week and then I'll have periods where I won't update at all, but I'll still log in. Ahm… I don't, I mean, I don't reveal as much personal information as other people do. Ah, but I reveal more, than as I say, my close friends. I don't know why, but most of my close friends just don't, they hardly use it really. Or if they do, it's just for photos. So, ahm, I feel like I, I'm more of a, I'm more involved with it than my close friends. But I'm not involved with it to the extent that..some of the people that I'm friends with, so I'd say I'm kind of like in the middle really.	Wanting to separate use of game, with use of FB Playing FB online game with others in a f2f environment Competing Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Getting led to game through colleague and FB friend Becoming curious about game because of others involvement as evidenced by content on their profile
R: When you say you're not really revealing as much personal information…	Becoming obsessed by FB game
P: Like saying um, I'm ill, or depressed or putting pictures of my water bottle beside my bed, you know (both laugh). That's what one of them was! Or the other thing I forgot to say, my addiction now is thankfully waning, but I was obsessed by "bejeweled blitz". (Laughs) You know, the game. There's this game on facebook called bejewelled blitz where you match the jewels. Oh my goodness I was obsessed by it and that, as well, that I just used to spend, this is going to sound really bad, but in my old job I used to spend so much time playing bejewelled blitz on facebook. I wasn't using facebook, it was just my link to this game. And, there's a scoreboard and I was playing against other people, other friends on facebook and I (laughs) one of my colleagues in the office was my main rival. And so it became like, this big thing about, we had to beat each	Feeling that other FB games are ridiculous Uncertainty in knowing/meaning Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Suggesting judgement about others who play FB games Questioning others FB use Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Judging others for use of FB Tentatively comparing self to others Looking for confirmation/shared meaning

other and that made me play it more and more because I was working with her and it, you know…So um, so that, that used to take up a lot of my time, but since I've moved jobs I just, and I lost the good mouse that I had, that I could really get a high score with, I don't play it so much!	Seeing others activities on FB makes her want to do the same
R: And so how did you come across that game?	
P: Oh, my colleague told me about it, because she, she always had, like when I logged on to facebook it always had (colleague's name) has just got 100,000 in bejewelled blitz and I used to think, what is this? And then she used to say to me, oh it's really good, oh it's great, you should try it. So then I tried it and it's just really addictive and I just became, just became really obsessed by it. But the other thing I haven't mentioned to you is um, what I find really funny and I think is and I think is ridiculous is Applications on facebook like "Farmville" and…um, where you , I don't know, you have a pet or something. And, you get…you know, the pets do something. And I find people who play, especially "Farmville" and then it comes up on their newsfeed saying, I don't know, um "(name) has discovered a Bull and he needs some food, can anybody…" And I just think WHAT?! WHY ARE YOU PLAYING THIS RUBBISH GAME?! What is this, you know? Is this all you do? All your time, just playing this stupid game? Um, but, for me, I suppose I was playing Bejeweled Blitz (laughs) So I guess it could be, you know, the same, same issue. But, um, I, I say I don't think, now I don't have access to that good mouse or computer anymore, or in work time, I just don't do it. So…	Mocking others use of FB Questioning others use of FB Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Thinking about how she may be perceived, feeling horrible Questioning self and judgements about others Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Questioning others use of FB Not confronting others about use of FB Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Uncertainty in knowing Concern about how perceived, altering true feeling being expressed Not liking judging others, but feeling that everyone does
R: But it seems that to see other people playing these games elicits quite a strong feeling?	Judging others FB use
P: Ya, it does! Like, bejewelled blitz, I still, like if I see people with bejewelled blitz	

scores I think oh, I almost feel like I wish I could play it! I really, really and I feel like I really want to beat them but I can't because all I have now is a stupid laptop and there's no, I can't get the high scores anymore. So I, I just, I've given up with that now. I'm really competitive, so it does make me feel a bit like oh god, d'you, I used to be able to beat them and I can't play it anymore. But when I see people coming up with, they need some grain or something for the hens in Farmville, oh, I just think (Laughs) what, you know, what is this? This stupid game, you know? So…	Uncertainty about knowing feelings Feeling others are ridiculous Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Ease of FB Judging others
R: You feel that they're using it to sort of distract themselves?	
P: Yeah, I just think why? You know, I know I sound, I feel really horrible saying this, but I just, I just feel like why are you, why are you playing this game? It's rubbish, that's what I think. Basically…(laughs) But I sound really harsh! It's those tiny little thoughts you have inside yourself that, you know…I mean I have spoken to my fiancé about it, we've had a laugh about Farmville as in who, you know, why do people play this game? It looks ridiculous but…um…I'd never actually go on facebook and say why are you doing this, you know? It's, it's…..	Feeling FB and outlet for nosiness Sharing concerns about FB with friends Stress about others being able to know one's movements on FB Friend becoming very distressed at thought that others would know her movements on FB Contradictory behaviour f2f and on FB
R: But it feels as though you feel guilty for having those feelings?	
P: Ya, I think it's, no, I, I don't feel guilty but now I've told you I feel guilty because I think (laughs) you would think what a complete bitch! But you know, I, I, I think it's just private feelings, you know, um, but I don't like judging people, but everyone does. And that's, that's how I feel, if I see someone playing Farmville I just think, why are you doing that, you know? It's just a really rubbish game.	Mortification at being "found out" on FB Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Concern about effect on portrayal of self Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Concern about own FB movements being discovered
R: Well, I certainly don't think you're a bitch. (P: Laughing, I know!) I appreciate and feel happy that you feel able to be honest	Wanting to see others (ex's) and know about

about your feelings.	their lives
P: (Laughing) I JUST YA….! I just um, because I know a lot of people do play these games but, I just, I don't know. I just think some of them are a bit ridiculous really. So, ya….but that's it, I think I've, I think that's how I do, you know, use it and so games and photos mainly and just being nosey and entertainment ahm, through people's lives who I don't know and who choose to put things on there that I think they really shouldn't do, that kind of entertainment.	Checking to see if privacy settings have changed Mortification at being found out Feeling that potential for being exposed on FB leading to considering coming off of FB Concern about losing newfound contact with others prevents leaving of FB
R: So you feel that the reason for staying on is about sort of ease of setting up meetings and things and…	Feeling new level of closeness to others through FB Feeling FB is easier than other options
P: Ya, just staying in touch with people, showing photos and entertainment value from some people..ya basically. Ya, I'm just nosey.	Feeling the need to "keep in touch" with those that otherwise would not speak to/keep in touch with Feeling maintained contact more important than risk of being "found out" on FB
R: And have you ever thought about coming off of facebook? I know you did before.	Looking for confirmation/shared meaning
P: Ya, ya. There was, it was quite interesting, um, I had a weekend at, seeing my friends, 4 of us, we all, we all met up. And we were talking about facebook and um, there's this app, it came to light that there was this application that you could click and find out who'd looked at your profile. And one of my friends just had a complete mental breakdown, 'cause she'd been looking at the profile of this guy she, she'd told that she never wanted him to contact her again. (Laughing) And so she, she was, this was at uni and this was like 10 years ago now, but she has continued to look at his profile, but obviously she's not friends with him, but just clicks on him. And she was really mortified that he'd find out that she'd been trying to look at his profile and she was going oh my god, you know, what do I look like, you know and she was really worried about that. And then I thought, oh my goodness, because then I thought I'd, you know, I do look at, I do look, I have to say, every now and then ,	Using FB to spy Getting a thrill from spying on FB Feeling a bit dangerous/naughty Pleasure in doing something she "shouldn't" Questioning need to spy, use of FB Questioning need to see others Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Questioning ability to let go Feeling sense of nosiness in self Not actually wanting to be reconnecting with those spied upon Not wanting to be apart of their lives, but wanting to know about/see their lives

look for profiles of ex boyfriends, just out of curiosity. I'm not friends with them, but I would sometimes click on them to see what their photos are, to see if I can glean any kind of information about, are they married, what they're doing, have they changed their privacy so that I can look at any more…Ummm… But they're not, the thought, if they found out that I'd been looking, I'd be like, I was just like oh my god…you know, so it did cross my mind when she was having a fit, thinking this facebook thing is awful. Oh my goodness, it's just a disaster, so I did think, right I, I'm going to get off it. But what stopped me was, I don't want to lose that touch with, the contact with my family that I have on there, because I really, really like that and it makes me feel close to them and also um, I just really like the ability to um, as I say, contact people really easily, arrange to meet them, share photos and just generally…keep in, keep in touch with people who you just wouldn't normally speak to. Just, I don't know…so that was kind of more important to me than even the fear that any ex boyfriends finding out that I'd been trying to look at their profiles. And now I just think, of, it's stupid, I'm not bothered, you know… So…	Embarrassment about movements being known in professional context/publication Concern about who then sees information Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Not liking broadcasting self without control Looking for confirmation/shared meaning Assumption of knowing others motivations/activities on FB Preventing friendship from one person because of fear of another
R: It sounds like there is a little bit of anxiety about that, one of the first things you said was that you use it to spy a bit….	
P: YA, YA, I do use it to spy, I kind of get a bit of a thrill about, spying on facebook actually, I quite, it kind of feels a bit naughty. And…it's a bit, you know, I know I shouldn't kind of thing and I know what I think, why am I, why am, why do I feel the need to spy, especially as, it's really in relation to ex boyfriends. I think really, it was 8 years ago now, why are you still thinking about them, you know. Um, and it sort of makes me think, oh…you know, have you not let go? Is that what it is? And I suppose that's why I think, oh, it's a bit naughty. But, I just, I'm just nosey really…I just, you know…and, but I would never at	Rejecting friendship because of shared connections

the same time want to be friends with them because I don't want that, you know, I don't really want to be part of their lives or for them to be part of mine anymore. So, I suppose it's just, having a quick look! But then not having anymore contact, you know… R: Have you ever had anybody that you know try to be your friend but you've sort of felt like that it's not the best thing? P: Um, ya…ya. Um recently, um…when I moved jobs, my face was published in the bloody (career magazine) I was mortified, it's just embarrassing because (laughs) um, my ex boyfriend is a (same profession) and he would have seen that picture and all my old course, course mates at uni would have seen that picture and they would have gone oh my god there's (name)! You know and I don't, I don't like that. I don't like being, I, I suppose it's the same relationship, I don't like broadcasting myself too much without any control, you know. And um, I got a friend request from a guy who um, who I, who I was at uni with, did my (profession) course with and I know that he had seen that photo in (magazine)…. R: Right, and you feel this had prompted him… P: Ya, I knew it had and I knew who he was, but…I knew he'd be friends with people who were on my course, one girl in particular who I, just really hated and I thought, if I become friends with him, she'll see me again and…I didn't want her trying to be friends with me, you know, or just see me or think about me in any way, so I thought no! NO, I won't be friends with him and I declined it. R: And did you do that without saying anything? P: Yeah, ya….It wasn't him, it was through people he knew that I didn't want them to see that link coming up on his thing. So…(laughs)	

R: Is there anything else that comes to mind? P:No… Is that alright?! R: Yes, thank you, it's been really interesting. P: Ok, cool, thank you it's been interesting for me as well actually!	

APPENDIX 7

Example Email Interview

	OPEN CODES
R: Questions: 1) Do you feel comfortable telling me your age? P: Yep - 29 R: 2) How long have you been on Facebook? P: Maybe 2 years or so R: 3) Approximately how many friends do you have on Facebook? P: 85 I think R: 4) How frequently do you log on to Facebook? P: 2-3 times a week R: 5) Approximately how much time per week do you spend on Facebook? P: 1 hour R: 6) Where do you tend to log on most? P: At home or during travelling for work (like on the train, etc.) R: 7) What are your main reasons for belonging to Facebook?	Uncertainty about time
P: My main reason for belonging to Facebook is to keep in touch with friends from University and back home in (place of origin) (or wherever they now live). It gives me the opportunity to show all my friends and family pictures of my son and to keep in touch with them.	Wanting to keep in touch with those geographically far away
Another reason is related to work as we post event details on the site and it's a good way of keeping up to date regarding news and events of partner organisations…such as if the (organisation holds a sporting event) or something.	Using FB for work purposes FB for keeping up to date
Actually forgot to add another reason – its	

to keep in touch with all my friends from the military too R: That's great, thanks. So your Facebook use is split between personal and work purposes? How much would you say you spend doing either and what is your friend split? (i.e. what percentage of FB friends are personal and what percentage work related?) Thanks. P: Yep… it is indeed split between personal and work purposes. Probably 10% of my friends are directly through work… Out of the 1 hour I spend on there… probably 20 minutes is due to work…40 minutes due to personal. But if we have a particular event coming up, like the (event) last year…I could spend an hour on there a day for up to two weeks prior to the event We are busy setting up a (work related) page on the site at the moment. R: Thanks. How do you feel about work people potentially having access to your personal life/information, photos, etc and people from your personal life having access to your work information? P: The people from my work side are pretty good friends anyway…so even when I leave (place of work), they will still be on my friends list as we are pretty good mates. People from personal life having access to my work life is fine as I'm quite proud of what I'm achieving considering where I've come from and my background Although I've mentioned above that I'm happy about this…. This is the reason I'm setting up a (work related page) – so I can separate the two aspect of my use	Splitting time on FB between personal and work related purposes More time spent on FB for work purposes at times Feeling work colleagues are friends Feeling happy for friends and family being able to see work pursuits on FB Qualifying Wanting to separate work/personal aspects of FB

R: Thanks, So can you tell me about your experiences of relationships (Friends from the past, family, or any other type) on Facebook?	
P: Hi, Relationships with certain friends have become stronger as we have an avenue to keep in touch...although I have their e-mail address, it is much easier to be in touch with someone through Facebook as its hitting many birds with one stone. For example, I was able to contact everyone to say my son was born with just one post.	Friendships becoming stronger Ease of being connected FB easier to be in contact Feeling able to relay information too many at once
One or two relationships have developed further through Facebook - as in we've exchanged mobile numbers and text regularly now as well. One in particular from my past who was very close to me is back in touch and we text a lot and we will be meeting up soon.	Reuniting friendships Reuniting Friendships
Relationships with family haven't really been affected by Facebook as I speak to closer family most weeks. I know this sounds awful, but certain members of distant family have been rejected from my Facebook page as I don't want them to know my business and I'm not interested in keeping in contact with them at all - this has actually caused a little tension as my feelings about them became obvious.	FB not impacting on close family relationships Concerned about sounding awful Rejecting certain family members as concerned about privacy FB rejecting causing real life tension
R: Thanks for that. Can you tell me a little more about why it feels easier and what it means to hit all with one stone? Do you mean that by sending one message out, you then get lots of replies? And/or something else?	Wanting to inform people
P: Well, when I needed to inform people that we'd had (baby), it was much easier to post a message saying that (baby) had been born rather than e-mail people or text loads of people. I was happy to text close friends and a few others... but not send a text to 80-odd people...so posting the message on Facebook reached all the friends I needed - and it only took a few	Feeling FB much easier than sending personal message Sending personal message to those close FB fulfilling information sending in a short time

minutes. R: And in terms of reconnecting with people from the past, do you mean you had lost contact completely until reconnecting on Facebook? Or that Facebook has just meant that you are more in touch? P: Oh yeah, I'd lost contact completely with a few people - I would not be in contact with these certain people if Facebook wasn't created. As we didn't know addresses, e-mails address or phone numbers and they were not part of any circles that other friends were part of (so I couldn't use that 'people you may know tool') R: How do you experience the tension from having rejected distant family members? (I don't think you sound awful, I really appreciate your honesty!) P: I don't really experience it directly as they don't contact me... they moan to other family members who then mention it to me. But my Mum totally understands why I don't accept them and does state that to them in a nice way. R: How do you feel your use of facebook compares to others who use facebook? P: That's a good question – I don't think my use compares to millions of others on there. Some friends seem to post everything and anything on there and it generally rules their life. I see it as a way of contacting several people with a certain piece of news about myself (or family). I generally don't post much pointless information… as I don't see the point of posting something like 'having lasagne for tea'.	Having lost contact completely, reconnecting on FB Feeling these people would otherwise be impossible to find Not experiencing direct impact from FB activities Family members being impacted upon by others' feelings related to FB use Feeling own use doesn't "compare" to others Feeling others post much more Making assumption that it rules their lives Seeing FB as purely for relaying information about family Making judgement about others use Feeling of only posting worthwhile info Mocking others' use of FB Making assumption of others use of FB Feeling others have gotten bored and see their accounts as dormant

But on the other hand, I think some people have signed up to it…become bored and left their account alone to gather dust.	
R: What does it make you think about the people who post "everything and anything" or the fact they are posting what they are having for tea?	Not wanting to judge people Feeling others are entitled to do as they wish
P: I don't want to judge people…as everyone is entitled to do what they want in their spare time. But I do think it's a little sad when people spend more time on there than actually speaking or seeing their friends.	Making assumption/judgement that it is sad that others spend more time on FB than off
	Not understanding others' use of FB
I also don't see the benefit of informing people of minor things like what they are having for tea.	
R: Equally, why do you think some people have become bored with it?	Feeling as though FB is losing its appeal Feeling that something else could become the new fad
P: I think it loses its appeal in the end… Twitter has come along as well as other social networking sites. I'm sure Friends reunited isn't as popular these days due to the introduction of Facebook.	Feeling FB grew at expense of other social networking sites
	Feeling would have less use for FB if living close to friends/family Contradiction?
To be honest, if I lived in (place of origin)…I doubt I'd use Facebook for personal reasons as I'd see my family and close friends more. Meaning I'd only have a few people to e-mail on various occasions.	
I speak to my closest-best friends such as (list of friends) and my lads back home.	Not engaging in responding to other people's status'
I rarely post messages on other people's statuses (probably only 3-4 times in 2	

years)…	
R: Have you ever found anything out about someone from facebook that you feel you wouldn't have otherwise known?	Feeling of finding out things through FB that would otherwise not be known about those not really close
P: Yeah, quite a few things to be honest… not so much about close friends, but others that I don't keep in regular contact with. I have also found things out of a personal nature that I don't think should be made public. For example, a friend announced that he'd split from his wife before she had a chance to inform her family, etc.	Feeling uncomfortable about finding out personal things about others that felt should be private and not on FB
R: Have you ever thought about coming off of facebook?	Feeling that FB is not needed to stay on contact with "key people"
P: Yes, have seriously thought about coming off Facebook as I think I could keep in touch with key people without it.	
R: What stops you from coming off facebook?	Uncertainty about what keeps on FB
	Feeling to lose FB suddenly would have no impact as long as some contact info wasn't lost
P: To be honest… I don't know really. If they closed the site down tomorrow, it wouldn't matter to me in the slightest (as long as I could copy and paste a few e-mail addresses first)	
R: Is there anything else that has come to mind as you've answered these questions?	Questioning need for FB
	Feeling as though contact is maintained without it
P: To be honest, I've started questioning if I actually need a Facebook account as I e-mail or speak to the people that mean the most to me on a regular basis anyway.	Feeling concern about too much use of typing as communication
I also think there may be a bit of an issue with people using it too much and the typing-form of communication is become too well-used.	Wanting to know another's perspective

	Making assumption about others use/addiction to FB
It would be interesting to hear your thoughts on it…but seems some have almost become addicted to Facebook and knowing what others are doing…	Making assumption about others FB use and info displayed on FB Feeling cautious about info posted on FB
I also think people are not aware of the details that they post on there. I'm always very cautious of the information I post on there, such as my birthday – I can't remember what is on there, but it certainly is not my real one. In the age of identity theft and dodgy pictures, I think people post far too much personally information.	Feeling the need to use false information on FB Concern about identity theft Feeling others post far too much
I also made sure that my privacy setting was robust to ensure pictures of (son) could not be used by others.	Wanting to ensure that photos were secure and unusable by others Feeling sense of control/security over own content
I don't think Facebook do enough to protect their users and do not promote their privacy settings enough	Feeling that FB does not provide enough security FB don't guide this well enough
Wow…all that came tumbling out!!!	Surprise about level of feeling
R: Can you tell me a little more about how you feel that typing as a form of communication has become so common?	
P: I think it's a shame…as children are growing up on Facebook and other social networking sites and oral communication is suffering. While visiting schools, you can almost see it happen in front of you – they struggle to keep eye contact and they don't grow up with the skills necessary to communicate orally.	Feeling something is lost through typed communication Feeling there is impact on children Noticing lack of communication skills in children/lack of eye contact
	Feeling that others may have more confidence typing

Some children also have more confidence communicating by typing, I suppose text messaging has also caused this. It's very common – it's easier to send an e-mail rather than speak to someone on the phone. I realise in a working-sense, an e-mail with a read-receipt is required to evidence the person receiving and reading the e-mail… But, e-mails are sent between colleagues here even though they sit nearby and it could easily be sorted within a 3-minute conversation. It is generally a work issue and is not a private issue between those certain colleagues. I know we are doing this by e-mail, but it's probably the only way we can keep it a private conversation. I'm going to make a greater effort to speak to people over the phone more rather than e-mailing. R: Is there anything else you feel is coming up as you talk (type!) about these things? P: I cant think of anything on top of what we've discussed… I'll have a think about it while having a run later tonight! It will take my mind off things!!	Making assumption Easier to email than to call Feeling emailing had found a required use in wok settings Feeling use of email complicates an interaction that could be better addressed f2f Making assessment of others Commenting on interviewing process Feeling it's the only way to keep it private Wanting to change own behaviour, to less typed communication Feeling a little overwhelmed by thinking about issues

APPENDIX 8

Facebook Glossary of Terms

Admin	An admin is the person who's in charge of a group. When you create a group, you are automatically listed as both an admin and the group's creator. Admins can invite people to join the group, appoint other admins, and edit group information and content. They can also remove members and other admins.
Ads	An advertisement. Users can create Facebook Ads to market their products and ideas. Ads are not free and will be priced according to coverage required.
Application	Users can add applications to their profiles, pages, and groups. They usually reflect personal areas of interest/games, etc. There are hundreds, with more being created continually. Some are built by Facebook. Most are built by external developers.
Blog	An online log or diary written by an individual. Used as a noun or verb. Not exclusive to Facebook. Blogs generally contain commentary, but may also contain graphic images, videos, or descriptions of events.
Cause	An advocacy group or online campaign for collective action. Any Facebook user can start one. A cause can be used to raise money or promote one's position on an issue.
Chat	A feature that lets users talk with friends who are online and logged into Facebook.
Creator	The person who started and administers a cause.
Event	A calendar-based resource that users can add to their profiles, pages and groups that lets them share news about upcoming affairs or social gatherings. Allowing users to invite many Facebook friends all at once and for all invitee's to monitor who is able to attend/not attend/may attend.
Facebook Connect	A single sign-on service that enables Facebook users to login to affiliated sites using their Facebook account and share information from those sites with their Facebook friends.
Facebook Blog	The official Facebook blog where you will find hundreds of posts on a wide range of subjects.
Fan	A person who has joined a page because they like what that page represents.
Filters	Used to separate friends into different categories. Create your own filters using Friend Lists. You can also filter by applications, like Photos.

Friend	A person who has joined a profile, usually by invitation.
Friend Finder	A Facebook utility that helps users find present and former friends, family, co-workers, schoolmates, and other acquaintances. This works by searching email contact lists.
Friend Suggestion	A complex Facebook feature which suggests possible new friends for Facebook users. Based upon current friends and networks, as well as possible friend suggestions made by other users.
Gifts	Virtual tokens of appreciation one member gives to another (Including many possible items, i.e. flowers, drinks, teddies, cakes, etc.
Group	A group is not a page or profile. It is a Facebook site that are often created by musical groups, companies and other organisations to promote their activities.
Highlights	Featured photos, events, notes and more that it's believed would be of interest to Facebook users. Stories are chosen based on what friends have interacted with.
Inbox	The Facebook mail application.
Like	A feature that appears as a link next to something you see on Facebook that allows users to let others know they appreciate whatever they register their approval (like) of, whether it be a video, a comment or something else.
Limited Profile	A profile that allows only restricted access.
Marketplace	Facebook Marketplace is a feature developed by Facebook that allows users to post free classified ads within the following categories: For Sale, Housing, Jobs, and Other. Ads can be posted as either available and offered, or wanted.
Member	A person who has joined and participates within a group.
Mini Feed	Similar to a News Feed, but different. A Mini Feed centres around one person. Each person's Mini Feed shows what has changed recently in their profile and what content (notes, photos, etc.) they've added. Mini Feeds are sent automatically and posted to friends' profiles for all to see.

Mobile	Facebook Mobile offers multiple Facebook features for your phone, such as Facebook Mobile Web, Facebook Mobile Texts and Facebook Mobile Uploads.
Network	A circle of friends and acquaintances that centres on a city, school, company, etc.
News Feed	News Feeds provides a list of highlights (either chronologically or based on user's previous interest/Facebook activity) what's happening in your social circles on Facebook. News Feeds are posted to profiles for all to see.
Notes	Notes are like mini-blogs for your profile.
Notifications	Like Mini Feeds, Notifications are News Feeds from friends, sent automatically as they engage in activity on their profile.
Officer	An honorary appointment. Group admins can add officers to a group. Other than holding a title, officers have no additional privileges beyond regular members. They do not have admin authority.
Page	A page is not a Profile. It may look like one, but it's not. The features and capabilities are different. It is a Facebook site intended for and created by artists, musical groups, celebrities, businesses, brands and similar entities (not individuals). You can add pages to your profile to show your friends what you care about. Only the official representative of an artist or business can create and make changes to a page.
Photos	A Facebook application that lets users upload albums of photos, tag friends, and leave public comments on photos.
Poke	A poke is a way to interact with your friends on Facebook. It allows one user to virtually poke another. Some consider it flirting. Once poked the Facebook User will be notified via email and the history of those who have poked them will remain on their profile, publically visible depending on privacy settings.
Profile	A profile is not a Page. It may look like one, but it's not. The features and capabilities are different. It is a Facebook site intended for and created by people who want to share information about themselves and socialize with others. A profile displays a user's personal information and their interactions with friends. Each registered user may have only one profile.
Publisher	Use publisher to Publish your status, photos, notes and more into the stream. Posts show up both in your profile, and on your friends' home pages.

Relationship Status	A feature which publicly displays a person's relationship status on their profile (Single, Engaged, Married, In a Complicated Relationship, etc…) and can also depict the name of the person as well, if both parties have agreed that this is the relationship they share. If a person changes this, it will be added to the News Feed, etc alerting friends to this changed status.
Status (Updates)	A micro-blogging feature which allows users to inform their friends of their current whereabouts, actions, or thoughts. Facebook prompts for this (at all times) to be updated on the top of a user's profile.
Stream	The stream shows you posts from your friends in real-time. This keeps you up to date on everything that's happening. You can control who appears here, i.e. who you follow.
Tag	Marking a photo or video with text that identifies the image or the person in the image. Anyone can tag someone in a photo without their permission, thereby making this photo available to anyone who has access to a user's profile based on their privacy settings. Most often, this photo would become visible to all "friends" of a user. A tagged user can remove a tag, thereby preventing them from being tagged again in a particular photo. However, the photo will still be available on the original photo posting user's profile.
Translations	A Facebook application that allows translators from around the world to translate Facebook into different languages.
Updates	News feeds sent to you from the pages that a Facebook user has joined.
Video	A Facebook application that lets users share videos on Facebook. Users can add their videos with the service by uploading video, adding video through Facebook Mobile, and using a web cam recording feature. Additionally, users can "tag" their friends in the videos they add, in the same way as users can tag their friends in photos.
Wall	A featured section inside a Facebook profile. It's a space on every user's profile page that allows friends and users themselves to post messages for all to see (and which will be included in News Feeds, etc).
Warnings	Notices from Facebook that you have engaged in a prohibited activity or that you have reached a limit that suggests you were using a feature at a rate that is likely to be abusive.

APPENDIX 9

Key Themes – Analysis Process

Key Codes – The Gerunds (Open Codes) Common phrases (CP)	Memo Thoughts/Making sense of Key Codes – Turning into Themes (Focused Codes) Memos (M)	Sorted data into Core Categories The Main Theme and 4 Key Themes
Main Theme		
Making assumptions/judgements	- **Constant assertions of feeling sure/certain and making assumptions while concurrently feeling very unsure/uncertain** - **Making judgements about others' behaviour** - **Not understanding others' behaviour** - **Not knowing or being able to describe their own behaviour or actions, or reasons for it**	**Assumption Making vs Uncertainty**
Feeling some users of Facebook are lonely and/or sad		
Feeling uncertain		
Not knowing how to express what they mean		
Additional Key Themes		
Feeling Facebook is a superficial space	- Speaking about Facebook as a superficial /inconsequential space - Facebook also eliciting deep emotional responses - Attachment /closeness to Facebook(M) - Facebook as a transitional object (M) - Not forgetting/not needing to let go	**Emotional Depth:** FB as a Superficial experience **vs** FB as a profound experience
Losing sense of self		
Facebook bringing out anger		
Feeling no sense of loss		
Feeling envy and jealousy		
Expecting Facebook to disappear		
Needing to re-negotiate emotions		
Feeling voyeuristic	- Need/want to be seen - Security in being seen - Also feeling alarmed by access to others and others' access to them	**Exposure:** Great, we can see each other **VS** OMG, we can see each other!
Alarming being watched/seen		
Re-negotiating relationships		
Sense of security in being		

seen Needing access to others Surprise about availability of information Feeling no one is watching Feeling everyone is watching Feeling paranoid Feeling exposed Feeling a need to record life Feeling invaded by professional/personal clash Feeling uncertain about who's there Wanting to know others	- All is accessible (M) - Closeness vs distance (M) - Feeling positive about shared information - Feeling alarmed about shared information	
"Do you know what I mean?" (CP) "D'ya know?" (CP) "You know?" (CP) Feeling sense of lost closeness Feeling sense of gained closeness Feeling peer pressure Wanting acceptance Feeling different from others on Facebook Being reunited Feeling few "real friends" on Facebook Idealising others Positively comparing self to others Negatively comparing self to others	- Looking for confirmation/shared experience (M) - Sense of "the others" – not knowing or caring about these 'unknown' people (M) - Facebook content informing opinions of others/feelings about relationships - Needing to be a part of Facebook (the indescribable "something" that Facebook offers) - Questioning relationship with others on Facebook	**Relational Needs:** I need you here, d'you know what I mean? **VS** Who are you? What are you doing? Do I care about you?
It makes me feel/think (CP) Facebook friends informing notions of self Facebook as a free space to portray self in any way Feeling Facebook is in control Feeling Facebook is	- Psychodynamic theory (M) - Personal vs professional identities (M) - Exposure of self (M) - Reality vs virtual reality (M) - Lacking ability to tolerate ambivalence (M) - Facebook as a free space - Anything goes vs Facebook	**Addiction and Exploitation:** I love using it! **VS** Is it using me? **VS** What is it?!

addictive	rules - Questioning what Facebook is - Feeling out of control of Facebook use - Struggling with ambivalent feelings	
Being distracted		
Qualifying self		
Feeling that Facebook tells what's right and wrong		
Thinking about self-presentation on Facebook		
Questioning self		
Losing time on Facebook		
Not being able to leave Facebook		
Impulsivity		
Feeling Facebook information more authentic than that gained f2f		
Doing things just to put on Facebook		
Feeling Facebook cures loneliness		
Comparing Facebook to f2f		
Gaining a lot from Facebook		
Feeling something is lost on Facebook		
Feeling no sense of purpose on Facebook		
Using Facebook as a substitute for f2f		
New problems coming from Facebook		
Facebook causing complications		
Facebook making things easier		
Wondering what Facebook is		
Feeling Facebook is good		
Feeling Facebook is weird		
Feeling that there are rules on Facebook		
Feeling anything goes		

APPENDIX 10

Theme Occurrence Table

	Interview													
Themes (The Gerunds)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Making assumptions	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Making judgements about others	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Feeling uncertain	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Not knowing how to express what they mean	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Feeling Facebook is a superficial space	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Facebook eliciting strong emotional reactions	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Expecting Facebook to disappear		X	X	X	X		X		X		X	X	X	X
Needing to re-negotiate emotions	X			X			X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Feeling voyeuristic				X	X		X	X	X		X	X		X
Negative feelings about being watched/seen	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
Re-negotiating relationships based on Facebook	X	X	X	X	X		X	X			X	X	X	X
Sense of security in being seen	X		X			X	X	X		X			X	
Needing access to others	X		X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Surprise/shock about availability of information	X	X		X			X	X			X		X	
Feeling that no one will notice			X	X	X			X		X	X			
Feeling everyone is watching	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Feeling paranoid	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X		X	X	
Feeling exposed	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Feeling invaded by Professional/personal clash					X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Feeling uncertain about who's there	X		X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Wanting to know others	X			X	X		X	X	X		X			
Feeling peer pressure	X			X		X	X	X		X	X	X		
Wanting acceptance	X		X	X			X			X				
Being reunited	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Feeling sense of gained closeness	X			X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Feeling sense of lost closeness/left out	X	X		X	X		X	X			X	X	X	X
Feeling different from others on Facebook	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
"Do you know what I mean?" (CP) "D'ya know?" (CP) "You know?" (CP)	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Feeling few "real friends" on Facebook	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Idealising others					X		X	X		X	X		X	
Comparing self positively to others	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Comparing self negatively to others	X	X			X		X	X		X		X		
It makes me feel/think (CP)	X		X	X				X			X	X	X	
Facebook as a free space to portray self in anyway		X			X			X		X	X			
Feeling Facebook is in control	X	X	X	X	X		X	X			X	X		X
Feeling Facebook is addictive	X	X	X				X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Being distracted	X	X			X		X	X		X	X	X		
Qualifying self, trying to find own sense of meaning/understanding	X	X		X	X		X	X	X		X	X		X
Facebook tells what's right and wrong							X			X	X			
Thinking about self-presentation on Facebook	X		X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X		X
Questioning self	X	X			X		X	X	X		X		X	
Losing time on Facebook	X	X		X	X		X			X	X	X		
Not being able to leave Facebook	X	X			X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Impulsivity		X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X		X
Feeling Facebook information more authentic than that gained f2f	X	X	X	X			X	X	X		X			
Comparing Facebook to f2f	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		
Describing gaining alot	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X

from Facebook														
Feeling something is lost on Facebook	X	X		X	X		X		X		X	X	X	X
Feeling no sense of purpose on Facebook	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	X	X		X
Using Facebook as a substitute for f2f	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Facebook causing complications	X		X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Facebook making things easier	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wondering what Facebook is		X			X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Feeling Facebook is good	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Feeling Facebook is weird	X	X	X		X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Feeling that there are rules on Facebook	X						X	X		X	X	X		X
Feeling anything goes					X		X	X			X	X	X	