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**Digital Risks and Family Dynamics:  
Adolescents' Perceptions of How  
Communication Styles Shape Risky  
Social Media Behaviour**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores how family communication styles influence adolescents' engagement in risky social media and online behaviours, including oversharing personal information, participating in harmful, viral challenges, and experiences related to cyberbullying. Drawing on Family Communication Patterns Theory (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002), Parental Mediation Theory (Clark, 2011), and the concept of internalization (Vygotsky, 1978), the study examines how adolescents perceive and internalize family communication norms and how these perceptions shape their digital risk-taking behaviours. A qualitative research design was employed, using three online focus groups with adolescents aged 17-19 (n=15), conducted via Google Meet. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to analyze the data, revealing six key themes: family communication patterns, parental mediation, adolescent autonomy, disclosure and parental reactions, peer and social influence, and risk perception and awareness. Findings indicate that open and supportive family communication may facilitate trust and digital risk awareness, but is often overridden by peer influence and personal autonomy. In contrast, restrictive or inconsistent communication can lead to avoidance, secrecy, and increased digital vulnerability. The study underscores the importance of nuanced, ongoing parent-adolescent dialogue in supporting safer online engagement. This research contributes to the fields of family communication, adolescent development, and digital media studies, offering practical insights for parents, educators, and policymakers aiming to foster digital resilience among youth.

*Keywords: family communication, parenting styles, adolescent behaviour, online risk, social media, digital safety, qualitative research*



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# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## ***1.1- Background and Rationale***

Adolescence is a critical stage of development characterized by the exploration of identity and increased risk-taking behaviours, particularly in digital spaces (Steinberg, 2008). As social media platforms become central to adolescent socialization, they are increasingly exposed to online risks, including oversharing personal information, engaging in harmful viral challenges, and participating in cyberbullying (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007; Mascheroni & Ólafsson, 2014). While peer influence plays a significant role in shaping adolescent online behaviours, family communication dynamics remain key in determining how adolescents perceive, manage, and engage with digital risks.

How families communicate about risks and digital behaviours varies significantly, influencing adolescents' willingness to share their online experiences with their families, seek parental guidance, and assess digital threats (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). Some families promote open discussions about social media use, allowing adolescents to develop critical thinking skills and digital resilience. Others enforce restrictive mediation strategies, which may lead to secrecy, non-disclosure, or increased risk-taking in online spaces (Clark, 2011). This study explores how family communication styles shape adolescent engagement with digital risks, contributing to a deeper understanding of the protective or risk-enhancing effects of different parental approaches.

## ***1.2- Research Problem***

The widespread adoption of social media among adolescents has introduced new challenges for families in regulating digital engagement. While parental strategies such as monitoring, rule-setting, or open discussions can influence online behaviours, there is limited research on how family communication styles specifically shape adolescents' engagement

with risky online behaviours. Existing studies have primarily focused on peer influence (Mascheroni & Ólafsson, 2014) or general parental mediation strategies (Clark, 2011), but fewer studies have examined how family communication orientations influence adolescent decision-making in digital environments.

This research addresses this gap by examining how different family communication styles (ranging from highly open to highly restrictive) affect adolescents' willingness to discuss online risks and their likelihood of engaging in risky online behaviours. By exploring these dynamics, this study aims to provide insight into effective communication strategies that can help families better support adolescents in navigating digital risks.

### ***1.3- Research Objectives***

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the relationship between family communication styles and adolescent engagement in online risk-taking behaviours. Specifically, the study aims to identify patterns in how families communicate about online behaviours, assessing whether certain communication styles foster openness while others lead to secrecy or avoidance. Furthermore, the study seeks to examine whether open communication styles serve as protective factors, enabling adolescents to make informed and responsible digital choices, while also considering whether restrictive styles contribute to secrecy and increased online risk-taking behaviours.

Beyond examining communication patterns, this study also seeks to understand how adolescents internalize and apply family communication norms to their digital interactions. By analyzing how adolescents negotiate parental guidance, peer influence, and personal autonomy, the study aims to gain insight into how family norms translate into online behaviours. Finally, this research aims to contribute to family communication and digital risk scholarship, offering insights that may inform parents, educators, and policymakers on how

to develop effective communication strategies that support adolescent digital literacy and safety.

### ***1.4- Significance of the Study***

As social media and digital communication platforms continue to evolve, adolescents are increasingly exposed to both opportunities and risks in online environments. With the rise of harmful digital trends, cyberbullying, and privacy concerns, understanding how family communication influences adolescent engagement in online risk-taking is crucial. Families play a critical role in shaping how adolescents perceive, assess, and navigate online risks, yet there is limited research on how communication styles influence these digital behaviours. This study aims to bridge that gap by identifying which family communication patterns best support adolescent digital resilience and which may inadvertently contribute to increased online risk-taking behaviours.

By analyzing the interplay between family communication styles, parental mediation styles, and adolescent decision-making, this study has the potential to inform parents, educators, and policymakers on best practices for fostering healthy digital engagement. The findings will contribute to a growing body of research on adolescent risk-taking, digital literacy, and online safety, offering practical recommendations for improving family communication around social media use. As social media continues to shape adolescent identity, relationships, and risk behaviours, understanding how family dynamics influence these interactions will be essential in promoting safer and more informed digital experiences for young people.

### ***1.5- Suppositions***

This study is based on several suppositions regarding family communication, adolescent behaviour, and online risk-taking. First, it assumes that family communication styles significantly shape adolescents' perceptions of online risks, shaping whether they seek

parental guidance or engage in secrecy regarding their digital behaviours. It is also assumed that open family communication styles promote greater digital literacy and responsible online decision-making, whereas restrictive or authoritarian communication styles may lead to avoidance behaviours, secrecy, or riskier engagement with social media.

Additionally, this study assumes that adolescents are influenced not only by family communication but also by peer norms and external digital environments. While family communication may establish initial perceptions of online risk, social media culture and peer validation are expected to play a significant role in shaping adolescent engagement with risky behaviours. Lastly, the study assumes that parental mediation strategies, whether active, restrictive, or passive, affect how adolescents interpret and respond to digital risks. These suppositions will be examined through thematic analysis of focus group discussions, allowing for an exploration of how adolescents describe their family communication experiences and their effects on online behaviour.

## **Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework**

### ***2.1- Introduction***

This study is grounded in theories drawn from psychology and sociology, providing a conceptual lens to analyze how family communication styles influence adolescents' engagement in risky online behaviours, such as oversharing personal information, participating in harmful viral challenges, and cyberbullying.

The theoretical framework for this thesis consists of three primary theories: Family Communication Patterns Theory (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002), the Biopsychosocial Model of Adolescent Risk-Taking (Sales & Irwin, 2009), and Parental Mediation Theory (Clark, 2011). These theories provide insight into how family interactions and communication styles, psychological and social factors, and parental mediation strategies shape adolescent decision-making and risky behaviours in digital spaces. They provide a foundation for understanding the role of family dynamics in adolescent risk-taking in digital spaces.

### ***2.2- Family Communications Patterns Theory/ Parenting Styles***

Family communication shapes adolescent decision-making, emotional regulation, and engagement with online risks. Family Communication Patterns Theory (FCPT) (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002) and the Parenting Styles Framework (Baumrind, 1991; McMahan & Thompson, 2022) are two complementary theoretical models that provide insight into how family interactions influence adolescent behaviours. While FCPT categorizes families based on their conversation orientation (encouraging open discussions) and conformity orientation (expectation of obedience and shared values), Baumrind's Parenting Styles Framework examines how responsiveness and demandingness shape adolescents' perceptions of authority, support, and independence. By integrating these two frameworks, this study will

explore how family communication and parenting strategies interact to shape adolescent engagement in online risks such as oversharing, participating in harmful challenges, and cyberbullying.

### 2.2.1- Family Communication and Parenting Models

While FCPT focuses on how families communicate, Baumrind’s parenting styles emphasize the broader emotional and behavioural climate within the household. The table below presents a comparison of the two models and their potential influence on adolescent social media behaviours and online risk-taking:

<b><u>FCPT-</u></b> <b><u>(Koerner &amp; Fitzpatrick,</u></b> <b><u>2002)</u></b>	<b><u>Parenting Styles-</u></b> <b><u>(Baumrind, 1991)</u></b>	<b><u>Effect on Adolescent</u></b> <b><u>Online Behaviour</u></b>
<u>Consensual Families</u> ( <i>high conversation, high conformity</i> )- Parents encourage discussion but expect shared values and agreement.	<u>Authoritative Parenting</u> ( <i>high responsiveness, high demandingness</i> )- Parents are warm and supportive while enforcing clear expectations.	Adolescents are more likely to discuss online risks with parents, but may feel hesitant about challenging authority.
<u>Pluralistic Families</u> ( <i>high conversation, low conformity</i> )- Open discussions are encouraged, and adolescents are given independence to form opinions.	<u>Indulgent (Permissive) Parenting</u> ( <i>high responsiveness, low demandingness</i> )- Parents provide emotional support but lack structure.	Adolescents may be digitally confident but engage in more exploratory online behaviours, as they have less parental control over social media use.
<u>Protective Families</u> ( <i>low conversation, high conformity</i> )-	<u>Authoritarian Parenting</u> ( <i>low responsiveness, high demandingness</i> )-	Adolescents may avoid discussing online risks with parents and engage in

Parents enforce strict rules with minimal discussion	Emphasis on obedience and discipline with less warmth.	secretive online behaviours to bypass restrictions.
<u>Laissez-faire Families</u> ( <i>low conversation, low conformity</i> )- Minimal communication or parental involvement.	<u>Neglectful (Uninvolved) Parenting</u> ( <i>low responsiveness, low demandingness</i> )- Parents provide little to no emotional or behavioural guidance.	Adolescents may lack digital literacy and be highly vulnerable to online risks such as cyberbullying, oversharing, and harmful social media trends.

Fig. 1: Comparison of Family Communication Styles Theory and Parenting Styles Framework

By integrating both frameworks, this study explores how variations in communication and parenting styles influence adolescent engagement in risky online behaviours.

Consensual communication and authoritative parenting styles tend to create a supportive and protective environment where adolescents are less likely to engage in high-risk digital behaviours since they feel comfortable having discussions with their parents, in this case, about online challenges, allowing for guidance rather than strict control (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; Baumrind, 1991; McMahan & Thompson, 2022).

On the other hand, protective and authoritarian styles may lead to secretive online behaviours on the adolescents' part to avoid feeling monitored rather than supported in these environments. When parents impose strict monitoring without explanation and without fostering open dialogue, adolescents may find alternative ways to engage online, which would therefore increase their exposure to digital risks (boyd<sup>1</sup>, 2014; Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Stattin and Kerr (2000) state that effective parental monitoring comes from adolescent disclosure rather than parental tracking, suggesting that forced control may push adolescents toward riskier behaviours online.

Meanwhile, laissez-faire and neglectful parenting styles may leave adolescents more vulnerable to online dangers, as they have minimal parental guidance in managing digital risks. Adolescents may lack the necessary skills to identify and respond to online threats, making them more susceptible to cyberbullying, oversharing personal information, and engaging in harmful social media challenges (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007).

### ***2.2.2- Internalization of Family Communication Norms***

The process of internalization, defined as “the nonconscious mental process by which the characteristics, beliefs, feelings, or attitudes of other individuals or groups are assimilated into the self and adopted as one’s own” (American Psychological Association, 2018), is

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<sup>1</sup> Author does not capitalize their name

central to understanding how adolescents absorb and adopt family communication norms. These norms, once internalized, influence their decision-making, risk perception, and engagement in digital environments.

Rooted in the sociocultural tradition of Vygotsky (1978), internalization involves the incorporation of external social influences, such as family values, communication styles, and cultural norms, into an individual's cognitive and emotional structure. In the context of this study, it explains how adolescents' ongoing exposure to their family's way of communicating informs their online behavior and sense of risk.

However, internalization is not a simple, passive process of copying or imitating parental models. As argued by Lawrence and Valsiner (1993), and further developed by Zittoun and Gillespie (2015), internalization is transformative: individuals do not merely absorb external influences, but rework, reinterpret, and sometimes resist them based on their own experiences and social contexts. Zittoun and Gillespie emphasize that meaning-making occurs through a dialogical process, where individuals position themselves in relation to the values and practices they encounter. This means adolescents may selectively adopt or reformulate the norms and expectations they experience at home, especially when they come into contact with contrasting peer norms or digital cultures.

For instance, adolescents from open and trusting communication environments may internalize critical thinking and emotional safety, leading them to reflect more carefully before engaging in online risks (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; Morris et al., 2007). In contrast, those raised in restrictive or authoritarian households may internalize not just rules, but the underlying sense of fear, secrecy, or surveillance, which can foster concealment and disengagement rather than open dialogue (Stattin & Kerr, 2000; boyd, 2014). These internalized patterns become especially significant in digital spaces, where surveillance can

lead adolescents to develop tactics for circumventing restrictions, ultimately increasing their exposure to risk (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007).

In this study, internalization is therefore understood as an active, dynamic, and context-sensitive process that shapes how adolescents navigate digital risks, whether it is by aligning with or diverging from the communication norms experienced within their families.

### ***2.3- The Biopsychosocial Model of Adolescent Risk-Taking***

Adolescents are more likely than adults to engage in risk-taking behaviours, both offline and online, due to a combination of biological, social, and environmental factors. While past research, such as Steinberg's Social Neuroscience Perspective on Risk-Taking (2008), has emphasized the role of brain development, more recent studies highlight the importance of environmental influences, including family communication and peer norms (Sales & Irwin, 2003).

The Biopsychosocial Model of Adolescent Risk-Taking (Sales & Irwin, 2009) provides a framework for understanding the complex interaction of these factors. This model highlights that adolescent risk-taking is not only influenced by biological changes (such as hormonal fluctuations and brain development) but also by social dynamics, including peer pressure and family interactions. Adolescence is characterized by heightened impulsivity, identity exploration, and susceptibility to peer influence, all of which increase the likelihood of risky behaviours such as oversharing on social media or engaging in viral challenges (Leather, 2009). Furthermore, the model highlights the role of family communication and parental mediation in moderating these behaviours. Effective family communication, particularly one that is open and supportive, can help counterbalance the external pressures that may lead adolescents to take risks online (Sales & Irwin, 2009).

### ***2.3.1- Social and Peer Interactions***

Adolescents are particularly sensitive to peer approval, and social norms strongly influence their online risk-taking behaviours. The appeal of social validation through likes, comments, and shares can incite reckless online actions, such as oversharing personal information or engaging in harmful viral challenges (Macheroni & Ólafsson, 2014). Even when adolescents have internalized family values that discourage risky online behaviours, peer norms may override parental influence, leading them to conform to digital trends that pose potential risks (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). This is especially evident in cases of cyberbullying, where adolescents may either become perpetrators in an attempt to gain social status or remain silent to avoid social exclusion (boyd, 2014).

The Biopsychosocial Model (Sales & Irwin, 2009) further underscores the role of peer influence by highlighting adolescence as a period of heightened impulsivity and risk-taking, particularly in social contexts. The desire for peer acceptance, along with the underdeveloped cognitive control systems in the adolescent brain, increases susceptibility to digital risk-taking behaviours. However, the model also emphasizes the counterbalancing effect of strong family communication, which can mitigate the influence of peer pressure in online environments. Open and supportive family discussions about digital risks can help develop critical thinking skills and a stronger resistance to peer-driven online behaviours.

### ***2.4- Parental Mediation Theory***

Parental Mediation Theory (Clark, 2011), originally developed in the context of television and media studies, has since been expanded to digital media environments. This theory explains how parents regulate and guide their children's media use, shaping their engagement with digital spaces in ways that can either mitigate or unintentionally exacerbate online risks.

### ***2.4.1- Types of Parental Mediation***

Parental mediation strategies (Clark, 2011) are typically categorized into:

1. **Active Mediation:** involves parents engaging in open, ongoing conversations about digital media use, discussing online risks, and providing guidance on navigating digital spaces safely. This strategy encourages critical thinking and digital literacy, which can help adolescents make informed decisions about their online activities.
2. **Restrictive Mediation:** involves parents placing limitations on their adolescents' use of digital media, such as setting time restrictions or using content filters. While this strategy may provide structure, it may also foster secrecy as adolescents seek to bypass these controls and engage in risky online behaviours in secret.
3. **Co-viewing Mediation:** involves parents passively observing their adolescent's media use without directly engaging in discussions about online risks. While this strategy offers some level of supervision, it does not promote active learning or critical thinking about the potential dangers of digital spaces.

Research suggests that active mediation is the most effective in reducing adolescent online risk-taking, as it fosters digital literacy and responsible decision-making (Clark, 2011). In contrast, restrictive mediation may contribute to secrecy and disengagement (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007), aligning with the Biopsychological Model's emphasis on the role of family communication in moderating adolescent risk-taking behaviours (Sales & Irwin, 2009).

### ***2.5- Synthesis of Theoretical Framework***

Together, these theories provide a comprehensive understanding of how family communication, internalized norms, social influences, and parental mediation interact to shape adolescent digital risk-taking. The Biopsychosocial Model (Sales & Irwin, 2009)

emphasizes the interaction between biological, psychological, and social factors in adolescent risk behaviours, highlighting the role of peer influence and parental communication in online decision-making. FCPT (Koerner & Fitzgerald, 2002) explains how different communication styles set the foundation for adolescent decision-making, while the concept of Internalization (Vygotsky, 1978) describes how these styles are absorbed and reflected in behaviour. Parental Mediation Theory (Clark, 2011) further illustrates how parents attempt to guide adolescent online behaviour through various mediation strategies, with active mediation being the most effective in fostering responsible digital engagement.

By integrating these frameworks, this study explores whether open and supportive family communication serves as a protective factor against adolescent digital risk-taking or whether restrictive and authoritarian approaches contribute to secrecy and increased risk. This analysis aims to contribute to the broader discussion on adolescent digital resilience and the role of family dynamics in fostering safe online behaviours.

These frameworks were selected with consideration to their conceptual relevance and the phenomena that this study can explore through their lens. Each model supports different elements of the research problem in a complementary manner, hence their selection. Koerner and Fitzpatrick's (2002) Family Communication Patterns Theory addresses patterns of interaction and the transmission of norms within the family unit, Baumrind's (1991) parenting typology captures the affective and regulatory dimensions of parenting, and Sales and Irwin's Biopsychosocial Model situates adolescent behaviour within an interplay of developmental, environmental, and individual factors.

Other relevant perspectives were also considered, including Bowlby's (1969) Attachment Theory, which posits that early caregiver–child relationships form the foundation for later social and emotional development, with secure attachments fostering healthier communication and reduced risk-taking, Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which

emphasizes behaviour acquisition through observation, imitation, and modelling, suggesting that adolescents may adopt parental communication styles and online behaviours through these processes, Bowen's (1978) Family Systems Theory, which conceptualizes the family as an interdependent emotional unit in which each member's behaviour influences and is influenced by others, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, which conceptualizes human development within embedded environmental systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, chronosystem), and Erikson's (1963) Psychosocial Development Theory, which situates adolescence as a stage marked by the resolution of identity versus role confusion. These approaches were not selected because, while valuable, they either focus too narrowly on early attachment processes (Bowlby), observational learning without detailed consideration of communicative processes (Bandura), or the macro-level structuring of environments at the expense of micro-level interactional patterns (Bronfenbrenner). Others provide broad developmental stage models without the more detailed differentiation of family interaction styles needed for this study (Erikson), or take a systemic view without offering a typology that can be readily applied to adolescent self-reports (Bowen).

On the other hand, the above chosen frameworks are better suited to this research, which aims to understand adolescent's perceptions of their own digital risk-taking within the context of family communication, because they not only provide typologies that can be readily applied to adolescents' self-reports but also offer conceptual dimensions such as conversation and conformity orientations, parental responsiveness and demandingness, and the interplay of biological, psychological, and social factors that can be meaningfully explored through qualitative methods. Their constructs are sufficiently specific to guide the formulation of the focused research question while remaining flexible enough to capture the subjective, context-dependent interpretations adolescents give to their family communication

patterns and digital behaviours, thus aligning more closely with the qualitative and adolescent-centred aims of this study.

Epistemologically, while Family Communication Patterns Theory (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002) and Baumrind's (1991) framework originate in more quantitative methods, their constructs are not incompatible with the processual and socially mediated understanding of internalization advanced by the cultural-historical approaches such as those of Vygotsky and Valsiner. Communicative orientations and parenting styles can be understood not as static typologies but as dynamic processes that adolescents interpret and respond to over time, hence the integration of these models. Similarly, although the Biopsychosocial Model (Sales & Irwin, 2009) is often operationalized in quantitative health research, its triadic structure offers a heuristic for mapping the interplay between individual development, social influence, and family context, which can be explored qualitatively.

These models were developed through diverse empirical methods, from survey-based typology to longitudinal development studies, which do not mirror the qualitative focus group methodology adopted in this research, which does not adopt these frameworks as measurement tools but as conceptual lenses that can be operationalized within a qualitative design. Their key constructs, conversation and conformity orientations, responsiveness and demandingness, and the interrelation of biological, psychological, and social domains, are used to inform the structure of focus group prompts, guide thematic coding, and interpret the narratives adolescents provide about their familial and online experiences. Rather than quantifying these dimensions, the analysis attends to how participants describe and attribute meaning to them in the context of their own family relationships and digital practices. This approach preserves the conceptual integrity of the models while extending them into an adolescent-centred, meaning-focused qualitative exploration, allowing the study to capture

not only these theoretical elements but also the nuanced ways in which they are lived and understood.

## ***2.6- Research Question and Problematization***

Drawing from Family Communication Patterns Theory (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002), the Parenting Styles Framework (Baumrind, 1991), the Biopsychosocial Model of Adolescent Risk-Taking (Sales & Irwin, 2009), and Parental Mediation Theory (Clark, 2011), the study explores how family dynamics, internalized norms, and external influences jointly shape adolescent behaviour in digital environments.

These frameworks emphasize the importance of family communication orientation (conversation vs. conformity), parenting responsiveness and control, and the role of internalized family norms in adolescent decision-making. They also highlight how such factors interact with adolescent developmental processes and social pressures, particularly peer influence, to either mitigate or exacerbate digital risk-taking. As adolescents navigate online spaces, the quality and style of family communication may significantly affect their ability to disclose risky encounters, seek guidance, or resist peer-driven behaviours such as oversharing, engaging in viral challenges, or participating in cyberbullying.

From this theoretical grounding, the central question guiding this study is:

*How do adolescents perceive the role of family communication styles in shaping their engagement in risky social media behaviour, such as oversharing personal information, participating in harmful viral challenges, or engaging in cyberbullying?*

This central question is explored through several interrelated sub-questions, each of which reflecting a specific aspect of the theoretical framework and serves to guide the study's methodological design. First, the study investigates how adolescents describe their family's communication style regarding social media and online risks, considering whether they experience open discussions, restrictive rule-setting, or a general absence of parental

involvement. Second, it explores whether adolescents associate open family communication with greater digital literacy and a more cautious or informed approach to online engagement. Third, the study examines the potential effects of restrictive or authoritarian communication styles on adolescent disclosure and secrecy, specifically whether such approaches foster avoidance behaviours or increase vulnerability to digital risks. Finally, it considers the role of peer norms and external social influences in shaping adolescent responses to family communication, asking whether adolescents tend to prioritize peer approval over parental guidance when making digital decisions.

These questions are not posed abstractly but are instead operationalized through qualitative focus group discussions with adolescents, allowing for a detailed exploration of how the theoretical constructs outlined above are reflected in adolescents' lived experiences. The research questions therefore transform the conceptual insights from the theoretical framework into empirical inquiry in the form of the qualitative focus groups to capture the complex ways in which family communication contributes to risky adolescent behaviour in digital spaces, or the lack thereof.



## **Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology**

### ***3.1- Research Design***

A qualitative research design was selected for this study, as it allows for in-depth exploration of participants' lived experiences, subjective meanings, and the nuances of family communication and online behaviour that may not be captured through quantitative measures (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This approach is particularly suited to understanding complex social behaviours, such as adolescents' online risk-taking, within their relational and emotional contexts. While qualitative methods do not offer statistical generalizability, they provide rich and contextualized insights that are essential for exploring sensitive topics in-depth. The focus group method was chosen because it enables interactive discussions, where participants can reflect on shared experiences and co-construct meaning through dialogue (Leung & Savithiri, 2009). This approach is relevant for understanding adolescents' perspectives on family communication and its role in navigating online risks, as it allows for identifying patterns and differences between participants' experiences.

In addition to the general strengths of qualitative research for capturing complexity and subjective meaning, this methodological choice also responds directly to gaps identified in existing literature. Much of the foundational research on adolescent risk and family communication, such as Baumrind's parenting typologies (1991), Livingstone and Helsper's work on digital inclusion (2007), or Mascheroni and Ólafsson's large-scale surveys (2014) has relied on quantitative methods. These studies offer valuable structural insights but often produce broad correlations that do not capture the nuanced lived experiences of adolescents navigating family communication around digital risk. Similarly, models such as the Biopsychological Model (Sales & Irwin, 2009) and Parental Mediation Theory (Clark, 2011) provide conceptual foundations, yet they lack direct engagement with adolescent voices. By

contrast, this study uses a qualitative focus group-based design to prioritize adolescent's own narratives and meaning-making processes. Drawing on insights from scholars like boyd (2014) and the reflexive methodologies of Braun and Clarke (2006), this approach allows participants to articulate how they experience and interpret family communication in digital contexts, therefore moving beyond static models to capture the dynamic and interactive nature of adolescent digital behaviour. This enables the study to address underexplored dimensions of emotional nuance, relational negotiation, and internalization that are often absent in quantitatively driven accounts.

Due to logistical challenges in coordinating in-person sessions and not finding enough participants in Neuchâtel, the focus groups were conducted online, which offered greater flexibility for participants and allowed for engagement in a familiar digital environment (Fox, Morris & Rumsey, 2007). However, conducting focus groups online also introduces specific challenges, such as managing group dynamics and participant interaction, which were carefully considered during the data collection process (Sim & Waterfield, 2019).

### ***3.2- Participant Sampling***

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling, targeting adolescents aged 17-19 who actively use social media and are currently navigating family communication dynamics during adolescence. This age range was selected as it aligns with the developmental stage where risk-taking behaviours and peer influence are most prominent (Steinberg, 2008).

To recruit more participants and increase diversity in participants' experiences, a snowball sampling strategy was also implemented. This involved initial participants referring peers within their social networks who met the study's criteria, allowing for broader access to participants from varying family communication backgrounds (Naderifar, Goli, & Ghaljaie, 2017). This approach was particularly useful given the challenges of accessing adolescents through formal channels and the sensitive nature of the topic, as referrals from trusted peers

helped foster openness and timely participation within the constraints of the research timeline. It also enabled access to a variety of family dynamics relevant to the study's aims.

In total, 3 focus groups with 5-6 participants each were conducted, reaching 15 participants in total, which is consistent with the recommended sample size for qualitative research to reach data saturation (Guest, Namey & McKenna, 2017).

In order to provide a clearer understanding of the participant sample and to contextualize the data presented in later chapters, the following table summarizes the demographic information across gender identity, educational background, sociocultural context, and migration experiences. Given the study's focus on how adolescents' perceptions of family communication relate to digital risk behaviours, these factors are relevant in shaping participants' lived experiences, especially as many themes in the analysis chapter intersect with issues of culture, religion, language, and personal identity. While participants varied widely in background and therefore perspective, the sample represents a diverse cross-section of youth from multiple continents, with varied parental origins, religious upbringings, and educational experiences. The table below provides a concise overview of the fifteen participants' demographics.

<b><u>Category</u></b>	<b><u>Information</u></b>
Gender identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 8 Female</li> <li>- 3 Male</li> <li>- 4 Non-binary/ Genderfluid</li> </ul>
Educational background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 4 recently completed high school and enrolled/waiting for responses from post-secondary institutions</li> <li>- 6 currently in university (bachelor's)</li> <li>- 1 completed an apprenticeship</li> <li>- 1 with IB &amp; IGCSE diplomas</li> </ul>
Ethnicities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Amazigh</li> <li>- Arab</li> <li>- Swiss</li> <li>- Kazakh</li> <li>- Peulh</li> <li>- Colombian</li> <li>- German</li> <li>- Irish</li> <li>- Salvadoran</li> <li>- Chilean</li> <li>- Indigenous (Canada)</li> <li>- Dutch</li> <li>- French</li> <li>- Canadian</li> <li>- Ukrainian</li> <li>- Scottish</li> <li>- Slavic</li> <li>- Austrian</li> <li>- Slovak</li> <li>- Norwegian</li> <li>- Uyghur</li> </ul>
Race (Self-Identified)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- White</li> <li>- Brown</li> <li>- Black</li> <li>- Central Asian</li> <li>- Hispanic</li> <li>- Mixed</li> <li>- Caucasian</li> </ul>
Place of Birth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 7 in Canada</li> <li>- 4 in Switzerland</li> <li>- 1 in Cameroon</li> <li>- 1 in Morocco</li> <li>- 1 in Senegal</li> </ul>
Parental Place of Birth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Canada</li> <li>- El Salvador</li> <li>- Chile</li> <li>- Turkiye</li> <li>- Switzerland</li> <li>- Austria</li> <li>- Slovakia</li> <li>- East Turkestan</li> <li>- Morocco</li> <li>- Pakistan</li> <li>- Tunisia</li> </ul>
Nationalities/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 7 Canadians</li> <li>- 1 Moroccan</li> <li>- 1 Colombian</li> </ul>

Citizenship	- 6 Swiss	- 1 Kazakh	- 1 Austrian
Languages Spoken/ Understood	- English - French - Arabic - Swiss German - Turkish	- Kazakh - Wolof - High German	- Spanish - Italian - Russian - Urdu - Uyghur - American Sign Language - Sloval - Peulh
Home Languages	- English - French	- Arabic - Wolof	- German
Religions/ Cultural Traditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 7 Muslim (1 mixed with Tengrist practices)</li> <li>- 4 Christian (Catholic, Evangelical, or general Christian)</li> <li>- 2 Mixed/Interfaith (practices and holidays from 2 religions)</li> <li>- 1 Agnostic (with former Catholic background)</li> <li>- 1 from a secular household</li> <li>- 1 household celebrates Nowruz (a bit differently to Persians), Turkiye and East Turkestan Independence Days and attends yearly protests for massacre anniversaries</li> </ul>		
Migration Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants who migrated or lived abroad: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Senegal → Cote d'Ivoire (5 years) → Switzerland</li> <li>- Switzerland → Egypt (10 years) → Switzerland</li> <li>- Switzerland → England (ages 3-4) → Egypt (ages 9-15) → Switzerland</li> <li>- Cameroon → Switzerland</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Parents who were born outside of children's birth country migrated there</li> </ul>		
Notable Identity Markers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Queer</li> <li>- LGBTQ+ (AFAB non-binary, genderfluid)</li> <li>- Neurodivergent (Autism, ADHD)</li> </ul>		

Fig. 2: Participants' Demographics

### ***3.3- Data Collection***

The focus groups were conducted from February to April 2025 via Google Meet, an online platform that allows real-time interaction and participant engagement even digitally. This format was chosen due to the difficulty of coordinating in-person sessions and also finding enough participants in Neuchâtel. It provided greater flexibility for participants to join from familiar environments, which is particularly relevant when working with adolescents (Fox, Morris & Rumsey, 2007). Conducting the focus groups online, therefore, ensured accessibility; however, considering the difficulties in conducting qualitative research online, they were conducted in alignment with the best practices to optimize online focus groups (Murukulta & Puri, 2020). Each session lasted 90-140 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent (and that of their guardians, if applicable) for later transcription and analysis.

A semi-structured focus group guide was developed to ensure consistency across all sessions, while also allowing for flexibility in participants' responses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The questions were designed to first map out concrete situations, such as family discussions about social media use, before prompting participants to reflect on their experiences and decision-making processes. This approach aligns with the Family Communications Patterns Theory (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002), which emphasizes the role of open communication in shaping adolescent behaviour. These open-ended questions allowed for deeper reflection on family dynamics, while also encouraging participants to share personal experiences related to online risk-taking behaviours.

In addition to verbal discussions, an interactive presentation software (Mentimeter, version 2.0, 2012, Mentimeter AB), was used to create a word cloud activity at the end of each session. This allowed participants to anonymously share keywords and emotions that emerged during the discussion, creating a visual representation of their reflections on family

communication and social media use. The word cloud served as a closing activity, helping to highlight recurring themes and patterns, while also giving participants a creative way to express their experiences before concluding the session. The inclusion of the word cloud activity was inspired by a course exercise I completed in a seminar called “Méthodes et recherches qualitatives en sciences sociales”, where the class was prompted to submit words and symbols in response to a guiding question. Given my background and interest in the arts, I was encouraged by my professors to incorporate a creative or artistic approach to my data collection. Building on this suggestion, I designed the word cloud activity as a way to complement the verbal dimension of the focus groups with a more visual and participatory expression of the adolescents’ reflections. The original intention was to have the participants complete this exercise on a poster board, using different colours. However, given the online setting of the focus groups, I had to modify the exercise accordingly.

By combining open dialogue with the visual support of the Mentimeter word cloud, the online format allowed for more dynamic interaction, while also capturing participants' emotions and experiences more creatively and engagingly.

### ***3.4- Data Analysis***

All focus group audio recordings were transcribed using TurboScribe (Foged, 2023), an online transcription tool that provided accurate and time-efficient rendering of the spoken data. The transcriptions were reviewed and manually corrected for accuracy prior to analysis. The data collected from the focus groups was analyzed using thematic analysis, a widely recognized method for identifying patterns and meanings within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach was chosen because it effectively captures personal experiences and is well-suited for exploring family communication and risky online behaviours.

The analysis followed the six-step process proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006):

1. Familiarization with the data: Listening to the recordings and reading transcripts to gain an overall understanding of the participants' experiences.
2. Generating initial codes: Identifying recurring patterns and assigning codes to specific parts of the data.
3. Identifying themes: Grouping similar codes into broader themes related to family communication and online behaviour.
4. Reviewing themes: Ensuring the themes accurately reflect the data and refining them as needed.
5. Defining and naming themes: Clearly articulating the meaning of each theme.
6. Producing the final report: Writing a comprehensive analysis that connects the themes to the research question.

The coding process was guided by the theoretical framework, particularly FCPT (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002) and Parental Mediation Theory (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007), while also allowing for emerging themes from participants' experiences to surface. This combination of top-down and bottom-up analysis ensured that the findings remained grounded in existing literature while also capturing unique insights from the participants' perspectives.

### ***3.5- Ethical Considerations***

This study adhered to the ethical guidelines outlined in the Guide Verte (2020) for research in the social sciences. The following measures were implemented to protect participants' rights and well-being throughout the data collection process:

- Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and for those under 18, parental consent was also obtained. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study, their rights as participants, and the confidentiality of their data.

- Participants' confidentiality and anonymity were ensured through the anonymization of transcripts and the replacement and/or removal of any identifying information during the data analysis process.
- Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without providing a reason.
- Given the sensitive nature of discussing risky online behaviours, mental health support resources were provided in case participants experienced emotional distress during or after the discussion.

These ethical measures were particularly important due to the vulnerable nature of the adolescent population being studied and the potential emotional significance of reflecting on family dynamics and online experiences.

### ***3.6- Limitations***

While the focus group method provided valuable insights into how family communication styles influence adolescents' engagement in risky online behaviours, several limitations were acknowledged:

First, conducting the focus groups online limited the ability to observe non-verbal cues and body language, which are often essential for understanding participants' emotional responses and group dynamics (Sim & Waterfield, 2019).

Second, social desirability bias may have influenced participants' initial responses, as some adolescents may have felt pressure to present their family in a more positive light or minimize risky behaviours (Krueger & Casey, 2015). This was mitigated by creating a safe and non-judgmental environment, but remains an inherent challenge in focus group research.

Finally, the use of snowball sampling, while effective for recruiting participants from diverse family backgrounds, may have resulted in participants from similar social environments, limiting the diversity of experiences represented. Despite this limitation, the

thematic saturation achieved across the three focus groups suggests that key patterns and experiences were adequately captured (Guest, Namey & McKenna, 2017).

## **Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion**

This chapter presents the findings of the study using thematic analysis, a qualitative method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The aim was to understand how adolescents perceive and navigate family communication styles in relation to their engagement with risky online behaviours. Thematic analysis was selected for its flexibility and capacity to capture complex social meanings and subjective experiences, which aligns with the qualitative aims of this research.

### ***4.1- Execution of Braun & Clarke's 6-Step Thematic Analysis***

Thematic analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's six-step framework to analyze the focus group data. Following transcription, each session was read multiple times (also along with the audio) to ensure familiarity with the participants' tone, emotional nuances, and repeated references. Initial codes were generated manually across all transcripts, which are attached in the annexes, capturing patterns such as "parental mediation", "adolescent autonomy", and "disclosure and reactions". These codes reflected core experiences around family communication, parental control, and adolescents' digital choices.

From these codes, the final themes were developed and refined. Clusters were formed around concepts like guidance, resistance, trust, and online risk. During the review process, some broader themes were separated into more precise subthemes, for example, distinguishing "trust-based autonomy" from "rules and restrictions". Themes were then clearly named to reflect adolescents' perspectives, and quotes were selected to illustrate them. This process ensured that the final thematic structure was grounded in participants' lived experiences and aligned with the theoretical framework of the thesis.

David Byrne's (2021) article, *A worked example of Braun and Clarke's approach to reflexive thematic analysis*, served as a methodological guide. Byrne's transparent

walk-through of coding, theme development, and researcher reflexivity was used to structure the progression from raw data to final themes. His emphasis on theme coherence and iterative coding inspired the flexible refinement of subthemes during the review and defining stages. A thematic map adapted in Byrne’s style was developed to visualize how these themes interrelate, with themes represented by ovals and sub-themes by rectangles, and dotted lines indicating conceptual overlaps.

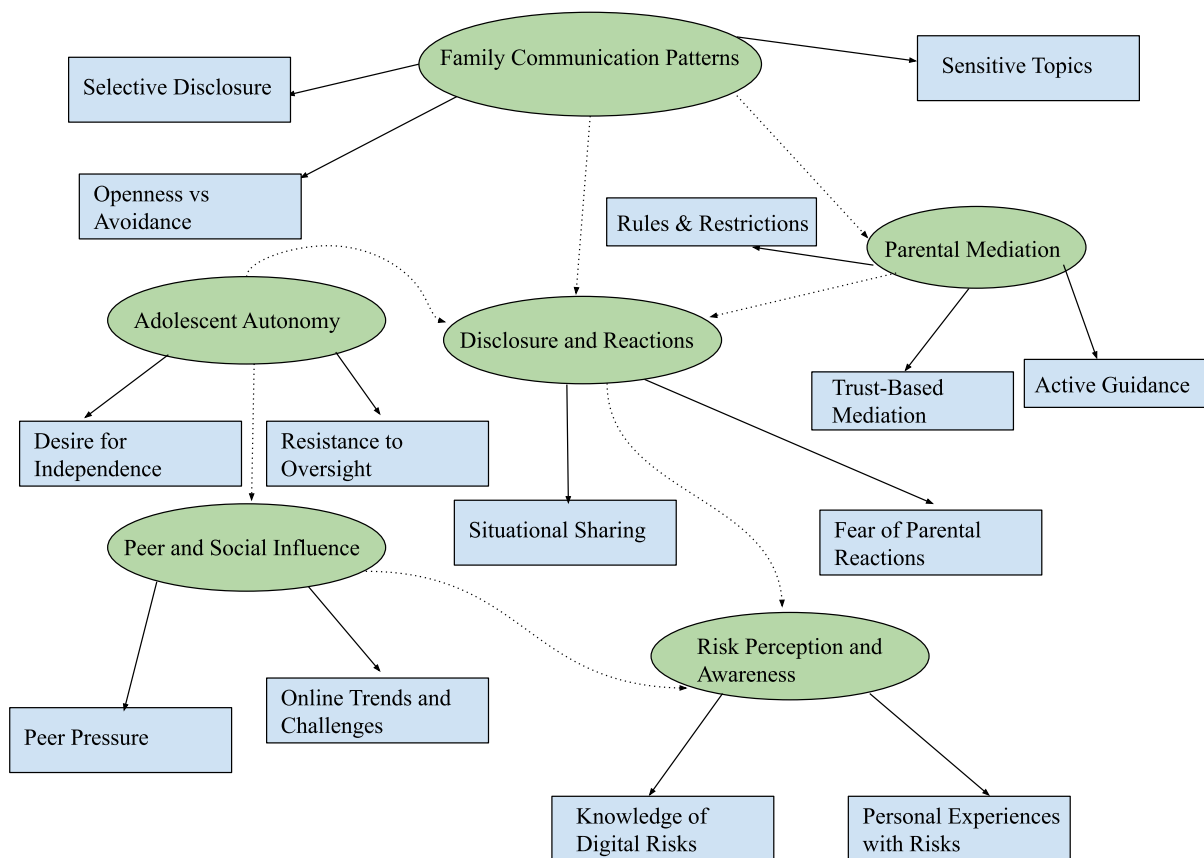


Fig. 3: Thematic Map

## 4.2- Family Communication Patterns

Family communication patterns are critical in shaping adolescents’ digital behaviours, influencing how openly adolescents discuss personal topics and the extent to which they strategically manage disclosure to parents. According to the FCPT (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002), family interactions can range along two dimensions: conversation orientation (degree of openness and frequency of dialogue) and conformity orientation (emphasis on obedience

and uniformity). These orientations significantly influence adolescents' comfort and willingness to engage in open discussions, particularly about potentially sensitive topics or risky online experiences.

#### *4.2.1- Sensitive Topics*

Sensitive topics were consistently identified by adolescents as areas where family communication was particularly nuanced and often challenging as well. Participants expressed varying comfort levels with addressing topics perceived as emotionally charged or controversial, such as personal relationships, sexuality, mental health, and political matters. According to FCPT, families high in conversation orientation encourage open dialogue, making adolescents more likely to feel secure and supported when discussing sensitive issues. On the other hand, families emphasizing conformity might discourage these discussions, implicitly teaching adolescents to avoid or minimize communication about sensitive issues to prevent conflict or parental disapproval (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002).

Several participants highlighted that conversations around sensitive topics were influenced strongly by the context of family interactions. For example, one participant mentioned the following situational nature of discussing sensitive matters, noting:

“We have our most intimate conversations about topics that are more taboo in car rides, because more often than not it's usually when it's one-on-one... We talk about stuff more in-depth and personal”. (Jordan, Focus Group #2, April 4, 2025)

This suggests that privacy and reduced direct confrontation, such as car rides providing a sense of safety, can facilitate communication on sensitive topics. Such situational openness aligns with Koerner & Fitzpatrick's (2002) statement that open dialogue environments foster more flexible discussions, allowing adolescents to feel less vulnerable when discussing sensitive issues.

During the focus groups, mental health emerged as a particularly sensitive topic. Sebastian from the second focus group addressed his discomfort discussing mental health with his family, saying:

“Whenever my family has to discuss anything serious, it’s not as personal. It’s just not taken as seriously. But once it gets personal, my parents have a little habit of taking it personally themselves... these conversations just tend to blow up a little bit in my family. One time, I had told my mom I was struggling with depression, and she had yelled at me and threatened to send me to a psych ward just because I said I was a little sad”. (Focus Group #3, April 6, 2025)

Sebastian’s account highlights the emotional barriers adolescents face when sensitive topics are perceived as stigmatized or misunderstood within their family environment. This hesitance stems not necessarily from overt authority but rather from anticipated emotional misunderstandings, which aligns with Koerner & Fitzpatrick’s (2002) statement that family dialogue’s emotional responsiveness significantly shapes adolescents’ comfort levels in discussing sensitive topics.

Another participant discussed how romantic relationships would be an uncomfortable topic due to a perceived generational gap as well as cultural differences. They explain:

“My parents are very, you know, very much, ‘you’re not allowed to date, you’re not allowed to have, you know, romantic relationships with boys because it’s not our way and you’re too young’, which was 100% respectable”. (Melanie, Focus Group #3, April 6, 2025)

This participant’s description underscores a common dynamic whereby generational and cultural differences in values and experiences create emotional and communicative

barriers, causing adolescents to avoid such sensitive discussions altogether. This supports the view from Family Communication Pattern Theory that perceived judgment and lack of openness reinforce avoidance behaviours and limit effective communication with families.

Moreover, another participant noted discomfort discussing difficult political and social topics, which could spark tension within the family:

“It’s fairly easy to talk about things like current politics, sociology, and other world subjects. Well, as long as we’re sticking to my family's point of view and opinions, of course (said in a slightly sarcastic tone).” (Amy, Focus Group #1, February 24, 2025)

This participant’s statement illustrates how sociopolitical values and progressive ideals can become sensitive when there is a discrepancy between the adolescent’s views and their family’s beliefs. This tension can inhibit open communication and reinforce selective avoidance of controversial subjects, aligning with FCPT’s notion that discrepancies in values significantly affect dialogue openness (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002).

Collectively, these experiences illustrate the multifaceted nature of sensitive topics within family communication patterns, reinforcing the notion that emotional responsiveness, anticipated parental reactions, and generational or ideological gaps significantly influence adolescents’ openness and willingness to engage in difficult conversations.

#### *4.2.2- Selective Disclosure*

Selective disclosure refers to adolescents’ deliberate decisions about what personal information to share with their families. The analysis indicated that adolescents were strategic about disclosure based on anticipated parental reactions and existing parental reactions and existing communication patterns in their families. FCPT suggests that adolescents in conversation-oriented families feel more comfortable disclosing broadly, whereas those from

conformity-oriented environments disclose selectively due to anticipated reactions (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002).

One participant demonstrated clear awareness of what topics should be avoided, reflecting strategic selective disclosure:

“Very open and conversational, will talk about lots, I know which topics to avoid, though... Can’t talk about politics, mental health, or being queer but I can talk about school and [physical] pain”. (Melody, Focus Group #3, April 6, 2025)

This illustrates a deliberate management of information to maintain positive family dynamics or to protect oneself from potential judgement. Theoretically, this behaviour aligns with the concept of conformity orientation, where adolescents may strategically withhold certain information perceived as challenging family norms to maintain harmony or avoid punishment.

Another participant articulated the dynamic nature of their selective disclosure, specifically highlighting comfort differences in sharing between parents:

“I’m more comfortable with my mom than with my dad, so I have more discussions with her, and it’s easier to discuss personal things with my mom compared to my dad. But when it comes to things like my love life, for example, I’d be able to talk about it more easily with my mom, because it’s my mom, my friend.” (Yasmin, Focus Group #3, April 6, 2025)

This example underscores selective disclosure influenced by relational closeness and perceived parental receptivity. Adolescents tailor their disclosures based on who they believe

will respond with understanding and empathy, reinforcing the significance of emotional safety and trust within family communication.

These patterns of selective disclosure reveal that adolescents do not simply communicate less in restrictive environments, they become adept at navigating what is safe to share, with whom, and when. As illustrated in the examples above, adolescents are often attuned to both relational dynamics and emotional cues, using this awareness to shape their disclosure strategies. Whether it is avoiding politically or emotionally charged topics, or selectively choosing one parent over another for specific conversations, these decisions reflect a nuanced balancing act between maintaining relational harmony and asserting personal boundaries. Within the broader framework of FCPT, these findings underscore how adolescents actively manage the flow of information in ways that reflect both their agency and the implicit expectations of their family systems.

### ***4.3- Parental Mediation***

Parental mediation refers to strategies parents employ to manage their children's online behaviours, aiming either to mitigate risks or to guide and support their digital experiences (Clark, 2011). As outlined in Chapter 2, Parental Mediation Theory categorizes three approaches: active mediation, restrictive mediation, and co-viewing mediation, each varying in terms of parental involvement, communication style, and the degree of adolescent autonomy they afford (Clark, 2011; Livingstone & Helsper, 2007).

The focus group data revealed three distinct mediation strategies used by parents: active guidance, trust-based autonomy, and rules and restrictions. These forms of mediation corresponded closely to adolescent experiences and perceptions of support, control, and autonomy in the digital sphere. Importantly, adolescents' responses to those strategies were not solely determined by the mediation style itself, but also by the rational and emotional tone in which it was embedded. In this section, each mediation approach is analyzed through the

lens of participants' lived experiences, with particular attention to how family communication styles influenced the effectiveness and interpretation of parental guidance.

### *4.3.1- Active Guidance*

Active guidance involves deliberate and collaborative conversations between adolescents and their parents about digital risk, online choices, and safety strategies. Adolescents described situations where parental input was welcomed and seen as helpful, rather than controlling or punitive. This aligns with the authoritative parenting style, which emphasizes mutual respect, responsiveness, and reasoning (Baumrind, 1991).

One participant described a conversation with her mother before going to a party:

“Um, the most recent thing I can think of... I was going out to, like, a rave with a friend and my mom was just, like, reminding me to be safe and, um, watch my drink and all that”. (Nicole, Focus Group #3, April 6, 2025)

This illustrates a non-intrusive, yet caring form of guidance. Rather than enforcing rules or forbidding participation, the parent takes a supportive stance that prioritizes safety and demonstrates concern. Nicole does not describe feeling constrained, but rather prepared for her night out with her friend.

Another participant shared a situation in which their father actively helped him during a stressful moment related to university registration:

“He sat me down, luckily, and pulled out his own computer and started to do stuff. He ended up actually taking the Registration 101 class as well, just to, like, try and help”. (Derek, Focus Group #3, April 6, 2025)

This anecdote highlights not only emotional availability, but also behavioural involvement. Although not explicitly digital in nature, this act of parental engagement reinforces a sense of collaboration and trust, which may influence the adolescent's openness

in future online-related discussions. This kind of support demonstrates the long-term relational foundation necessary for meaningful digital mediation.

#### *4.3.2- Trust-Based Autonomy*

Trust-based autonomy refers to parenting approaches where adolescents are granted autonomy and decision-making power while knowing they can rely on parental support if needed. Rather than issuing strict rules, these parents express confidence in their child's judgment, which adolescents often reciprocate with openness and accountability. This strategy is commonly associated with conversation-orientated families (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002), where open communication fosters a climate of mutual trust.

One participant reflected on her parents' supportive stance:

“But it wasn't like something—like, my parents were really understanding and more like here to help me. Because at the end of the day, I was making that decision, and they were just like, ‘do whatever you feel is right’”. (Yasmin, Focus Group #3, April 6, 2025)

This reflects the adolescent's experience of being treated with maturity, trust and respect. The parents do not dictate choices, but take on the role of offering reassurance and support, reinforcing the adolescent's agency. This hands-off, yet emotionally available approach aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) notion of guided participation, where autonomy is scaffolded rather than imposed.

Another participant described a similar experience, adding nuance to how trust evolves over time:

“Because I’m 18 now, so I can do whatever, not whatever, okay, but I can do more things than when I was younger. And like, now I can do like alcohol or something like that. But like, I can travel alone, something like that. But when I was like, for example, 14, like, I needed to go, I needed to be at home by 8, something like that. But now everything’s okay.”

(Mallaika, Focus Group #2, April 4, 2025)

This reflection illustrates how trust-based autonomy evolves over time in response to adolescence's growing maturity. Mallaika describes a shift from structured oversight to increased autonomy, underscoring the role of age-appropriate trust as a central feature of this mediation style. Rather than enforcing rigid rules, parents gradually allow more freedom, signaling confidence in their adolescent's judgement. This transition aligns with the principles of trust-based autonomy, where guidance is balanced with respect for the adolescent's developmental stage and growing capacity for independent decision-making.

#### ***4.3.3- Rules and Restrictions***

In contrast to the above, some participants described environments characterized by rigid rules, unspoken taboos, or a general sense of control. These households reflected a more authoritarian approach or parenting style, where conformity and obedience are prioritized over dialogue. Adolescents raised in such environments often internalize the need for secrecy or avoidance.

One participant describes how she would deliberately withhold information from her parents:

“Absolutely not (in response to a question asking if the participants are comfortable discussing social media challenges with their family). Everything on personal information, activities on the internet, challenges, etc would be a bit embarrassing to discuss simply because everything private could be used as a weapon, so better to keep things like that close to the chest and hide them”. (Amy, Focus Group #1, February 24, 2025)

This quote reveals a relational environment characterized by caution and emotional self-protection, where adolescents intentionally withhold information about their digital lives. Rather than stemming solely from cultural taboos (Amy’s not from Switzerland or Canada), the reluctance to disclose arises from fear that private information could be weaponized within the family. Amy’s framing of personal content as something to be “kept close to the chest” underscores a lack of psychological safety, where openness is perceived as vulnerability. This dynamic reinforces selective disclosure as a protective strategy in environments where trust and emotional safety are compromised.

Amy also explains how adherence to family rules and expectations because a default strategy:

“With the way I communicate in my family, and how I grew up, I always follow the norms and I never break them. So I follow the pressure of the people around me to follow the rules because to have less problems, it’s easier to follow the rules. When you follow the rules, you risk nothing. So in general, I just follow the rules”. (Amy, Focus Group #1, March 9, 2025)

Here, the pressure to conform is internalized as a way to avoid conflict. Rather than feeling supported or guided, Amy learns to navigate digital behaviour through rule-following and compliance. This echoes Lawrence and Valsiner’s (1993) point that internalization is not

always transformative, but can also be conservative, preserving existing structures through passive acceptance.

#### ***4.4- Adolescent Autonomy***

Adolescent autonomy represents a critical transition phase during which young individuals seek greater control over their decisions, behaviours, and identities. Within the context of digital life, this desire often manifests in how adolescents manage their online presence and interactions, especially in response to family structures and parental mediation. As discussed in Chapter Two, the Biopsychological Model frames this period as one where identity development and social learning are deeply shaped by psychological needs and family systems (Sales & Irwin, 2009). Furthermore, Family Communications Patterns Theory helps explain how autonomy is either facilitated or constrained through communication norms, particularly in conversation-oriented versus conformity-oriented families (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002).

Focus group discussions revealed two interlinked dimensions of adolescent autonomy: the resistance to oversight and a pronounced desire for independence. These were expressed both when discussing disclosures adolescents chose to make and in their broader reflections on family rules and expectations.

##### ***4.4.1- Resistance to Oversight***

Resistance to oversight appeared frequently across all three focus groups. The participants consistently highlighted a tendency to manage their digital experiences independently and to withhold certain aspects of their online lives from parental scrutiny. For example, one of them said:

“I would say no because in general my family doesn’t really participate in my social media life and I know that in general, I tend to solve the problem before they even realize that whatever it is... they just never find out.” (Amy, Focus Group #1, February 24, 2025)

This statement encapsulates the agency many adolescents claim over their digital experiences. It also reflects a broader reluctance to involve parents, possibly stemming from a desire to avoid conflict, protect privacy, or maintain autonomy. Rather than viewing parents as resources for digital guidance or support, adolescents in this study often positioned themselves as the sole managers of their online behaviours.

The theme of resistance was also evident in situations involving life choices, such as academic or career planning. One participant offered a nuanced reflection on the influence of parental expectations:

“Sometimes when I talk about it with my parents [...] I feel which, like, subjects they find better and which ones, like, worse. Like, and it doesn’t really depend on what I’m good at, but more, like, what they think is good for me. And then I think it also, like, influences how I think about the subject. And, yeah, that’s maybe, like, not the best thing, because it should be what I want to study and not what my parents think is the best thing.”

(Myra, Focus Group #2, April 4, 2025)

Here, resistance is less overt but still present, manifesting in internal conflict and pressure to align with familial standards. Myra expresses awareness of subtle coercion that can steer decision-making away from personal interest and toward perceived parental approval. This reflects what Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) describe as high-conformity

environments, where adolescents may self-censor or internalize familial expectation to maintain harmony.

Another participant was more explicit in rejecting parental authority in specific domains, particularly personal relationships:

“Especially not in the relationships aspect. To be honest, I do not care because that’s my relationship. It’s not something they should manage.”

(Rachel, Focus Group #2, April 4, 2025)

This assertion of autonomy delineates clear boundaries between self and parent, and demonstrates a deliberate decision to exclude parents from certain aspects of life. In the context of Parental Mediation Theory, this may signal resistance to restrictive or judgmental parenting styles and reflects an intentional protection of personal agency.

The cumulative effect of these perspectives is the reinforcement of digital independence. Participants viewed themselves as capable decision-makers and expressed reluctance to involve parents in choices that they believe were either too personal or not within parental purview. This resistance to oversight reveals how adolescents negotiate the boundary between familial involvement and personal control.

#### *4.4.2- Desire for Independence*

Closely tied to resistance is a strong, articulated desire for independence, particularly in how adolescents manage digital behaviour, time use, and emotional wellbeing. This autonomy often reflects a deeper self-awareness and commitment to self-governance, rather than an opposition to parental authority. One participant said:

“I think my parents support me, like just telling me that I’m just too much on my phone. And like, it helps when somebody else tells you that you’re too much on your phone. But when, like, actually trying to, yeah, stop using my phone, I think it’s better if I do that by myself”. (Myra, Focus Group #2, April 4, 2025)

This comment reflects a proactive stance toward self-regulation, demonstrating a sense of responsibility. Rather than relying on external controls, such as parental monitoring, Myra values internal motivation to manage their online behaviour. This form of autonomy aligns with Steinberg’s (2008) discussion of adolescents’ increasing ability for independent decision-making and behavioural self-control, a developmental shift toward psychological independence that is crucial in navigating digital environments.

Some participants discussed how early experiences of independence, including complex family structures or foster care, contributed to the way they have approached autonomy and continue to do so today. One participant explained:

“I moved to my new family when I was about 12... I was pretty independent from them, and I still am. Like, I do things that other people my age are just confused by, frankly. Like, I book my own appointments, I take myself to my own appointments...” (Melody, Focus Group #3, April 6, 2025)

This illustrates how structural independence (due to changes in caregiving or family circumstances) can translate into broader personal or digital autonomy. Notably, this independence was neither characterized by rebellion or distress, it was simply the context Melody grew up in that led them to these circumstances, therefore developing a strong sense of self-reliance.

For others, the journey toward autonomy was more self-reflective. One participant described how they used to overshare online due to limited parental communication, but is working on redirecting that behaviour:

“Because of my parents’ lack of communication, I would overshare on social media as a release. But as of now, I think their lack of communication and me being aware of it is, like, ‘Hey, I don’t want to end up like that’, so now I’m working on being able to communicate with my closest friends, instead of oversharing on social media”. (Sebastian, Focus Group #3, April 6, 2025)

This transformation highlights the potential for adolescents to recognize the limitations of their familial relationships and actively seek alternative support systems. What Sebastian shared also suggests that digital behaviours are deeply connected to emotional regulation and interpersonal connection. In the absence of open family dialogue, social media can become an outlet, which can be reconsidered as adolescents mature.

Another participant reinforced this self-directed approach to social media, stating:

“I’m just so independent from everyone in my house that the way I use social media, if it changes, it’ll be because I decided to do that on my own. As far as I’m aware, I don’t think changing that kind of thing because of the people I live with has happened for me in a very long time”. (Melody, Focus Group #3, April 6, 2025)

This sentiment encapsulates a broader finding of the study: many adolescents view themselves as the primary (and sometimes only) agents in decisions regarding online behaviour. Rather than waiting for or relying on parental input, they turn inward, or to peers, to navigate digital life.

These insights illustrate that adolescent autonomy is expressed not only through resistance, but also through deliberate self-regulation, internal reflection, and proactive boundary-setting. Whether influenced by family structure, cultural norms, or emotional development, the desire for independence is a dominant theme in how adolescents relate to their digital environment. The findings align with both theoretical models and contemporary literature, emphasizing that autonomy, when paired with emotional support, can lead to healthier and more confident digital engagement (Clark, 2011; Livingstone & Helsper, 2007).

#### ***4.5- Disclosure and Reactions***

Disclosure of risky online behaviour to parents is a critical aspect of adolescent digital life, as it reflects the degree of openness, perceived trust, and anticipated parental response. This section examines two key sub themes that emerged from the data: fear of parental reaction and situational sharing. These findings are interpreted through the lens of FCPT and Parental Mediation Theory, offering insight into how disclosure dynamics shape adolescent decision-making.

##### ***4.5.1- Fear of Parental Reactions***

Fear of negative parental reactions emerged as a significant barrier to open disclosure. Adolescents often avoided revealing certain behaviours or experiences, such as those involving mistakes, perceived missteps, or digital risks, because of anticipated emotional or disciplinary consequences. Disclosure was not simply an act of sharing, but also a calculated decision on the adolescent's part weighed against potential fallout. Participants described not only the fear of being punished, but also the emotional unpredictability of invalidation they might face from their parents.

One adolescent recalled a disclosure about mental health:

“One time, I had told my mom I was struggling with depression, and she had yelled at me and threatened to send me to a psych ward just because I said I was a little sad”. (Sebastian, Focus Group #3, April 6, 2025)

This example encapsulates the extent to which emotionally reactive responses can discourage further openness. Rather than receiving support, Sebastian experienced dismissal and pathologization, framing disclosure as a risky act. According to FCPT (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002), adolescents in conformity-oriented families are less likely to disclose personal experiences due to the emphasis on agreement and parental authority. In such contexts, withholding information becomes a protective mechanism.

Sebastian describes another example of the challenge of expressing emotional needs without the discussion being misinterpreted or escalating into conflict:

“Recently I had to talk to my dad about something he did that upset me, and when I was talking about it, he took it almost as like I was telling him, ‘You’re a bad father, you make me feel unsafe’. Well, that was not what I was saying”. (Sebastian, Focus Group #3, April 6, 2025)

This illustrates how emotionally reactive family environments create barriers to honest communication. Anticipated defensiveness or perceived accusations on the parents’ part discourage adolescents from sharing personal issues even when support is needed.

A more visceral account came from a participant who described how early exposure to emotionally intense digital interactions, coupled with strict parental expectations, shaped a deep-seated fear of disclosure:

“... people were asking me to, like, send them nudes and stuff like that on Snapchat, it was really weird, and my brain factor was like, this is, like, haram because I’m Muslim. But on top of that, I was like, if my mom finds out, like, she’s going to *beat me*. Like, she’s going to *put me in a hospital*. Which is a fair reaction because why would a 15-year-old send pictures of her naked body to people? Why would a 15-year-old be therapizing people who need institutionalized help? And so that was a main factor of them, like, finding out what was going on on my phone, so I always, like, lived in, like, a constant state of, like, panic for when they would go through my phone of, ‘oh my gosh, what if they see X, Y, and Z?’”. (Melanie, Focus Group #3, April 6, 2025)

This narrative reflects not only the psychological toll of secrecy but also the internalization of fear-focused regulation. Instead of relying on internalized moral reasoning or parental guidance, Melanie monitored her own behaviour to avoid imagined consequences. Importantly, she does not describe any constructive method of seeking help, highlighting the isolating effect of punitive and emotionally charged parental dynamics.

The findings suggest that fear of parental reaction is not limited to traditionally authoritarian households, but often stems from emotional volatility and a lack of communicative competence. As Clark (2011) notes in the context of Parental Mediation Theory, low levels of active mediation (where parents do not engage in open discussions about digital life) result in adolescents navigating online risk in isolation. When parental support is either conditional or absent, disclosure becomes too costly to risk.

#### ***4.5.2- Situational Sharing***

While fear of negative reactions led many adolescents to withhold information, others described situational sharing, a more nuanced approach to disclosure. This practice involved

selectively sharing information depending on the topic, emotional climate, and their relationship with their parent(s). Adolescents' assessed when and what to share, balancing their need for autonomy with the potential benefits of support.

One participant highlighted the variation in what could be disclosed, noting:

“I agree with the everyday aspects, like whether it’s uni or work. I think these are the more easy aspects to talk about. And then something I find more difficult is maybe sometimes other relationships outside of family or even close friends that my parents would know about. I think that would be a bit more complicated to talk about”. (Amelia, Focus Group #2, April 4, 2025)

This reflects an internal hierarchy of topics deemed appropriate for parental discussion. Impersonal or routine matters such as academic life are shared openly, whereas emotionally charged or sensitive subjects are carefully withheld. These decisions are deeply relational and situational, often based on prior parental reactions. As Koerner & Fitzpatrick (2002) explain, adolescents in conversation-oriented families may feel more comfortable initiating discussions, but the focus group discussions also show that they still weigh the potential consequences of doing so.

Another participant discusses the emotional labour involved in disclosing risky behaviour:

“For me, I would say just the fact that if I’m already talking to you (the parents) and I have the courage to tell you about the risky social media behaviour and stuff, you should not be blaming me at that moment. Because I’m already stressed enough”. (Rachel, Focus Group #2, April 4, 2025)

Disclosure is described as an emotionally costly act, one that requires courage and a supportive response. Rachel's request for non-judgment underscores the fragility of trust in these interactions. Adolescents seek validation and assistance when revealing sensitive experiences, rather than blame. An overly critical or reactive parental response, even when well-intentioned, risks undermining the possibility of future openness.

Situational sharing therefore serves as a pragmatic solution, enabling adolescents to preserve aspects of autonomy while still engaging their parents when necessary. It reflects both a developmental progression toward independence and a social adaptation to potentially volatile familial dynamics. These findings align with broader literature in adolescent development, which emphasizes that disclosure is often an act of social negotiation rather than unfiltered transparency (Smetand, 2008).

Therefore, parents who maintain active mediation, an emotionally safe and responsive environment are more likely to be included in their adolescent's decision-making process (Clark, 2011). However, when that safety is lacking or provided under conditions, adolescents turn to situational disclosure as a form of risk management.

#### ***4.6- Peer and Social Influence***

Adolescents's social media behaviours are embedded in wider peer dynamics and online cultural norms. The focus group discussions revealed how social influence operates through the interconnected channels of online trends and peer pressure. While some participants expressed vulnerability to these forces when seeing online behaviours are widely validated or mocked, others displayed resistance and a sense of independence in their digital decision-making.

This duality underscores the significance of peer and social influence in adolescent identity formation, aligning with research that highlights how adolescence is a developmental period in which peer feedback and group norms strongly shape both self-concept and

behaviour (Steinberg, 2008). Social media environments intensify these dynamics by providing a continuous stream of validation, comparison, and social commentary, which amplify both opportunities and pressure for resistance.

#### *4.6.1- Online Trends and Challenges*

Online trends frequently emerged in the focus groups as prominent influencers. Some participants acknowledged that even passive engagement with popular content or comments could affect their mood or self-image. One shared:

“So this may be a bit stupid, but whatever... on TikTok there is this ski community... some people, they bully other people for wearing a helmet with a visor... I was feeling insecure for some reason and I was not happy that evening when I saw those comments”. (Amanda, Focus Group #1, February 24, 2025)

Here, peer commentary on something as trivial as skiing equipment incited feelings of insecurity, reflecting how adolescents often absorb evaluated messages even when they are not directed at them. This form of subtle social correction contributes to shaping behaviours and appearances in line with what is culturally accepted or praised online.

Another participant offered an example of how emotional stress became stylized within digital communities:

“I think when I first, in, like, the sixth grade, got my iPod and started building up social media and stuff like that, a lot of people were depressed on the Internet... it was trending to be depressed and, like, emo on the internet”. (Melanie, Focus Group #3, April 6, 2025)

This highlights a cultural phenomenon in which mental health struggles are normalized to the point of glamorization through shared experiences and viral content. For

Melanie, the trend had real effects on how they processed emotions, pointing to the risks of adolescents internalizing online norms in ways that shape their affective lives.

These findings support the view that online communities not only reflect social norms but actively produce as well as propagate them. Trends are an ambient form of peer pressure, exerting influence on what to post, how to behave, what to wear, even when not directly enforced by one's immediate social group. The rapid circulation of these norms therefore creates a climate where adolescents must constantly evaluate how they fit within a shifting digital landscape.

#### *4.6.2- Peer Pressure*

Peer pressure in its different forms was also discussed during the focus groups. In some cases, it was experienced as subtle emotional comparison:

“It's easy to fall into peer pressure and compare yourself online”.

(Amanda, Focus Group #1, March 9, 2025)

This succinct statement illustrates how social comparison is also a form of pressure that can erode self-esteem or influence behaviour subconsciously. Adolescents are aware of these dynamics and therefore are able to discuss the difficulty in preserving their individuality in settings that favour conformity.

Regardless, not all participants seem to be influenced in this way, and directly resist peer norms. Jordan expressed confidence in his capacity to reject unwanted trends:

“When it comes to social norms, peer pressure, sorry, I've never really been susceptible to it. I'm just like, ‘I'm not doing this. Screw that’. Why would I ever do that if I don't want to do it, right?” (Jordan, Focus Group #3, April 6, 2025)

Another participant similarly framed their relationship with digital culture in terms of individual authenticity:

“I think I have a very healthy attitude with [being myself and not following the crowd]”. (Logan, Focus Group #1, March 9, 2025)

These narratives reflect an empowered form of digital citizenship once adolescents develop a critical stance toward online influence and embrace selective participation. On the other hand, some participants alluded to more subtle forms of pressure that can lead to posting in order to seek validation or to simulate the feeling of social connection. Rachel shares:

“I do not post a lot, to be honest, but for the friends that these kinds are restricted and not very open, they are the ones that post a lot... They’re just doing it for the purpose”. (Rachel, Focus Group #2, April 4, 2025)

Rachel’s statement alludes to a compensatory use of social media, where adolescents who feel constrained offline may express themselves more freely and frequently online. The “purpose” may thus be attention, validation, or simply connection, underscoring the way peer pressure intersects with unmet emotional needs.

Together, these quotes demonstrate that peer and social influence operates on a spectrum: from coercive to ambient and from resisted to internalized. Adolescents are not passive consumers of these norms, but active negotiators of their online identities. Their responses, whether they conform or resist, are shaped by personal values, family communication patterns, and social positioning within peer groups. These findings affirm the importance of equipping adolescents not only with digital literacy, but also with critical thinking and emotional resilience to navigate these complex online environments.

## ***4.7- Risk Perception and Awareness***

Adolescents' perceptions of online risk are shaped by a dynamic interplay of personal experiences, social environments, and developmental needs, a synthesis that aligns with the biopsychosocial model of behaviour. This framework recognizes that individual behaviour is never simply the product of the choices one makes, but forms through any combination of biological maturation, social influence, and psychological interpretation of one's environment (Sales & Irwin, 2009). Within this context, adolescents demonstrate a growing awareness of the dangers associated with digital platforms, such as privacy breaches and emotional exploitation, but still often navigate these risks without consistent parental mediation.

This section explores how participants perceived, internalized, and responded to digital risks. While many demonstrated high awareness of online safety practices, their reflections also reveal how risk perception is filtered through personal values, social dynamics, and the presence of absence of adult support.

### ***4.7.1- Knowledge of Digital Risks***

Many participants demonstrated a clear and proactive understanding of the risk associated with online engagement, especially concerning the sharing of personal information and interactions with unfamiliar individuals.

One participant expressed a vigilant stance toward the potential consequences of oversharing:

“Posting the exact location you live in or where you are. For example, I don't know, you're on vacation, and you put the exact place where you are. I guess it's okay if you put the city, or, yeah, just for safety. I don't know if anything would happen, but I wouldn't do it”. (Amanda, Focus Group #1, February 24, 2025)

This quote reflects both spatial awareness and anticipatory caution, both developmental competencies linked to prefrontal cortex maturation, which supports foresight and impulse control (Steinberg, 2007; Sales & Irwin, 2009). Even when no immediate harm is foreseen, the participants' reluctance to disclose precise locations demonstrates a nuanced internal risk filter.

Another participant described his early education on internet safety:

“Yeah, I think so (in response to the question: ‘Can you give examples of risks people your age might take on social media?’), all about private information about me, about my family members or friends. Yeah, I should not, or we should not share online with people we don’t know. So that’s what I learned, I don’t know, 10 years ago. So I shouldn’t share such information with, what do we call it in English? Strangers”. (Logan, Focus Group #1, February 24, 2025)

Here, the notion of “learning” reflects the influence of early socialization, usually from caregivers or educators (Davies et al., 2009). It indicates that foundational norms around privacy may become embedded over time, forming a psychological buffer against risky behaviours.

Peer-shared digital knowledge was cited as another influence on risk perception. Margaret adds to what Amanda stated about sharing one’s location on social media:

“I saw a TikTok, and it’s like, for security, it’s better to post, like, things after you leave the place. Like, from now on, like, all I think about is that”. (Margaret, Focus Group #1, February 24, 2025)

This form of vicarious learning is characteristic of the digital age: risk perception is not only taught through formal mechanisms but also through informal media environments.

Adolescents engage with safety-oriented content provided by influencers or content creators and internalize what is presented, often reshaping their behaviour accordingly.

Other participants emphasized the potential pitfalls of trusting semi-familiar individuals online:

“I would say one thing is to completely trust people who seem close... we could feel like we trust them because they’re the friend of a friend, but in fact, they are strangers, at the end of the day”. (Amy, Focus Group #1, February 24, 2025)

This statement suggests a growing capacity for abstract social reasoning. Adolescents begin to realize that social proximity does not equate to trustworthiness. This critical stance reflects both a psychological readiness to challenge assumptions and a social maturity that prevents impulsive trust, thus aiding with the management of online boundaries.

These reflections illustrate that risk awareness is not simply a product of instruction or policy, but is produced through an iterative process of learning, reflections, and environmental engagement. From a biopsychosocial perspective, adolescents’ developing cognitive and emotional capacities, social feedback loops, and value-based reasoning all converge to produce increasingly refined assessments of digital risk.

#### *4.7.2- Personal Experiences with Risk*

While many participants expressed confidence in their ability to avoid most risks, some still described past experiences in which digital threats were recognized only retrospectively, if not as it was occurring. These narratives often centered on social manipulation, fraud, and personal vulnerability.. These therefore catalyzed growth in digital literacy through experiential learning. Adolescents were either introduced to risks they were not familiar with before, or shown how easily one can be exposed to these digital threats if they have only heard of them or vaguely discussed them before.

One participant described narrowly avoiding an online scam:

“So I almost got scammed recently, because I got a message online about a possible job prospect [...] So I almost fell for it. Until they were like, ‘Message this person on Telegram’. And I’m like they were like, ‘or alternatively, go to WhatsApp’. And I went to WhatsApp. So I’m like ‘Oh God, I just need a job’. And when they started, like, I saw a name that was a little more foreign that I would like to admit. And then I’m like, ‘Hold on. Okay’. And then I let them give more information. They didn’t even spell the city right. So I’m like, ‘Yeah, this is not, this is not happening’. So yeah, I blocked him”. (Jordan, Focus Group #2, April 4, 2025)

This example illustrates a real-time process of threat detection: initial desperation for employment along with psychological vulnerability were intercepted by suspicious interactions alluding to digital deception, prompting Jordan to critically evaluate the situation. His eventual rejection of the scam demonstrates how cognitive development supports post-hoc reasoning and decision-making despite uncertainty (Steinberg, 2008).

Another participant shared a more alarming case:

“[My friend] was talking to someone online. She’s never seen him. This is like two weeks ago. And then she just felt something was off about him. And then when she stopped talking to him, he just kept telling her, ‘I have your IP address, I know where you study , I know where you do this stuff. And I’ll come, and I will see you in two months, and you won’t escape’, and bam, bam, bam. And this is, like, the second instance”. (Rachel, Focus Group #2, April 4, 2025)

Rachel's friend's scary experience emphasizes how digital risk can escalate into psychological distress and perceived physical danger. Such moments serve as turning points, enhancing adolescents' awareness of their digital exposure and reinforcing cautious future behaviour. From a biopsychosocial standpoint, lessons from shock such as this situation may have long-term implications on both digital behaviour and emotional regulation (Sales & Irwin, 2009).

Some participants contextualized their understanding of risk through temporal reflection:

“When I was younger, I had Instagram really early, I would say, when I was 10 years old. And a friend and me posted some pictures together, and now I would not do that again. But now it's on the internet. I can't find it anywhere, so maybe it's not that bad, but it could also be worse than that”.

(Myra, Focus Group #2, April 4, 2025)

The shift in attitude over time signals the maturation of executive functioning and emotional insights. As adolescents age, they reevaluate past decisions through the lens of increased self-awareness and social understanding. Myra's account also underscores the irreversibility of certain digital actions, which is not realized by some until after the fact.

Parental input can also play a subtle role in framing adolescents' digital choices. Amelia explained:

“My mom has always told me, for instance, if I'm somewhere, I'm not going to post a story right away [...] She'd rather I post it once I'm done”.

(Amelia, personal communication, April 4, 2025)

This parental guidance reflects an external regulatory mechanism that may become internalized over time. This means that even when the parents are not present, their advice will play a role in the adolescent's decision-making process.

These examples collectively illustrate that risk perception is not static, but rather jointly evolves with adolescents' psychological development, their social environment, and the biological transformations of puberty and adolescence. As their risk perception develops through these processes, it can be applied to the digital environments they interact with, each risky experience contributing to their internal model of digital safety.

#### ***4.8- Discussion***

Adolescents' navigation of digital spaces does not occur in isolation, but is also shaped and mediated by the familial context in which they are embedded. The ways in which parents interact with their children about digital use, whether through conversation, restriction, or trust, play a critical role in how adolescents internalize risk, regulate behaviour, and engage with social media. Drawing from FCPT (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002) and Parental Mediation Theory (Clark, 2011), this section explores the various mediation strategies used by parents and their perceived effectiveness. It also considers how adolescents respond to these interventions based on family dynamics, cultural values, and their developmental need for autonomy.

The findings demonstrate three major modes of parental mediation described by the participants: active guidance, trust-based autonomy, and rules and restriction. Each of these styles had a different psychological and emotional influence on adolescents' digital lives and shaped their likelihood of disclosure, degree of self-regulation, and overall risk behaviour. These experiences are situated within the biopsychosocial model of adolescent risk-taking (Sales & Irwin, 2009), which confirms that digital behaviours are shaped not only by internal cognitive factors but also by family relational dynamics and broader sociocultural influences.

A key insight from the findings is that parental mediation and family communication patterns are deeply interconnected as mediation strategies are interpreted and responded to through the lens of the family's communicative climate. For example, active guidance, which aligns with the concept of active mediation in Parental Mediation Theory (Clark, 2011), was not effective in families characterized by high conversation orientation (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). In these families, open dialogue fostered collaborative discussions around digital risk, where adolescents reported feeling respected and supported. This approach reflects authoritative parenting principles in which responsiveness and rational discourse foster adolescent competence and responsibility (Baumrind, 1991).

In families with parents who use trust-based autonomy as a mediation strategy, adolescents are granted autonomy within a framework of emotional availability. This form of mediation is effective as mutual respect and non-punitive support were consistently practiced, aligning with Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding, where guidance is gradually adjusted to match the adolescent's developing capabilities, allowing them to take increasing responsibility for decision-making while knowing that parental support remains available as a secure base (Vygotsky, 1978; Merce & Howe, 2012). Adolescents interpreted this approach as a sign of parental confidence, which encouraged self-regulation and openness, even when parental oversight was minimal. As previously discussed in Chapter Two, this style thrives when parents acknowledge adolescent maturity while remaining available as a source of support and guidance (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007).

Finally, rules and restrictions, which correspond to restrictive mediation, are more frequently associated with high conformity orientation families (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). Adolescents in these environments often reported withholding information or avoiding rules entirely, leading to greater secrecy and digital vulnerability as strict rule-setting without

a dialogic foundation may inadvertently increase the appeal of risky behaviours, especially when adolescents feel misunderstood or controlled (Livingstone & Byrne, 2018).

Furthermore, the emotional tone and consistency of communication played a significant role in how adolescents perceived and responded to parental mediation. Even when rules were similar, adolescents were able to distinguish between supportive and authoritarian environments based on the emotional tone delivery, a distinction that echoes Byrne's (2021) emphasis on how affective nuance and coherence shape individual's interpretations of interpersonal communication. Emotional reactivity, judgment, or lack of explanation eroded trust and inhibited disclosure, whereas calm, respectful dialogue (even when enforcing rules) was more likely to be accepted and internalized.

Adolescents also demonstrated considerable agency in shaping the communication dynamic. Rather than simply complying with or even resisting parental expectations, they engaged in strategic disclosure: carefully managing what to share, the person they share it with, and the emotional conditions under which the sharing would occur. Many participants described one-on-one interactions, such as late-night conversations or car rides, as emotionally safer spaces for opening up about sensitive topics, indicating that the timing, context, and perceived emotional availability of parents were critical factors. As Petronio (2017) explains in her Communication Privacy Management Theory, individuals make ongoing judgments about privacy boundaries, revealing personal information only when trust and relational safety are perceived to be intact. Similarly, Guerrero and Afifi (1995) note that adolescents often avoid discussing personal or emotionally charged issues with parents when they anticipate negative reactions or feel their disclosures may not be respected. These findings reinforce that adolescents are active, discerning participants who continuously navigate their privacy and communication in strategic ways, rather than be passive recipients.

These communicative patterns were deeply embedded in sociocultural contexts, including cultural norms around emotional expression, generational gaps, and family roles. For example, adolescents from immigrant or conservative backgrounds often described mental health, gender identity, or romantic relationships as taboo topics, reflecting a broader socialization process that influences digital behaviours (Cogan et al., 2023). Such environments made adolescents more likely to seek information and validation online, sometimes through risky or unsupervised channels.

In summary, the findings support a nuanced understanding of how family communication and parental mediation co-construct adolescents' digital experiences. When communication is open, emotionally safe, and developmentally responsive, mediation strategies (guiding, trust-based, or restrictive), are more likely to be internalized positively. When communication is inconsistent, reactive, or emotionally invalidating, adolescents may reject or evade parental input, increasing the likelihood of risky or concealed online behaviours.

Therefore, this study focuses on how rules are communicated and within what emotional climate rather than just what rules parents set for their children as effective parental mediation is a matter of relational, emotional, and cultural context. These findings urge a shift away from rigid rule-based approaches to promoting digital safety, and towards relational models that prioritize trust, dialogue, and shared meaning-making (Clark, 2011; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978).

To conclude this discussion, and to offer a systematic synthesis of the thematic insights developed across the chapter, the table below cross-references perceived family communication patterns and parenting styles of the participants' families, with their engagement in risky behaviours on social media. Framed through Koerner & Fitzpatrick's (2002) Family Communication Patterns and Baumrind's (1991) parenting typology, the table

highlights how particular configurations of family interactions, ranging from authoritative to authoritarian and open to restrictive, correspond with adolescents' level of online risk-taking. It captures how family environments may either facilitate open dialogue, foster self-regulation, or encourage secrecy and avoidance, depending on how adolescents interpret and respond to the relational dynamics at home.

<b><u>Participant</u></b>	<b><u>Family Communication Style (Koerner &amp; Fitzpatrick, 2002)</u></b>	<b><u>Parenting Style (Baumrind, 1991)</u></b>	<b><u>Risk Behaviour Level</u></b>	<b><u>Observed Risk Behaviours / Attitudes</u></b>
Jordan	Pluralistic	Authoritative	Low-Moderate	Open dialogue within context (ex.: car); Resists peer pressure; Cautious online, but independently
Sebastian	Protective	Authoritarian	High	Feels emotionally unsafe; Past oversharing online due to lack of parental support; Avoids family disclosure
Melanie	Protective	Authoritarian	High	Fear-driven secrecy; Intense control around relationships; Fear about digital discovery
Amy	Protective	Authoritarian	Moderate	Self-regulates to avoid judgment; Avoids digital disclosure; Sees rules as means to prevent conflict

Melody	Protective → laissez-faire (different families)	Authoritarian → Neglectful	High	Moved from high control to little-no structure/communication; Formerly overshared online, now self-monitors
Yasmin	Consensual	Authoritative	Low	Comfortable discussing personal topics (especially with mom); Reports trust and guidance
Nicole	Consensual	Authoritative	Low	Receives practical advice (ex.: drink safety); Parental tone: warm & supportive
Derek	Consensual	Authoritative	Low	Highly engaged and supportive father; Cooperative problem-solving; No risk indicators
Mallaika	Protective → Consensual (same family)	Authoritarian → Authoritative	Low	Moved from high control to relaxed guidance; Now enjoys autonomy
Myra	Consensual	Authoritative	Moderate	Parental influence lead to more self-awareness; Past oversharing but learned from experiences
Rachel	Protective	Mixed: Authoritarian and Authoritative	Moderate- High	Avoids personal topics; Doesn't discuss social media activity; Describes peer threats and occasional lack of parental

				support
Amanda	Consensual	Authoritative	Moderate	Insecure from peer comparison and online negativity; Avoids risky behaviour and adopts cautious attitude
Amelia	Consensual	Authoritative	Low-Moderate	Comfortable discussing daily matters; Adopts digital safety habits taught by mother
Logan	Pluralistic	Authoritative	Low	Expresses strong values and resistance to trends; Communicates openly and securely
Margaret	Consensual		Low	Applies parental digital safety advice (ex.: delayed posted when out/on vacation); Demonstrates situational awareness

*Fig. 4: Family Communication Patterns and Parenting Styles in Relation to Adolescent Risky Behaviours Online*

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

This study set out to examine how family communication shapes adolescents' engagement with digital risk, with a particular focus on how different styles of parental mediation and family communication are interpreted and internalized through in-depth qualitative analysis using Braun & Clarke's reflexive thematic approach, three mediation strategies emerged that aligned with Clark (2011)'s Parental Mediation Theory: active guidance, trust-based autonomy, and rules and restrictions. Each of these approaches was experienced differently by adolescents depending not only on what was discussed during communication, but also on its emotional tone, consistency, and relational context.

Findings showed that adolescents from families characterized by open, emotionally responsive communication were more likely to navigate digital spaces with a sense of confidence and self-awareness. In these families, guidance was not perceived as control, but as attentive care within a pattern of mutual respect. On the other hand, adolescents from homes where communication was rigid, emotionally reactive, or dismissive of adolescent agency often responded to parental mediation with secrecy, resistance, or withdrawal. Despite the restrictions put in place, these adolescents often develop strategies to resist or even bypass oversight, thus suggesting that relational disconnection can undermine the intended protective effects of parental control.

The adolescents in this study demonstrated active agency in shaping how much they disclose, when, and to whom. Many described selectively choosing moments when they felt emotionally safe to speak openly with their families, such as during private one-on-one conversations or more informal settings with low pressure such as car rides or relaxed conversations on the couch. This reinforces the theoretical framework suggesting that adolescents are continuous evaluators of the emotional climate of their relationships and make their disclosure decisions accordingly. As Petronio (2017) outlines in her

Communication Privacy Management Theory, individuals manage the boundaries of personal information based on assessments of trust, anticipated judgment, and past interactions. Guerrero and Afifi (1995) also highlight that adolescents often avoid disclosing emotionally sensitive topics to parents when they expect disapproval or dismissal from them. These findings provide a deeper understanding of adolescent communication as a strategic, emotionally driven process shaped equally by relational dynamics as individual choice.

From a practical perspective, this research suggests that digital literacy interventions aimed at families should not only focus on rule-setting, but on improving relational quality. Programs that equip parents with skills in active listening, emotional regulation, and collaborative problem-solving may foster more open family communication, especially when it comes to emerging digital challenges. These approaches are particularly important in cultural contexts where taboos around topics such as sexuality, mental health, or identity can limit adolescents' willingness to seek support from their families. In such cases, adolescents may rather turn to digital spaces for affirmation and information, which emphasizes the importance of fostering relational trust within the home.

Despite the profound understanding provided by the findings, this study also has a few limitations. The sample was relatively small and culturally specific, with participants coming from similar socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. Future research would benefit from a more diverse set of participants, such as those from more cultural, linguistic, and family structures. Also, the study relied exclusively on adolescent self-reports, which offers a one-sided story despite the valuing of youth perspectives. Figuring out a comprehensive way to incorporate parental perspectives or using observational methods could provide a more holistic understanding of how communication is enacted and received within the family. Finally, the digital landscape continues to rapidly evolve, and therefore the norms, risks, and platforms that shape adolescents' online behaviour are also very likely to

shift. Continued research is thus needed to track how new forms of digital engagement intersect with also evolving family dynamics and evolving societal norms.

This study therefore reinforced the idea that adolescents' digital risk-taking cannot be fully understood or addressed without attending to the communicative and emotional environments in which they are embedded. The findings emphasize that effective parental mediation is not merely about setting rules, but about cultivating a relational context that fosters trust, empathy, and emotional safety. When adolescents feel rejected and supported, they are more likely to engage openly, seek guidance, and develop the internal resources needed to navigate a complex and often unpredictable digital world.



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# **Appendices**

## ***Appendix 1: Focus Group Guide***

### **Research question:**

How do family communication styles influence adolescents' engagement in risky social media or online behaviours, such as oversharing personal information, participating in harmful viral challenges, or engaging in cyberbullying?

### **Focus group questions:**

#### **1. General Family Communication**

- How would you describe how your family communicates with each other? For example, do you usually share openly, or is communication more formal or restricted?
- Can you recall a recent situation where your family had an important discussion about something personal (e.g., school, relationships, or social media)? How did it go?
- Are there specific topics you find easy or difficult to discuss with your parents or guardians? Why do you think that is?
- In your family, when does communication typically happen (e.g., during meals, car rides, or planned discussions)?

#### **2. Perspectives on Family Influence**

- Can you think of a time when your family's way of communicating influenced a decision you made about using social media?
- When you're in a difficult situation online (e.g., witnessing or experiencing cyberbullying, or feeling pressured to participate in a challenge), do you think about how your family might react?
- Do your family's reactions to your choices (online or offline) affect how you approach schoolwork or relationships with others? Can you give an example?
- How do/would you feel after discussing online challenges or risks with your parents? Do/would you feel more confident, confused, or something else?

#### **3. Risk-Taking Behaviours**

- What does "risk-taking" mean to you when it comes to online behaviour? Can you give examples of risks people your age might take on social media?
- Imagine you were thinking about sharing something personal online or participating in a social media challenge. Are you comfortable discussing this with your family? Why or why not?
- Have you ever avoided telling your family about something risky you've done online? What made you decide not to tell them?
- How do you think your family's communication style (e.g., openness, supportiveness) affects whether you participate in risky online behaviours?

#### 4. Comparing Family Communication Styles and Norms

- Have you noticed differences in how your friends' families communicate compared to your own? Do these differences affect their choices about social media or online behaviour?
- Are there rules or expectations in your family about social media use? How do they compare to what you hear about other families?
- How do you think family communication influences your ability to navigate social norms or peer pressure online?

#### 5. Reflections on Family Communication and Risk

- If you could change one thing about how your family communicates about social media or online behaviours, what would it be?
- Looking ahead, how do you think your family's communication style might affect your decisions about social media use as you grow older?
- In what ways do you feel supported (or unsupported) by your family when dealing with social media risks or challenges?

#### Group Activity and Reflection

- **Activity Prompt:** Create a group mural representing how families influence how adolescents manage risks online (e.g., through guidance, rules, or trust). Use colours and symbols to depict your ideas.
- **Reflection Question:** What patterns or differences did you notice in the mural? Were there any words or symbols that surprised you? Why? Did any part of the activity make you think differently about your family's communication style?

## *Appendix 2: Consent Forms*

### **CONSENT FORM**

#### **RESEARCH:**

#### ***Exploring the Impact of Communication Styles on Adolescents' Social Media Behaviours***

How do family communication styles influence adolescents' engagement in risky social media or online behaviours?

#### **Researcher:**

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#### **Purpose of the Study:**

This research aims to explore how family communication styles influence adolescents' engagement in risky behaviours on social media. The study will focus on how different family communication styles (e.g., open, restrictive) may impact adolescents' decisions regarding oversharing personal information, participation in harmful viral challenges, or engagement in cyberbullying.

#### **Procedure:**

As a participant in this study, you will be invited to take part in a **1.5-hour focus group discussion**. During this session, you will share your experiences and insights regarding family communication styles and how they relate to your social media behaviour. The discussion will include creative activities (e.g., a group mural) to help express your thoughts and ideas more freely.

#### **Participation Criteria:**

- **Age:** 17-19 years
- **Location:** Google Meet
- **Social Media Use:** Active users of social media who are willing to discuss their online behaviours
- **Comfort Level:** Must be comfortable discussing family communication dynamics and online behaviours in a group setting

#### **Confidentiality:**

All information shared during the focus group will remain confidential. The session will be audio-recorded for transcription purposes. The recordings will be securely stored and used

only for research purposes. The recordings will be deleted after they have been transcribed and analyzed.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose to withdraw at any time without any consequences. If you withdraw, any data collected from you will be destroyed upon your request.

**Risks:**

This study may involve discussions that bring up personal or emotional topics. If at any point during the session, you feel uncomfortable, you may stop participating or withdraw without explanation.

**Data Usage and Access to Results:**

The data collected during this study will be used to inform the thesis. Results from the study may also be used in academic presentations or publications. If you wish to access the findings of the study, you may contact the researcher after the study is completed.

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**Consent:**

By signing below, you confirm that you understand the information presented and agree to participate in the study under the conditions outlined above.

<b>I consent to participate in the research study</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>I consent to the audio recording of the focus group session</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>I consent to the use of the data for scientific purposes (including publications and presentations)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

**I agree that my responses will be kept confidential and stored securely**

- Yes  
 No

**Signatures:**

**Participant's Name (Printed):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**(If a Minor)**

**Participant's Parent/Guardian's Name (Printed):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher's Name (Printed):**

**Researcher's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

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This consent form ensures the protection of your rights as a participant and provides clear communication about the study's processes. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask the researcher at any time.

### *Appendix 3: Focus Group Transcripts*

Theme Legend	
-> Family Communication Patterns (Subthemes: Sensitive Topics and Selective Disclosure)	-> Disclosure and Reactions (Subthemes: Fear of Parental Reaction and Situational Sharing)
-> Parental Mediation (Subthemes: Active Guidance, Trust-Based Autonomy, Rules and Restrictions)	-> Peer and Social Influence (Subthemes: Online Trends and Challenges and Peer Pressure)
-> Adolescent Autonomy (Subthemes: Resistance to Oversight and Desire for Independence)	-> Risk Perception and Awareness (Subthemes: Knowledge of Digital Risks and Personal Experience with Risk)

*Fig. 5: Themes Legend for Thematic Analysis*

## *Focus Group Transcript #1*

### First part of the focus group session

Date and time: 24/02/2025 @ 5:00 PM CET; 3 participants arrived 10-30 minutes late, leading to late start

**[Me]** Hi Margaret, can you hear me okay?

**[Margaret]** Yes.

**[Me]** Okay, awesome. We're still missing one more person, but I'll just go ahead and start the focus group, and when she joins, we'll just continue as is. So, I'll start with a brief introduction.

So, first of all, thank you all for participating in this study. It really does help, so thank you very much. So, just again, as we've covered together, this focus group is part of a research study that explores how different family communication styles influence adolescents' online behaviours, including risky behaviours like oversharing, viral challenges, and cyberbullying.

So, I want this to be an open and respectful discussion where everyone feels comfortable sharing their thoughts. The main language for the discussion will be in English, but those who are francophone, please feel free to speak in French and I've written the questions in French in the slides so you can also access that. And I'll translate accordingly for the non-French speakers.

So, if anyone needs clarification or translation again, feel free to let me know. So, again, this session would last about an hour, max an hour and a half. Your responses will be confidential and will only be used for this study.

Feel free to share as much or as little as you are comfortable with. There are no right or wrong answers. I just want to hear from you and your experiences and I would also like to say please respect each other and listen to each other's perspectives and if at any point you feel uncomfortable, you are welcome to leave the session.

Does anyone have any questions before we start?

I think we're good. Okay, so before we start, let's start off with a quick introduction. So, I'd like you to share your name, your age, and what social media app you use the most. So, whoever's feeling like they want to go first, feel free.

**[Amy - Translated]** Shall I start?

**[Me - Translated]** Yes

**[Amy - Translated]** So, my name's Amy [...], I'm 19 years old, and I mainly use Whatsapp and YouTube.

**[Me - Partially Translated]** Okay, thank you. So, she says her name is Amy. She is 19 years old and she mainly uses WhatsApp and YouTube as social media apps.

**[Amanda]** Okay, I can go. Hello, my name is Amanda. I am 19 and I use WhatsApp, Pinterest, and TikTok mostly.

**[Me]** Awesome, thank you.

**[Logan]** Should I continue?

**[Me]** Sure.

**[Logan]** Okay, I'm Logan. I'm 18 years old and mostly I use WhatsApp and Instagram.

**[Me]** Awesome, thank you.

**[Margaret]** Hi, I'm Margaret. I'm 20 and the social media I use most is probably Instagram.

**[Me]** Awesome, thank you very much. And just so everyone knows, my name is Yemariam. I am 23 and I mainly use WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok as social media apps.

So, with that we can just go ahead and get started. So, this is the research question. Oh my goodness, it's not cooperating with me. One of the beauties of doing an online meeting is that it doesn't always cooperate with you. Okay, so the first question. How would you describe how your family communicates with each other?

So, for example, do you usually share openly or is communication more formal or restricted? So, whoever would like to start.

**[Amanda]** I can start.

**[Me]** Sure.

**[Amanda]** It's pretty open. It's different for when I'm at my dad's place or at my mom's place because my parents are separated, but pretty similar still.

And the moment when there's something bothering us, we either first don't talk about it, but later on need to talk about it because it's still bothering us. And well, it's always in a respectful manner, even though I must say, because I have a little sister and my little sister and I, we sometimes say things the wrong way, not the best way possible, maybe. And then after we've talked about everything they, my mom tells us, yeah, okay, but you could have said that differently and didn't have to go on the offensive side.

**[Me]** Who else would like to share their response?

**[Amy - translated]** I can go, if you'd like? I've unfortunately got a very particular family and, because of this, apart from my sister, there isn't any communication, in fact no problems, at all, and I can only have normal conversations with my sister and talk about problems in a normal way. Aside from this, the rest of our family tends to hide our problems under the rug and make it seem like there are no problems.

**[Me]** Okay. So, for the English speakers, she says, apart from her sister, there's not much communication in her family. And most of the time when problems are discussed, like, they're not discussed fully, mostly they're hidden under the rug. (Translated) Have I missed anything, Amy?

**[Amy - Translated]** No, that's right.

**[Me]** Okay. Amazing translation work so far (laughter). Thank you. Who would like to go next?

**[Margaret]** I can go. Sorry. We have an open conversation. We share our thoughts and, well, yeah, that's basically it.

**[Me]** Ok.

**[Margaret]** Sorry for the noise.

**[Me]** Yeah, no worries. Thank you.

**[Logan]** Yeah. I would also say we have an open communication, but I would say we are all really good speakers, but often we could have listened better to what the others are saying. And yeah, I think that's our point to get better.

**[Me]** Okay. So, you're saying that in general, it's pretty open communication, but there are some discussions where it could be more open. Is that what you're...?

**[Logan]** Yeah, exactly.

**[Me]** Okay. Thank you. So, based off of the answers that we've heard, did anyone get reminded of something, maybe an example that you guys could give?

**[Amy - Translated]** An example of what exactly?

**[Me]** Like an example of maybe a conversation that you had that would describe the communication style? How else could I explain? So, I guess for those who said that they have more open communication, they could describe how, how so. Yeah. Give an example in general.

**[Amanda]** I have a little example.

**[Me]** Sure.

**[Amanda]** Yesterday... Okay. So, for a little context, tomorrow I am taking my driver's license and I hope I will succeed.

**[Me]** I hope so too. Good luck.

**[Logan]** Good luck.

**[Amanda - Part Translated]** Thanks. Danke. Ah, noooo<sup>2</sup> (laughs). And we were talking about it yesterday at the dinner table with my dad and my sister. And my sister, she's the type of person that will say things very bluntly.

She's 14. She doesn't really have filters. And she was like, yeah, you need to have your driver's license.

**[Me]** Okay.

**[Amanda]** You cannot fail. And I thought, "girl, I have enough pressure, okay? Please." And so, I told her, "okay, can you please not say that? I am thinking it to myself already enough." I did not sleep very well because I was thinking about my driver's exam, license. And my dad was sitting next to us and at some point he said, "okay, well, don't worry, she will get her driver's license. It's all right." And then my sister realized that maybe that wasn't so good to say. And she said, "yes, I'm sorry. I just wanted to make sure that you know that it's important." Yeah. And my dad didn't really intervene since we talked about it, us two.

**[Me]** Thank you for your example.

**[Amanda]** You're welcome.

**[Me]** Anyone else? If not, we can move to the next question.

**[Amy- Translated]** I have an example of good and bad communication, (Me - "Okay") if there is one that you prefer, which one?

**[Me]** You can give both examples.

**[Amy - Translated]** For the example of bad communication, for context, I had to go on holiday to (Amy's home country) because my mum lives in (Amy's home country), except I told her that I wouldn't go because I didn't feel good there due to childhood experiences. And instead of talking about the problems behind why I didn't feel good there, my mum just told me how much she just didn't want to see me because I'd decided not to go, and how I

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<sup>2</sup> Frustration from not using the intended language.

was ungrateful, etc. And I guess I find it's a good example of poor communication, because in the end we never actually talked about the problem and she just got annoyed. Would you like to give your translation before I move on to the next example?

**[Me - Partially Translated]** Thank you.

So, she gave an example of not good communication. So, her mom lives in (Amy's home country) and proposed a vacation in (Amy's home country). But Amy told her mother that she would prefer not to go to (Amy's home country) because she doesn't feel good being there because of childhood experiences. And rather than discussing the problem or asking how come, her mother instead described how much she doesn't want to see her and just said other things out of anger. So, finally, the problem wasn't actually discussed. She just became upset and nothing was resolved at the end of it.

Did I miss something or is it okay?

**[Amy - Translated]** No, that's about it.

**[Me]** Okay, awesome.

**[Amy - Translated]** And so, for the good example, I would say with my sister, for a little more context, we had a difficult relationship when we were younger, which means that sometimes there are situations in which we don't feel great about the other, but it's not necessarily that we don't appreciate each other. And once, I felt bad and I didn't necessarily want to see her. So, I just called her and I told her, I don't want to see you, even though we were supposed to meet-up.

And what was funny was that instead of getting angry, because I was expecting her to get angry, instead of getting angry, she just asked me what the problem was and if we could discuss it. We discussed it and in the end, she just accepted it and told me, "no problem, we'll see each other when you want to."

**[Me]** So, the example of good communication was with her sister. So, she gave some context that they had a bit of a tumultuous relationship in their childhood. And one time they were meant to meet and Amy didn't want to, so she gave her sister a call and said, "I don't want to meet with you."

And instead of being upset or just accepting and hanging up the call, her sister asked her directly what was wrong so they could discuss it. And they did have a discussion about it and afterwards, her sister said, "okay, it's no big deal. If you don't want to meet up, we can meet up at a time where you want to."

So, did I cover everything?

**[Amy - Translated]** 100%.

**[Me - Part Translated]** Okay, thank you. Did anyone else have an example?

**[Margaret]** Well, I don't have an example, like, I don't know how to say it.

Well, we all have dinner together every time. So, if we have a conversation or something, we all just talk and if something is wrong, we all just say what's wrong or say what's right. And yeah, like, we're all open and we all do jokes together and like, it's pretty good.

**[Me]** That's good. Thank you so much. If there aren't any more comments, we can move on to the next question. Does that work for everyone? Okay. So, can you recall a recent situation where your family had an important discussion about something personal? So, about school, relationships, social media, or anything like that? And if you can recall a recent situation like that, how did this conversation go?

-long pause-

**[Amanda]** Should I go?

**[Me]** Yes, please.

**[Amanda]** Okay. So, I don't know if it's that personal.

You tell me if it's not. I don't know. Anyway, so, we were in the car with my dad and we were discussing my mom. The divorce wasn't the best, I would say. And I don't know, it really hurt and it still hurts, for some reason. And that was already five years ago. So, just so you can imagine.

**[Me]** Yeah.

**[Amanda]** And we were discussing it and my mom has a boyfriend for a long time already and she's really happy. My dad doesn't like him and we were talking about him and I was talking about how it hurts that he doesn't like him, even though it doesn't have anything to do with me personally. Like, I shouldn't really care, but I do (voice starts to shake). And by the end of the car ride, I was crying. But we talked about it again. So, we were still sitting in the car, and at the end he... it's a little bit more difficult to talk about things like that with my dad than it is with my mom, but he tried to go to my direction of how I feel. And in the end, everything was good. We hugged and it was fine. Yeah.

**[Me]** Good. Thank you so much for sharing. Would anyone else like to respond?

-long pause-

**[Amy- Translated]** Could you please repeat the question?

**[Me]** So, if you could recall a recent situation where your family had an important discussion about something personal. So, it could be about school, relationships, social media, or anything else that's personal. And if so, how did it go?

**[Amy - Translated]** So, once again, it's a conversation with my mum, and it happened a few days ago. We had this conversation where, to give context, we hadn't really spoken for a while. And one day she wrote to me, asking for an explanation. So I decided to talk to her, and in one of my messages I explained that it wasn't because of a small error she once made, where she just [verbally] attacked me, that I wasn't speaking to her, but because, well, I made a long list of things that she had done during my childhood that badly hurt me. And, once again an example of bad communication, she just ignored all of this, and said that she hoped I'd got it all off my chest, that it wasn't her fault, it wasn't her intention. And, in fact, she saw this more as an error, rather than something seriously important; she completely ignored what I said and moved on to something else. So it went badly.

**[Me - Partially Translated]** Thanks.

So, Amy said this example was with her mom and it's been... it was a couple days ago. And so, for context, they didn't speak for a while. So, her mother asked her why. And Amy explained that it wasn't, like, a small error or just like one instance. It was an accumulation of things that were said and done since childhood. So, basically in response, what Amy expressed to her mother was ignored, was told that it wasn't her fault and was viewed just as a small error. And she just moved on to a different topic of discussion. Does that about cover it?

**[Amy - Translated]** Yes.

**[Me]** Awesome.

**[Amanda - Translated]** Just a question. I still have the first page of the online focus group. Is it because the thing's glitching??

**[Me - Translated]** Ahh, maybe the thing's glitching, wait.

**[Amanda - Translated]** Ahhh, yeah, there it is.

**[Me]** Is it there?

**[Amanda - Translated]** Yeah, go ahead. Thank you.

**[Me - Translated]** Don't worry. Is it ok now?

**[Amanda]** Mm-hmm.

**[Me]** Okay. Who else would like to respond? (pause) And if you don't have a response that's more than fine, we can move to the next question.

Okay. So, the next question is, are there specific topics that you find easy or difficult to discuss with your parents or guardians? Why do you think that is?

**[Logan]** Should I start?

**[Me]** Sure. Thank you.

**[Logan]** Okay. So, I think one of the most difficult discussions are the political ones.

**[Me]** Mm-hmm.

**[Logan]** So, there are different opinions. So, between me and my sisters, between the children and the parents. And so, again, without a problem to listen carefully, there are misunderstandings, and... So, yeah, the whole discussion is more difficult when we don't listen and we don't agree with the opinion from the others. And so... I think we prefer talking about the topic we are the same... so, we have the same opinion.

**[Me]** Thank you very much for sharing. Who else would like to go?

**[Amanda]** So, for our family, with my dad, it's also difficult to talk about politics and I just don't like to talk about it anyway in general with people because it creates so much hate and splitting between people. Like, one group is against the other and the other is against the other and I just... I just don't like the hate. So, I don't talk about that topic with anybody, really. But if we do, it's uncomfortable but that's just because I don't like the topic maybe.

And then everybody says what they think and maybe in the end we understand more the other person's point of view or we just say, "okay, well, then you think like that. Maybe we will change your mind at some point, maybe not. But that's not my problem. You think how you think, and I think how I think and I cannot change how you think." I mean, yeah, you have to do that yourself.

And then another topic is women. I have lots of empathy with women that are suppressed and don't have rights in other countries and all the rape and stuff. Yeah, anyway, I don't like talking about it but if we do, it's the same thing. We talk about it respectfully, and in the end everybody goes with their own opinions.

**[Me]** Thank you. Would anyone else like to share?

**[Amy - Translated]** Can I go? In truth, the only subject that would be difficult to talk about in my family is, really, the past, our family's past and responsibility. Other than that, everything else is fairly open. It's fairly easy to talk about things like current politics, [sociology], and other world subjects. Well, as long as we're sticking to my family's point of view and

opinions, of course (said in a slightly sarcastic tone). But otherwise, it's the past and responsibilities [which are hard to talk about].

**[Me]** So, essentially, Amy says that the only difficult discussion within her family is related to the family's past and also when discussing responsibilities, the roles that everyone plays. And she says, otherwise, it's pretty open with politics and everything like that as long as it's within the family's values. But other than that, it's pretty open. But the one difficult discussion is the family's past and responsibilities. Did I miss anything?

**[Amy - Translated]** No.

**[Margaret]** Umm, for my family, I think the most difficult conversation we have is our emotions. Like, we all know we all feel different, but talking about it is... sometimes it's, like, causes problems. And, yeah, that's it.

**[Me]** Thank you very much for sharing, everybody. So based on everyone's responses do you have any other comments that you'd like to add or maybe something else that popped into your head that you'd like to share?

**[Logan]** Yeah to my statement I can also add next to the political things, there are these discussions on the pride and the LGBTQ thing and the future [of] our planet and... I don't want to tell names but some of the people in our family didn't mention we're moving on [in support of LGBTQ rights] so yeah particularly with the LGBTQ thing so we're not... we're now in the 21st century and yeah, hello and welcome.

**[Amy- Translated]** If I can add to that, if I may, it's pretty much the same, but for me it's my whole family because they're very... I'm Muslim but they're all also Muslim but they're a lot more than that, so for me personally I don't care as long as everyone is happy in the world but they're a lot more than that on some points and I've heard things where they don't have a problem saying that "Hitler didn't finish the job" or the fact that "the LGBTQ community doesn't have as much of a place on earth." I've heard a lot of nice things like that in my family.

**[Me- Translated]** Sorry, I can just check, maybe it's a silly question but what is chouïa?

**[Amy- Translated]** A little bit.

**[Me]** Okay, okay, thank you. So essentially, this was going to be a very rough translation because some of the examples I didn't get enough time to note down but so for context Amy and her family are Muslim so essentially practically everyone in her family does not view the LGBTQ community with respect and they make quite colorful comments when it comes to that community and Amy expressed that her personally even as a Muslim does not care what anyone's sexual orientation is but other members of her family quite insert themselves into that topic of discussion. (Amy signals agreement)

Okay, as rough as the translation was, I think I covered all grounds. Thank you for sharing and does anyone else want to add anything? We can move to the next question otherwise. Cool. So in your family, when does communication typically happen? So for example, during meals, car rides or planned discussions? I think someone already kind of brought this one up but ...whoever would like to start, feel free.

**[Amy-Translated]** Can I start?

**[Me]** Yes, please.

**[Amy-Translated]** So, with my family in general, it's going to be more meals. There might be some initial communication. I'm going to put it differently because the term communication in our family is very particular but let's say that it's more in meals where there are going to be spikes launched to try to launch communications. And otherwise it can sometimes also happen in the car. But in general, it's when people are locked up together and can't leave that it's going to try to provoke and launch spikes to try to get reactions. And that's the form of communication in our family.

**[Me]** Thank you very much. So Amy says that essentially the word communication in itself is very particular for her family and how it typically goes is generally speaking either during meals or in the car but a lot of the time it's also when people are closed in together so not necessarily physically but in a context where no one can leave so they're pretty much stuck with each other and discussions pretty much start when someone throws an insult at someone just to see if they could get a reaction and if they do that is how conversations start.

Who else would like to go?

**[Amanda]** So I already mentioned the car. So in the car while eating dinner or breakfast or I mean lunch just eating together but honestly every time there's something happening like if for example my mom was very emotional I mean not emotional but unsure because she quit her job and it was a very difficult decision to make so she was anxious except that that anxiety translated on everybody and everybody was stressed and it was not fun it was uncomfortable so at some point I was like okay mom maybe you should go into your room and I don't know take a bath or just relax a little so we can all relax and just every time there's some little thing that is bothering somebody or there's some process happening emotional process we talk about it not necessarily the moment it happens but it can also be later so yeah there's lots of communication.

**[Me]** Awesome. Thank you so much. Who else would like to go?

**[Margaret]** I can go. My family is so close like we are actually in constant communication so if I go studying I text them every day all day and I'm like, "I'm in exam, I'm going to eat, I'm

going with my friends”, I don't know I'm constantly texting them and saying I'm alright and here I don't know we talk every time if we have dinner lunch, breakfast we talk and if we all are bored we all go to our parents' room and watch TV together, talk, and spend time together.

**[Me]** Awesome. Thank you so much for sharing. Did anyone else want to go?

**[Logan]** Yeah, okay. I think mainly we talk at dinner so in the evening it also happens we meet after work in the kitchen so I eat something and my sister joins or my mom and then we talk about our day how is the day going and so the whole family is eating together at the dinner table or on Sunday during breakfast and so from Monday to Friday I never join breakfast so I go straight to work.

**[Me]** Thank you very much. If anyone has anything else to add, they can. Otherwise we'll go to the next question: Can you think of a time when your family's way of communicating influenced a decision you made about using social media?

-pause-

**[Amy- Translated]** I would say that since it's never direct in my family it influenced me to be more direct in the sense that since in social media we generally talk by message, if we are not direct maybe the message will never pass and what we want to say will never pass and so I would say that it influenced me to always be more direct in what I want to say.

**[Me]** Thank you. So Amy says, viewed that there's not enough direct communication within her family she says that it had influenced her to be more direct so when messaging with her family or messaging in general she tries her best to be as direct as possible to fully communicate what she's trying to say in the message. Am I missing anything or does that cover it?

**[Amy- Translated]** No, it's fine.

**[Me]** Thank you. Who else would like to go?

**[Amanda]** Could you repeat the question?

**[Me]** Can you think of a time when your family's way of communicating influenced a decision you made about using social media?

**[Amanda]** I don't think I understand it correctly. Using social media to communicate with your family?

**[Me]** No, the way you communicate with your family is there a time like a certain instance when you communicated with your family where you took kind of a lesson from it and that influenced a decision you made about using social media? It doesn't necessarily have to be a

direct influence but it could have been, I don't know something you observed within the conversation or within the communication process that influenced your decision.

**[Amanda]** Okay, so my mom always taught us that when you're talking to somebody over social media for example WhatsApp or Instagram or Snapchat anyway and it's something important like something I don't know, some problem something hurtful always talk about how it affects you and never blame the other person like "yeah you did that", "you did this that's why I did this" no, you just say "I am hurt or I felt hurt and I wish to I don't know... I wish to solve the situation differently than we're doing it right now because this is dumb" and in general just talking about problems over social media is not good because you cannot hear the other person you cannot hear their tone their facial expressions just maybe call them that's also better and if you have to text like Amy said say it directly.

**[Me]** Thank you so much. Would anyone else like to respond?

**[Logan]** Yeah I totally agree with Amanda at this point I had also the experience to or that communication over social media is mostly or often misunderstood. So well the perfect example is my ex-girlfriend. In the evening, when we had a FaceTime call, we couldn't tell the other one what exactly we mean with our words so we didn't have the personal, that's missing when we do it over social media and also with other persons that had the same experience and yeah I clearly learned in person is way better to communicate.

**[Me]** Awesome, thank you so much. Would anyone else like to give a response? If not we can move to the next question.

**[Margaret]** No, I don't know

**[Me]** That's ok! If you don't have a response, this applies to everyone, don't feel obligated to respond, yeah no worries at all. So the next question is, when you're in a difficult situation online, for example, witnessing or experiencing cyberbullying or feeling pressured to participate in a social media challenge, do you think about how your family might react?

**[Amy- Translated]** Uhm I would say no because in general my family doesn't really participate in my social media life and I know that in general I tend to solve the problem before they even realize that whatever it is in general they just never find out.

**[Me]** So Amy says typically no because in general her family doesn't have any say or participation in her life online so there would be no need for her to think about their reaction.

-pause-

**[Amanda]** For me they wouldn't find out like Amy said they don't have anything to say in what I do on social media but I think if it would happen and if there is pressure. Actually I

have an example. So this may be a bit stupid but whatever um on TikTok there is this ski community I mean the people that go skiing and I do not understand why but some people they bully other people for wearing a helmet with a visor.

**[Me]** Oh

**[Amanda]** Yes! I don't get it. It's dumb it's a helmet, it's supposed to protect your head, it doesn't matter, maybe it looks a little bit less cool but who cares you're not wearing the helmet the other person is so whatever. Yeah, but for some reason I have that helmet because I have glasses and it's just very good to have a helmet like that because the other ones it just hurts. But it's practical what else am I supposed to say. It's good for the glasses and whatever but the comments of the people on other people's posts, I don't post on social media I don't want to do that honestly I use social media either to entertain myself which is dumb because I don't want to be that much on my phone but this is another problem, or to text friends and meet up.

**[Me]** Yeah, that's fair.

**[Amanda]** It's just in the comments of other people's posts that they say yeah that helmet looks stupid blah blah blah and then I was feeling insecure for some reason and I was not happy that evening when I saw those comments and my mom noticed and she asked "yeah what's wrong do you want to tell us what's happening?" and I told her and basically she just said what I was already thinking. "That's stupid it's just a helmet you wear to protect your head", you know the obvious stuff. Yeah.

**[Me]** Thank you for sharing. Does anyone else have a response? (Pause) No worries, we can move to the next question. So do your family's reactions to your choices online or offline affect your approach to school work or relationships and if so can you give an example?

**[Amy- Translated]** Could you just show the question please?

**[Me- Translated]** Oh it's not working yet? Ok I'm going to start sharing... sorry it's loading, I'm so sorry. (long pause, laptop loading) Can you see the slides now?

**[Amy- Translated]** Yes

**[Me]** So the question was do your family's reactions to your choices either online or offline affect your approach to school work or relationships and if so can you give an example?

-pause-

**[Amy- Translated]** I can start. I would say that in general since in my family they always have something to say and always have reactions depending on the people I'm going to be with, for example, in relationships, I'm just not going to talk about people. It can be friends or

others, I live a little bit in secret and for work, here it's school, but I'm going to choose university to serve smoke screens in general I'm just going to say that I work all the time and as they say, "fake it till you make it", so sometimes I really work all the time to escape.

**[Me]** Thank you very much. So Amy says in general with her family there's always, no matter what the discussion is, there's always something to say there's always a reaction so when it comes to things like relationships, Amy just chooses not to say anything, so pretty much they won't know anything, and when it comes to school, as the English expression, "fake it till you make it", she just tells them that she works all the time even though that may not necessarily be the case but still in university. So does that cover it all?

**[Amy- Translated]** Yes.

**[Me]** Would anyone else like to respond?

**[Amanda]** Usually no, it doesn't affect school work or my relationships so

**[Me]** Okay, yeah cool, thank you so much. Would anyone else like to respond? Okay we'll go to the next question then. How do or would you feel discussing online challenges or risks with your parents, do or would you feel more confident, confused or something else? So if you have already had this discussion, you can give the example and if you haven't, you can make a hypothesis, I guess, of how it would go.

-long pause-

**[Amy- Translated]** So, I can start. You know, I've never had a discussion with my family about online challenges. But, in fact, I just imagine that the discussion would go more in the sense that it's not very intelligent for some. And, in fact, that's all. There wouldn't really be a discussion around it, knowing that I'm very little involved in it, since I'm more on WhatsApp and sometimes on YouTube, but it's not at all the content I'm going to have. So, it's just going to be treated as something a little stupid, but otherwise that's all.

**[Me]** Okay. So Amy says she's never had a discussion of this nature with her family, but if she were to have it, there wouldn't be much discussion because already mostly she uses YouTube and WhatsApp, so there's not much that would come out of that. (In French) I have the impression that I missed something.

**[Amy- Translated]** Yes, that the subject would have remained as something insignificant.

**[Me]** Oh, the part that I missed was, apart from there not being much discussion, it would also be treated like something that's not significant. So, the discussion would not be given importance. Would anyone else like to share their response?

**[Amanda]** So, for us, it wouldn't be a topic, I mean, we never talked about it, and it wouldn't be a topic because I wouldn't consider taking part of that, of the challenges or anything. But if someday I would, it would also go like, okay, I mean, I do what you want, but it's a bit dumb, depending on the thing. But if it's not something too, too dumb, they would just let me do it and say, okay, you will be embarrassed in a few years, but okay, do what you want.

**[Me]** Thank you for sharing. Would anyone else like to give a response? If not, we can just go to the next question. So, what does risk-taking mean to you when it comes to online behaviour? And can you give examples of risks people your age might take on social media?

**[Amanda]** Posting the exact location you live in or you are, where you are. For example, I don't know, you're on vacation, and you put the exact place where you are. I guess it's okay if you put the city or, yeah, just for safety. I don't know if anything would happen, but I wouldn't do it.

**[Me]** Yeah, that's a valid concern to have. Anyone else?

**[Logan]** Yeah, I think so, all about private information about me, about my family members or friends. Yeah, I should not, or we should not share online with people we don't know. So, that's what I learned, I don't know, 10 years ago. So, I shouldn't share such information with, what do we call it in English? Strangers.

**[Me]** Yes.

**[Logan]** And, yeah, so I'm going really good with that.

**[Me]** Thank you very much. Anyone-?

**[Margaret]** I think, like, I support what Amanda said. Like, the location and all the private things about, sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry. (Someone walked into her room. She mutes herself)

**[Me]** No worries.

**[Amanda]** Logan, do you speak German?

**[Logan]** Yeah.

**[Margaret]** And, like, about the private things about location and all of that. Like, I saw a TikTok, and it's like, for security, it's better to post, like, things after you leave the place. Like, from now on, like, all I think about is that.

[Me] Yeah. Thank you.

Anyone else would like to share?

[Amy-Translated] I would say one thing is to completely trust people who seem close, so that could be the friend of a friend and you follow each other mutually on social media, and we could feel like we trust them because they're the friend of a friend, but in fact, they are strangers, at the end of the day. So we could quickly put trust in the wrong people or bad people.

[Me] So, Amy says that one risk online would be to trust strangers in general on the internet, but specifically those who appear to be close. So, we would assume, oh, they're a friend of a friend, so I can trust them. But at the end of the day, they're still a stranger. You don't know much about them, so still a risk to share much information. If we don't have many responses, we can move to the next question.

So, imagine you were thinking about sharing something personal online or participating in a social media challenge. Are you comfortable discussing (stutters), oh, my goodness, I cannot speak. Are you comfortable discussing this with your family? Why or why not?.

[Amy- Translated] I've not really reflected on this, but I can start. Absolutely not. Everything on personal info, activities on the internet, challenges, etc would be a bit embarrassing to discuss. Simply because everything private could be used as a weapon, so better to keep things like that close to the chest and hide them.

[Me] So, Amy says absolutely not, because everything personal that is shared can be used against you, essentially. So, she would not engage in something like that. Okay. Would anyone else like to share?

I'll just also make a note about the time. I think we are running a bit behind schedule. So, in the worst case scenario, is everyone okay with continuing this focus group another time? \*everyone agrees\* Thank you very much. As we were, the next person who would like to share their response, please go ahead.

[Amanda] I would not share anything personal, so it wouldn't be a question. But if I would think about doing it and I would talk about it to my family, they would just say don't do it, because it's not safe.

[Me] Thank you very much. Anyone else? (pause) We can just move to the next question.

Have you ever avoided telling your family about something risky you've done online? What made you decide not to tell them?

**[Logan]** So, I think I never did something risky online. Simple, because I learned from my parents to not do it. So far, I haven't done anything. (conciierge walks in my space, moves chairs around loudly)

I would also share it with my brother or my parents, because it helps me a lot when I'm doing it. I did something risky to share with somebody, so I don't feel as much [discomfort] when I have it on my own.

**[Me]** Awesome. Thank you so much. Unfortunately, with that, I'm being kicked out of the school library, so we do have to end now, unfortunately. I will send everyone a message asking for your availability again, so we can continue where we left off. I'm very sorry for the fact that it didn't take the amount of time that I anticipated.

**[Amy- Translated]** Can you just add me to the group [chat] so that it's easier?

**[Me]** Yes.

**[Amy- Translated]** If we have to discuss schedules again.

**[Me]** Yes. Thank you. But yeah, so sorry about that.

We did have a bit of a late start, so that is a huge contributing factor. But we'll arrange a continuation session very soon, and that one will for sure be shorter than this one. Thank you all so much for your participation thus far, and I'll send a message either later tonight or tomorrow asking for your availability.

**[Logan]** Thank you. Perfect.

**[Me]** Thank you very much.

**[Amanda and Amy]** Au revoir. Au revoir.

**[Margaret]** Have a good evening.

**[Me]** Bye. Au revoir. Bye.

Second part of the focus group session

Date and time: 09/03/2025 @ 5:00 PM CET

**[Me]** Hello. All right, if it's all right for everyone I can just get into it and start right away? Amazing.

First of all, thank you all again for bearing with me during this process. I know it was supposed to be done within one sitting but considering the circumstances, it did not succeed. So thank you again for bearing with me and for joining me for part two of this interview.

I will just share the slides right now so we can continue where we left off. Unfortunately, I will have to re-ask you the last question again because I forget who was responding, but during that response a concierge came in and was making a lot of noise so nothing came up in my audio<sup>3</sup> so I'm going to have to ask you that question again. So we could just get right to it.

Oh, and just so everyone's aware, Margaret has let me know that she's feeling a bit unwell so her voice is not at the state where it normally is so she has decided to send her response to the chat and I'll just read it out loud for the sake of everyone not missing it and also for it to come on my record here. (presentation loading) Can you see the slides? (positive response from everyone) Okay, amazing.

Okay, so the last question I asked was: Have you ever avoided telling your family about something risky you've done online? And if so, what made you decide not to tell them?

-pause-

**[Amy- translated]** I can start. Yes, I have avoided telling some things I've experienced on the Internet that I could consider as risky. I didn't talk to them about it because I knew they wouldn't react well, that they would judge. So I just didn't talk about it, I just went through it.

**[Me]** So what Amy says is yes, she has avoided telling her family about something risky that they've encountered online. And what made her decide not to tell her family was that she knew that they wouldn't have a good reaction to it and they would (pause because of some noise from one of the other participants). As I was saying, she knew that they would not

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<sup>3</sup> I was unable to hear Logan's first response to that question in real time or when first listening to the audio. I transcribed both parts of this focus group at the same time and was able to hear his response after editing the sound.

have a good reaction and that they would have judgment. So she just avoided the conversation altogether. Am I missing anything Amy?

**[Amy- translated]** No, it's all correct.

**[Me]** Okay, great. Thank you. Who else would like to respond? (long pause) Feel free to also say- (noise from the same participant)... Hello?

-long pause-

Sorry, I'm unable to see who else is on the screen. So someone was trying to speak. Oh, I see that Margaret has entered something in the chat.

I will just read it out for everyone. (clears throat) Excuse me. So Margaret says, *no, I have not avoided telling my family about something risky. But if I do, maybe I would not tell them because of the conversation it may lead to.* So just a clarifying question for Margaret, when you say because of the conversation it may lead to, do you mean that like, you know that the conversation would be a bit heavier, a bit more difficult to explain to your family? And what do you mean by the conversation it may lead to?

And feel free to take your time writing that response. And in waiting for Margaret to type her response out, is anyone else willing to respond to this question?

**[Amanda]** Can you hear me? Okay, I'm sorry. I'm sorry because I just... (in French) In fact, I had a problem with the microphone just before.

**[Me]** Oh yeah, okay. I can hear you now. It's just a bit faint.

**[Amanda]** Ah, okay. Yeah, I don't know. But is it okay?

**[Me]** Yeah, right now it's better now. So it's good.

**[Amanda]** Alright. Well, I've never [done] something risky online, I think. But if I were to talk about it, it would be just an uncomfortable thing to tell because I would be kind of ashamed, you know? Not ashamed, but I would think, what? Why did you do that? That was dumb, you know?

**[Me]** So you would feel... During the conversation you would end up judging yourself?

**[Amanda]** Yeah.

**[Me]** Okay. And do you think it's because of your own perception of the risks? Or because of how you would end up feeling during the conversation? Is there an exterior factor involved?

**[Amanda]** I think it would just be me. They would say, yeah, okay, that was not the best thing to do, but it wouldn't be a huge deal, I think.

**[Me]** Okay. Well, thank you for your response. And I see that Margaret wrote in a response during that time.

And says, *maybe the conversation would be them telling the risks all over again*. So it would just be a tedious conversation, from my understanding. (Margaret confirms in the chat) Logan, did you have a response to this question?

**[Logan]** Yeah, I noticed I was muted. So I had, like, four or five years ago, my example is when I had my credit card. So the first week I had my credit card and it was possible to buy stuff online. Yeah, I found a nice link with a crazy, what was it, a bright lamp. And I wanted to buy it and it was an unsecure link. So I didn't know what I was doing with my credit card... how do you say it, credit card details. And I was thinking about not [telling] my father because he'd be disappointed in how I handled this whole thing. But after one or two weeks, we talked about it and then he explained the whole thing to me. And so, in the end, yeah, the better choice was to tell him, to learn about it.

**[Me]** Okay. Well, thank you very much for your responses. And based on the other responses that you've heard, did anything come up in your minds? Were you reminded about something else or is there a detail you'd like to add? (pause, I notice hesitation on their faces) No is also a very valid answer. So don't be afraid to say no, I don't have a response.

**[Amanda]** I don't have a response. (laughs, others agree)

**[Me]** Amazing (laughs) Okay, cool. We'll move on to the next question. So, how do you think your family's communication style so, openness, supportiveness or otherwise, affects your participation in risky online behaviours? Whoever is willing to go first, feel free to take first mic.

**[Amy- translated]** I can go? (Amanda also speaks) Or do you want to go?

**[Amanda- translated]** Go ahead, go ahead.

**[Amy- translated]** Okay. So, I would say that the type of communication in my family has influenced my online participation in risky behaviours, in terms of how I approach them, and the fact that I will probably take fewer risks and be much more wary of things around me, given that in communicating with my family, you always have to be a little wary of others. I will do the same online; I will always be wary of others, I will always be careful, I will always see something that isn't there, or at least always analyze it. And I would say that I have this aspect that impacts my online behaviour.

**[Me]** Okay. So, Amy says that she feels that her family's communication type influences how she handles risky online behaviours, would be that she handles the space she takes in online environments the same way she handles her family environments, so she finds that she's always analytic, she's always careful when she's around her family, and finds that she does the same when online, so she's always aware of what's happening in the online spaces she enters. She's careful with new people online, etc. (in French) Did I miss anything or does that cover everything?

**[Amy- translated]** No, it's good.

**[Me]** Amazing. And I think it was Amanda who had her hand up? Sorry I'm just going to get a lozenge.

**[Amanda]** Yeah, I'd say it's the same as Amy, but not because the communication style in my family is careful towards other people, but from other people's bad experiences they told me. I don't know, some stories online where they say, yeah, and then my bank account got hacked, or I don't know. But I would also be more careful in analyzing things.

**[Me]** Because of the stories that you hear all the time from your family? (Amanda confirms) And are these stories prompted, or is it just within normal conversation?

**[Amanda]** Well, it's not stories from my family, a few of them are, but mostly things I see online, or from my friends.

**[Me]** Okay, thank you. Did Margaret and Logan have a response?

**[Logan]** Yeah, so my parents told me long ago to be careful, also when the thing came up with online games or stuff like that. So, like I said last time, it's all about strangers, so don't tell anybody things you don't want to share. So, I think I'm very careful what I'm sharing with people I don't know. And yeah, I think it helped me to handle this very [well].

**[Me]** Okay. Thank you very much for your response. Margaret just sent in a response.

*My family's communication style may affect my participation in risky behaviours. By knowing how risky my decision may be, and knowing if something bad happens I can openly talk to them.*

Thank you very much for your responses. And again, if there's anything that came up in your minds upon hearing other people's responses, or if there's a detail you'd like to add, please feel free.

**[Logan]** Yeah, I think one sentence I will always remember is "the Internet never forgets". So, when you share something, a picture, yeah, we were told in school when we share anything,

we can delete it, but it's everywhere in the world. And yeah, I'm going with this sentence, and I think it's a very important sentence.

**[Me]** Thank you very much. Did anyone else have something they'd like to add?

**[Amy and Amanda]** No.

**[Me]** Amazing. Okay, we'll move on to the next question.

So, have you noticed differences in how your friends' families communicate compared to your own? And do these differences affect their choices about social media or online behaviour?

-pause-

**[Amanda]** Yeah, I have one friend, I know that her parents are very strict with basically everything. And she also got a phone pretty late, and she was never allowed to have social media until a certain point. And yeah, but I think it just made her even more suspicious and careful about online behaviour. I just, I don't know, I feel like her parents were too strict, that it wasn't necessary.

**[Me]** Some follow-up questions I have. When you say that she got a phone pretty late, how late are we talking?

**[Amanda]** She was, I mean, it doesn't even sound that late, maybe, but she was 15. And most of the kids had phones at like 12, 13. I got mine at 13, and two years later, it does sound late.

**[Me]** In comparison to her, to the people around her, you mean?

**[Amanda]** Yeah.

**[Me]** And when you say she wasn't allowed social media until up to a certain point, that certain point being a few years after she got her phone?

**[Amanda]** Yeah, she was 16, I mean, one year later. Yeah, I know that she still had social media. She used it and then deleted it just for her parents not to see.

And also, kids with strict parents, they are so, I feel like they have to be careful with everything. And I'm pretty sure that, okay, that's maybe a little example, but nothing to do with social media. But, you know, when you hear somebody walk, and you recognize the person who walks, and then you have to hide your phone, or I don't know, it doesn't sound really healthy.

**[Me]** Do you think that living in that strict environment could transfer to how one is careful with their online behaviour? So, for example, you just said she would [still] have social media. Would she delete her accounts, or would she delete the apps so her parents don't see?

**[Amanda]** The apps.

**[Me]** Okay. ... so, I lost my train of thought. Okay yeah, so- (Amanda goes to speak) Sorry, say that again?

**[Amanda]** No, I'm sorry.

**[Me]** No, I'll let you finish. I was just gonna say that. I think that was the only question I wanted to ask.

**[Amanda]** Okay, yeah, no, that's it. (laughs)

**[Me]** Okay, perfect. (laughs) Who else would like to respond?

**[Amy- translated]** Can I answer?

**[Me]** Yes.

**[Amy- translated]** I had a friend, it was when I was still in (Amy's home country). Her parents had abandoned her a little, she was all alone. Her mother had left, and had returned to France. Her father worked all day, so he never saw her. And her brothers and sisters had also returned to France after a while. So she was all alone. And I know that because of this lack of communication and this lack of presence around her, when she went on the internet, she did a little bit of everything and anything.

And I know that after a while, for example, she would flirt with guys directly on the internet, or something like that, where she would write to guys to meet in places. And I would say that the absence of structure in her life, at some point, she got a little lost on the internet, then she let herself go a little bit. We could say, in the terms we use, that she committed herself to risky behaviours on the internet.

**[Me]** I hope I got every detail down. But Amy says that she had a friend when she was still in (Amy's home country). Her mom, brother and sister, if I'm not mistaken, went to France at some point. And her dad worked pretty much all day, all the time. So there was not much of a familial presence in the household. And no one to necessarily look after or tell her what to do and not to do, essentially.

So when this friend was online, she would do everything and nothing, basically. Notably, would flirt with men online, write messages online, talking about meeting up with men that she met online. So essentially, the lack of... What's the word in English? Lack of order, for

lack of a better wording. I can't find the proper translation. But lack of order in her real life, kind of led to lack of order in her online behaviours. This led to these risky behaviours that she engaged in. Did I miss something?

**[Amy- translated]** No, I don't think so.

**[Me]** Okay, amazing. (in French) Thank you for the response. Who else would like to respond?

**[Logan]** Okay, can I continue?

**[Me]** Yes, please.

**[Logan]** I met a very good friend of mine in primary school. And he came to my city. And I always noticed his parents are never at home. And he was always alone since he was 8, 9 years old. The only one who was at home also was his bigger sister. And so they were both together at home and could do anything. Could eat what they want[ed] and could watch TV and everything.

And in secondary school, online, they could also do what they wanted to do. And I also thought, "Wow, that's my dream life. No rules, no controlling parents. Wow, that's amazing. I want that too." And three or four years ago, they had a big family disaster. And so he was telling me they were all very unhappy. And the sister was also affected by the online behaviour. She did bad things. And it ended all very, very sadly. And then I noticed I enjoyed a very good and healthy childhood. And it wasn't that good in this family. But I noticed early three years ago.

**[Me]** Just a quick clarifying question. When you say it ended sadly...?

**[Logan]** Yeah, so I had no further information. So they're all alive and I think they're [doing] good. But I have no social... I have no contact [with] this family, [with] this person anymore. So I don't have any information. But the last information I have is that I call it ended sadly. So the last thing I know [is] what they were going through.

**[Me]** Okay well, thank you for your response. I don't know if Margaret had something that she wanted to add. I don't know if you're still typing, if that's what you were doing. Okay. Sounds good.

*She says that she doesn't think she has a response for this question.*

We will move on to the next one. Unless there was a detail that one of you wanted to add.

**[Amy and Amanda]** No.

**[Me]** Okay. Amazing.

So the next question is. Are there specific rules or expectations in your family about social media use? And how would they compare to what you hear about other families?

**[Amanda]** I can start.

**[Me]** Yeah. Sure.

**[Amanda]** I wouldn't say there are strict rules that are talked about all the time. But just like the general rules. Don't post any stupid pictures or anything dumb. And before writing any comments or anything. Just think. "Yeah. How will I think about this in a few years?" And maybe then you delete it. Or I don't know. So there aren't really rules. But just as Logan said. Anything you put on the internet is there somehow. Yeah.

**[Me]** Thank you for your response. Did anyone else have a response to this question?

**[Logan]** So two, three years ago. I think I used my phone very often. So social media and all the handy games. So I think we can clearly call it a handy addiction. So not anymore, but then there were rules with screen time, with a strict screen time from 2 hours a day and no phone from 10 in the morning to 5 pm or something like that. And there were rules, but now... oh also I couldn't also download apps in the app store without permission from my father, was also a rule. But now all rules are dismissed and I'm now a free person on my iPhone.

(laughter)

**[Me]** Thank you for your response. Did Amy or Margaret have a response?

**[Amy- translated]** I don't know if there was a rule about the internet. It has always been expected that we behave well. And so we were never really imposed any rules. And given that for a long time my parents were never there, they couldn't really impose any rules because they had no presence in our lives. And so I think it worked for them to take care of us in a way. And there was this... Yeah, let's say it like that.

**[Me]** Okay, thank you. So Amy says that there were no explicit rules. There was just kind of the unspoken expectation that the children would behave as expected online. And for a long period of time, both her mother and father weren't really present in the children's lives.

So it worked out in the sense that they didn't really have to give explicit rules. So it was just the unspoken expectation. Margaret says, *I don't think there are any rules about social media in my family. Maybe the only expectation is to take care of ourselves. And compared to other families, I don't really know. From what I've heard, they have the same expectations.*

Okay. So I think we have just a mix of unspoken rules, the expectation that you would know better, and also specific concrete rules. We could move on to the next question unless someone had a detail that they wanted to share or... (participants signal no)

So the next question is, how do you think family communication influences your ability to navigate social norms or peer pressure online?

**[Amy- translated]** I can start. It's a difficult question to respond to right away. With the way I communicate in my family, and how I grew up, I always follow the norms and I never break them. So I follow the pressure of the people around me to follow the rules because to have less problems, it's easier to follow the rules. When you follow the rules, you risk nothing. So in general, I just follow the rules.

**[Me]** So Amy says that it's a question that's a bit complicated to respond to. However, based on how she grew up and based off of her family's specific communication styles, it just became a habit for her to always follow rules and always follow the norms within and outside the family, based on what she could read about the environment that she's in. And it just became easier to follow rules, because following rules meant you're putting yourself at less risk, essentially. (Amy agrees with translation)

Anyone else want to respond to this question?

**[Amanda]** Well, I think it's... I don't even know how to respond. But it's easy to fall into peer pressure and compare yourself online. But if that happens, if it really is something that's bothering me, I would talk to them about it. I've talked already about the helmet thing, which was really dumb.

**[Me]** It's still a valid example, don't worry.

**[Amanda]** (laughs) Yeah, and then, I mean, everything was alright. But yeah, I think it's also trying to be open and not judging people.

And then maybe when I see stupid comments on people's videos, I think, oh my god, are they dumb? They shouldn't write things like that. I don't know, that doesn't have anything to do with the question. Anyway, whatever. (laughter)

**[Me]** It's still a valid response, so thank you for sharing your thoughts. But do you think how you communicate within your family influences these perspectives that you have when you see this behaviour online?

**[Amanda]** Yeah, my immediate reaction is, oh, so for example, on a video of, I don't know, a girl having an outfit that is not in the norms, in the social norms, and then the comments say, "oh my god, you look so ugly", or something dumb like that. My first reaction would be, "oh, this person is insecure, that's why they write this. They probably have problems in their

life with themselves or maybe with their family. And this person shouldn't write that, because that's hurtful." Maybe like that? Does that answer your question?

**[Me]** Yeah, it does. Thank you so much. Did Logan or Margaret have a response?

**[Logan]** So, I think it's not only about online peer pressure, but about the whole thing about making my own decisions, building my own opinion about any topic. And not only follow a group of dummies, because it's easier. So, I think, in my family we are six people, and we have all different opinions in any discussions. And I think I learned very early to stand for my thing and not go with the crowd. So, I think I have a very healthy attitude with that.

**[Me]** Thank you for your response. Margaret says, *family communication helps me navigate social media in a secure way, knowing which content may be good or bad for me, avoiding the pressure and the hate that other people have.* Thank you so much for your response.

I think I heard a voice. If someone wanted to add something, they could feel free. If not, we can move to the next question. (agreement and laughter)

So, I think this is the last set of questions, if I'm not mistaken. Yeah, this is the third last question, and then there's the group activity portion afterwards. So, anyway, if you could change one thing about how your family communicates about social media or online behaviours, what would it be?

**[Logan]** So, I think I'm very happy how we all handle this. And for now, there's nothing I would change.

**[Me]** Okay, thank you. Amy, your hand's up, I think.

**[Amy- translated]** Yes. I remembered something from a long time ago for this question. The first thing I was going to say was to talk and communicate about social media, because it's a discussion we've never had in my life.

But when I think about it, when we were younger, it happened to me in (Amy's home country), that I was sometimes asked to take pictures with strangers or strangers asked me to take pictures with them. And I would always remember that my mother had told me not to take pictures with strangers. So, I would say that at least I have a prevention.

But other than that, I would just say to communicate like normal people. In the sense of simply having a real exchange and being able to speak openly about things, and not just having implicit conversations and assumptions.

**[Me]** Okay. Sorry, I'm just writing the notes so I don't forget what to say. So, Amy says that the first thing that she would say in response to this question is having just a real conversation, real communication about this subject, because it was never really discussed

in her family, apart one time when she was younger, she was told not to take photos with strangers when her mom saw that she was taking photos with people that she didn't know. But apart from that, not a real discussion about these things. So, in general, just to communicate like normal people and no implicit or supposed conversations. (Amy agrees with translation)

**[Amanda]** I'm also quite happy with how we talk about social media and online behaviours.

But there is one thing that I forgot to say, but the moment my mom sees us too much on our phones, on the couch, and she will say, maybe you should read a book, or you know, just to not be on the phone anymore. Of course, that's a little bit annoying, but honestly, she's right. The phones keep us from the real world, and I wish I could be more disciplined and not be so much on the phone.

**[Me]** Thank you for your response. I don't know if Margaret had a response to this question, or if she's still typing, maybe. (pause) She says, *I would just change the fact that we don't have many conversations about social media. We talk good and bad about it.*

Okay. So it's a very balanced mix between either happy where it's at, and also maybe have more conversations about it. Was there a detail that anyone wanted to add, or anything they would like to share as well? We can move on to the next question. (participants agree)

Sounds good. The next question is, looking ahead, how do you think your family's communication style might affect your decisions about your social media use as you grow older? I can start.

**[Amanda]** Yeah, as I said, just use it less in general, just because it keeps you from reality.

**[Me]** Thank you. Anyone else?

-pause-

**[Amy- translated]** I don't think I have a lot of answers to this one.

**[Me]** Okay, thank you. Amy says she doesn't really have a response for this question, which is completely fine. Logan or Margaret, did you have a response? It's okay if you don't.

**[Logan]** I'm thinking?

**[Me]** Yeah.

**[Logan]** Yeah, so I talked a few days ago with my older brother about it, to, like Amanda said, to live more in the real world. To live the life how we should live it, and not be in the online world and on Instagram and watching people living their dreams. And I'm sitting on my bed and watching "Wow, it's crazy", but I'm still sitting on my bed.

So, I think as I get older, the only way to manage this whole thing right with social media and the phone is to use it only for the necessary things. To consume from the social media apps at the absolute minimum.

**[Amy- translated]** With Logan's response, I would say that, thinking about it again, with time, I think I would just bend to the expectations that we have on my part, which would be to disconnect from social media and simply go with my life, which is to work or reach certain goals in life in general. So, having a good position, having a family, maybe one day, not too early anyway. But I would just say that with time, social media is nice and pretty as long as you're young, but with time, there are things that you have to start doing. And I think I'm just going to conform to these expectations and move forward. So, leaving social media with time, or at least being less present.

**[Me]** Thank you. So, essentially, Amy is saying that she feels that over time, social media would become less present in at least her life. Because as she gets older, she'll want to live her life, pursue different goals in her life. So, finishing her studies, having a family in the future, things like that. So, as those things are being pursued and achieved, social media will probably still be there, but have a lesser presence. So, she finds that regardless, over time, it will just become less of a necessity, quote unquote. (Amy agrees with translation)

*And Margaret says, as I grow older, all the decisions I'll make with social media may be my responsibility, and I would need to know by my own what could be good or not.*

Did anyone want to add anything, or maybe clarify what you wanted to say, or anything like that? (participants signal no) Okay, and we can go to the last question, I believe, before the group activity. In what ways do you feel supported or unsupported by your family when dealing with social media risks or challenges?

-pause-

**[Amanda]** I feel supported when they listen to me and are loving and empathetic, and just try to understand my perspective. Sometimes my perspective is not the best, and they just put me on the right track. Yeah, just loving conversations, mostly (laugh). Yeah.

**[Me]** Thank you for your response. Did anyone else want to give their response?

-pause-

**[Amy- translated]** Well, I would say that apart from if something happened to me on the internet, or if I did something on the internet, well, apart from my sister, who would scold me, of course, but who would help me, I don't think I would feel supported. They would offer more judgment, they would maybe offer to help me, but it would always be under conditions.

**[Me]** So Amy feels that if something were to happen online, or if she were to do something online, apart from her sister, she would feel like she would not be supported, there would just be more judgment. And if there were support, it would be support with conditions, so only conditional support, but mainly judgment-based, essentially. (Amy agrees with translation)

I see Margaret wrote something. She says, *I feel supported with my family dealing with social media, since we share most of the things that we see.*

*Also, since we all follow each other, it might be easier for us to know how we consume social media.* Okay. Thank you all for your responses.

Did anyone else want to clarify anything, add a detail? (participants signal no) Okay. Sounds good.

So I'm going to stop sharing my screen here. And for the group activity, I'm going to send you all in the chat. It's a link and a code for Mentimeter. So it's mentimeter.com, I believe. So that is the link. (sending it) And then this is the code (sending it).

And so, essentially, the... I'm just going to copy and paste the instructions also in the chat to make everyone's lives easier. (doing so) So when you go on the page, think of any words or symbols that you think would represent how families influence adolescence management of online risks. So some examples could be trust, rules, communication, curiosity, a lock for privacy. So try to focus on elements such as guidance, rules, trust, communication styles, and things like that. And you basically put in one at a time as many as you can think of. So you're not just limited to one or two, just as many as you can think of. And if the link... The link is working for everyone, yes? And the code?

**[Logan]** Yep.

**[Me]** Okay, perfect.

-giving participants time to submit their responses-

**[Amanda]** Did it start yet? Because for me it isn't working. Like, there's nothing...

**[Me]** From my end, I'm seeing the responses come in. So if you've already submitted something, it's submitting and you can just continue to do so. You won't see anything until I share it.

**[Amanda]** Oh, okay, okay.

**[Me]** And just let me know when you're all done. You can do a reaction on the screen or just say it out loud, whatever works for you.

-giving participants time to submit their responses-

**[Amy- translated]** I answered the questions, so I don't know if I should do more.

**[Me- translated]** No, apart from that, it's all good.

**[Amy- translated]** I'm sorry, I can't hear you. I'll come back. It's my problem.

**[Me]** Okay. Is everyone else done responding? (participants signal yes) Okay, I will... sorry, my laptop froze on me. It was very, very rude. (laughter) I'm about to say that I will share my screen again so we can see the results of all your responses, and I will get to the discussion part of the group activity. (pause) I'll give you all a moment to read everything that's on the screen there.



*Fig. 6: Product of the Mentimeter Activity (1)*

And as you do so, the reflection questions are, what patterns or differences did you notice in the mural? And were there any words or symbols that surprised you and why? And did any part of the activity change how you feel about, not how you feel, how you think about your family's communication? And I will repeat these questions when we actually get to the discussion part, but just keep these kind of themes in mind while you're looking over everything. And if you have a response, feel free to just go ahead and say something.

-pause-

(overlapped speech) Sorry, you go ahead and speak.

**[Amanda]** Okay, I can go. So, I don't know, I was expecting those words, except for maybe confidence. That was on first glance, not the first thing I would have put, but then it made a lot of sense because talking about, well, emotions and difficulties with social media, maybe it needs confidence to just bring it up and then talk about it. So, it makes sense. And I think for the last question, I don't know, I thought that communication in my family is pretty good. And I still think that, so, yeah.

**[Me]** Okay, amazing, thank you for your response. Would anyone else like to go?

**[Logan]** So, I wasn't surprised or anything like that by any words. So, everything else, yeah, I would tell for me it's, I think this really is the thing.

**[Me]** Could you say the last bit one more time? I'm not sure I understood.

**[Logan]** Yeah, so, I really think that would be my response to all these words, yeah.

**[Me]** Okay, thank you. Did Amy or Margaret want to give their responses?

**[Amy- translated]** I would say that, so, I'm not surprised by the answers, but the answer that amuses me the most in a way would be freedom. Where I see the internet as a free space, but at the same time an extremely closed space in a certain way. Or, as Logan said, we never forget.

So, that means that whatever you do, you're always locked in by what you do. It's something that will always hold you back. So, yes, these are words that I expect, but I would say that the word freedom is the one that I would place, perhaps, with the internet, but with nuances.

**[Me]** Thank you. So, what Amy says is that she's, in general, not surprised by any of the responses, but one word that stood out to her was the word freedom. And that's because she sees the internet as a free space, but in the same breath, she also sees it as a closed space. So, for example, like the sentence that was brought up earlier, like the internet never forgets. That implies that you're still kind of closed in this environment, a set of unspoken rules about this environment. So, it leaves it being a free space. You have freedom, but still nuanced. So, conditional freedom. (Amy agrees with translation)

I just saw that Margaret submitted something. She says, *I was not surprised by any words. I think all of them are necessary and all of them are relatively similar and useful for a good social media use. And my family communication, I think, has not changed. I still believe we have a communication based in trust.*

Awesome. Did anyone have anything else they'd like to share about this question or anything else they'd like to add in general? It doesn't have to necessarily be related to the question. Just last thoughts.

**[Amy- translated]** No.

**[Me]** Okay. Anyone else?

**[Amanda]** No.

(Logan and Margaret signal no)

**[Me]** Okay. Well, with that, that brings us to the end of our session. So, again, thank you all so much for your time and for sharing your perspectives. Again, your participation is very much appreciated and your input is also very valuable for this research study. So, if you would like to follow up on anything or even access the study results later, you have my contact information. Feel free to message me on WhatsApp or send me an email. And if you have any questions, even between now and then, feel free to. But apart from that, I think everyone has submitted their consent forms. I think. Yes, yes, yes. Everyone has submitted their consent forms. And that's pretty much it. So, thank you very much again for your participation and have a lovely rest of your days.

**[Everyone]** Thank you, you too. Bye.

## *Focus Group Transcript #2*

Date and time: 04/04/2025 @ 4:30 PM CET

**[Me]** Hello, everyone.

**[All participants]** Hello. Hello. Hey. Hello.

**[Me]** Everyone can hear me okay?

**[Jordan]** Yep.

**[Me]** Awesome. We'll just get right into it.

So just a quick little recap again, as the PowerPoint says. This is a research study about how different family communication styles influence adolescents' online behaviour. So that would include risky behaviours like oversharing personal information, participating in viral challenges, and cyberbullying.

So I would like this to be an open and respectful discussion where everyone feels comfortable sharing their thoughts. If at any point you need to take a break, or if you feel like you're uncomfortable, feel free to do so. Take a break or... either that, or leave the discussion. So a few key points to keep in mind: this session should take roughly about one and a half hours. With my last focus group, we took a little close to two hours. So please be prepared to take around that much time. It really just depends on how much everyone has to share. Your responses are confidential and will only be used for the purpose of the thesis. Feel free to share as much or as little as you're comfortable with. There are no right or wrong answers.

As I said earlier, I would like this to be an open and respectful discussion. So please listen to each other and respect different perspectives. Everyone has different experiences, so keep an open mind about that. That's essentially it. Does anyone have any questions before we start? (participants signal no) Perfect. Okay.

This is the research question I'm basing the study off of. So everyone can have a more solid idea of what we're doing here. Before we start, I'd like to start with a quick introduction. So whoever wants to start, feel free. I'd like you to please share your name, your age, and some social media apps you use the most. To start off with myself, my name is Yemariam. I am 23 years old. Some social media apps I use the most are, since living here, more WhatsApp, Instagram, and I suppose TikTok as well.

**[Myra]** My name is Myra. I am 18. I also use WhatsApp a lot and Instagram sometimes. I try not to use it as much and delete it (the app) sometimes. But yeah, that's like all.

**[Me]** Awesome. Thank you.

**[Jordan]** Hi, my name is Jordan Castillo. I am 19 years old. The social media platforms I usually use are Instagram and Discord.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Mallaika]** Hi, my name is Mallaika. I am 18 years old and the social media platforms I mostly use are probably TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Rachel]** Hi, I'm Rachel and I'm 18 years old and what I use most is Facebook all the time.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Amelia]** Hi, my name is Amelia. I'm 19 years old and I use, I'd say, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Snapchat the most.

**[Me]** Awesome. Thank you all so much for your responses. So we'll get into the more nitty-gritty of the questions. So first off, how would you describe how your family communicates with each other? So, for example, do you usually share openly or is communication more formal or restricted? Feel free to share an example if you feel that that would help you explain better.

**[Jordan]** Well, for me, my communication style with my family is usually pretty open, regardless of the topic. Me and my family usually just talk to each other about anything really. There are some times that I omit certain details, but I wouldn't quite say it's restricted. But yeah, I'd say more, a lot more open.

**[Me]** Just a quick clarification for Jordan before we move on to the next person. So when you say that there are certain things that you would omit when communicating with them, is it like topics that you just wouldn't be, you'd be more comfortable talking about with your friends rather than your family, that sort of thing? Or is it like, it's better if they don't know?

**[Jordan]** It's much more like someone else's part of the story that I would, like they've told me in confidence that I wouldn't tell, you know what I mean? But it's not my story to tell, type of thing.

**[Me]** Okay, cool. Thank you.

**[Amelia]** Well, I guess I'm pretty much the same in that the general family communication in my family is pretty open. But as you said, I think there are some things that I'd feel more comfortable sharing with my friends rather than my family. But other than that, it's, yeah, it's pretty open.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Myra]** I would also agree. There are just, like we talk more about, like what we did today or things like that or what we plan to do. But like, yeah, there are always some things that I only tell my friends.

**[Me]** Awesome. Thank you.

**[Rachel]** Well, for me, in my case, my family is really open to everything. There's not something that I do not feel like that's confidential, like I can't share with them. So I'd say, very open to everything.

**[Me]** Awesome. Thank you.

**[Mallaika]** I can also say that I communicate with my family. I share everything with them openly. But I think it was kind of restricted when I was younger, now everything is like, okay, I share everything openly.

**[Me]** Was there like an influencing factor to why it was more restricted or was it more of... I'm not sure. Was there an external factor that would be the reason as to why it was more restricted before and what changed now?

**[Mallaika]** Because I'm 18 now, so I can do whatever, not whatever, okay, but I can do more things than when I was younger. And like, now I can do like alcohol or something like that. But like, I can travel alone, something like that. But when I was like, for example, 14, like, I needed to go, I needed to be at home by 8, something like that. But now everything's okay.

**[Me]** Okay, so just like more rules that were enlisted and enforced as well there?

**[Mallaika]** Yeah, I think it's not like a restrictive communication, it's mostly like rules.

**[Me]** Yeah, okay.

**[Mallaika]** Now it's, everything is like, you know, not everything is prohibited.

**[Me]** Okay, well thank you for clarifying and thank you all for sharing your responses. We will go to the next question. So can you recall a recent situation where your family had an important discussion about something personal? So that could be school, relationships, either romantic or platonic, or social media in general. And if so, how did it go?

**[Jordan]** So for me, the most recent situation, an important discussion, was— currently the job market's not been nice to me. And so there's been constant reminders to really go and get a job. But like, I'm really, really trying. And there's just a lot of like, talking about how this will set me up for my future. Like, building my portfolio in different kinds of employment is

really important. And I, you know, it was just a really important discussion about the job, I guess.

**[Me]** Yeah, fair enough.

**[Jordan]** Oh, and it went well. Sorry, it went well. It was a reminder to go and I'm like, yes, I understand completely. I can see why you're bringing this up.

**[Me]** Okay, cool, cool. Are you looking for work in a particular field or is it just work in general? And that's part A of my question and part B is, are you in (city where participant resides)?

**[Jordan]** I am in (city where participant resides), yes.

**[Me]** Okay. And was there like a specific field you were looking for work in or?

**[Jordan]** Oh, I thought I responded. No, I'm looking for anything. I'll flip patties again if I have to.

**[Me]** Well, best of luck, though. Best of luck. Thank you for your response and whoever would like to go next, feel free.

**[Rachel]** For me, the recent situation where we had an important discussion was like five months ago. It was since I turned 18, I had to go to uni and I had to switch cities. So it was mostly about, are you ready to take that risk, ready to live alone in a city where I wasn't even 18, I was 17. And it was harsh, like facing reality for the first time, living alone. But now I think it was the best [decision] that I've [made] in my life.

**[Me]** That's good, I'm glad. Thank you for sharing.

**[Myra]** Um, so we have in school some subjects that we can choose our own. And I wanted to switch one and I talked about it with my father and he thought I shouldn't switch. But I thought it would be better. But then in the end, I wasn't allowed to switch because of the school. Like, yeah, you just can't change it anymore once you've decided.

**[Me]** And what was your father's reasoning behind saying that you shouldn't switch? Was it more his perspective of, would it be more worth it to take this subject rather than the one you wanted to switch to? Or was it maybe a different factor?

**[Myra]** Yeah, maybe that this subject is more interesting and then if I would switch, maybe I would like it. And then I figured it out.

**[Me]** Okay. Thank you.

**[Amelia]** Yeah, so I also had a conversation about, I mean, it was a work-related conversation with my mom. And so I just started a new job. So I was just kind of telling her how that's going. And yeah.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Mallaika]** We had a very simple conversation about the school, related to my exchange semester. And I think I was just like, you know, I want to go there. Like, there might be some kind of expenses and, you know, things like that. But it went well.

**[Me]** Okay. Thank you all so much for sharing your responses. And the next question. What are some specific topics that you find easy or difficult to discuss with your parents or guardians? And why do you think that is? And if you feel like you can come up with an example for both, feel free to share both. And if you feel like you can only come up with the one, there's no biggie.

**[Myra]** I think things that are easy to talk about are like everyday things that we do, like what we did at school or things like that. And something that is sometimes a bit more difficult for me is, like, talking about money. Like when I ask my father if I can do this and maybe if he could pay for it. Or if he maybe owes me some money for something. Then it's sometimes difficult to ask for it.

**[Me]** Fair enough. So I guess for part two of the question, do you feel like there's a reason as to why that topic is difficult to... What was the word? To discuss?

**[Myra]** I'm actually not sure, no. Like maybe just in general, sometimes money is difficult to talk about. Also when you know that your friend owes you something, then you don't really want to ask them if they could pay you back or things like that.

**[Me]** Yeah, that's more than valid. Money is always a very uncomfortable conversation. So who would like to go next?

**[Amelia]** Well, I guess I agree with the everyday aspects, like whether it's uni or work. I think these are the more easy aspects to talk about. And then something I find more difficult is maybe sometimes other relationships outside of family or even close friends that my parents would know about. I think that would be a bit more complicated to talk about. I also think there's a bit of a... in person I have a difference with how comfortable I talk about these things, like with my mom or my dad. Like I'll talk often with my mom rather than sharing with my dad on certain subjects.

**[Me]** Do you think there's a reason why that's so? Or is it just the different relationships you have?

**[Amelia]** I think already the relationship is a bit different, but also my dad lives abroad and I see him less. So I think that's also part of the equation, yeah.

**[Me]** Fair. Whoever would like to go next?

**[Jordan]** So for me, a topic I'd find easy to discuss... like Amelia had said earlier, sometimes there's different topics that's more easily discussed with different parents. Like with my mom I usually talk with more lifestyle things for advice and stuff like that. I still go to my dad for advice, but with my dad I speak more about the current happenstance of the world, like how the economy is going and maybe stuff about technology. But a topic I would find difficult is money as well. Talking about anything related to money, it just feels like I'm begging with them, you know what I mean?

**[Me]** Yeah.

**[Jordan]** So it's just I hate talking about stuff like that with them.

**[Me]** That is valid.

**[Jordan]** Oh, and why I think that is, is because both of my parents, I guess more my dad, they came here to give me a better life. To them it looks like I'm not participating in that by not generating more income than I am now, right? And so I think they're just more like trying to push me forward with that, so I can't really blame them, you know what I mean?

**[Me]** Yeah. That's fair. Thank you so much.

I think Mallaika can't answer this question at the moment, she's having problems with the internet. So when she comes back I'll go back a little bit, but in the meantime, the next question is, in your family, when does communication typically happen? So would that be during meals, car rides, or do you have planned discussions?

**[Rachel]** No, we're not big on talking during meals, it's considered a bit uncomfortable. So it's mostly in my planned discussions, since I'm not living with them, so we have to call, make plans, I'm talking to you guys about this and that, car rides also, and that's it.

**[Myra]** I would say during meals, or also when I come home from school. If my parents are home and we both have time to talk about something, then yeah. But mostly during meals, like dinner.

**[Jordan]** For me, it's usually during car rides, because there is nothing else to do really. And so we just have our most intimate conversations about topics that are more taboo in car rides. Because more often than not it's usually when it's one on one, or with just my mom, or with just my dad. We talk about stuff more in depth and more personal.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Amelia]** I kind of agree for the more personal parts, I mean the personal aspects are often car rides, because it is one on one. But other than that, I guess, because I come back home on weekends basically, so it will be during meals then. But it's less formal and less emotional than a one on one car ride sometimes.

**[Mallaika]** Is it my turn to answer?

**[Me]** Yes.

**[Mallaika]** I think it mostly happens after the meal, when we are having a tea or dessert, something like that. And mostly in car rides.

**[Me]** Awesome. And there was one question that you missed while your internet was cut out. Are there specific topics you find easy or difficult to discuss with your parents or guardian? And why do you think that is?

**[Mallaika]** I don't think that there are specific topics that I find difficult. There are no such topics. Not about the easy, I think the easiest one is about the university. And that's all.

**[Me]** Okay. Do you think it's because it's an ongoing event?

**[Mallaika]** Yeah, because university is the only thing that's happening with me, because I have no work, I have only studies. And the one thing that I need to talk about is just the school, and that's all.

**[Me]** Thank you so much, and thank you all so much again for sharing your responses. The next question is, can you think of a time when your family's way of communicating influenced the decision you made about using social media?

-pause-

**[Mallaika]** I don't think so. My mother also always talks about the bad impact of social media. But I don't think that I changed any kind of, I don't know, I didn't change anything. I didn't make any decisions about social media. But I think I consume less now than before.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Amelia]** I think I, I mean, maybe it's a more recent decision, but a decision that I've kind of taken is to kind of have social media as a place more for my, I mean, social media as in like Instagram, for instance. I have more of my friends on there rather than relatives or family, like my close family will be on there, but I mean, my mom doesn't really use Instagram. And then if it's like secondary degree aunts or something, I'd rather keep my social media on that to be just like my friends. Whereas WhatsApp, I guess, is more family. So I guess that's kind of how it's impacted it. But other than that, I don't, I can't think of anything that really impacts the way I think about social media.

**[Rachel]** For me, I'd say that the decision was to not post the pictures anymore. We've had the discussion. It was, it wasn't about me. I was just hearing some experiences from the family members. And it was like publishing, it was more about publishing pictures, experiences, and to just keep it private. So I just, I no longer post pictures. I no longer post something that would indicate my place, my, what I'm doing, what I'm studying. That's it.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Jordan]** If I were to be really reaching, my family has always like decided on time and a place type of thing. Sometimes you do things, sometimes you don't. And so I guess that kind of influenced my posting pattern to some extent. Because when I first started Instagram, I was just reposting random memes through my feed or through my, onto my account. But then towards the end, I archived all those and just posted big important things that I would like to share. So I guess, yeah, that's time and a place. That's what influenced me.

**[Me]** Yeah. Thank you.

**[Myra]** I think it only influenced how much I use social media. Like sometimes my parents told me that I'm just too much on my phone. I'm using my phone too much. So yeah, I try to be less on my phone. But also like, so they will stop telling me that I shouldn't be on my phone. But yeah, not like actually, it didn't influence anything that I'm doing on social media.

**[Me]** Thank you all for sharing. Next question is, when you're in a difficult situation online. So the examples could be witnessing or experiencing cyberbullying or feeling pressured to participate in a challenge. Do you think about how your family might react? And if you've never been in a difficult situation online, I want you to try to put yourself in a position where you are and just think of the hypothetical situation.

**[Jordan]** So I've actually been in a situation like this, much less cyberbullying, but just we had to like, out a really toxic person that was in my friend group online. And I thought my family's reaction would just be like, "sorry for everyone involved", because this person was like, really intertwined with everyone, you know. And yeah, we just had to kick them out and get rid of them because they were just always ruining literally everything anyone had to do with any game we're playing online. So I thought they would probably just feel sorry for me, if anything.

**[Me]** That is unfortunate. Thanks for sharing.

**[Amelia]** I mean, yeah, I've also had kind of a difficult situation in that my account got hacked last year. And it kind of just sent a message to everyone as in like, "oh, it's an emergency. I need your number". And from there, actually, my dad got really stressed because he thought I was actually in an emergency. And so ever since that moment, I kind of, yeah, I do think about how, I mean, there is an impact. And I do have people from my

family who are online on the same sites as me. So there, I mean, if anything happens, I think I would think about how they'd react.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Rachel]** For me, I had an experience with cyberbullying. And it was middle school. Actually, that was an unknown number. I knew that it was someone from school, but I didn't know who that was. And it just kept spamming me, spamming me, spamming me, spamming me. And I got the call to tell mom. And mom was actually very nice about it. We had a conversation, discussing, telling me, "are you feeling okay right now?" And like, the next week, we just went to school. And she told the director about it. I still don't know who did it, but it was nice to feel like we could deal with it together.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Myra]** So I don't think I ever was in a difficult situation like that. But I guess my parents would just help me to get, like, to make it better, to get out of that situation. And, yeah.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Mallaika]** I also didn't experience any kind of difficult situation online. But I'm sure that my family, like, will help me to get out of this situation and will support me. Yeah.

**[Me]** Great. Thank you all for your responses. Again, the next question is, do your family's reactions to your choices, either online or offline, affect your approach to schoolwork or relationships? Again, relationships could be romantic or platonic. And could you give an example?

**[Myra]** I definitely think so, because I'm, like, starting to think about what I want to study, like, and to which university I want to go. And then sometimes when I talk about it with my parents, I really, like, like, I feel which, like, subjects they find better and which ones, like, worse. Like, and it doesn't really depend on what I'm good at, but more, like, what they think is good for me. And then I think it also, like, influences how I think about the subject. And, yeah, that's maybe, like, not the best thing, because it should be what I want to study and not what my parents think is the best thing. Yeah.

**[Me]** And do you think that affects, like, because typically getting into university is based on your performance in high school. So do you feel like these discussions affect how you approach your schoolwork then?

**[Myra]** No, I don't think so. It's more just, like, what interests me.

**[Me]** Yeah. Okay. Thank you.

**[Jordan]** For me, when it comes to relationships in my personal life, I guess, my, okay, this is a bit of a long explanation here, I'll just get by it quick. So my parents are divorced. And I'll hold the reasons back, but my mother was always afraid I would turn into someone akin to my father. And so my mother would always remind me to just keep my temper cool and don't get angry. Like I've never hit anyone or anything, but she'd always tell me to be careful and watch my anger when I'm around my girlfriend, which I never had an issue with. But yeah, so I guess it just, that would be an example of how they would change my approach with that.

**[Me]** Thank you for sharing.

**[Amelia]** I mean, I think, yeah, as for everyone, it kind of, it does have an effect. For instance, if I feel supported in one choice, I'll maybe be more motivated to pursue that choice. But in general, I think in my schoolwork, I always have this kind of same approach, and it doesn't really affect it. Because I'm lucky enough that my parents have given me a choice to do what I want to do and do what I like. So I'd say it has an effect, but not a really extensive one.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Rachel]** For me, I'd say that my family's reaction has the biggest effect on my choices. Especially not in the relationship aspect. To be honest, I do not care, because that's my relationship. It's not something they should manage. But for the schoolwork, that affects it a lot. Because, schoolwork, for the university, after that, work. You have to pay them (parents) back, and we have to make them proud. So it's more of a teamwork.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Mallaika]** When I chose my major, my mother gave advice about majors. So I think I really appreciate their not reactions, mostly advice in schoolwork. And I think her advice really helped me with what I'm studying now. And I want to share one thing. When I was in middle school, I had a best friend. But she (her mother) said that, Mallaika, I'm not sure about this girl. She may betray you, or something like that. These kinds of sentences, words. And then we stopped friendship, I think after one and a half years. And I was like, oh, mom, you were like, true, something like that. And I think parents, because they care about their children, might feel the stress, I think. They might feel like I'm not dividing people. They might feel the bad energy from that person, or I don't know. These kinds of things.

**[Me]** Thank you for sharing. Everyone responded. Awesome. We'll move on to the next question. How do or would you feel after discussing online challenges or risks with your parents? And do or would you feel more confident, confused, or something else?

**[Jordan]** When it comes to sharing online challenges with my parents, my father works in IT. So he's been with the internet since before it became popular, really. And so he's like, yeah,

no, I understand. And I get it. He's, he's been to the ring when it comes to stuff like that. And so is my mom. So if anything, I'd feel much, much more confident after discussing something with them.

**[Me]** Awesome. Thank you so much.

**[Amelia]** Yeah, I think, yeah, I'd also feel, or I do feel more confident after discussing risks, especially, I guess, I think what scares me the most is more the addiction side of it, of online and social media and that. And my mom's a doctor. So it kind of helps, I mean, the times I've talked to her about these kinds of things, it's been more the addiction aspects. And I do feel more confident after voicing it out with her.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Myra]** I also think I would feel better after discussing it with my parents. But maybe like my parents don't, don't always know the best answers to everything. So maybe also a little bit confused or something. But yeah, like most of the time it helps to talk about things.

**[Me]** Great. Thank you.

**[Rachel]** In my case, I don't really discuss online challenges with my parents because I just don't feel the need to. But I think I feel confident.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Mallaika]** I would say when I talk with my mom, I think I will feel more confused than confident. But when it's with my dad, I think I will be just relaxed and then I will be more confident. Because my mother is kind of, you know, very nervous about everything. So because of that.

**[Me]** Okay. Thank you all for your answers. We're already in the third section of the focus group. So the first question is, what does risk taking mean to you when it comes to online behaviour? And can you give examples of risks people your age might take on social media? And if you have concrete examples, that's more than welcome as well.

**[Jordan]** I have a recent example, actually. So I almost got scammed recently, because I got a message online about a possible job prospect. And so— yeah, you've gotten those too (responding to me cringing in response). So I almost fell for it. Until they were like, "message this person on Telegram". And I'm like, red flag number one. And they were like, "or alternatively, go to WhatsApp". And I went to WhatsApp. So I'm like, "Oh God, I just need a job". And when they started, like I saw a name that was a little more foreign than I would like to admit. And then I'm like, "Hold on. Okay." And then I let them give more information. They didn't even spell the city right. So I'm like, "Yeah, this is not, this is not happening". So yeah, I blocked him. But yeah, no. So I guess, I don't know how this pertains to, come back to

me. I think I may have mentioned enough already. No, no. I'm right. Forgive me. I don't, I'm not very smart (laughs). Yeah, no, I guess we just ended there. I think I explained enough. (thought he gave a response that didn't correspond with the question)

**[Me]** Okay, perfect. Thank you. Well, I'm glad that they didn't succeed with the scamming though, for what it's worth. Because those are not fun.

**[Rachel]** For me, it's personal information, like pictures, dates, and times. I also had an experience, a recent experience, last week, I was with this girl, my friend. She was talking to someone online. She's never seen him. This is like two weeks ago. And then she just felt something was off about him. And then when she stopped talking to him, he just kept telling her, "I have your IP address, I know where you study, I know where you do this stuff. And I'll come, and I will see you in person in two months, and you won't escape", and bam, bam, bam. And this is, like, the second instance.

**[Me]** Oh, that's so beyond scary. Is she okay?

**[Rachel]** Well, for the moment, she is.

**[Me]** Yeah. Thank you for your example.

**[Myra]** I think posting something is always a risk, because it's probably going to be on the internet forever. And when I was younger, I had Instagram really early, I would say, when I was 10 years old. And a friend and me posted some pictures together, and now I would not do that again. But now it's on the internet. I can't find it anywhere, so maybe it's not that bad, but it could also be worse than that.

**[Me]** Yeah, that's true. Thank you.

**[Amelia]** Yeah, I agree with that. The posting and also the kind of sharing personal information, all of that is kind of a risk. And I don't know, but my mom has always told me, for instance, if I'm somewhere, I'm not going to post a story right away. And I'd rather, I mean, she'd rather I post it once I'm done. You don't really share where you are and the location at the exact same time that you are there. So I guess those are the kind of risks that you can take. And also, there's always going to be, I mean, people online are always going to act a little more different than what they would in real life, I think. And there's always that risk as well, of people texting you weird stuff or all that.

**[Mallaika]** I think it's also related to posting some publications on social media. So I would just prefer to have a private account, because I think it's safer than having an open account and that everybody can see your photos, where you're located, your videos, your family. I think it will be just [better] to have a private account. And also, there are a lot of advertisements about the easy job, about, I don't know, easy things that you can do and you can earn a lot of money. I know that everything is [scam], but most people, mostly

youngsters like me, seek this kind of job, like side jobs, so they can combine it with their university, with their school. So I think they might be in a bad situation if they will just, you know, open this link or something like that.

**[Me]** Awesome, thank you for sharing. Both Mallaika and Jordan's examples of scams with jobs reminded me of how easily students can be targeted with things like that, because I remember during my undergrad at the University of Alberta, they would— they being the scammers, would manage to email students with their university account, and they would send a link saying like, sign up with this, this job will pay you for 300, 400 dollars a week, and so many people fell for it. And like, very thankful that it was through their university account, nothing personal was on it besides their full name, but still, even that was insane. The forum would ask for personal information, and there were some people who were so desperate for those jobs that they filled out everything and submitted it. So I don't know what happened to them after that, but it's insane, it's actually crazy. But that being said, thank you all for your responses. The next question is, imagine you were thinking about sharing something personal online or participating in a social media challenge, so are you comfortable or would you be comfortable discussing this with your family, why or why not?

**[Amelia]** I mean, personally I think from the moment I'm sharing it online, I've thought about the fact that it's going to come to, I mean my family is going to be able to see it, and if, and so I would be able to discuss it with them, because I feel like there's, I think the first step would actually be the opposite, I'd talk about it with my family and then post, and I think the acts of posting makes it obvious that I'm gonna maybe have to be able to discuss this with my family.

**[Me]** Yeah, thank you.

**[Rachel]** For me it's the same, so if I were to think about sharing something personal online, then I'll be pretty much comfortable talking with my family about it. Yeah, the same thing.

**[Me]** Awesome, thank you.

**[Myra]** I think for me it's a little bit different, because when I post something then it's more like for my friends, because like only my friends follow me on Instagram, and so I don't think about that my parents would see it, because they probably won't. So yeah, but like all the things that I would be comfortable to post, I would be also comfortable to talk to my parents.

**[Me]** Great, thank you.

**[Jordan]** Yeah, I fully second Myra's explanation there, like almost exactly.

**[Me]** Okay, perfect.

**[Mallaika]** I think I will be comfortable discussing this with my family.

**[Me]** Awesome, thank you all so much. The next question is, have you ever avoided telling your family about something risky that you've done online, and what made you decide not to tell them?

**[Jordan]** I'm in the exact opposite camp here actually. Anything risky that I can't really think of, if anything, recently anyways, I've told them.

**[Me]** Okay.

**[Jordan]** I just, I have no reason to hide anything, really.

**[Amelia]** I think the only thing maybe I can think of is when people have tagged me in photos, and when it's like, say like, it's my friends who've tagged me in photos, and maybe it's not what I would myself post or have up on my feed, then I don't really show them that. I mean, I don't also, I wouldn't see the logic of going to show them the photo, but just in general, things that aren't really in my control, I've avoided telling them. But otherwise, yeah, I don't, I can't really think of even risky behaviours that I take online, like it's not really something I'd engage in.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Rachel]** For me, it was not just something risky, it was the whole fact that I'm using social media. I've never told it, like, because I was young at that time, well, 11 or something, and I did not decide to tell them, just because it was not a familiar concept that we discussed at that time. It was considered to be a bit weird. It was a taboo, taboo-related thing in our society (Rachel is not from Switzerland or Canada).

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Mallaika]** I don't have any case that I did something risky online, so I cannot answer that question, but I think even if I did, like, I have, if I have done something risky, or experienced something risky, I will just tell them.

**[Myra]** I think if you maybe text with somebody you don't actually know, then that's maybe a little bit risky, but I mean, I would never tell them anything stupid, like personal information, or anything like that, but yeah, like, I didn't talk about that with my parents, but there's not really a reason why I didn't.

**[Me]** All right. Thank you all so much. The next question is, how do you think that your family's communication style affects your participation in risky online behaviours?

And I know that some of you wouldn't even participate in risky online behaviours, but if you were to do it, how would it affect your participation?

**[Jordan]** I guess since my family's really open with communication, then it's like a challenge, I guess, for something, or talking to people. I wouldn't really hide anything. Someone asks me something, I'll just tell them. I don't really have anything to hide from my family, so by extension, if someone asked me something, I wouldn't hide something, you know what I mean, even to my own fault. I would just say things just to say things.

**[Me]** Cool. Thank you.

**[Amelia]** I think if I were to engage in risky online behaviours, I wouldn't tell them, or I mean, if it came up, maybe I'd be open to discussing it, but it wouldn't be as open, or it wouldn't be a choice to go and tell them about it, but I don't think it's because maybe of the communication style. I think it's just, that would be a bit of an uncomfortable conversation, and yeah, so I don't think it's particularly because of the communication style, because as I've said, we're quite open, but maybe for other personal reasons, I wouldn't really, yeah, I wouldn't really tell them about risky online behaviours, I think, unless I were putting myself maybe in grave danger, but that's, yeah.

**[Myra]** I think if you are somebody who participates in risky online behaviours and doesn't communicate that much with your family, then it's more likely that you will do something risky, because there are no people who tell you that it's maybe not a good thing to do, so if you're like more open with other people, then it's less likely to do something risky.

**[Rachel]** I would say the fact that they became super specific when I grew older. I'd say that it prevented me a lot from risky online behaviours, and that's just, yeah, if you grow up, you'll realize that it wasn't them preventing you from the whole process of socialization, it was just them preventing you from risky online behaviours. You just have to be old enough to realize that.

**[Mallaika]** I don't think that their communication style will be affected because of my risky online behaviours.

**[Me]** Okay, thank you all so much. So, how, not how, I can't read. Have you noticed differences in how your friends' families communicate compared to your own, and do these differences affect their choices about social media or online behaviour?

**[Amelia]** I think I have friends who are maybe more open sharing about, say, what they do with their friends and everything to their parents, and as I said earlier, I think social media for me is more, I mean, the friends side, and so I guess these friends will be more open sharing a lot more, or maybe not more, but I guess, say like you're going out and you're sharing photos of that. For my personal, on my personal pages, I don't really share that, but I'll have friends who are more open sharing that even though they know their grandma or their father or like their mother follows them, and I guess that's the only thing I could really

think of. Otherwise, we don't have that many differences in terms of what we share on social media.

**[Myra]** So, just last week, I was at a friend's house, and I noticed how my friend and their parents talk way more about what happens at school, and like her parents like knew all the names of all students and things like that, and like the teachers, and like my parents don't really know that, and my friend doesn't use Instagram, so maybe it's like because they are really like close and like her parents know that it's like not a good thing to do or like to use Instagram a lot. Yeah, but I don't know if that's really connected to each other.

**[Rachel]** For me, I'd say that the main difference is the fact that my friend became very open in talking about social media. I do not post a lot. I do not post a lot, to be honest, but for the friends that these kinds are restricted and not very open, they are the ones that post a lot, because they do not have someone who could tell them that it's dangerous, you should not be doing this. They're just doing it for the purpose.

**[Me]** Thank you so much.

**[Jordan]** So, I have a friend online who doesn't usually share very much about anything in their personal life, really, and so I think that stems from they don't really talk too much about personal matters with their parents. I think they're a lot more reserved, which makes them a lot more reserved online.

**[Me]** Okay, thank you.

**[Mallaika]** I think I know some, like, I have some friends that have a restricted communication with their families, and I can say that in social media they kind of hide what they do. Actually, maybe if they're having a party or something like that, they will post that on close friends in stories, so I think they just hide this from their parents.

**[Me]** Thank you all so much. The next question is, are there rules or expectations in your family about social media use, and how do they compare to what you hear about other families?

**[Jordan]** Mine is very unlimited, really. They're just like, "do what you want, just be responsible about it", but I know a lot of other families that I know kind of limit the time you use on Instagram or social media. Like, a close person to me, they have timers on their phone to stop them from using Instagram for so long. I have one, but I usually ignore it, but yeah, no, they adhere to a lot more restrictive things when it comes to social media.

**[Me]** Okay, thank you.

**[Myra]** For me, it's just like the same. Like, I don't really have any limits, but I also have a friend once that was, like, her parents, like, programmed something in her phone, so she can't use it unlimited, or, like, only certain times of the day.

**[Rachel]** For me, I'd say the only rule is to be over 15. That's it. For the other families, they mostly lock it.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Amelia]** Yeah, I don't think there are proper rules that I abide to, but I guess just general, like, I know what would be okay to post and what would not be okay to post, and I guess now at my age, it doesn't really differ from anyone else in my close friends or in my circle, but I guess when I was younger, yeah, some people would have time limits or other restrictions on their phone, which I didn't necessarily have, but I didn't feel like it was needed, I guess.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Mallaika]** I have not any rules from my family about social media use, but I could only download Instagram and TikTok after 13, I think. Before that, they didn't, I will not say didn't allow, they just said, okay, after 13, you can download, but now you don't.

**[Me]** Okay. Thank you.

We'll move on to the next question, which is, how do you think family communication influences your ability to navigate social norms or peer pressure online?

**[Jordan]** When it comes to social norms, I'm usually just, like I said, I'm not one to keep secrets or hide anything from anyone, so I'm really quick to just say something, but when it comes to social norms, peer pressure, sorry, I've never really been susceptible to it. I'm just like, "I'm not doing this. Screw that." Why would I ever do that if I don't want to do it, right? And that's more an extension of my diagnosis of the various mental ailments that I have, but yeah, no, I guess they just taught me to not fall to it, do what I want. If I don't want to do it, just don't do it.

**[Me]** Awesome. Thank you.

**[Amelia]** I think from what I've been able to see, the more restrictive communication styles, might lead to more, I guess, how to say, rebellious, I don't know, is that a word? Going against what your parents would tell you or that kind of stuff. As someone said earlier, the fact that some people who are a lot more restricted with their parents will post a lot more online. So I guess in terms of peer pressure, that might seem like, "oh, like I'm challenging my parents so that I'm gonna take part in this activity". But I think on the opposite, once you have a more open communication style, you kind of, in my personal experience, I kind of,

yeah, I know how to say no to that kind of peer pressure, I guess. Or I hope that I can, because it's never really happened to me.

**[Rachel]** For me, I think that really affects, it's affecting the quality of the ability of people to engage in social norms and all. Because if you're not very open with your own family, your own people, how can you know how to communicate with other people online? It's like the biggest influence that could characterize a person's behaviour.

**[Myra]** I'm actually not really sure. I don't know if it's like, if the communication with my family affects like, yeah, the social norms for me.

**[Mallaika]** I kind of think that if you have good family communication in your house, you will feel comfortable in your school as well. So you will not have any peer pressure. If you will feel any pressure from your classmates, you can handle that because your family is supporting you in your house, I think.

**[Me]** Thank you. That is everybody. So we will get to the next question, which is, this is the, like the final section of the questions portion of the focus group. And after that is the group activity. So just to keep in mind, I think this section has around three or four questions, if I remember correctly. So the first one is, if you could change one thing about how your family communicates about social media or online behaviours, what would it be?

**[Rachel]** For me, I would just change the fact that you should not be blaming me when I did that thing, because I'm already stressed enough.

**[Me]** Could you say that one more time?

**[Rachel]** Okay, sorry. For me, I would say just the fact that if I'm already talking to you and I have the courage to tell you about the risky social media behaviour and stuff, you should not be blaming me at that moment. Because I'm already stressed enough. Leave it until you solve the problem. And then I can hear whatever you have to say.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Amelia]** Yeah, I'm having a bit of trouble coming up with something that I'd change because I don't think, I mean, I can't think of explicit ways in which we actually communicated about or regularly communicated about social media or online behaviours. So I guess for me, I'd say I wouldn't change anything.

**[Myra]** I think a thing we could change is not only talk about the problems and what's really wrong, but more like how we can change it and just how to use it differently.

**[Jordan]** Yeah, no, I can't really come up with anything on how I would change. I don't really have an opinion, per se, much less that I should just be on it a little less. But yeah, I can't really think of anything that I would change.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Mallaika]** Yeah, I also have no idea, but I would prefer, like, my mom usually sends reels about the bad impact of social media. And then I kind of know I'm aware of that, but she continues to send that. Maybe the amount of reels they send to us should be minimized or something like that (laughs).

**[Me]** Great. Thank you so much for your responses. So looking ahead, how do you think your family's communication style might affect your decisions about social media use as you grow older?

**[Amelia]** I think it's allowed me to kind of know what kind of works and in terms of how to kind of stay safe online. Also with the addiction stuff I was talking about. And I've got a little brother who's 13 and I've kind of seen now I'm old enough to see how kind of my mom has, you know, implemented like a time limit or I mean, he doesn't have any social media except for like WhatsApp because he's 13. So I think that could help me see kind of the risks for in terms of my personal experience, but also in terms of the communication style and what to try and reproduce later on if I have children or if I'm ever in the position where I have to give advice to someone. So I think in all in all, I think it's quite a positive impact looking ahead.

**[Me]** Hmm. Thank you.

**[Jordan]** Maybe just using social media as intended, you know, and it was originally intended for as a messenger, right? Maybe post a thing or two about status updates. But yeah, no, my family sees it as kind of a waste of time, a little bit scrolling through reels and sending stuff back and forth. So I guess as I grow older, I'll just use it less and just use it to message people or if not migrate to other social media apps that are exclusively for messaging or just like, yeah, like WhatsApp. I don't use WhatsApp, but maybe it'll come to me in the future.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Mallaika]** I don't think that my family's communication style might change my social media use. But as I said before, I'm consuming, I try to consume less social media. But [when] I grow up, I think I will just use them less now. Just post only once in a year, something like that.

**[Myra]** I also think that like, (thud) I'm sorry, I will just use it less. But maybe like, on the other hand, my parents will use it more because just like more and more, like older people use social media. Yeah.

**[Rachel]** As I grow older, I just, I can now see more why my parents were warning me about social media and stuff. And I think the communication style, it took me about four or five years, mostly just as I said, not posting a lot.

**[Me]** Thank you so much. The next question is, in what ways do you feel supported or unsupported by your family, when dealing with social media risks or challenges, if at all?

**[Jordan]** There was a time a few years back, I'm sorry, I'm just telling the story to give an example here. It was around when the PS5 was released. And a friend of mine sent me this challenge like, "yo, this guy is taking participants to do a bunch of challenges to win a PS5". Then I was like, "sure, I'll, I'll join in". Just to spoil the ending: wasn't real. No PS5 was even out. But yeah, my family was like, "sure, yeah, man, just go on ahead". And I know challenges as in like, difficult situations with people. But this is like participating in random things online, right?

**[Me]** That is definitely what I meant with social media challenges. So like things like that, like the giveaways that people post, like things like the, what was that? I think it was like 2016, the ice bucket challenge, things like that.

**[Jordan]** Yeah, yeah. You know, my family was very supportive. So they were like, "yeah, go for it. Just try and hopefully, you win", I guess they'd support me.

**[Me]** Okay, cool. Thank you.

**[Amelia]** Yeah. I guess it's, I mean, I've never actually entered or kind of tried one of these challenges or, you know, giveaways, as you said. And I think because of that— and neither has my brother or anything. So I kind of, I think it would be seen as a bit stupid, like it would be seen a bit, you know, it's like, "what, why are you really doing this?" Not in the sense that they don't support me. It's just, it's just, it hasn't been, it's never kind of been seen or anything in our family. So I guess if I one day said, "oh, I entered this random contest online", I'm not sure how well that would be taken by my family.

**[Me]** Fair enough. Do you feel like it would just come from a place of just simply not understanding the point or?

**[Amelia]** Yeah, I think it's, it's more that, I mean, yeah, I think it's just because it's never really been, like as an option, I guess. And because I mean, my older brother and I are the ones who are kind of the most on, you know, Instagram, and we'll talk about it. And so if it hasn't really been brought up by us, they wouldn't, my mom wouldn't be aware of the latest challenge. So I guess I'm thinking in her eyes, it would be, it would seem a bit weird.

**[Me]** Okay. That's fair. Thank you for sharing.

**[Rachel]** In my family, they're supportive only if it's a study-related challenge, intellectual challenges. Other than that, if it's something that's involved, it's completely preventative and supportive.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Myra]** I think the only challenge that social media has for me is like the addictive part of it. And I think my parents support me, like just telling me that I'm just too much on my phone. And like, it helps when somebody else tells you that you're too much on your phone. But then like actually trying to, yeah, stop using my phone, I think it's better if I do that by myself.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Mallaika]** Yeah, I think also my parents will let me know if I'm consuming a lot of social media or even if I will have some kind of social media risk or challenges, they will support me. And also I want to mention about the giveaways, like free giveaways or something like that. I'm pretty sure that they will not support that because most of them are fake. So, and most of them, most of them, you need to press something to go by links or something like that, or you need to buy them things. And it kind of feels like a [scam]. So they will not support this kind of idea. But otherwise, they will support me if I'm taking any kind of risks.

**[Me]** Great, thank you all so much. Next we have the group activity.

So I'm going to send you, one, a link, and two, a code that you'll enter in the link. It's a site called Mentimeter. So menti.com and the code is (the code). So once you're in the activity, as you see on the slide, it's a word cloud. So I would like you to think of words or symbols that represent how families influence adolescence management of online risks. So some examples could be trust, rules, communication, curiosity, or the lock emoji for privacy, things like that.

So when thinking of these words or symbols, I'd like you to keep in mind elements like guidance, rules, trust, communication styles. The reflection questions will be for after. So I'll give you like my clock reads 5:54. I'll give you until 6. Yeah, and it doesn't have to be just the one word or the one symbol like as many as you think of. Um, put them all in there. And if you feel like you've finished before that set time, write a message in the chat saying that you're done and then we'll get to discussing it.

**[Jordan]** I'm not too sure I'm on the right thing because mine is limited to only 25 words per. Am I on the correct thing?

**[Me]** I would go as far as to say yes, but I'm going to try going on it myself and seeing what it says.

**[Amelia]** Yeah, I think I was on the limit of a few words.

**[Me]** So if you can think of more than three words, you could in each section separate them by commas. Yeah, that's the best solution I can come up with. I was under the impression that it was unlimited. Sorry, guys.

-pause-

**[Jordan]** So they also remove commas from being able to be written.

**[Me]** Then I guess we're gonna limit it to three words, Jesus Christ. (laughter) Oh, goodness, I will have to fix that for the next group. Thank you for telling me that. That did not happen the last time. Strange.

**[Jordan]** No worries.

-pause-

**[Jordan]** Sorry for interrupting again. You wanted to leave that third one blank so we can discuss it later? Or do you want us to participate in putting in a few words there as well?

**[Me]** Yeah, put in a few words there as well. And then at the end, the word cloud, I'll share my screen so you'll see everyone's responses on like the one thing. So share as many as possible. As the site will permit you at this point. (laughter)

**[Jordan]** Okay, for sure.

**[Me]** Thank you.



Fig. 7: Product of the Mentimeter Activity (2)

-pause-

**[Me]** My clock is reading 6. Does anyone need more time? Or is everyone done? Like feel free to do a thumbs up if you're good. That way I know when to swap screens.

-pause-

I think there are two, Rachel and Mallaika who haven't given an indication yet. Are you? -

**[Mallaika]** I gave actually. I gave it four minutes ago.

**[Me]** Oh my gosh, I did not see it. I am so sorry. Okay, well, cool. Love Google Meet.

So we will go to this part. Everyone can see? Okay, so I'll give you a second to like go over everything. But the three questions I'd like you to keep in mind are what patterns or differences do you notice? Were there any words or symbols that surprised you? And did this activity change how you think about your family's communication? And give me two seconds to copy paste those questions in the chat because I would not blame you if you didn't retain any of what I just said. (laughter) And whenever you're ready to respond to those questions, just feel free to just start the discussion.

**[Myra]** I think there are, like, some more negative words like ignorance or fear or addiction, but, like, also some more positive like safety and trust and confidence.

**[Me]** Awesome. Do you feel like those words, either those words, both negative and positive accurately represent social media or online behaviours or how family would influence online behaviour?

**[Myra]** I think it represents social media because there are, like, good sides of social media, like connecting with people, but also, like, bad sides, like addiction.

**[Me]** Awesome. Thank you.

**[Amelia]** I think, I guess for the second question, the word that surprised me was the individualism one. I didn't actually think of that straight away, but I think it's a really good one to have up there, especially when talking about social media. And then I guess for the third question as well, I don't, I mean, it hasn't really changed about the way I think about my family's communication, but it kind of puts things into perspective where you kind of see how, I mean, personally, I think I've had quite a positive communication about social media, but there are also, as she said, the more negative aspects like fear or addiction. So yeah.

**[Me]** Yeah, and the word that surprised you, is there like any particular reason that it surprised you or is it just that you didn't think of it before?

**[Amelia]** I think it surprised me in the sense that when we talk about family communication regarding social media, I don't really think of, you know, the fact that it can, it can provide a kind of individualistic point of view. I guess in that context, I didn't actually think of it. Because we all, we kind of think often, yeah, as like the black and white, the good side, bad side. And I think the personal aspects of social media is kind of the grey line. As in, it's very good because it allows you to express yourself in a certain way that's personal to you. But then yeah, there's also the individualistic aspects that can seem a little too self-centered.

**[Me]** Thank you so much.

**[Rachel]** For me, the word that surprised me was the respect, trust, self. Because most of the time, it's all about what people are going to think about our use of social media. We never think that we should respect ourselves. You know, "I feel my dad would find this" and "my mom would not be happy". But it's not always about them. It's about us at the end of the day. And for the last question, that really changed the way my family communicates about social media. Because I've seen a lot of different families and I've seen each one of you and how different we are. Because I've seen everyone socialize with other people from different social backgrounds. And I can see a huge difference.

**[Me]** Awesome. Thank you so much.

**[Jordan]** For the first question there, I had noticed that there are a lot of synonyms for trust. Like there's confidence, which you could say it's confidence in someone else. Risk-taking, which often goes with trusting someone. And again, trust noted two different times. Not

only that, it's beyond those, everything else is kind of its own thing. Everything else doesn't really relate besides just trust, which is an interesting pattern. I think, I don't know why, but addiction stood out to me the most. Because it is very talked about, but at the same time almost taboo to mention social media addiction nowadays. Because everyone's on it, right? Everyone's on social media to some extent. Talking about the abuse of it, people don't want to have a mirror put in their face to see like, "yeah, maybe I am using this a bit too much". And this activity did really change how I thought of my family's communication styles. Because I've realized how I'm very fortunate to have an incredibly open level of communication with my family. And also, I was the one who wrote down the words that we're talking about the most. I just wanted to say that.

**[Me]** And just like a quick backpedal to your response to the first question. Do you think trust and the synonyms for trust that you mentioned, do you think those are fair words to use?

**[Jordan]** Absolutely, yeah. Because we're putting a lot out there on social media. Like I myself have my first name and a photo of myself on my Instagram account. So it wouldn't be too hard to find me there. So I trust that there aren't too many malicious people in my circle needing that information for anything.

**[Me]** Yeah. Thank you.

**[Mallaika]** I think it's my turn, yeah?

**[Me]** Yes.

**[Mallaika]** Okay. I think the one thing that I noticed today is that most of our parents were supportive of us. Because in my environment, I felt like my parents are very, very supportive. And my friend's parents are kind of not supportive, I will say. And they have kind of very restricted communications and rules. But now I was like, "oh, like everyone's like most parents are very supportive to their children". So I was like, yeah. And were there any words or so? I think the subtle difference, no, yes. I'm not fully understanding, but I really like when our family will give us the distinct and the certain definition of no and the yes.

So we can have the imagination of where to say yes, where to say no. So we have a kind of privacy of ourselves. And the last question, maybe. I don't think that it changed how I think about my family communications. But I think I have become more aware that family communication is a crucial part of my life as a child, because they are part of my life.

**[Me]** Thank you all very much for your responses. That brings us to the end of our session. Unless someone had a question, something they wanted to add real quick.

**[Jordan]** I have something to add really quick. So the ones that are multiple words, I misinterpreted the question. And so the first like actual number question was the first response I gave in the second one.

And then the ones that's listed right now as the responses, I consolidated into one, which was the subtle difference, no and yes. Which if you follow, what patterns or differences do you notice? I noticed a subtle difference. Were there any words that surprised you? Which makes no sense because there wasn't a word board there. So I don't know what I was thinking. I'm very sorry (laughs).

**[Me]** That is okay. That's completely okay. I think it still worked out in the end.

**[Jordan]** Yeah, it did. So it's all good.

**[Me]** Yeah, thank you so much. Did anyone else have something they wanted to add or a question even? (participants indicate no) Perfect. Okay, so that brings us to the end of our session. Again, thank you all so very much for your time and sharing your perspectives. Genuinely very valuable to this research and just the fact that you're participating in itself. You're all lifesavers. Truly, thank you. And if you'd like to follow up on anything or if you'd like to even access the study results later, you have both my number and my email. So feel free to contact me. And I think I'm missing a couple more consent forms. So please, please, please. I need them today. Please. Thank you. And yeah, that is pretty much it. That's all I need from you. And again, if you need anything, feel free to reach out. So thank you very much again for your participation and have a lovely rest of your days.

**[All participants]** Thank you. Bye.

### *Focus Group Transcript #3*

Date and time: 06/04/2025 @ 4:00 PM CET

*Italicized text: late responses from participants who arrived late.*

**[Me]** Hey everyone, sorry about that. I think we have two people who are just running a bit late, so we'll just go ahead and get started. Just to be sure everyone can hear me okay? (Participants confirm) Perfect. Thank you.

So just a quick recap before we get started, this focus group is part of a research study for my master's thesis exploring how different family communication styles influence adolescents' online behaviours, so particularly risky behaviours online. So that could be oversharing personal information, participating in viral challenges that can be dangerous, and cyberbullying.

So I want this to be an open and respectful discussion where everyone feels comfortable sharing their thoughts and perspectives. Yeah, so a few key points to keep in mind: this session is designed to last about an hour and a half. My last group did last that long, but another group lasted like around two hours, so it does depend on how much people speak and how much everyone has to say, so be prepared for it to go a little over that set time. Your responses are confidential and will only be used for research purposes. So the second my thesis is submitted and validated and I pass, like the transcriptions will be deleted and all of that.

Feel free to share as much or as little as you're comfortable with, so there are no right or wrong answers. And again, I want this to be an open and respectful discussion, so please listen to each other and respect different perspectives and experiences. And if at any point you feel uncomfortable, feel free to either take a break or step out of the session completely if that is what you so choose. Does anyone have any questions before we start? (participants signal no) Amazing, okay. Just for reference, this is the official research question (I show on the PowerPoint). Before we get to the questions part, let's start off with a quick introduction. So please share your name, your age, and one or two social media apps that you use the most. So whoever wants to start can go right ahead.

**[Melanie]** I can start off. Hi guys, my name is Melanie. I'm 19 and I think that, what I use the most, I switched from Snapchat to Instagram and definitely like TikTok consistently.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Derek]** My name is Derek. I'm 17, 18 in a month. And I definitely use Instagram the most. I don't use a lot of other social media apps.

**[Me]** Thank you. Happy early birthday.

**[Derek]** Thank you!

**[Sebastian]** Hi, my name is Sebastian. I'm 17, I turn 18 like much later in the year. I don't really use any social media apps besides Instagram. I rarely reuse TikTok or anything, but I do still have them.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Nicole]** Hi, I'm Nicole, I'm 19 and I only really use Instagram.

**[Me]** Awesome. Thank you all so much. So we'll get to the actual questions part of this focus group. So the first one would be how would you describe how your family communicates and do you share openly or is communication more formal or restricted?

**[Melanie]** I can just go because I feel like we've gotta get things going. Our communication, I think, from... I don't know how to explain this, but from when I was younger until now has definitely shifted. When we were younger, there was a lot of miscommunication, and we are an immigrant household, so like a lot of language barriers between my parents and the outside world and frustrations. Compared to now, it's very much an open dialogue. Obviously, they are still parents, so they're still very protective and, you know, love to raise their voice once in a while, but c'est la vie. And so yeah, it's shifted from a closed-off, outsider way of communicating to now a more open-dialogue, friendly, and like always-learning-and-listening-to-each-other type of communication style.

**[Me]** Awesome, thank you.

**[Derek]** For my family it very much depends on the situation. My parents have always been very very open with me and my sibling. But there's been other aspects where there's definitely more of a, it has to be very structured for communication to actually go effectively. It generally depends on how difficult the topic is.

**[Me]** Would you say that the more difficult the topic the more restrained communication would be?

**[Derek]** Yeah, the more difficult the topic the more it has to be like a very structured discussion with like very much the typical like "I feel, I feel" kind of format.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Sebastian]** With my family, personally, I think as time has been going on, we've been getting better with communication. But both of my parents are from households that did not openly talk about communication, and we have a lot of undiagnosed autism in my family as well, which makes it very hard for my family to do so. It has been very restrictive, but it is slowly—very slowly— getting better.

**[Me]** Nice, thank you.

**[Nicole]** I would say now my family has a pretty open style of communication but it's definitely gotten, like, better over the years from how it used to be.

**[Me]** Do you think that there's any contributing factor to it shifting or is it just like time?

**[Nicole]** I think some things it's just because my parents are, like, more willing to learn and, like, admit they're wrong now.

**[Yasmin]** *Well, in my family, we're all very open-minded, we talk about everything and nothing without too much worry. The discussions are usually very light and relaxed. There's really no formality, like we just talk like that and that's it.*

**[Melody]** *Very open and conversational, will talk about lots, I know which topics to avoid, though.*

**[Me]** Okay, thank you all so much for your responses. We'll just go right out to the next question. Can you recall a recent situation where your family had an important discussion about something personal? So it could be school, relationships, romantic or platonic or social media and if you can recall how did it go?

**[Melanie]** I think the most — there's a lot of different serious conversations in my family, but I think the one that most relates to this type is... this is gonna be an insane lore drop — but when I finally told my parents about my year-and-a-half-long relationship as I was breaking up with him. That wasn't a lot of a conversation. My parents are very, you know, very much, "You're not allowed to date, you're not allowed to have, you know, romantic relationships with boys because it's not our way and you're too young," which was 100% respectable. But I thought I was gonna marry this man, so — and his whole family knew, and my family knew. However, the relationship didn't work out, obviously.

I told them as a last resort to help me break up with him, and contrary to my initial belief of how they would both handle it, they both handled it very well. My father did not know how to approach the conversation because there's a lot of disconnect sometimes when it comes to these types of topics with a father and a daughter in our culture. He was unsure about how to approach it; however, he went about it in a way of just comforting me and reassuring me that there's support. That's a big change from how we were supported when we were younger. There was no shaming, and there was no, you know, being upset that I had a boyfriend — more so upset that I had gone through what I had gone through and allowed somebody to treat me the way that I was treated.

My mother, she was also, again, the same key points. However, she was disappointed that I had chosen to make that relationship a reality and keep it from them. Reflecting on it now, a lot of what I noticed about how they chose to communicate to me was very much

soft-spoken, very much treading the waters very carefully. Whereas in the past, if something similar had happened or, you know, along the same lines, they would have yelled, raised their voices, gotten me in trouble, grounded me, been upset with me — a lot more dramatic ways of communicating their frustration about my actions. This time, it was a lot more soft-spoken, a lot more reassuring and supportive, and not blaming me as the victim but blaming the other guy, who, you know, obviously was not a good guy.

I think the main reason for that shift was, number one, I've tried to teach them a lot about how to communicate and how to control their emotions and regulate their emotions. That's been always — that's a common issue in our family household. We're all Turkish, so we're like one of the highest peoples to have anger issues, and it really shows.

There's been a lot of active learning collectively with my parents about: How do we control anger? How do we redirect it? How do we take a breath? How do we step away? A lot of that work is being seen in moments like these.

On top of it, I think now that I am 19, heading to 20, they do feel more obligated to treat me like an adult. Even though they don't see me as an adult, they do understand that at some points and in some places, they do need to treat me as such. I think that helped make that experience a lot more positive than I had assumed it was going to be.

**[Me]** Thank you so much for sharing and I'm glad that the conversation did go well after all. Whoever'd like to go next?

**[Derek]** Um, so I actually—very recently, this is a very recent one—um, I applied for all my university courses, and I had been, like, I was kind of going into it blind. I tried to take the Registration 101 class, and I, like, felt like um, it didn't help at all. So I came into this conversation with a lot of anxiety because my dad's actually gone to the (university Derek is applying to), so I was like, okay, so he can probably help.

But I also know that in the past, I've struggled to communicate with my dad because if I come into something anxious, then oftentimes that'll, like, it'll reflect back. Um, and it did a little bit. I mean, I definitely came in, um, not in the best shape, um, because I was so stressed over it. And he did really well for, you know, also trying to moderate my anxiety while also getting it done.

My mom was also there. She wasn't as much of a help; she took a back burner on this one. But he sat me down, luckily, and pulled out his own computer and started to do stuff. He ended up actually taking the Registration 101 class as well, just to, like, try and help.

And we got it done. It was—I mean, it was still stressful. As well as the conversation went, I came out of it with what I needed, but I didn't come out of it with, like, full confidence or with my anxiety completely appeased. Which, to be fair, would have been incredibly difficult

to do. But I did come out of it with my classes registered, and he was able to help despite both of us sort of having that anxious state.

**[Me]** Well I'm glad that it ended up working out fine thank you for sharing. Whoever'd like to go next?

**[Sebastian]** Uh, personally for me, whenever my family has to discuss anything serious, it's not as personal. It's just not taken as seriously. But once it gets personal, my parents have a little habit of taking it personally themselves.

Uh, recently I had to talk to my dad about something he did that had upset me, and when I was talking about it, he took it almost as like a personal—like I was telling him, "you're a bad father, you make me feel unsafe". Well, that was not what I was saying.

And these conversations just tend to blow up a little bit in my family. One time, I had told my mom I was struggling with depression, and she had yelled at me and threatened to send me to a psych ward just because I said I was a little sad.

So I'm trying to help them get better, but they do tend to take personal conversations personal themselves.

**[Nicole]** Um, the most recent thing I can think of like it's not that much of a, like, personal discussion but um I was going out to, like, a rave with a friend and my mom was just, like, reminding me to be safe and, um, watch my drink and all that.

**[Me]** Thank you and uh Yasmin if you want to share and before you answer the question if you don't mind sharing your name, age and what social media app you use the most.

**[Yasmin]** Uh, yes, my name is Yasmin, I'm 18, and I think that the social media that I use the most is probably Snapchat or TikTok.

And so I don't have, like, a really personal situation, but coming from my mind, I think that the most recent thing that happened was when I was applying for university. But it wasn't, like, a really big or something really deep with my family. They were more like helping me choose which country I was going to choose for my course, and they're, like, more helpful, I think.

But it wasn't like something—like, my parents were really understanding and more like here to help me. Because at the end of the day, I was making that decision, and they were just like, "do whatever you feel is right". And that's all. I can't really think of a particular situation. It's the only thing that comes to my mind, but they were, like, really helpful. And yeah.

**[Melody]** *No, I tend to keep conversations surface level.*

**[Me]** Thank you so much and thank you all again for your responses. The next question is, are there specific topics that you find easy or difficult to discuss with your parents or guardians and why do you think that is? And if you're able to find examples for both easy and difficult conversations feel free to share.

**[Melanie]** Um, difficult conversations would definitely be anything about emotions and feelings. For a long time, I would tell my mother, "Hey Mom, I don't feel happy," and her reaction has always been, "I don't understand." The communist countries, like, they didn't have a lot of rights, and so she, like, doesn't understand the concept of having a lot of feelings — a lot of spread of different emotions across different things — which she obviously does, but there's just a lot of suppression for it, and she just doesn't recognize that, which is fine.

When I was younger, I struggled a lot with mental health, and I still obviously do. I have told my mom, "Hey, I think I'm going through some things. I think I'm, you know, I'm sure I have some form of anxiety. Like, there's no way this is normal. Also, I think I want, you know, to take my life, and this is clearly not a normal thought." The rhetoric that was matched with that was, "So do it," and it was more so in the fact of, "I don't relate to where you're coming from; therefore, that is not a valid experience and a valid emotion."

This is not something that she's ever grown up around or been around or talked about or heard about, and so it took her as a shock. I believe her initial reaction, I think mentally, was that her daughter was becoming westernized, which is obviously a very big fear for some of the diasporas from back home. Because of that, it was very much, "This is not true, this is not real, you're spreading propaganda..." C'est la vie.

A lot of hard conversations were had, a lot of non-conversations were had. There were days where we just didn't talk to each other, a lot of miscommunication. At that age, I was very young as well, so I was unable — like, even though I'm unable to play the referee in that situation because I was personally involved — I was also very much struggling and looking for help. Because of that, I was not able to effectively communicate it to my mom.

Since I wasn't able to effectively communicate what I was feeling to my mom, she took that as a dig on her parenting style, which is obviously, again, not the case. That took a lot of years of conversations and reworking and explaining and sitting down so that she no longer thinks that, and I no longer communicate that to her. But at the time, because of this barrier and space disconnect that we had with each other, it felt a lot like a personal attack on her. My father, on the other hand, he was very much confused and didn't even entertain a conversation. So my mom had to deal with it on her own, which made it even ten times harder for her again.

Yeah, that's a difficult conversation. An easier conversation to have is if there's a concern I have in my life — this is only now, now at this point in my life — if I have a concern with

something or someone or something I'm not able to figure out or can't make a full decision on, whether it's a trip I would like to go on, or I have too many tasks, or we're working on a project together and I can't figure out something for the project, or I think something should change.

If there's a concern that I have, for lack of a better word, I am now able to kind of come to them and sit down and say, "I need your advice on this X, Y, and Z issue," and they're actually able to provide me with a good, good, uh, good plan of how I should handle something. It does usually come with a long-winded lecture and a long-winded life advice story, which is a little frustrating; however, they do end up making their point of, "You should do X, Y, and Z."

If I do something with them, they're also very much open to understanding each other sometimes. However, again, we are very angry people, so we do get frustrated, and those frustrations end up coming out in those conversations. We end up getting into a fight sometimes, but we're always able to de-escalate it and be like, "Okay, that was a fluke, let's just take a minute, we need to reevaluate," and then come back to the conversation.

**[Me]** Great thank you so much for sharing.

**[Derek]** There's a lot of stuff that's easy and a lot of stuff that's difficult to talk about.

Um, the easy stuff, to start with, is school. My parents have always been not necessarily lenient with school, but they have the mindset of "do the best you can and push through." I think part of that [attributes] to the fact that I've always done well in school. I mean, I still have my own kind of academic terms I want to set for myself, but when it comes to them, it's kind of a "as long as I pass," with an expectation that I'm going to do better. But the idea is, if I feel I really botched a test or I need to rebalance stuff, I can talk to them, especially when it comes to, in a way, work-life balance.

If I ever really need to stay home and study and miss an activity, they've always been pretty good about that. They might lightly complain about it, but they let it go very easily because they know that priority is important. So they've always been really good around schooling and talking about things like "I'm really stressed about this test." "Okay, well here's what we can do—do you want us to help you study?" Which is amazing.

Something that's been pretty perpetually difficult, ever since I was a kid up until now, is if I have a sort of—not critique of parenting style, but if a parent does something that hurts me—then I'm oftentimes not comfortable bringing it up, because I know that will be taken very personally and also in kind of a harsher way. It's happened in the past where I've brought up an issue, and it's gone very poorly, because oftentimes people are blind to their issues. Or even if they kind of understand it, they have a certain perception around an adolescent sharing these feelings. So I know I've always been really hesitant to bring those up, even now, because oftentimes it just goes quite poorly.

**[Sebastian]** With my family, um, as long as the topic is not personal, it's very easy to talk about. So, like, just what we're gonna have for dinner, what the plans are for tomorrow—if it's stuff like that, my family takes it very lighthearted. But the second that any emotion or personal problems come into play, then it gets very difficult, and they take things personally. In communication, it's just like they expect you to read minds. If you say anything in a tone that they do not like, things will just blow up in your face.

Um, I love both my parents, but I think they're both kind of difficult to talk to about certain topics, especially my mom. Because as much as I love her, and I have told her, "Hey, these symptoms that we both have are autism," she doesn't believe me. So, uh, her undiagnosed symptoms do kind of blow up in my face sometimes. But really, if it's personal, it will be a difficult conversation. If it's not, then it'll be easy.

**[Nicole]** For my family most topics are pretty easy to talk about. I think the only thing that sometimes is more difficult can be, like, talking about mental health but that's mainly like most of us are good I think um maybe just my mom struggles with that a bit.

**[Melody]** *Can't talk about politics, mental health or being queer but I can talk about school and [physical] pain.*

**[Yasmin]** For me, like, my parents are really open-minded, okay, so like you can have a discussion about everything. But I think that it's more complicated to have a conversation with my dad, since, like, my parents are divorced. So it's more complicated because, uh, I'm more comfortable with my mom than my dad, so I have more discussions with her, and it's easier to discuss personal things with my mom compared to my dad.

But with discussions in general with my dad, it's okay—we can still talk about everything and nothing. But when it comes to things like my love life, for example, I'd be able to talk about it more easily with my mom, because it's my mom, my friend. So I think it's more like that.

But otherwise, they're very open-minded, and we can talk about everything and nothing. But when it turns to something a little more personal, I'm more comfortable talking to my mom than my dad.

**[Me]** (translates for non-French speaking participants) So the next question. Thank you all for your responses. In your family, when does communication typically happen? So during meals, car rides, do you have planned discussions? And you can give a little explanation as to why it happens during whichever time.

**[Melanie]** A lot of the initial times that we were working on communication—I guess without trying to work on communication—was my mom would talk to me in the car. One, I think it was a means of trapping me because I couldn't go to my room. Number two, it was just how things ended up working out, because we would drive places together, go places

together, and so we'd end up having these conversations. And she'd end up just parking the car, and we'd sit there for however long needed.

Now, it usually happens down at our kitchen table. And those are for conversations that are, you know, decently open, decently like, if we're confused, we're getting through something. If it's a more private thing that would kind of keep hush hush from other people—which is, like, it's very private—it'll be in one of our rooms, and the door will be closed. And then that way, people know not to come bother us. I'm not sure exactly why it happens that way. It just kind of does. Growing up, a lot of the family conversations we had were at kitchen tables on Sunday mornings because my dad doesn't work Sunday mornings. And any conversation between me and my mom is usually in the car or in her room.

**[Derek]** It used to be very much during car rides. There was an incident, so we don't do car rides anymore. Oftentimes, it'll be actively just during, like, if the incident happens, or if an error in communication happens. It kind of will typically immediately expand into further communication. Most of the time, we have that communication in our living room. So it's pretty open. My sibling stays in their room, usually. But if we're really worried about them hearing it in a conversation, it's in the parents' room, because they have a big, comfy bed and I like sitting on it. Yeah.

**[Sebastian]** I'm the youngest in my family, and my older brother, who I'm closest to in age, is six years older than me. So basically, by the time I was finishing elementary [school], my parents were like, “our kids are old enough, we don't really need to make dinner for them or anything”. So my family did not really spend a lot of time together. We don't have dinner together, we just kind of do all our own things in the same house. So because of that, whenever we need to have a conversation, they're always in the living room. So I just go up to my parents and I'm like, “hey guys, we need to talk”. So if we ever have to communicate something, it is always in the living room, because that's just always where my parents are sitting, and that's where I know I can go find them.

**[Me]** Okay. Great, thank you so much. Whoever would like to go next?

**[Nicole]** For my family, I think we usually end up talking in the kitchen. But it's not like we don't have a set place to talk about things. It's just that we usually, when we're eating supper, we're just all in the kitchen. That's when we'll talk about things.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Yasmin]** So personally, now that I live abroad, I speak to my parents or my family in general via WhatsApp. So our conversations are via WhatsApp and texting.

**[Me]** And before you moved abroad, what was it like typically?

**[Yasmin]** So I'm the youngest, so when I was in the age of speaking about more personal things with my parents, my sisters weren't there anymore. So discussions can start everywhere, I guess. In the car, in the living room. Just when I feel it, and I'm like, "Oh, mom, I need to talk about this and this", and she's like, "Oh, okay", and we'll just talk. Because most of the time, we'll always be together. And it will be just us, so we can just talk about it whenever we feel like it. And with my dad, since I don't really talk about personal things with my dad, when we talk, it's when we see each other. And we'll be everywhere, actually. Most of the time, we'll be in the living room, but discussions can start everywhere, I guess.

**[Melody]** *We usually talk during meals, in the car, or at random times in (foster mom's) room.*

**[Me]** Great. Thank you so much, and thank you, everyone. We're in the second section of the focus group.

Can you think of a time when your family's way of communicating influenced the decision that you made about using social media? Whoever would like to start.

**[Melanie]** I don't really know. I think my parents had no social media. And I think in the 5th or 6th grade, I just downloaded Instagram and Snapchat, and they just didn't question it. And I grew up posting on Musical.ly a concerning amount. Like, a *concerning* amount. If I was prettier and if I was white, I probably could have been Baby Ariel with how much I was posting, right?

And they never really checked, they never really cared, too. My mom would sporadically check through my phone and see what I was doing, and sometimes get mad at me for using cuss words in my text messages. And I would get my phone taken away a decent amount, and I also had a kid's lock app on my phone. That was more so to limit my phone usage in general and not target it towards how I'm using social media. My father has expressed concerns and continues to express concerns over what I post, but more so from a political aspect than anything else. They've never been one to be like, "you can't use social media".

I'm not sure, they've never been shy with it either. My mom grew up posting on Facebook a lot. There is a whole archive of my childhood on Facebook. So social media was something that my parents were not new to, but they were true to it. They checked through my phone, they looked at who I was texting, what I was doing, and obviously weren't happy sometimes with what I was texting, but nothing specifically about social media in that sense.

**[Me]** Okay. Thank you.

**[Derek]** I was pretty restricted from tech for a long time. (laughs) My mom is a big Facebook user. I have a similar thing, there's an archive of my childhood. And every once in a while, I would sit next to her while she scrolled. But I only got an iPad when I was, I want to say 12,

which isn't that young. And at that point, it was just messages. So I had access to messages and Roblox. So a lot of it was very much like I, from a very young age, thought that social media was either Facebook or just texting people. That it was one or the other. And there's nothing else. And then I got a phone at 14 or 15, something around there. And only at that point did I realize that there was a whole bunch of other stuff. And luckily, when they got me my phone, they were very clear. They communicated, like, "there's going to be a lot of things that you can do with this. Be responsible with it". So there's a lot of communication around responsibility and technological responsibility, especially receiving new items. So I think I was pretty well set. Like, I've always been pretty careful with social media because I also work with kids. So if people were to find Instagram stuff that's inappropriate, that would be unwise. So yeah, I guess a lot of communication around responsibility has influenced me in that way.

**[Me]** Great. Thank you.

**[Sebastian]** My mom, I think, is rage-cleaning upstairs. So if you hear a vacuum at all, I'm so sorry.

My parents gave me devices pretty early. I got my first phone when I was eight years old, and I was an iPad kid before then. I think, as I've mentioned, my parents are just very not good at discussing. The examples I've listed before have been more recent, but they were worse when I was younger. When I was in eighth grade, I started posting a lot of story posts to do with my Sims on the Sims 4, because I was really into that stuff. And I had made a lot of friends through that community. When I joined a Discord server with these friends through Instagram, they were all adults. I think they were the ones I was closest to my age— I was 13, just turning 14. The one closest to my age was 18. They had taken me in like a little brother. I'm very thankful that I never ran into any predators or anything, but I had started almost relying on these adults living in America, in South America, as a family. I had vented to them about everything. They comforted me when I was at my lowest, because I was going through a very bad depression episode, when my family were yelling at me and trying to send me to a psych ward. So I think my family's way of communicating, with it being very poor, and taking things very personally, had influenced me to do something that could have been dangerous. I'm very glad that the people that I ended up talking to were very sweet. I barely talk to them anymore, but every now and then people text me to say, like, happy birthday or something. But yeah, I had relied on strangers on the internet to abide my feelings with my family.

**[Me]** Thank you so much for sharing. Whoever would like to go next?

**[Nicole]** For me, my parents... I think I got a phone in junior high, but my parents always warned me of the dangers of talking to random people on the internet, because they just might be, like, creeps, basically. And I think that's about the only way... Oh, actually, one

time, too, they, like, for a little while, they put on, like, my phone, something to, like, restrict screen time. So, like, certain apps would lock after a certain amount of time.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Yasmin]** So, for me, like, my parents did not mind at all that I was using social media. So, like, I had a lot of freedom, I guess. Like, they did not mind. Like, I don't have... I can't remember a time or some... Yeah, a moment where, like, my parents were like, "Oh, you should, like, you have to be aware and, like, don't post this and don't do this". Like, they did not mind. Like, no, they did not mind at all. So, they did not influence, I think, my... the way that I was using social media, because I used to post things and... some Musical.lys or TikToks or stories, but they knew that only my friends were able to see, so I think that it wasn't a big deal for them. So, yeah.

**[Melody]** No, but *it did make it so I don't talk about certain things.*

**[Me]** Thank you. Thank you all for your responses.

The next question is, when you're in a difficult situation online, so, for example, you're witnessing or experiencing cyberbullying or you're feeling pressure to participate in a challenge, do you think about how your family might react? And if you haven't been in a situation like this, you could try to hypothesize.

**[Melanie]** Oh, definitely. I think when I first, in, like, the sixth grade, got my iPod and started building up social media and stuff like that, a lot of people were depressed on the internet and a lot of people, like, it was trending to be depressed and, like, emo on the internet, and so a lot of my interactions with people and my friends on there was them telling me they were going to off themselves and all that, like, was really weird for me. Which, per se, in fact, is, like, how I handled my emotions afterwards as well. But when, you know, people were, like, dumping these emotions on me and I wasn't sure how to support them or help them, or people were asking me to, like, send them nudes and stuff like that on Snapchat, it was really weird, and my brain factor was like, this is, like, haram because I'm Muslim. But on top of that, I was like, if my mom finds out, like, she's going to *beat me*. Like, she's going to *put me in a hospital*. Which is a fair reaction because why would a 15-year-old send pictures of her naked body to people? Why would a 15-year-old be therapizing people who need institutionalized help? And so that was a main factor of them, like, finding out what was going on on my phone, so I always, like, lived in, like, a constant state of, like, panic for when they would go through my phone of, "oh my gosh, what if they see X, Y, and Z?" So, yeah.

**[Me]** Thank you for sharing. Whoever would like to go next?

**[Derek]** This one's... This one is difficult. I... I've, like, faced situations online that have been uncomfortable. I was on Discord, you know, when I was 16, so there's always going to be

that sort of thing. I always thought, like, “is this something I'm comfortable telling my family about?” And how would they react to it? I think my biggest fear was, even though I know that it's pretty irrational, there was a part of me that was worried that I would be blamed for everything. I didn't ever think I would, like, lose social media stuff because it was never something that I personally, like... I had been punished by getting devices taken away, but never social media. So there was never a concern about that. There was a concern about having a device taken away because I'm rather possessive about my things due to childhood stuff. So I think there was a bit of worry around that, but there was also a worry of, like, how embarrassing is it if all of this stuff is suddenly shown to my parents, you know?

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Sebastian]** Because of how independent my family is, how, like, my parents were like, “oh, our kids are old enough to do whatever they want”, despite being in elementary school because my brother graduated high school. I think growing up, whenever something happened, my first instinct was not to go to my parents. It was to deal with it myself. And then if it had escalated to such a bad area, then that is when I would go to tell my parents. But I think a lot of the stuff, if I had told my parents or tried to talk to them, my dad's reaction might have been to do his best to help, but my mom would probably just dismiss it, roll her eyes at it, because that does tend to happen to be a lot of the conversations I have with them. My dad is like me, where I can kind of panic over something or just see the worst in it right away. While, my mom is very like, “eh, that doesn't matter”. If there's not something exploding in front of her face, she will think it's fine. But yeah, mostly I was very independent growing up. I didn't look to my parents as parents. I looked to myself as a parent almost.

**[Me]** Thank you so much for sharing.

**[Nicole]** For me, if something like that would happen online, I don't think... I haven't experienced much of that. But if I would tell my parents, they'd probably just tell me to ignore or don't engage, just kind of leave it alone, don't interact with the person. And I know sometimes I'll, on a (local culture and entertainment Instagram page) post, I'll look in the comments, and the comments are so bad. I used to just go through and block a bunch of people who were saying racist stuff. But I don't really do that anymore.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Yasmin]** So I've never been exposed to all that kind of stuff since when I was posting online, it was private. So only my friends were able to see it. So I actually never experienced that. But I think that if I did, I would probably tell my mom, and she will kind of figure it out and help me. But I don't really know since I've never experienced it. But I think, in my opinion, that I will directly go to my mom, and she will find a solution, I guess.

**[Melody]** *No I don't, I just do what I want.*

**[Me]** Amazing. Thank you all so much. The next question is, do your family's reactions to your choices, either online or offline, affect your approach to schoolwork or relationships? And if so, can you give an example? And do keep in mind, relationships can be either romantic or platonic, or both.

**[Melanie]** I think growing up, my family's reaction, my parents' reaction, has always been angry and very, I don't know the English word for it, but very confrontational, almost, I guess. And so whenever I make a decision about schooling, or when I make a decision about who and who not to be friends with, it's always, well now, it's more like, "you're making this decision, I completely disagree with you, are you sure?" And it's not always from a place of like, "let's have an open dialogue", but it's more so like, trying to place seeds of doubt in something, even if I'm like, "no, I want this to work, or I have faith, I'm gonna try". It's always, "well, don't forget, you're never gonna have true friends in life", and you're like, "oh, okay". And that obviously for them stems from an area of having to leave their whole family, and everything that they know, coming to a different country, so they feel super alone, and they do not have community, but it's like, I'm born and raised here, I have community here, but so because of that, they kind of project some of their worries and their struggles onto me, and it makes me unable to always trust in something, or trust in a process, or trust in people, just because I've been planted with this forever lasting seed of doubt in a person's ability to commit and stay, or in a process, or a thing's ability to follow through to its fullest capacity without problems, hiccups, or interference to them.

**[Me]** Thank you for sharing. Whoever would like to go next?

**[Derek]** So, as I mentioned before, school has always been something that's been easy to handle with parents, but relationships, I know, my mom follows my Instagram, I don't have her blocked on anything, and my parents have always been weird around relationships, not like in a "don't date", but in a like, they're just weird to any partners I've had (laughs), so I've found that I keep things on the down low, and I often, I don't post about relationships at all on social media, because it's just not something that I want to have to have that conversation with parents, so if I'm dating someone, I oftentimes, I just won't post about it, which can cause some weird sort of, like, I'll see some weird side effects, but it's definitely an impact of like, I just don't want to have to go through the whole really awkward sort of process of like, "don't be weird to them, and be respectful, and there's some boundaries with that kind of stuff", so I, yeah.

**[Me]** Thank you so much.

**[Sebastian]** I think from my family being bad with communication, and also the independence given to me at such a young age, I also kind of grew up being pretty bad with affection, or not affection, sorry, communication. Within the last couple years, I've gotten a

lot more self-aware, and I'm working on myself as a person, but a lot of people I'm close to, I have accidentally been a little bit of a meanie to whenever I'm upset. I have this habit of just, with relationships in my life, platonic or romantic, if something is wrong, I will not tell them, because I have this need to solve it on my own, and also fear that they will react like my parents. One of my really close friends, though, has been helping me work on this, and she says that when I try to act normal when I'm upset, I act as if I am someone trying to act as me, so I think that has definitely affected my relationships. If she's the first person to tell me this, I can imagine other people have probably noticed it. When it comes to schoolwork, again, just independence, I have to beg my parents sometimes to call the school when I'm sick, so I think them giving me so much independence at such an early age has definitely affected how I talk to people. I've had to build up my own communication skills and my own affection skills, really, with people because of this.

**[Me]** Thank you so much. Whoever would like to go next?

**[Nicole]** For me, I would say, yeah, like, for a little while, I wouldn't open up to them as much. Like, I had two relationships that I didn't tell them about. Not that they would, like, react badly. I just kind of didn't want to (laughs), well, maybe because I was scared they would react badly, but I don't think they actually would. And then with schoolwork, like, they're pretty, they've always been, like, helpful. Like, if they can't help me with that, they will. But they're also kind of, like, both, like, they were pretty academic, so there's a certain pressure to, like, get better grades and, like, like, they won't be, like, super upset if I get a bad grade, but, yeah, I don't know.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Melody]** No, I'm very independent of my family and don't let what they think affect my decisions too much.

**[Yasmin]** So for the schoolwork, I think that, like, I have two big sisters, and they were really good at school. So I had a little, I don't know how to say it, but I had a little pressure, I guess, but it did not come from my parents. It was from myself. That I put on myself to, like, be good at school, but it wasn't really hard, so it was, like, kind of, like, a pressure that was from the fact that my sisters were good at school, but, like, my parents were more, like, "calm down", like, I don't know how to say that in English, but, like, (switches to French) it was very chill, actually, whereas I really put myself under pressure, but, like, the pressure came more from the fact that my sisters were good at school, which did not come from my parents, but it made me, like, really, it created a lot of anxiety, and until now, at uni, I stress a lot, for example, during the exam session or something like that, whereas, in itself, my parents are very chill, like, "calm down, it's okay", they are very supportive, like, they are very listening, they are very, very there, actually, (switches back to English) but in relation to relationships, well, my parents' opinion is very... not necessarily my parents', but my mother's and my

sisters', is very important on the relationships that I have with people, because I have the impression that the gut, I don't know how to say that, I think it's the gut, I don't know how to say it in French either, but my mother is very, very developed on a person, so I know that when she tells me, "yes, be careful, wait", I will directly move away from that person, and that's it.

**[Me]** Awesome. So, for non-French speakers, (translates) Okay, thank you all so much, and with that, we go to the next question. How do or would you feel after discussing online challenges or risks with your parents, and do or would you feel more confident, confused, or something else? So whoever would like to start.

-pause-

**[Sebastian]** If no one's volunteering, I guess I will. I think the times where I have tried to communicate online challenges or risks, I left feeling either more confused or the same, because my parents did not usually try to help me when it comes to this. If one of them would, it would probably be my dad, but more times than not, I don't normally go to my parents for this kind of stuff. They, I think the most they would do is either tell me I'm being dramatic, or to just ignore and block everybody in the situation, as if most of these people I probably don't have to see at school, or anything. (underline= said in sarcastic tone) which most of the time I normally do. But really, any online challenges or risks, I would avoid talking to my parents about, and if I did, I would just be more panicked, because now, I've caused a kerfuffle between my parents and myself.

**[Melanie]** Sorry, I know I usually go but I'm like, trying to like, think like, I don't go to my parents about any online things. I've gone to them when I've gotten into some issues during high school, and like, the people in grade 12 were texting me some crazy messages. But I've never been able to go to them, because both of them, again, are very much like, confrontational, so they, their whole thing is, "well, where are they? Go confront them", or "tell them to come here, and we can confront this issue and get it out of the way". And like, I don't want to confront people all over the internet. And they're more, so just like, "let's just handle it and get it done". So never really go onto them. Also, try to explain to them that like, these are people I've met on the internet, and these are my friends. That is something I don't want to do, because my mom believes in AI videos, still. So it's just not, like, yeah, I'm just not able to go to them with online challenges and stuff.

**[Me]** That's fair. Thank you so much.

**[Derek]** I find that my parents will bring up discussions about challenges and risks on social media before I even can think of it. We've had one conversation about challenging risks and it was when I first got my phone. Um, and it was a long conversation. It didn't cover everything. Um I've faced other risks that they didn't talk about. I think I would feel worried about discussing it, but I'd hope that I'd feel more confident afterwards. Both my parents are

pretty good on social media, so I'm assuming they have a lot more uh knowledge on the subject. So I'd hope, at least especially with my mom, I think if I brought up something with my mom, that was a challenge or a risk I believe that if we had a conversation about it, she would be able to help and make me feel better as long as it's not something that I'm too scared to bring up in the first place (laughs).

**[Me]** That's fair, thank you so much

**[Nicole]** Um for me, I don't know if talking to them would make me feel more confident, but it would definitely make me have like a more definitive idea of what to do because they would probably be very against like taking risks online um so I guess more confident just because they would like tell me to be careful.

**[Me]** Thank you

**[Yasmin]** So I don't remember having a discussion about online challenges with my parents, but I think that if I did, I don't think that it will change anything because in all case, I stopped it like posting on social media everything like that, so I think that it will make me feel more confident my decision of stopping but yeah, I don't really know.

**[Melody]** *I don't discuss things but if I did I would have to explain too much and it would be more of a headache than it's worth.*

**[Me]** Okay. Thank you all so much for sharing your responses. We go to the next section of the focus group. So what does risk taking mean to you when it comes to online behaviour? And can you give me some examples of risks people your age might take on social media? Or if you have concrete examples, feel free to share those as well.

**[Derek]** Uh, if I can. Um, for me, risk taking in online behavior is, um, I think there's a couple different forms. I mean, risk taking takes a lot of different forms as we grow up. I believe when you're a young kid, risk taking means bending rules that people have given you. So for me, that was, um, contacting people on social media that were, like, across the world that I didn't have any feel for. Especially on this part, I think I was taking a risk by reaching out to people that I really didn't know well, and I didn't know if they could have been lying about their age or other things. And part of that was, I would lie about my age a lot on social media—not for, like, inappropriate means, but just to get into places that I wouldn't have access to prior. So a lot of the time, that was risk taking to me. Um, and I think it's—for a lot of people like my age now—I think a lot of risks that people are taking on social media are... um, some of these risks are greater than others. For example, you could... I mean, I don't personally see it as risk taking, but a lot of people may perceive posting political content as risk taking because you could be risking relationships with people that disagree. Whether you want those friendships or not in the first place is up to you. Same thing as posting very

personal details about your life to a public account, I think, is something that a lot of people do.

**[Me]** For sure, thank you. Whoever would like to go next?

**[Yasmin]** Uh, so for me an example of like risk taking behaviour is like posting personal things about your life on social media when you don't know who will be able to see it and like there are crazy people out there so you don't really know like what they will do with it with those information. So I think that this is really like a risk that you should not take but I know that a lot of people of my age do it anyway, so yeah.

**[Me]** Thank you

**[Sebastian]** I think I agree a lot with what Derek and Yasmin said um as well as I've seen a lot of people my age or around my age uh start being mean to random people on social media as a form of risk taking because they can't see your face behind your comment so you're able to say whatever you want. I've had a lot of people be mean to my face, but I've had way more people being mean to me on social media, especially when I was posting religiously on Musical.ly as a kid. I have so many private videos and then if I look at the comments there's people being like "you suck" when I was like seven for some reason but um no, I think as a kid personally a lot of my risk taking involved making a lot of friends on social media when my parents were like "you should be careful of predators" and stuff. It was a very short conversation, but I still remember it and I'm very lucky that I never ran into predators but I did do a lot of things that could have been unsafe and I'm very glad that the risk that I took did not lead to it being unsafe, but I do know better now.

**[Nicole]** For me, I had a couple online friends so I think that could have been risky um and then one of my friends like one time just for fun she joined like an incel group on Discord because she wanted to know like "why do they think the way they do?" Which was I mean that's kind of risky I think but um yeah, she kind of just thought it was like fun.

**[Me]** Um, did anything come of that? When I say that... like yeah, joining that group in itself is a risk so did she... I don't know. Did she get what she wanted out of joining the group? Did it backfire?

**[Nicole]** I think she kind of learned that like a lot of them they just have one bad relationship and like, break up and then they just like start like... I don't know if all of them hate women, but they definitely just kind of give up on relationships because of one bad experience um... So, I guess she got what she wanted and nothing bad happened to my knowledge.

**[Me]** Good. Thank you for sharing.

**[Melanie]** Um, I think for risk-taking for me specifically right now a lot of the risk that I take on social media is due to advocacy and putting political statements out there and so that

puts me in a position where a lot of people will make assumptions. A lot of people will, you know, say insane things about me or, you know, spread a lot of misinformation about whether it's the cause, or whether it's me, whether it's my family, and that sometimes makes me a target for a lot of trolls and bots and they'll be like trying to get a rise out of my stuff, which I don't respond to. Um, and I think generally as somebody who's not an activist, a lot of the risk is like when you're talking to new people online and you know through Instagram mutuals and stuff like that. You're never certain of who else is seeing the conversation and I know that's always been a thing for social media but that's even more of a thing for me right now because I'm like, you know, speaking to a lot of new people and, you know, making new friends online, and it's always like at the back of my mind where like who else is seeing these conversations, who else is seeing these texts?

**[Melody]** Uh, I guess I'll go next. Um, for me personally, I grew up in a very, like, "you can't really do anything" house. So for me, risk-taking was very loose—like online friends were very risky. But now, um, my rules are very lax. I can kind of just do whatever I want. Um, so most of my risk-taking now is things like, "Oh, my family is on my socials. Maybe I shouldn't post the name that I'm using that they don't know about," or like, "Maybe I shouldn't post this political stuff that they don't agree with and could start an argument," kind of thing.

Um, and I found that's a thing for a lot of my friends who aren't out yet, where they have to keep different names on their socials if their family's following, or they have to keep things to their close friends' stories, or just things like that. When you're not out (referring to coming out), it's harder to navigate social media in a way that truly reflects yourself, which is a huge aspect of what social media should be for a lot of people, I find.

Um, but yeah, like, I have two younger sisters that I live with currently, and one of them has gotten into some pretty inappropriate stuff for her age online. So I can definitely see why I was restricted when I was younger. It's all a balance, really. But yeah, at a certain point, it's like the parents have to think about things like, "Okay, when am I just hurting my kid?" But yeah.

**[Me]** Thank you so much and could you give a quick introduction, please? So your name, age and what social media app or apps you use the most?

**[Melody]** Uh, yeah, so sorry I'm late. Um, my name is (suggestions for nicknames), either or works. Um, I'm 17 now and I use pretty much all of them, but I'm mainly on Instagram.

**[Me]** Cool, thank you so much. And thank you all. With that, we'll go to the next question. So imagine you were thinking about sharing something personal online or participating in a social media challenge uh, are you or would you be comfortable sharing this with you? Not sharing, discussing this with your family and why or why not?

**[Melanie]** Um for me again depending what it is. I would say no because both my parents follow my social media and so do all of their friends [and] a lot of people in my mom's circle who follow me see me at least once a month. Um, and they've never once said anything about what I post on Instagram and nobody's ever said anything to my mom about what I post. But again, I post consciously about knowing that they're, you know, watching all my stuff but um, I also don't uh think that... sorry, no, I don't think that I would. But if I was imagining, and I was going to say something personal um, I would just give them a heads up. I would be like "yo, I'm gonna post this just so you know" and they would just be like "what is that?" And then if it was super concerning for some reason they would be like, "all right pipe down like what are you doing?" But if I really was [committed] and I was like, "I need to do this", they'd be like, "all right go for it."

**[Derek]** I think the baseline for me is I don't post a lot of stuff that I would even think about telling family um, there's certain issues that I do post about that I don't think I'd ever bring up with parents solely because I just know they don't agree with it. Um like the Free Palestine movement. I've been pretty avid about that on social media and my parents (chuckles) don't... they don't have the um, they haven't done the research and therefore they have pretty outdated opinions on it or or not outdated, but they don't um... they don't match mine, so it's not something I'd be comfortable talking with them about because the last couple times I brought it up uh, like when I was organizing a rally at our school and it went awkwardly trying to explain why it was something that was important. Um like challenges for social media, I found I haven't exactly done many. I'll do the classic Instagram like Post This with a little caption but they're never something I've even thought about sharing with family because they are so small. So in that case, I'd be comfortable discussing it because it's not something that I'm really doing that is something to be embarrassed by but certain topics, yeah, I could definitely see myself being uncomfortable because I have been in the past.

**[Sebastian]** I think depending on what kind of personal things I'm uploading... it depends on how my family would react. Um whenever I hang out with my friends I normally post that on my account because I like looking back at the memories and all the photos and that is also the entire reason that my mom follows me on Instagram because she didn't before and she's like, "oh you're posting these photos of (Sebastian's two friends)? I want to see them!" So she started following me on Instagram, but if it were something more personal that had emotion to it, I think she'd get mad at me and I have an example of this because in junior high before I met those online friends that I mentioned I vented to a lot, I would vent on my Instagram story and my mom sat me down one time and she's like "you can't do this, you're making our family look unhinged in front of a bunch of people. This is public. Don't do that." So I had to stop doing that, so I think if it's like any social media challenge or just anything that does not involve my family or my emotions, my mom will not care. She will turn up like that. But as soon as it is something that involves me personally then she's going to be like, "hey, don't do this. You're making us look bad."

**[Melody]** Um, I'm kind of in the same boat as Derek where there are some like political stuff that I'm not going to share because uh my guardians don't agree with my stance and it would just be an uncomfortable conversation and like I don't think there's any like things that I do that I, like challenge wise that I like that are big enough that I purposefully wouldn't bring them up, but they're usually just like I forget about them like the second after I post the thing because it's usually like oh "30 days of music challenge" kind of thing. Um but yeah, I think like most of the things I do um are so small in that aspect and then the things that aren't I kind of keep far away from them on purpose.

**[Yasmin]** Uh, so for me, I think that uh, if I'm posting something online, I'm comfortable with that thing, and since like my parents and my sisters and all the members of my family that follow me on Instagram or uh in my personal like private stories on Snapchat, like, they know when I'm posting about something and since I'm comfortable with posting that thing, I think that I'm also comfortable with the fact of speaking about it with my family. So it's not a problem for me, like I feel comfortable with my family members to talk with them about something and if it's like a challenge we're talking about like the Free Palestine [movement], like my parents think like me so I'm like we can discuss about it without it being taboo, I don't know how to say it in English but....

**[Me]** Yeah, it's the same word. Thank you so much.

**[Nicole]** Um for me, I try not to post like super personal stuff online and then um yeah, I don't really participate in challenges online either, um, so I don't discuss it with my family, but I think if I did and I discussed it with them, they would just warn me not to post like super personal stuff or something like that might like, uh be online for a long time and then like affects my ability to get a job or something like that.

**[Me]** Okay, um, thank you all so much. That will lead us to the next question. Some of you have touched on this a little bit, but um, have you ever avoided telling your family about something risky you've done online and what made you decide not to tell them?

**[Melanie]** Um yeah, I um I think something that like risky quote unquote done online that I haven't told my parents is maybe... um sorry, I'm just trying to think. I don't know, my hands were like really... they're maybe a little bit *too* relaxed so when I post on social media I think probably just like in the prime of like the sixth, seventh grade is like being added to a bunch of group chats. *Oh*, I was beefing a lot of people. *Yeah*, I used to get into a lot of disagreements with people in my school but online and I would not tell my mom whatsoever and I would get trolled and like I was getting severely bullied. Actually, um, sorry. I don't know how that completely monumental thing slipped my head but I was like getting severely bullied. I was in a private school and these people were online bullying me like not talking to me in person and I wasn't telling my parents that, I wasn't telling anybody. At some point like things escalated and I got into a fight with these two guys and then I had to tell my mom but

they were super supportive because again, they're super conversational people so they're like, "all right, well, did you win the fight?" And I was like, "well, yeah". It's like (the parent's reaction) "okay, then that sounds like a non-issue" and there was no further conversation about why I was getting bullied. There was no further conversation about how to handle being bullied online. Like it was mostly just like "did you handle it? Yes", and then there was a follow-up of like "did they continue" which *they did* um yeah, I think that's something that I wouldn't tell them because again they don't understand the concept of social media and getting bullied online. They're very much just like "did you handle it?" And that's it, should end there, which unfortunately it doesn't for a lot of people.

**[Derek]** Um, I've definitely avoided (chuckles) uh telling family about risky things, um I mean I kind of went for that risky behaviour because it was something that was bending the rules. This is again definitely on like Discord chats. I just didn't feel a need or or even um... it comes back to the embarrassment as well. I think for me, if something were to happen it would feel just generally uncomfortable and embarrassing to tell something and I guess in the end my mind kind of went to like "is this something that's really relevant" and I usually just deem it as something that's not um necessary to share, I think kind of what it came down to.

**[Sebastian]** I think almost everything I kind of tend to avoid telling my parents. I talk to them a lot, but it's usually just mundane stuff. I'm like, "oh, how was your day?" And then the stuff that did not impact me um so really anything risky I did or still do online I don't really tell them about because I've just never had that relationship with them where I could and a couple times where I have told them about something I was backed into a corner and forced to tell them and it didn't turn out well, so I think I've just kind of been conditioned to not tell them about anything risky I do or anything that's serious unless it is I am backed into a corner and forced to tell them or is serious enough that it might impact them as well.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Nicole]** Um for me the few times I made friends online, I didn't tell them about it um and then yeah, most situations like unless it's really serious, I won't tell them like I can just block the person and like I'm not too worried about like most risky stuff.

**[Yasmin]** So for me, like, I never did something risky online. I think that the only thing that we can consider as risky was talking to someone that I saw on a comment that was like, "oh, I want to speak to a person that speak French" I was like, "oh I speak French" and like I started speaking with her but that's the only risky thing that I ever did and uh I like when I started talking to her I went to my mom and I was like, "oh, mom, like I saw a comment of a girl that was like, oh I want to speak to people that speak French and I was like, oh me too. I want to speak to people that speak English and we started speaking" and she was like, "oh, okay", so like that's the only risky thing that I ever did and like I told it to my mom I think that I never told my dad, but my mom was aware of it.

**[Me]** Thank you

**[Melody]** Um for me, there's obviously the stuff I've touched on like not coming out to them and like not sharing political stuff that I think is gonna cause a huge thing. Um but there's also some aspects where, like, I have never really said anything and I don't know how they would feel about it like online friends and such or something that, like... I don't know how they would feel about me, like, talking to people online and all that because when I was younger, it was a huge issue but, like, I don't know where I'd be at with that now. Um, but um somebody also mentioned like... oh, like getting into a bunch of arguments with people and all of that um, I did do that quite a lot um now I don't but like that used to be a huge issue for me online.

**[Me]** Thank you, and thank you all so much for your responses. This is the last question of this section of the focus group. Um, how do you think your family's communication style affects your participation in risky online behaviours

**[Melanie]** For me, I think because we're super confrontational as a whole, it's always been—if there's something that I'm concerned about, I will just head on either post about it, talk about it, and confront somebody about it. I'm the same way in person. So it's not like, “Oh, the screen, I can say whatever I want behind the screen.” No, it's like, I'm the same way in person. And I think posting about things and, you know, sharing things—again, because there's never a lot of questions, a lot of like, “Oh, don't do this, don't do that”—I'm just like, “Okay, we'll just do it and see what happens. We'll try and see what happens.” I think that's because there was unmonitored access to the internet. So yeah.

**[Derek]** I think because there's some aspects that were very open, it's reduced how much I, um, encounter risky behaviours but I think that the fact that, um, the fact that a lot of things do end up with a harsher response, especially when it's critiquing something a parent did, makes it so that I feel a little more hesitant to bring certain risky behaviours up that I did participate in.

**[Sebastian]** I think the way my family's communication style is structured did lead me into the risky behaviours that I did, such as how my family's communication is not very open and we're all very independent people, so it kind of feels more like I'm living with three, four other roommates than my own family, and that led me to almost try and find one online, which led to risky behaviours of finding online friends and then becoming part of this friend group where the age range was 18 to 20 while I was 14, um, and I would vent a lot, like, online on my Instagram story or to these friends, which were issues, like, I was 14 and wanting to kill myself, this was honestly something I should have been talking to my family about, but they exploded when my psychologist threatened to tell them, so I told them instead and they exploded, threatened to send me to a psych ward, as I mentioned, so I never talked to them about my mental health, really. Again, I was risky and told strangers on

the Internet instead because I could not find this support at home, I went to try and find it elsewhere.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Melody]** Um, I think now I'm a lot more, I'm sorry, I'm a lot less risky than I used to be. Um, like I said, when I was younger, I lived in a very, like, "oh, you can't really do anything, like, straight to school, straight home". I don't think I went to my first sleepover until I was in, like, the sixth grade, kind of thing.

Um, but when I moved family, um, like, that kind of changed, and instead, like, they just trust me more, and like, like, oh, yeah, "you can do this and this" that I wouldn't have been allowed to do before, and I think that has made it so that, like, I'm not gonna do as much as I used to, because I don't feel the need to, like, try to get away with anything, because I can just tell them.

**[Me]** Thank you. Whoever would like to go next?

**[Yasmin]** Um, so for me, I think that since we're really, like, open in my family, like, I'm more able to speak to people, like, online, and, like, I feel comfortable talking to people online and telling it to my family, so, like, they know that I'm doing it, and my, for example, I'm taking the same example, but when my mom, like, is like, "Oh, yes, you shouldn't do that," I will just stop, so I think that it really affects the way that I'm more, like, chill and okay with talking to people that I don't really know, but since I'm, like, a little bit shy, it's also more, like, easy for me to speak to people online than in real life. I think that this also affects the way that I'm more comfortable with it, but yeah, I guess that that's all.

**[Me]** Great, thank you.

**[Nicole]** Um, for me, I don't really know how the communication style affects that, but, um, like, I would say, like, I just don't really, like, engage with people who are, like, uh, being disrespectful or something like that. I'll just, like, ignore them or block them.

**[Me]** Thank you. That leads us to the next question. Um, have you noticed differences in how your friends' families communicate compared to your own, and do these differences affect their choices about social media or online behaviour?

**[Melody]** Uh, I definitely have. My partner, um, his mom is super strict, like, to the point where it, like, gets in the way of, like, other people trying to do things. Um, like, usually when we're gonna hang out, I'm like, "Okay, ask your mom," and then we'll plan something, because there's, like, anywhere from, like, a 50 to 70 percent chance she'll just say no in the first place. But, um, like, my philosophy has kind of always been, like, strict parents don't raise good kids, they raise sneaky kids, and that's exactly what happened with my boyfriend, because instead of just not using social medias like his mom wanted him to, he just made an

account and didn't tell her. Um, whereas, like, I don't necessarily think I asked before having an account, but it was never really, like, a thing that it was like, "Oh, you can't do this," and I, like, never really even thought, like, "Oh, this is gonna be a thing."

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Derek]** Uh, I— I have friends that are way more, I think, comfortable on social media than I am, because they— I mean, one of them, it's a simple thing, um, and it's actually really strange. They- I know, personally, they had a very, um, disjointed family, like, very much— communication's pretty closed on both ends, but they're very, very loose on social media. Like, they'll post very personal stuff, um, and— and they're very much, like, not concerned about risky behaviours. Versus, like, I have friends that, um, have pretty good, like, communication relationships with people in their family, and even then, they'll, um— they'll be a little bit more— I— I won't say moderated like I am, but oftentimes, it kind of leads to, um, you know, how early they had access to technology and how open the family was communicating those norms in technology, is what I've noticed.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Melanie]** Um, 100 percent. Um, I grew up mainly around, again, like, other people, other kids who are children of immigrants, and, like, we all had a general same style of childhood, same style of how our parents parented us, and, like, the same issues. But when I started making friends who weren't, you know, who were white, they—at least, like, the friends that I had—one of my closest friends, completely different style of the fact that they didn't talk to each other, and another one of my friends, they have so much communication, and they have so much online presence—sorry, not online presence, but they have so much open dialogue with their parents.

With my other friend, like, they also don't, and they have, like, weird, like, secrets and stuff. And so my one friend who comes from a home with, like, more secrets, like, you know, not communicating openly with each other, she's very much online, always posting, and, like, super careful and cautious because, you know, nobody really taught her a bunch of stuff growing up. But then, again, a little bit more relaxed with strangers, whereas my friend who grew up with, you know, a more controlling social media presence and, like, more communication with parents has a lot more critical thought about what she's interacting with, like, who she's messaging. And, again, for me, like, I relate more to my friend who didn't have a lot of communication growing up, and I have critical thought because I have to, right?

Like, I'm a very, like, political person, so I have to think twice before I post something. "What does that say to my political image?" But, again, I'm more so just, like, happy to text almost anybody back, and it's like, "oh, well, we're just gonna find out if you're clinically insane or if

you're a normal person who just, you know, wants to learn more about what's happening".  
So yeah.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Sebastian]** One of my friends, I'm not saying her family's perfect, so much so that when I mention anything weird that my family does, she'll look at me and she'll be like, "that's not normal. What?" But because of this, I don't really post much to social media anymore, but when the height of my family's communication problems were, I did post a lot, and I was much more risky.

Well, my friend (friend's name), she rarely, I don't think she ever really posted on social media. She did not really care for it. I was trying to make new friends on social media. I was finding almost, like, a chosen family in that part. Well, she was comfortable with her family, so she did not care. She, like, used it to watch funny videos and used it for entertainment, while I was almost using it to try and find a new safe place because my home did not feel like home.

And that's most of the differences that I did notice. It's just that she was less risky with her social media behaviour, while I gained more risk to try and find safe[ty], if that makes sense.

**[Me]** Yeah. Thank you so much. Whoever would like to go next?

**[Yasmin]** So, my friends, like, they kind of have the same relationship with their family as I do. So, they're, like, pretty close to their family members, but I don't really know if it, like, affects the way that they're posting on social media. I know that I have some friends that, like, post a lot, and others that are, like, more private, I guess.

But I don't know if it's because of the way that their family communicates, or it's just because of personal things that they like, or I don't know, like, if it's because of their family, or if it's just because of them and how they see social media and their, like, risk and things like that. So, yeah.

**[Me]** All right. Thank you.

**[Nicole]** Like, my family's communication style is pretty open, and, like, if you, like, kind of call them out on something, they won't take it personally. But I know one of my friends, her mom, like, will take anything personally, and just, like, almost, like, wants to start arguments, and she'll be, like, "oh, so I'm just a horrible mom" then, like, if she says, like, "you shouldn't do that". So, that's probably a lot more difficult to, like, communicate with someone like that.

**[Me]** For sure. Thank you so much. Thank you all. The next question is, if you could change one thing about how your family communicates about social media or online behaviours, what would it be?

**[Melanie]** I think I would get my parents to control my little sister's social media more. She's in high school, and she has a private account, which is great, but, *oh*, she's posting some funny things on there. I would definitely get her social media a little bit more on a leash than it is currently.

I also think I would try to get my parents to, like, understand how many people are actually looking at social media and how many people are watching what they post, because my mom posts on Facebook and doesn't think past that, and it's, like, a lot, mommy, like, a lot of people are watching, like, a lot of people see that post, like, too many people. I think that would be super useful, and then I think I, like, love to have more media literacy for them, because they are, you know, like, immigrant parents, so they don't understand half of what's happening, and again, like, I think just more open conversations about what are the dangers of social media, because I have to, like, just learn that from experience, and, like, you know, just critical thought as an oldest child. A lot of more, like, understanding, like, people can genuinely harm you and take information from you from social media. I would love to have, like, those conversations, if that makes sense. Yeah.

**[Me]** Yeah, definitely does. Thank you. Who would like to go next?

**[Derek]** I think, I think, I think I would have two things. I maybe, I wouldn't have had my, I would have wanted to change so that my mom would have posted me less on her social media when I was, like, little, little, because it's nice to have those photos of me when I'm young, but social media is a scary place, especially for photos of a half-clothed child, so I would have maybe had that, and then the other thing is I would have loved if my parents had continued talks on risk after the first chat we had. I think it would have made it easier to bring up certain issues if I knew that they were, like, very, like, if the conversation had been opened on their end, so I think if it had been a situation where communication about certain risks was brought up regularly, I think I would have, I think I would have changed that.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Sebastian]** I think I agree a lot with what Derek said about family, like, posting childhood photos. When I was in junior high, I practically had to, like, scream it into my parents' ear, "Hey, stop taking photos of me without my permission and posting them," because if you were to go on my parents' Facebook accounts, you could find so many photos of just me and my friend hanging out in the backyard, and my parents taking a photo from the kitchen window, looking like they're stalkers, and then they're just posting these photos without my permission.

They wouldn't even warn me they're taking a photo beforehand, so I couldn't even smile. It's just, like, creepy photos. Every now and then, I will catch them taking a photo of me, and I have to go, "No, what did we say? No, what did we say?" And then they're like, "Fine, can I take a photo of you?" And then I go, "There we go, thank you." And it's almost like I'm having to parent them.

So I would really like it if that could change, where they would actually just ask me for my consent to take photos and post them. But besides that, I also do just kind of wish that as a kid, they might have had those social media conversations with me, because it was mostly just, "Here's an iPad, here's a phone, go ham." And I feel like as a kid, I saw a lot of stuff on social media that I shouldn't have, because I didn't know the dangers. I had to learn them the hard way and teach them to myself the hard way. So I do wish my family had more communication in that aspect.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Melody]** I agree a lot with what Derek and Sebastian said. It's not so bad anymore, but when I was younger, I was really dysphoric. So I was like, "I don't want pictures of me anywhere. I don't want pictures of me to exist." And they just wouldn't care and carry on taking pictures anyways. And one, like, me and my sisters have this thing we do on New Year's, where we, like, just hang out, do Just Dance, like, play board games, like, just have a fun time. But they thought that it would be fine to just, like, post a video of us doing Just Dance on social media. And all of us agreed, like, "hell no, I don't want that online". And my sisters decided, "okay, you have to bring it up, because none of us want to bring it up, because we know how this is going to end". And it ended exactly how we thought it was going to. Basically, I got blocked from their Facebook so that I couldn't see what they posted, so that I couldn't say anything about what they posted. And just, like, things like that, just basic, like, respect and consent, I think, are aspects that, like, need to change with that. But yeah.

**[Me]** Thank you. Whoever would like to go next?

**[Nicole]** For me, I think the only thing I would change is, yeah, just asking permission if they're going to post, like, a photo of me. But other than that, I think they're pretty good about, like, not falling for scams and stuff like that.

**[Yasmin]** So for me, like, my parents do not, like, post on social media. So, like, the only thing that I think that I don't like is when my mom will take old snaps of me and she'll send it in the group chat. And I'm like, "Wsh (french slang expression), what's wrong with you, I look like a villain" But other than that, like, I don't think that there is something that I don't like. And, yeah, I cannot think of some of the things that I don't like since they do not post on social media.

**[Me]** Thank you. And with that, we will go to the next question. It should be the second-last question of this section before we go to the group activity that will conclude this focus group. So thank you all for bearing with me until now. So this question is, looking ahead, how do you think your family's communication style might affect your decisions about social media use as you grow older?

**[Melanie]** I think that as I continue to grow, the more I realize, like, the more confident we need to be of what we're posting. Again, that's from my, like, very narrow perspective of, like, doing political activism. And I just, like, my mom also does what I do with 10 times the scale, right?

And so, like, how important social media is in this day and age for my mom's advocacy, for my advocacy, for the organizations we run. Like, it's such an important tool, especially as we're growing, especially as people are, like, centering away from, like, national media and news outlets, but towards, like, individual stories and people's, like, perspectives. While that's great and it's a great tool, it needs to be used super, super consciously and super, like, with realizing that people who are coming to either my page, my mom's page, or whatever page for, like, informational, you know, posts and content, they're also going to get a side of personal life.

And some people are going to be pro that, and some people are going to be anti that. And you just never know. And so it's, like, I've posted, I've overshared on the internet too much. And now I don't as much. I still do. I'm just a girl. I'm doing my best. But there's a lot of oversharing that happens, and that needs to get cut significantly.

**[Me]** Thank you. Whoever would like to go next?

**[Derek]** I will say, I intend to adopt kids one day, and I know that my social media use around them is going to be very different from how my parents had social media use around me. I think that not only will my, like, social media change, but also the way I teach them about their social media will change. So I think that's a big part, is when, like, as my life is going to change, I prefer to keep a lot of private details to myself unless they're general things.

And I think that's going to be maintained, because I've seen how it is when you overshare everything. My mom, cough, cough, love her. (laughs) So I know that's going to be something that I'm going to hold with me.

And yeah, making sure that when introducing people to social media, I think I'll still do, because I believe that my parents bringing up risk at the beginning was really helpful. But I think that I will continue to expand on that myself, because communication can always be built on, especially in generations.

**[Me]** Sure. Thank you so much.

**[Sebastian]** I think from my previously mentioned independence from my parents, and also a big mental self-realization that I had to start high school, I am doing my best to just have a normal social media presence. But before I started working on myself as a person, and I was definitely a product of my parents' lack of communication, I overshared everything on social media. The more I got older, the worse it got.

I would, like, very constantly upload on Musical.ly, because I just thought it was fun, even if my account was public, and I was eight years old. But then as I got into junior high, I would, like, share very, like, details about my depression that other people would not be sharing online. It was because I had nowhere else to go.

And I think if I had not had my own self-realization, and bettered myself as a person, and found, like, chosen family, that there's a very likely chance that could have continued, and I could have continued to upload stuff like that onto social media. Because of my parents' lack of communication, I would overshare on social media as a release. But as of now, I think their lack of communication and me being aware of it is, like, "hey, I don't want to end up like that". So now I'm working on being able to communicate with my closest friends instead of oversharing on social media.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Melody]** I think for me, I moved to my new family when I was about 12. And that's a pretty late age to start with, like, an entirely new set of people. So from there, I was pretty independent from them, and I still am.

Like, I do things that other people my age are just confused by, frankly. Like, I book my own appointments, I take myself to my own appointments, all of this stuff. So, I think I'm at the point where I'm just so independent from everyone in my house that the way I use social media, if it changes, it'll be because I decided to do that on my own.

As far as I'm aware, I don't think changing that kind of thing because of the people I live with has happened for me in a very long time.

**[Me]** Thank you. Whoever would like to go next?

**[Nicole]** For me, I think it'll stay consistent. Like, I try not to share too many personal details online or, like, engage with people who are, like, just kind of closed-minded or, like, disrespectful or anything like that. Yeah, I think it'll all stay the same for me.

**[Yasmin]** So, for me, I think that I will probably distance myself from social media. That's actually what I'm trying to do, but it's not working. And I think that I will, like, try to, yeah, distance myself from using social media. But now I feel like I'm addicted to TikTok. So, like, I have a time limit, but I don't respect it (laughs). But anyway, I think that, yeah, I will just try

to change the way that I'm using it and be more responsible with my utilization of the social network and, yeah.

**[Me]** Great. Thank you all so much. That brings us to the final question before the group activity. In what ways do you feel supported or unsupported by your family when dealing with social media risks or challenges?

**[Melanie]** I think somewhere that I don't feel supported is when I'm trying to do new things on social media. And so, you know, there have been a few times where I've, like, done video campaigns and, like, you know, a different style of just randomly posting educational stuff. And I think that when I do that, it makes it, like, because it's new, they're not always super supportive of, like, how I want to go about that because they don't see the vision.

And I don't know if it's, like, they don't want me to fail. They don't want it to go badly. Or if it's they just don't want to see something different. Like, they don't want me to try something different. They don't want me to put myself out there. And they haven't communicated that worry to me. But, yeah, when I'm trying to experiment with something new online, they're like, "well, don't". And then I'm like, "okay, well, I will". So.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Derek]** Um, I think I feel relatively supported when I'm posting, like, family events and stuff. So, like, I posted about spring break, just, you know, a couple photos of, like, the vacation. There's some really pretty stuff like that. And my family was really happy to be like, "yeah, tag us in it. Post us in it". I think, as I said, I'll feel a little bit unsupported in some cases when it comes to stuff I'm uncomfortable with being posted on theirs. And I'm still, I mean, there's still the issue of [not being supported] in where it's disapproving [of] certain things that I haven't shared because, again, the embarrassment. But generally I think I feel relatively supported in a lot of social media stuff. I don't go crazy, so you know, the risks aren't, aren't, you know, gonna get me in a place where they can't support me physically or mentally.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Sebastian]** I think for me it's almost neither, because my parents really don't care too much about my social media presence, so I've never, like, it's not supported because they're not actively supporting me, but then I feel unsupported because it's not like I would relatively look for their support anyways, but sometimes I guess a little unsupported, because I have to remind them to look at, like, my art posts on my art account sometimes, and I have to ask, like, "oh, did you see, like, my artwork that I posted on my art account?"

And they'll be like, "no", and I have to go out of my way to show them. Meanwhile, every time my brother posts a new video about him playing basketball with his friends on YouTube, I walk into them watching it on the TV, so that sometimes feels a little, like, "ouch",

but besides that, I think my parents, they just don't really mind either way, so it's never been really a supported or unsupported feeling, it's just I'm kind of here on my own.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Melody]** I think I'm in the same boat as Sebastian, where I'm, like, I don't, like, because of how independent I am from them in general, it's like I'm just here doing my own thing.

**[Me]** Thank you.

**[Nicole]** I would say I feel pretty supported in most areas, just, like, if I were to talk about, like, making online friends or something, they would probably just be, like, "avoid it at all costs, it's too risky", instead of saying, like, how to go about being safe about it, but otherwise, like, they're pretty good, I would say.

**[Me]** Great, thank you.

**[Yasmin]** So, for me, like, I always feel supported, but since I don't really do, like, crazy things on social media, like, they can, like, they can always support me because I'm not doing, like, anything crazy, so I always, yeah, feel supported.

**[Me]** Okay, great, thank you all so much for your responses. That brings us to the final part of the focus group, which is the group activity. So, in the chat, I'm going to send the website and the code that you're going to sign up with.

I'm going to assume that some, if not all of you, have used it at least once or at least heard of it. It's called Mentimeter, so when you join with the code, you'll be prompted to put in words or symbols. I think the max that they give is three.

I think you can try to put, if you come up with more than three, you can try to put more than one word in the single slot, but anyway. So, what I would like you to do is think of words or symbols that represent, in your minds, how families influence adolescents' management of online risks. So, some examples can be the word trust, rules, communication, curiosity, a lock for privacy, so any words like that. So, when coming up with these words, try to focus on elements like guidance, rules, trust, again, and communication styles. So, I'll give you about five minutes. My clock says 6:10. I'll give you until 6:15, and then we'll reconvene for the three reflection questions on the screen there, and I will send it in the message so you guys can see it, because I'll be sharing my screen to the word cloud that's going to be produced. Let me know if you have any issues joining the link or anything like that.



Fig. 8: Product of the Mentimeter Activity (3)

-5 minutes later-

My clock reads 6:15. Is everyone good to move to the last part of the discussion?

**[All participants]** I am. Yeah, I'm good too. Yes, I'm good.

**[Me]** Great. Thank you all so much. So, with that....

Okay. The reflection questions will be in the chat, so I'll give you a sec to look through the word cloud. So, what differences or patterns do you notice? Are there any words that took you by surprise, and did this activity change how you think about your family's communication? So, whenever you feel ready to respond, just go ahead and start the discussion.

**[Derek]** I think it's kind of interesting seeing the difference between where there's supervision, unsupervised, and how those also, like, collaborate with other words.

**[Melanie]** Yeah, I think seeing, like, unsupervised and supported really puts, like, the drastic differences that people experience with social media and communication, like, right in your face. Yeah, and I think that, like, a pattern is that, like, it's a lot of trust either way, whether it's supervised or unsupervised, or I guess in some cases it can be just a lack of care, but yeah.

**[Me]** Great. Thank you.

**[Sebastian]** Are the words trust, safety, and boundaries being bigger, meaning that more people wrote them?

**[Me]** I think it's just how it automatically formatted the word cloud, to be honest with you.

**[Sebastian]** Okay, because in most word clouds, if those are bigger, that just means most people put them, and I was gonna say, like, I would see how those three being there would make sense if most people put them. Because I think from what a lot of people said, the more safety that, or, like, communication that was open in a household, the more likely someone would be to be more cautious on social media, I feel.

**[Me]** That is true. I just did a quick count of the words, and I think what you said is correct. A lot of people put those three words, so that's a very valid point. I didn't think of that. That's a good catch.

**[Derek]** It's also kind of interesting because I feel like I'm, like, looking over it, and I have my own personal biases on what some of these words mean, which I feel like is different from what other people's biases would be.

**[Me]** Can you give an example? (overlapped speech) Sorry, cut you off.

**[Derek]** Oh no, all good. Um, like, um, for me, boundaries is, like, a word that I, I enjoy because it's, like, a boundary is something you exert for your safety, but a restriction, I have a less positive, like, um, feeling associated with, so I thought that was really interesting because in a way they're very similar words, but, like, I get a, I have a positive reaction to boundaries, but a negative one to restrictions.

**[Me]** Yeah, I mean, they do have similar meanings, it's just their connotations are very different, no?

**[Derek]** Yeah.

**[Me]** Thank you. Did anyone else have something to add? (long pause) I will take the silence as a very polite no. Um...

**[Sebastian]** I have something I want to add.

**[Me]** Oh yes, okay, feel free.

**[Sebastian]** I was going to say, for the question, say, did this activity change how you think about your family's communication?

**[Me]** Yeah.

**[Sebastian]** I always kind of knew that there was, like, independence in my family and the lack of communication, but I think I've just been so used to it that usually, unless one of my friends is screaming it in my face, that, "hey, this isn't normal". I just forget that it is not normal, and now is one of those times where as I'm talking about it, I'm realizing, "okay, maybe my friends kind of had a point, I should talk to my parents more", but I just grew up in an environment where that was not normal, so I have a lot of difficulty talking to them or really communicating in general. I am trying to get better at that, but still, that is something I find very difficult as I'm not used to it.

**[Me]** Thank you so much.

**[Melody]** Something I find interesting, because I grew up very similar to Sebastian, where it's like just independence and you kind of do your own thing, I find the word loved on there very interesting, and I can see why it is on there, but it's, I find it interesting in the sense that, like, yeah, there is the love that is there, and it can help people feel more comfortable in figuring out what they should or shouldn't or don't or want to and don't want to express on social media.

But for me, I don't think that the, I don't want to say the lack of, but like, it wasn't, it was there, and it wasn't really there in the kind of like, "I'm just going to let you do your own thing, I'm kind of hands off in a way", and I don't think that impacted me too negatively on social media or really in any way that I can quantify. So it's just interesting seeing that there.

**[Me]** Thank you.

I'm going to share one word that I think... surprises is not quite the word to use, but I guess I just didn't expect to see it. If you are comfortable with explaining, could whoever put curiosity on the word cloud explain why they put it there?

**[Melanie]** Yeah, I put curiosity, and mainly because, like, with, from what I heard, not just my personal experience, but what everybody was sharing today, it's like, no matter where you come from, like, where your route of communication is from, like, within your household, it's like, especially, like, it seems like we all got technology at a decently young age, like, we were all super curious about what was on the internet and what was accessible. I don't remember who said this, but somebody said they got an iPad, they only had messages in Roblox, and then they got a phone, and then they were like, "wow, this is a whole new world". And, like, that's 100% fair. Like, I had an iPad when I was a kid, and then I got an iPod, and musically it was, like, ground shattering, breaking to me.

And, like, it's the same across the board, and I know someone else found a safe space online. Like, there's, like, a lot of curiosity between, like, what the internet has to offer, and, like, there's a lot of good things, there's a lot of negative things. And, like, for those of us who come from homes that haven't been super restrictive and, like, kind of let us go wild on the

internet, we found, like, curiosity kills the cat. We found some crazy things, but we've also, like, through trial and error learned what is okay and what isn't okay on the internet, making us question, like, how we grew up with the internet. So, yeah, I don't know. I think there's a lot of curiosity, like, for being young on the internet, and, like, also with how much information and how much is accessible through social media and, like, access to that.

**[Me]** Awesome. Thank you so much for that clarification. I'll ask one more time if anyone has anything else to add or to share for this activity particularly and also for the focus group in general and questions if you have any.

Cool, cool. So, that brings us to the end of our session. Thank you all very much for your time and for sharing your perspectives, even though in some parts it did get a bit heavy. So, thank you very much for trusting myself and everyone else with all of that. Very, very valuable to this research. So, genuinely, each and every one of you, lifesavers. Thank you.

If you'd like to follow up on anything, ask me questions. Even access, like, the results later on, let me know. You have both my number and my email. I'm still missing a couple of consent forms. Please, could I have them today? Thank you very much in advance. And apart from that, thank you all again for your participation.

Have a lovely rest of your day.

**[All participants]** Bye. Thank you.