"TEEN FRIENDSHIP QUALITY AND THE EFFECT OF A MEDIA

VACATION"

by

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Abstract

The present study investigated the effect of an enforced "media vacation" on teenagers aged 13 to 16, and the effect this may have on their perceptions of friendship qualities and if these perceptions may change after they have not been immersed in media for several weeks. The study also aimed to understand teens' use of social media, how and why they access it and if they are concerned with any social norms that surround its use. The participants for this study were recruited at a summer camp for teenagers in Maine, where cell phone and internet use are prohibited. Interview and questionnaire data were collected from the participants and the data were analyzed using qualitative methods to gain a deeper understanding of these teens' perceptions about social media use and friendship qualities. Findings from this qualitative study may help to understand the changing landscape of social media, mobile technologies and teens' friendship patterns.

Key words: social media, teens, summer camp, mobile technology, friend quality perception

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Introduction

Problem Statement and Significance of Study

Ask any teen in the US if they know what Facebook is, and you will be hard pressed to find one who does not say yes.   Social media has become ubiquitous in the lives of teens today, with 81% of 11-17 year olds using social media in 2012 (Madden et al., 2013), and of these social media users, 93% reporting that they have a Facebook profile. Figures have shown that in more recent years, Facebook use for 13-17 year olds has actually decreased, but it is still a very real, very pervasive part of teens' lives, with over 13 million teen users (istrategylabs.com). Along with Facebook, other social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram are also in the forefront of teens' day-to-day lives. Their popularity is still growing with figures in recent years showing an increase from 12% of teens in 2011 using Twitter to more than double that of 26% in 2012, and 11% of teens who use Instagram in 2012, only 1 year after its release (Madden et al., 2013).

Much of the research shows that social media is an important element in the lives of teens (Boyd, 2008), but we need to understand why it is important to them, what they gain from it, and how it fits into their developing lives. Boyd, in her ethnographic research has been not only trying to understand how social media penetrates teens' lives but also what it means to them.

Despite the growing research on the effects of media on children, social media is still a relatively new phenomenon, beginning only in the early 2000's. While some studies have explored the effect of social media on self-esteem, risk cognition and behavior, and depression and anxiety (Valkenburg, Peter &

Schouten, 2006; Litt & Stock, 2011; and Selfhout et al., 2009), there has been little research so far that has examined teens' perceptions about their social media use, and the associated quality of their friendships both online and face-to-face while at the same time having no access to media and social media that normally are on hand for them 24 hours a day. This research contends that there is a possibility that their thoughts and perceptions about social media will change once they are <u>not</u> immersed in the media-saturated world, and at the same time, being in an environment where interpersonal skills are celebrated, renewed and encouraged.

As technology is rapidly changing before our eyes, it is important to understand why teens are using social media, and to what ends? Has growing up as "digital natives" made it easier to navigate this online world and continual connectedness or has it become a burden? A qualitative methods approach in this study will aim to address why and how teens use social media, and the changes that are happening today including how social norms affect its use and their perceptions of its importance.

The concept of switching off from social media is not a new one. Dobrow (2014) describes how her students often write about how they feel the need to "take a deliberate break from social media" and discussed many of the reasons students articulate for the "vacation from Facebook" or for discontinuing their use altogether, and a new study by the Pew Institute in 2013 found that "61% of current Facebook users say that at one time or another in the past they have voluntarily taken a break from using Facebook for a period of several weeks or

more". This is an interesting trend and this research aims to find the possible reasons for these types of actions by social media using teens.

This research is significant because it is a rare opportunity to study this population whilst they are not immersed in media. In particular, we know that often summer camps can provide an environment for positive youth development, including the development of improved interpersonal skills. Coupling the effects of an enforced "social media vacation" with the positive and pro-social environment of a camp provides an unusual research site.

In addition, the research might provide data that can help to address some of the emerging questions in the field of child development about ways in which media use dovetails with social and emotional development.

Review of the Literature

The History of Social Media

Historically, teenagers were exposed to media only through mediums such as television, books, and radio, and friendships were formed with face-to-face interactions and they used interpersonal and social skills to build those relationships. This has changed rapidly over the last decade. Now there are a plethora of media types, Social Networking Sites (SNS) being the most recent, and the ability to watch movies and TV and play video games on the go almost anywhere and anytime. This 24/7 access has come about through the invention of wireless, internet connected devices such as smart phones and tablets. This has made it increasingly hard for parents and teachers to monitor what children are seeing, hearing and learning through various media channels, both because children can more independently and privately access media on handheld devices, and also because many children are more media savvy than the adults around them.

In addition to increased access to informative or entertainment media, there has also been an increase in the way teenagers are using online media to connect with others. Just over 10 years ago the first of many SNS was created, with the introduction of MySpace in 2003 (Stenovec, 2011). MySpace immediately became popular with teens as a place to showcase their style, their interests and often to share music with others. Add to this the introduction of YouTube in 2006 (Grayson, 2013), and teens were able to post music videos to their profile, and in their own way develop and share their growing identity with

their peers. Rather than receiving social and emotional support from friends face-to-face, teens are often looking for affirmation by the number of "likes" they have on their post or photo, or the number of "friends" or followers they have on their social media platforms. Is this detracting from intimacy and friendships, or is it supplemental? Adolescence is a time when teenagers are developing their identities, which they share through self-presentation and self-disclosure, but it is also a time when self-consciousness is high. Therefore presentation and communication through social media outlets can be of great benefit for this age group. In effect, they are in control of how and when they communicate with each other, with the ability to control and edit what they say which can generally not be done in person.

Not too long after its introduction, MySpace was soon overtaken by Facebook which was launched in 2004 (Philips, 2007) originally as a college networking site that has since become global and continues to draw ever-younger users. As of 2014 Facebook had over 1.23 billion active users (Sedghi, 2014). Facebook requires users to register and create a personal profile page, which includes interests, personal details, photos and comments that others may have written on their "wall". It allows people to connect with their friends and family, and share excerpts, updates and photographs from their lives. A recent study by iStrategy Labs revealed that there has been a loss of teens on Facebook in recent years. The report shows that there are more than four million fewer high-school aged users in 2014 than there were in 2011 (iStrategylabs.com). This is in contrast to the rise in users who are over 55 years old. This same report showed

that there was over an 80% increase in this age group from 2011 to 2014. Researchers are busy trying to figure out why this change is occurring now, and in a recent PBS interview Boyd (2014) has come to her own set of findings through her research and described one possible explanation for this change. Facebook is being joined quickly by mothers, fathers, and grandparents and these numbers are increasing rapidly. Teens do not want to hang out with their parents whether it is online or at a social function so they are finding new places to hang out and be with their friends where they are not being watched as closely by their parents. Boyd explains that Facebook was for a long time the only social media platform for teenagers to truly hang out with each other, but what they really wanted is different spaces for different friends and for different purposes. Therefore it is the combination of parents joining Facebook, and their need for other public networks that has guided this change in the number of teens using Facebook. The present research aims find out from teens what their reasons may be to leave Facebook for other platforms, or to disconnect completely.

Many other social networking platforms have since been developed over the past few years. For example, in 2006, Twitter was launched, a social networking application which enables the user to "follow" the lives of celebrities or friends, who can post and read short messages called "Tweets". The Pew Research Centre's Internet & American Life Project (2012) reported that the proportion of teens' internet users who reported using Twitter jumped from 16% to 24% from 2011 to 2012, while Facebook only saw a 1% increase in the same time span. This different type of social connectedness has its appeal to all ages and

demographics, and is often used by business to keep their customers up to speed with what is happening on a regular basis. In her book *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens* (2013), Boyd talks about teens using Twitter to keep up to date with what is happening with their favorite celebrity gossip and pop culture, to hear about the latest funny stories that are trending, and to follow their interests.

These new ways of communicating with each other have become such a "normality" that new language has spawned as a result of their pervasiveness in our world. In 2013, the word "selfie" made it officially into the Oxford Dictionary, a word that has only come to fruition since the introduction of social networking sites and smart phones (www.oxforddictionaries.com). Not too long ago, "tweet" was known only as the noise a bird might make, but as of 2013, "Tweet" is now in the Oxford English Dictionary, as it relates to its use on Twitter (Simpson, 2013). These examples show that social media may not be a 'fad', maybe it is around to stay. The mere fact that its language is being historically documented in the world's leading dictionaries may be evidence of this.

To date there have been a number of research studies that have looked into the effects of "taking a media vacation", but often the participants are disconnected for only a very short period of time. In 2010, a study by the International Center for Media & the Public Agenda, conducted at the University of Maryland, College Park, asked 200 students to abstain from using all media for just 24 hours. Moeller reported that many found it very hard to give up media for just for a short period of time, and some students even went as far to say that they

were "addicted" to their cell phone, or communication thought text-messaging or social media, and that they were "functionally unable to be without their media links to the world" (Moeller, 2010). The data did show that while students realized how much time they "wasted" online, they still felt "lost" without the technological connections to friends and family. Some students in the sample reported that taking part in the study and disconnecting from media made them realize that due to overloading on media, they had become oblivious to other important aspects of their lives such as spending face-to-face time with family and friends, having the time and wanting to cook a nice dinner, or go to the gym. The study concluded that most of the participants were not aware of how distracted by media they were. Moeller also reported negative effects such as feeling "disconnected and discontented."

There have also been studies that have looked at the positive and negative effects of social media such as Facebook. It is clear that most of the research has focused on Facebook, as this has been the most popular social media platform of recent years. One early study that explored use of other SNS looked at the effects on teens' self-esteem and well-being of the first social networking sites, MySpace and Friendster. Researchers found that positive feedback on their profiles enhanced their social self-esteem of young users whilst negative feedback had the opposite effect (Valkenburg, Peter & Schouten, 2006). Additional studies have determined the positive effects that social media can have for shy teens, and those who may have a hard time with interpersonal relationships (Sheldon, 2008; Rosen, 2011; & Common Sense Media, 2012). With the prominence of SNS in

their daily lives, teens now are able to receive constant social feedback, often

instantaneously, to validate their behaviors and gain social status. Some studies

have found that teens often use online tools such as SNS to strengthen their

offline relationships (Reich, Subrahmanyam, & Espinoza, 2012).

Back in the days before social media, and even mobile phones and the

ability to text, teens would arrange to meet each other at a specified time and

place, and then once together would give their attention fully to each other for the

time they were together. Phone conversations were frequent, and you had to ask

each other personal questions to gain the information that nowadays is public on

social media sites like Facebook. Now, in the 2010s some teens would rather text

their friends, than pick up the phone or see them face-to-face. A recent study

showed that 33% of 13-17 year olds would prefer to use texting as their favorite

way to communicate with friends (Common Sense Media, 2012). Furthermore

45% of these teens polled agree that they get frustrated when their friends are

using social media on their cell phones when they are hanging out.

Teens not only use many types of media they use them often at the same

time on different devices. This new phenomenon of media multi-tasking has

interested researchers, some of whom have reported that children's media multi-

tasking "is at an all-time high" as declared in a 2008 report on children and

electronic media by the Brookings Institution, and some who have looked at the

possible health effects of not just media use alone, but this use of many media at

one time. Research by Becker et al. (2013) has shown that media multi-tasking

can be associated with depression and social anxiety, even when controlling for

personality traits. In her *Huffington Post* article, Dobrow (2013) discusses the potential effects of multi-tasking on teens. She concludes that there is not yet enough longitudinal data to really show any long term effects, but suggests that we may need to think about how this "multi-screen, multi-task world probably means changes in education, the workplace and perhaps even in childhood and parenting" (Dobrow, 2013).

Some research that shows that the surge in 24/7 connectedness has no effect on teens could be questioned, as these teens are immersed in the media saturated world, and could find it hard to give accurate perceptions of how its use impacts them positively or negatively. Parents, educators and practitioners should all be aware of the potential impacts of social media in teens, as it is such a relatively new phenomenon of which its outcomes or effects have yet to be seen. The research as previously cited by Moeller (2012) was not longitudinal enough to really understand what's going on with teens and social media, as the ubiquity of social media in teens' lives makes it difficult to study their perceptions without the overarching influence of being within a social media world.

Friendship Quality

It is important to understand how these online friendships may be different from face-to-face friendships. Previous research (Samimi, Mazaheri, & Heidari, 2012) has used 'The Network Relationships Inventory' (Furman & Behrmester, 1985) to assess relationship quality by using the survey to assess positive and negative relationship features. Their research found that particular qualities of a relationship varied across gender and age. Another study by Rabaglietti, Vacirca,

& Ciairano (2012) used the Friendships Quality Scale (Bukowski, Hoza and Boivin, 1994) to study popularity and friendship quality. They found positive relations between friendship quality and emotional self-efficacy, and between friendship quality and positive self-perception, indicating that the quality of friendships is important indices for teens. We have to understand the new ways of communication that SNS bring about to understand how we need to change these measures for teens nowadays. The language of friendship has also changed as social media has become more prevalent, as discussed previously, more new words that have been born from social media are becoming everyday words. In 2009, the *New Oxford American Dictionary* named "unfriend" as their word of the year. They define this as "To remove someone as a 'friend' on a social networking site such as Facebook." (Gross, 2009).

Boyd (2007) encourages us to understand the shift from private to public friendships, and to what she terms "networked publics". Questions and comments that would have previously been spoken either directly to one another or over the phone in a one-to-one conversation are now being placed very publicly, for all to see on SNS, and potentially judged by peers whether you want it to be or not. She discusses how she believes that the properties of online friendships are very different from those in face-to-face friendships. Specifically she writes about "persistence, searchability, replicability, and invisible audiences" (Boyd, 2007). With these different properties come different social dynamics, and therefore interactions.

Some research has focused on young people whose social media use has led to anxiety or estrangement from family and friends (Turkle, 2011), while other research has highlighted how social media can facilitate important connections and some amazing accomplishments (Ito et al., 2010). Ito explains how teens' use social media to not only maintain preexisting friendships, but also to turn some acquaintances into real friends, and connect with others through existing friendships.

Studies on interpersonal relationships state that face-to-face interactions are often a matter of affect, e.g. eye contact, body language, facial expressions, touch, giggles, and that written communication can be capable of the expression of emotions, but it is not equivalent to face-to-face interactions (Nie, 2001). Therefore, there may be implications for more misinterpretations with online friendships, as affect cannot be added to the written word, and people might miss the small nuances and body language that can add depth and meaning to conversation.

In his book, *Friendship: An Expose*, Joseph Epstein (2006) talks about these online connections compared to those of the past like the telephone communications and how they facilitate friendship. SNS are always encouraging you to be connected, to post, to poke, and to like, but are they creating interactions of greater quantity or quality? He suggests that during adolescence "friendship can be explored, friends cultivated, unambiguously enjoyed, luxuriated in" (Epstein, 2006).

When discussing friendship quality it is also inherently important to understand how these teens would define the terms such as 'friend' and 'friendship' due to their use when it comes to social media. The terms 'friend' and 'unfriend', as we have seen above have special meanings within social media that might not necessarily mean the same as they do outside of social media. Danah Boyd (2007) talks about how friends on social networks, are not just people we know, but also a way of publicly displaying connections to others. We have to ask questions about what "friends" on social media actually represent, are they actually friends of the profile owner, or as Donath & Boyd (2004) investigated do the relations in these lists vary and are motivations for including some and not others clear? There are many nuances that users must navigate and take into account when these connections are being publicly displayed.

Friendship changes throughout the developmental stages of a child, and through each stage they value very different things in a friend. As a young child, one looks for another who likes similar activities, but as the child gets older they seek out friends who have other qualities such as loyalty and trustworthiness. As they move through adolescence these friendships now focus on "reciprocal emotional commitments" (Shaffer, 2009), where they are willing to share feelings and thoughts and can understand each other's strengths and weaknesses. When you throw social media into the mix, nothing changes with regards to what qualities these teens want from each other, but they may now have to be seen and explored in a different way. Peers during this stage are also a key form of social support, as adolescents start to rely less on parents and more on their friends.

Therefore it is important to understand how this support might be given using social media instead of through direct interactions face-to-face, and if it still has the same impact and carries the same weight.

These teens are also struggling with identity formation during this stage. Erikson's term "identity crisis" seems adequate to capture the feelings of confusion and anxiety that they may be facing (Shaffer, 2009). It is during this stage that these teens face many questions about themselves, and try to discover who they are and what they want to be. Therefore it is important to think about how social media could potentially be assistive in this quest for an identity, as it is a platform where that they can express their preferred self. Conversely could it have negative effects on identity formation by allowing teens to portray an image or persona that they think they should be and not necessarily who they are, and we should questions if these multiple identities are detrimental to development in this stage.

Summer Camp

Wallace (2008) described the connectedness that young people can achieve at summer camp as "the magic of growing up at camp." It is not forced, it is not rushed, it is just the coming together of a community that is inextricably linked, without the hubbub of everyday life, or the "lights and buttons" of media to distract.

Not too much research has been conducted around summer camps and the positive effects, especially for teens but two studies (Gass, 2006; Thurber et al., 2007) found that there was a growth in social skills such as friendship skills for

young teens that spent at least a week at summer camp. Thurber's study was based on reports by teens, parents and camp counselors, providing multi-perspective results. His results suggest that summer camp may provide the essential components of positive youth development (PYD). In line with PYD, summer camps provide "voluntary, structured activities where intrinsic motivation is high and where challenging opportunities and reliable supports are plentiful" (Thurber et al., 2007).   In his study, Gass found that participants who were surveyed at the beginning and again at the end for their stay at camp showed " significantly greater improvement in a variety of social skills, including time management, initiating action in new situation, self-confidence, task leadership, and interpersonal skills" (Gass, 2006).

This review of the literature available has helped us to understand how social media, as a new form of technology has come about, and that this landscape is ever changing due to the introduction of more and more platforms.   Some studies have researched taking a "media vacation" for a short period of time with outcomes showing that teens realized the other things they were missing out on when they became unplugged. Other studies have looked at the positive and negative effects of social media use and the ways in which it has changed the way we communicate with each other. There are now many more devices available to be constantly connected with each other with the invention of mobile technologies. Friendship quality research has shown us that there is a need to understand how the language of friendship has also changed when it comes to these online platforms, and more needs to be understood. Studies have also

researched interpersonal relationship and the importance of social cues that may

not be captured when communicating online. Finally the review captures some of

what is known about the effects of summer camp including positive youth

development and the benefits of disconnecting.

Methodology

Site of Study

The study took place at Maine Teen Camp (MTC), a co-ed sleep-away summer camp for 13-17 year old teens. The camp is located in rural Southern Maine between two lakes with rustic cabins and program buildings located amongst the wooded property. The camp is one of only a few camps that focus on teenagers, therefore their mission, staff and activities are exclusively focused on this age group, providing a nurturing, developmentally appropriate experience. The campers come from all over the world, and the multicultural community is based on the principles of diversity and acceptance of others. U.S. campers often make up around 50% of the camp population with the other 50% made up of international teens from over 20 countries including Spain, France, Italy and Antigua. The campers have a choice to stay at the camp for different periods of time from 2 weeks up to 8 weeks. While at the camp, no media use is permitted, campers turn in their cell phones and internet enabled devices to be securely stored, and there is no access to television. On specific nights, the camp shows movies that are developmentally appropriate for the ages of the campers.

Study Participants

Each summer, over 300 teens aged 13-17 enroll and attend MTC for various periods of time. The current study recruited 11 campers from those who had responded with the consent forms and pre-test questionnaires, who were also at the camp for at least 4 weeks. These participants were aged from 13 to 16, 4 were

male and 7 were female and they came from the USA, Azerbaijan, Puerto Rico, Brazil, & Russia.

This research study involves human subjects; therefore all procedures, recruitment materials, questionnaires and interview questions were submitted to and approved by the Tufts Institutional Review Board. The protocol was submitted and approved in June 2014. There was minimal risk to all participants in this research, beyond those of everyday life. The informational letter, parent consent form and child assent form can be found in Appendix D.

Procedures

Data for this study were collected in two phases. During the first phase, campers were recruited to take part by completing pre-test questionnaires before they arrived at camp. During the second phase, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants and a post-test questionnaire was completed. The methodological design shows strength by being able to use the questionnaire data collected at two time points to help support the qualitative data and analysis.

All procedures, instruments and intentions were discussed with the camp directors prior to any research being conducted. I was able to gain their full support to conduct this research with their population of teenagers, as they too are interested in what the results may indicate.

Prior to the campers' arrival at camp either at the end of June (Session 1) or end of July (Session 2), the parents were sent a packet of documents that included:

An informational letter to the parents explaining the purpose of the research study and included:

- Parental Consent Form

- Child Assent Form

- Demographic and Facebook Use Questionnaire

- Friendship Quality Questionnaire - Part 1

- Friendship Quality Questionnaire - Part 2

The parental consent form and the child assent form included information for the parents and campers about the different data collection methods (questionnaires/interviews) that were to be used in the study, including their consent to allow audio-taping of the interviews for the purpose of transcription and analysis. If the parent and camper both consented to take part in the study, they were instructed to complete the consent and assent forms and send them either to the researcher or to MTC.

Those campers who would be participating in the study were then instructed to complete the three enclosed questionnaires (Time 1), each of which should have taken no longer than 20 minutes to complete. They were instructed to return these directly to the researcher, or to bring them with them to MTC in a sealed envelope which could then be passed on to the researcher in confidence. The researcher travelled to MTC during the first weekend in June to collect any consents and questionnaires that were collected at the camp when the campers arrived.

On inspection of the consents and questionnaires, a sample of participants was selected to take part in the interviews. This sample ended up being all of the participants who agreed to take part in the study and who were staying at the camp for at least the 4 week session; this was due to the small response rate of the original recruitment. A sample of participants would have been chosen if there were too many recruited participants to interview all of them. The researcher travelled to the camp in the 3rd weekend of June, before the 4-week campers left to go home. It is at this time point that interviews were conducted with the sample of participants. Each subject was asked if he or she would like to take part in the interview (all subjects approached had already completed their assent form for the study), and they were excused from their activities for approximately 30-60 minutes to take part in the interview. The interviews took place in a few designated areas of the camp where confidentiality could be ensured, and the participants felt comfortable. This was for the most part on the lunch tables outside of the main lodge where the participants were still able to see all the activities that were going on around the camp, but far enough removed for it not to be distracting. Due to the different activity areas at the camp, some of the interviews took place in other places convenient for the participants, such as on the lakeside beach or at the log circle near the music studio. The participants were made to feel as comfortable in their surroundings as possible. The interviews were audio-recorded to enable transcription and analysis once completed. The researcher also had this sample of participants complete the Friendship Quality Questionnaires post-test Parts 1 & 2 (Time 2).

Due to the nature of enrollment at MTC, this procedure was repeated for campers who arrived at the camp at the end of July (Session 2). The researcher travelled to MTC again in the first weekend of July to collect all consents and questionnaires, and again in mid-August to conduct further interviews. The final data collection (Time 3) was in November/December, once the campers have returned home. The Friendship Quality questionnaires were sent to all those who participated at time points 1 & 2, for completion and return to the researcher. Unfortunately there were no responses to this final time point and no questionnaires were completed. The researcher did follow up through email request on 3 occasions into January 2015 with still no response from the participants or their parents.

This methodological approach was developed by the researcher to try to understand the differences in perceptions of these teens when they were and were not immersed in media. There has been no research up to this point that has developed a methodology that has been proven to be reliable, therefore the researcher had to design the study based their own research questions, the nature of the site of the study, and the participants involved.

Measures

Questionnaire. A pair of questionnaires that provide data on teens' perceived friendship quality were administered at two different time points as explained in the procedures. This instrument is called the "Friendship Quality Questionnaire" (Parts 1 & 2). This particular instrument has been used in previous similar research (Keraney, 2012) and has been assessed for validity and

reliability. The questionnaire is divided into two identical parts with the same questions on each part. Participants were asked to complete Part 1 of the questionnaire about a friend who they mostly saw face-to-face on a regular basis, and to complete Part 2 about a friend who they mostly communicated with through social media, and in this particular case the questionnaire asked specifically about Facebook. The questionnaire included questions about the extent to which the participant could turn to this friend for help or advice, to what extent this friend would listen and give honest feedback, and to what extent the participant could count on this friend to distract them from stress or worry. The complete pretest and posttest questionnaires, parts 1 & 2 can be found in Appendix A.

A "Demographic and Facebook Use Questionnaire" was also administered at Time 1 only, to assess baseline use of social media that helped to inform the qualitative analysis. This instrument was developed by the researcher in order to capture specific data that would provide descriptive results to support the findings. This questionnaire included items about how and when they access Facebook, how long they spend on Facebook each day, how many "friends" they have on Facebook, and asked the participants to list any other social media platforms they use. Demographic information about age, gender, school grade and home country were also collected on this measure. The complete questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

Interview. An interview protocol was developed by the researcher to guide semi-structured interviews with the participants. This included items to help

answer all the research questions, by assessing teens' perceptions of social media use, its possible positive and negative effects, and the social norms and rules that surround its use. These interviews were conducted with 11 campers and the interviews took place after the participants had been at the camp for at least 2 weeks. Detailed information about how these interviews were carried out can be found in the procedures section and the full protocol can be found in Appendix C.

Data Analysis

Questionnaire data were collated into table format in order to summarize the descriptive results. This also facilitated examining the differences between Part 1 and Part 2 of the Friendship Quality Questionnaire and between Time 1 and Time 2. These results are not substantial enough to analyze using quantitative methods.

Interview data were first transcribed from the original audio recordings taken at the time of the interview. These transcribed interviews were read multiple times by the researcher to first get an understanding of what was discussed during the interviews, and to become familiar with the data. These were then loaded into a qualitative analysis software program called Atlas.ti where they were open coded as a way to start to organize the data. A qualitative method called Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to refine the data as this method explores in detail how participants make sense of their experiences and their personal and social world. This enabled the researcher to begin to find and organize ideas and concepts that came up throughout the interviews. Specific phrases, words and ideas were coded and then further

organized into themes. It is from these themes that the researcher was able to

make sense of and explain the data in the findings.

Research Questions

Based on the literature discussed about the ever-changing landscape of social media and the need to understand how these new technologies are affecting teens' friendships, the current study aimed to look deeper into teens' use of social media, and their perceptions of friendship quality. By using a summer camp as the intervention where no media use is allowed, it was a rare opportunity to compare the differences in their perceived friendship quality of online and face-to-face friends while immersed in media, and then after a 3-4 week "media vacation".

This study used a combination of interview and questionnaire data collection methods to answer the following research questions:

R1: Will teens perceive their online relationships to be of a different quality to their face-to-face relationships?

R2: Will teens who have been disconnected from media for a period of time have different perceptions about their online and face-to-face relationships than they did whilst they were immersed in media?

R3: How and why are teens accessing social media, and what are the social norms around media use for teens?

Results

Friendship Quality

Generally in the pretest and posttest Friendship Quality Questionnaires, face-to-face friendships scored higher than friendships with someone you communicate with mostly on Facebook. This was indicated by more answers of "always" compared to "never" for questions about reliability, trust and others as seen on the questionnaire in Appendix A.

Social Media Use

The Facebook Use questionnaire revealed that Instagram was the most popular social media platform with 10 users of the 11 participants stating that they use Instagram, this was followed by Facebook and then less than half of the participants used other platforms such as Twitter, Vine, Snapchat and Tumblr. Only one participant reported using each of the following platforms; Google+, Vimeo, and Flickr.

This section of the results discusses the four themes that emerged from the data about teens social media use. This includes which platforms they are using and how frequently they are using them, how they are accessing social media platforms, why they are using them, and how access and use has changed over time.

Theme 1: Which social media platforms teens are accessing and how frequently. The most popular social media platforms in this sample of participants were Instagram and Facebook with 8 and 7 of the participants, respectively, saying they used these types of social media. Other popular

platforms were Twitter and Snapchat both with 4 users. 5 of the participants

mentioned that they have had accounts with most of these platforms in the past

but have stopped using them for various reasons, these participants explained why

they deleted or stopped using the accounts:

> *Participant: "Well I used to have like all of them and they just kind of got annoyously a big part of my life and I kind of was just like I am going to delete these now, just because."- Female, 13, USA*

> *Participant: "Um, I use Instagram, I have accounts for like other things but I don't use them, like Snapchat and Twitter, I don't use them , um, and I'm like weaning myself off of Instagram, like I've been totally just like using it less and less." - Female, 13, USA*

There were other various social media platforms that participants talked about

such as WhatsApp, Vine and YouTube, but these were only mentioned by one

participant.

The frequency with which the participants logged in to or used their social

media varied greatly in this study. Four participants said that they only used their

social media occasionally or not very often, maybe once every two or three

weeks. Seven of the participants said it was more like every day or multiple times

a day, and one participant explained an experiment that her school conducted that

found that she logged into her social media account 39 times in one day. This

surprised the participant as she knows she only really needs to go on it a couple of

times a day for a few minutes.

Theme 2: The different ways in which teens are accessing social

media. The participants of this study had many different examples of how they

would access social media, but there was a definite theme running through almost

all of the interviews that they mostly use their cell phones to access different types

of social media. The other method of access that they described was access

through their computers (PC, laptop, tablet), but this was often stated as only for

occasional or rare use. Only one participant did not access social media through

their cell phone at all, and only used their personal computer to access Facebook.

It appears that these teens use specific devices for specific platforms. One

participant actually explained that as the purpose or platform changes so does the

mode of access as seen in the following quotation:

> *Interviewer: "Are there different ways that you access social media? Like do you mostly do it through your phone or are there other ways?"*
>
> *Participant: "Yeah, I use my Facebook and YouTube more on my computer, but Twitter and Instagram are on my cell phone." – Female, 15, USA*

Whereas another participant explains that they use their computer for a different

platform in this quote:

> *Participant: "You can do it on like a computer, like I use Tumblr, but I don't communicate with people on it like <ok> Tumblr just has like really awesome pictures, so I just like to get pictures off Tumblr, <ok> I don't use it to like communicate with other people." – Female, 13, USA*

Theme 3: Different reasons teens are accessing social media platforms.

The last quote also starts to touch on the subject of what the participants use these

various platforms for. This participant clearly states that Tumblr is not for

communication like some of the other platforms, but for gaining access to

pictures. The participants all stated slightly different reasons for why they signed

up to use the social media platforms such as Facebook. Many said that it was to

keep in touch with friends, and two participants specifically said it was to keep in

touch with friends from where they used to live as they had recently moved out of

state:

> *Participant: "Usually to keep in touch with friends, because I moved, so I*
> *keep in touch with them that way because sometimes texting is just*
> *annoying." – Female, 15, USA*

Two of the participants cited the fact that their friends seem to all be doing

it and that "the people on Facebook seemed cool". One participant mentioned

that since they have known about social media, they want to keep in touch with

their friends all the time, not just when they are face-to-face. Only one participant

in this study talked about social media as a place to find and meet new people,

and to make friends.

Different platforms can be used for a multitude of different actions, but a

general theme that arose across most participants was that they were used as a

form of communication. One participant explains how she uses Twitter:

> *Participant: "Twitter I Tweet a lot and have conversations with people*
> *and post a lot of pictures." – Female, 15, Puerto Rico*

Other platforms are also used to post pictures of whatever is happening in

the user's life such as Instagram, which is also used by our participants for

following friends, and communication without having to text or call. Facebook is

used to post and read comments, talk with friends, follow the news of friends, and

to keep in touch. It appears that this platform is used for a greater number of

things than the others, some of which, like Snapchat are only used to share

pictures with an individual friend. It is clear from the following comment and

others throughout the interviews, that generally these teens think that social media

is a good idea:

> *Participant: "I do like social media to the point where like outside of camp I have friends from Russia and from London and it's so much easier to keep in touch with them." – Female, 15, USA*

Theme 4: How use and access has changed over time for themselves and others. Many comments arose from the interviews about the ways in which

people access social media has changed over time, and how even the demographic

of certain platforms' users has also shifted. Three participants talked about the

way that cell phones had taken the place of computers as a way to access most

social media, this is where this generation are most comfortable:

> *Participant: "I was using computer more, but then I got like new cell phone so I was more comfortable using cell phone." – Female, 16, Azerbaijan*

There was a definite feeling across many of the participants' comments about how

much easier access is now, from access in school to access whenever and

wherever you may be, the following comments capture some of their feelings

about this:

Participant: "Well in school we are allowed to use computers for projects and some kids they have like two windows open or something, one with Instagram and one with PowerPoint or something." – Male, 13, USA

Participant: "Yeah cos like Myspace back in the good old day was on the computer and you didn't have like smart phones to do that with, but now it's everywhere, it's like on tablets, computers, laptops, phones, iPods its everywhere, and it's much harder to avoid." – Female, 13, USA

Participant: "Yeah I think so, definitely cos now it's not just like, with the iPhone you basically have a miniature computer that's usable for everything <right> so you can have your Facebook, and you can have Tumbler and you can have like Twitter and all that so it's easier to access." – Female, 16, USA

Participant: "Yeah, cos everyone does it on their phone now and if they are not on their phone they do it on their computer and they do it everywhere <right, everywhere> yeah" – Female, 13, USA

There was definitely a general sense that social media and instant access are more important to people now than they used to be:

Participant: "I just think it's more, it's gotten a lot more important to people, like my age and our generation, because it basically how everyone gets in touch now, and texting's a big thing now, a lot of people don't call each other on the phone anymore." – Female, 16, USA

It was also very interesting to hear what they had to say about the way in which some social media platforms such as Facebook have changed in terms of the people who use it. It is clear from the two excerpts below and comments from other participants that these teens think that Facebook has become a social media platform for the older generation:

Participant: "My aunt and my uncle have Instagram and they never use it but when they do use it, it's like the cheesiest thing ever." – Female, 13, USA

Participant: "Yeah, like my grandma has Facebook." – Female, 13, USA

Thoughts about Social Media

This section discusses themes that have emerged from the data with regards to teens' general feelings and thoughts about social media and these new types of technology. The first two themes draw on examples of the importance of social media to teens and how, if needed, they navigate around any unwritten social rules that surround its use. The next three themes highlight examples of the potential for social media to interfere with other everyday activities, and also if using their social media platforms is always a pleasurable experience, noting their views about online bullying or general unkindness. The final theme in this section discusses by which methods these teens prefer to communicate and about appropriate cell phone and social media use in social situations.

Theme 1: The importance of Social Media platforms in their lives: The participants gave varied reasons for why they thought that social media was an important part of their life or not. Four participants indicated that it was important for various reasons including being able to know what their friends were up to; talking with friends at any time; and for staying in touch with people from other countries and just keeping in touch in general. Just under half of the participants indicated that social media was not an important part of their lives and that they could probably live without it. Furthermore two participants stated that before they came to camp it had been very important to them and they thought that they would not be able to live without it, but that now that they had

been away from it for a while they realized that they did not have to have it. One

participant here explains how her views changed:

> *Participant: "Like I think that before camp I thought it was very important, it was a very important part of me, that I couldn't live without it, and like not leave my phone at home, but like after camp, it's coming to an end and I notice that like it's been amazing and it's been a huge opportunity to be a whole month without my phone and I've noticed that I'm alive, I am not dying." – Female, 15, Puerto Rico*

Theme 2: The social rules that dictate the behavior of these teens.

There was no consensus about particular social rules that all participants indicated

in this study, but there were some ideas about things that you should definitely not

do on social media. These included, not posting things you would not want your

parents to see, not posting things that will get you in trouble like being drunk or

high, not posting annoying statuses, and not sharing personal problems. There

were multiple participants who also said that it was up to the individual to post

whatever they like; it is no one else's business, like these comments show:

> *Participant: "I think it's none of my business, like her personal, she can do whatever she wants to she's free so it's my mind like it's my opinion but I think everyone has their own opinion so everyone is free to do whatever they want to." – Female, 16, Azerbaijan*

> *Participant: "When I, ok, I see many times like comments like 'oh cover yourself up' and I feel like, like I feel bad for those people because I think if it's your Facebook you have the right to do what you want, and if you want to make that decision and post pictures like that or do stuff like that it's fine but I think that you should just, I mean if you don't like it better not say anything." – Female, 15, Puerto Rico*

Whereas one participant was very specific in saying that posting 3 pictures on Instagram in one day was a "no no," and Facebook statuses were "so two years ago". This shows a great deal of variation in what they perceive social norms to be around social media.

Theme 3: How social media interferes with other activities. Again the participants of this study were split in their thoughts about whether social media was an interfering factor in their lives and inhibited them from doing other things. More of the participants said no than yes to it interfering in other activities and mentioned that they choose to get homework done and socialize with friends over using their social media. Three of the participants stated that at least during the day in school and other clubs, like dance class, they were not allowed their cell phones, so accessing social media via cell phone could not interfere with those activities. Those that did admit to it interfering in other activities said they would sometimes check their phone in school, or use school computers to access social media. But there was a general sense from all participants that they would not allow social media to interfere in the things that they deemed important such as being with their friends face-to-face. However there was one participant who just felt like they spent too much time doing something he really didn't want to do:

> *Participant: "I just… Sometimes I just get like sucked doing it, cause like all my friends share like these pictures and videos and stuff that like get me on it" – Male, 14, USA*

Theme 4: If they ever witness any unkind behaviors online. Nine out

of the eleven participants talked about something they had seen on social media

that they thought to be unkind. They mentioned cyberbullying and people just

posting nasty comments about individuals or their pictures. Five participants gave

the reason that they think that people find it much easier to be unkind to each

other behind a barrier such as the screen of a cell phone or computer when using

social media, as there are no immediate or sometimes no repercussions at all when

these things are said on social media and not face-to-face. Three of the

participants called these actions cowardly and sometimes just the way their

generation was, that they did not have the guts to say how they really feel to

someone's face, or they were too scared to say it in person for fear of

repercussions. The quotes below show just two of the participants' views about

why people can be unkind online:

> *Participant: "I think so because it's like you can kind of detach yourself*
> *from what you are truly saying because you are not saying it to the*
> *persons face so it's like you can't necessarily, you can be caught but you*
> *get this feeling of like oh you can't see the direct reaction to it." – Female,*
> *16, USA*

> *Participant: "It's easier to do it online because you don't have to sit there*
> *and watch them get hurt, you can just….and there are going to be no*
> *automatic repercussions cos you are not with the person at the time." –*
> *Female, 14, USA*

Theme 5: If teens always enjoy accessing their social media accounts. About

half of the participants reported that sometimes they felt like they wished they had

not logged into their social media, because they may see things that they wish

they had not like the following participant:

Participant: "Sometimes when I, well sometimes when I see something I am not invited to, I am like okay that's cool I wish I didn't see that." – Female, 15, USA

Theme 6: How teens prefer to communicate, and appropriate uses of cell phones in social situations. When it comes to ways in which teens communicate with each other and the people in their lives these participants all clearly stated that with friends and family they would much rather communicate with them through any device other than through social media. Although several participants had enumerated many reasons that their friend networks were enhanced by social media, some still seemed to prefer a face-to-face encounters to one taking place across a screen. Two of the participants stated that they would much rather talk with their friends face-to-face and six participants indicated that if that was not possible then the next best thing would be directly talking on the phone, and many would defiantly choose this over texting as seen in this comment below:

Participant: "Yeah and you can like, when you are texting you don't always know what they actually mean, cos like they can send something even though it's not necessarily true cos you can't hear their expression but when you are on the phone it's more like personal." – Female, 13, USA

After face-to-face and on the phone, the next preferred mode of conversation is text messaging, the participants state that sometimes it is just easier and quicker than having to have a full conversation. One participant in particular also stated

that for friends from camp she prefers to communicate through email, and with

her best friend she will use Skype to talk to her.

When discussing what cell phone use was like when they were not at

camp, the majority of participants thought that sometimes their friends could be

inappropriate in their use of cell phones when teens gather socially. They

explained it as "annoying", "frustrating" and "not okay" when all their friends are

physically together but glued to their cell phone screens. They think that there is

no important bonding happening when this is the case, and they are not paying

attention to each other in the moment. This participant explains why it is

annoying to her when friends are using their phones in social situations:

> *Participant: "It's kind of like if I am in the mood to be on my phone and I
> need something I will be like okay this is fine but like if I want to, we are
> with each other to hang out with each other, so sometimes it gets really
> annoying, or if like I am trying to tell a story to a friend or something, and
> they'll be like 'oh what did you say?' because they are texting it's really
> annoying, it's actually like one of my most pet peeves because it's so
> annoying." – Female, 15, USA*

Disconnecting, Friendship Qualities, and Future Social Media Use.

This section will first present the emergent data with regards to how these

teens felt about having to give up their cell phones when they arrived at the camp,

and the impacts of being disconnected from media for a prolonged period of time.

Themes two and three will discuss the participants' views of friendship quality

and the differences in these qualities from face-to-face friendships to those

friendships that they have online. The final theme relates to the impact of the

"media vacation" and their thought on cell phone and social media use after camp.

Theme 1: How these teens felt about giving up their cell phone and reasons why they think it is good to disconnect. Seven of the participants indicated that they were a little apprehensive about giving up their phones when they arrived at camp as they thought that they would really miss having them, and for the first couple of days they often thought about being able to use it. But after those first few days they all indicated that they were not that bothered about not having their phones. One participant described it as being a little different, but thought it was good to take a break and realized they didn't actually need it and one said that they were not going to die without it. When addressing the issue of having to turn their phones over to the office when they arrived at camp, many of the participants explained how they did not mind, and that they actually relished the fact, as you can see from these excerpts:

> *Participant: "I was totally okay with it [giving up my cell phone], I was actually like really happy about it because I was thinking like if everyone had their phone like people wouldn't have made the friends they have, I know I wouldn't have," – Female, 13, USA*

> *Participant: "My last year, first year, I didn't really care, like last year I just give, they asked for my phone and I gave it and I didn't really care. This year, I came back, I went to cabin, I see all my friends from last year, then my counsellor say I have to take it, and I'm like take it then <right so you didn't really mind> No." – Female, 16, Azerbaijan*

Others talked about how it was easier to talk to people face-to-face and not on the phone, and while they were there with their friends there was no reason to use social media to communicate. Many believed it would have been a very different experience if they had been allowed to keep thee cell phones with them:

Participant: "I was totally okay with it, I was actually like really happy about it because I was thinking like if everyone had their phone like people wouldn't have made the friends they have, I know I wouldn't have, I don't use it but I would have used it enough cos if I have it I'm going to check it cos I have the freedom to do that…um.. so people definitely wouldn't have made the friends that they have made now, they would have just been caught up on their whatever they were using and I am sure everyone here could probably agree with that, like they might like deny it or something but it's like if people had their phones they wouldn't have made the friends that they have made." – Female, 13, USA

Participant: "I've made so many friends and I've had like an amazing time and I know that if I would have had my phone, I don't know like I wouldn't have made so many friends because I would always be like texting and stuff." – Female, 15, Puerto Rico

The reasons that they claimed for missing their phones if they did miss them were not being able to connect or chat with other friends not at camp, some missed the news and the sports news, not necessarily social media, and wondered about who may be trying to contact them. Five of the participants talked about how when they are at camp, especially the returning campers, they did not care about social media. It is a place that allows them to see that they do not need social media to survive. Some say it made them realize how important it is to actually talk with people without also simultaneously looking at a cell phone, and the importance of not having technology at the camp. One participant mentioned how it was important for her to get away from social media for a while, as it started to become an obsessive thing which she has to check all the time. Another participant gave this comment about how she felt about social media at that moment:

> *Participant: "It's a good thing but sometimes you are just getting bored with this, like just getting tired of all this social media like before I came to camp I was really tired of all this social media, I just throw my phone away and just like sitting and reading or something" Female, 16, Azerbaijan*

Theme 2: How teens describe the qualities of a friend. As was expected each participant had his/her own unique list of qualities that they would consider as important in a friend. Some of the qualities were agreed upon by more than one participant such as a sense of humor, someone you can talk to, someone you can trust and someone reliable. Other qualities stated by the participants include intelligence, kindness, loyalty, someone you can confide in, who understands you, and helps you, someone who cares for you and you know will be there for you. In the future sections these qualities may be referred to as a reference for friendship quality.

Theme 3: Impact and quality of face-to-face friendships and interactions compared to online friendships. There was a general sense throughout the interviews that all of the participants did perceive there to be differences in the quality of the friendships that they had online on various social media platforms, to those with whom they mostly had face-to-face interactions. They all agreed that face-to-face friendships were of a higher quality based on the friendship qualities they had stated in the interviews. These excerpts show some examples of what the participants thought about friendship quality and making friends:

Participant: "I think that it's changed the way I make friends and the quality of friendships that I have, because on the internet you can basically be friends with anyone even though you don't really know who they actually are at times." – Female, 16, USA

Participant: "I just want to say that like I really appreciate the opportunity that this camp has given me to like not only notice about social media that I could live without it, but like also like make friendships not through like anything else, but just like hanging out with people who are different." – Female, 15, Puerto Rico

Many of the participants talked about the friendships that they had made at camp, where they had to build these relationships through face-to-face conversations and not through posts, updates and tweets. One participant justified that friendships are of a better quality when interactions are face-to-face by saying that when you are talking face-to-face you can see the feelings in people's eyes, something that they deem important when it comes to the quality of a friendship, as seen in this excerpt:

Participant: "I always think the quality of friendships without social media is better like when you are texting someone, you can't see their face you can't see their feelings and maybe they are laughing like "hahaha" but they are not even laughing. But when you are talking face to face you see like the feelings in people's eyes and I don't know I always prefer talking to face" – Female, 16, Azerbaijan

These short interactions give examples of how these teens think that their friendship qualities are different face-to-face:

Participant: "Yeah I definitely talk to people a lot more now, I don't hide behind my phone <you think that's a good thing> yeah I love it"

> *Interviewer: "Okay great, and the quality of your relationships here (camp) are good"*
> *Participant: "Yes, amazing, I can already call everyone my lifelong best friends here" – Female, 13, USA*

> *Participant: "I mean yeah definitely I mean I feel like it is easier to know who a person is face-to-face when like you are actually talking to them, you are actually doing things with them, you are reacting around them, you know you are listening to them and talking to them" – Female, 15, USA*

Two of the participants said that they have made lifelong friends at the camp; they know it already as the quality of their friendships they feel is so good. Some of the other reasons given for better quality friendships face-to-face were that it was just easier to know a person when you are talking to them face-to-face, it is easier to make friends with people when they are not glued to their phones, and that the more you talk with each other the better you begin to know them.

When participants were talking about the idea of friends, the general consensus across interviews was that not all of the "friends" they have on social media have the same qualities as those that they would want to see in a face-to-face friendship. Nearly all of the participants stated that they had many more friends on platforms such as Facebook, like 750, and more than 1000, but in actuality they would only call a handful of these their actual friends who have the qualities that they described a friend as having. This quote shows how one participant explains this issue:

> *Participant: "If I see, like there's some people I have them on Facebook and I'll see then like whatever in the supermarket and I won't even know*

who they are and then I am like oh my god I have that person on Facebook! But I can't, we don't know each other." – Female, 15, Puerto Rico

Only one participant claimed that all of his friends on Facebook were those whom he would say had the qualities of a friend and that he sees them all on a regular basis.

Theme 4: Teens' thoughts on social media and cell phone use after camp. It seemed that most of the participants in this study were not that eager to get their phones back when they left the camp. Most of them said they would get round to checking their social media, but mostly none of them were very eager to get their phones back. The following excerpts show some examples of how they feel about using their phones after camp has ended:

Participant: "I mean I think I will check it, but it's not gonna be like really important or like mind-blowing you know" – Female, 13, USA

Participant: "I love it, when I get my phone back, I am like upset I'm just like 'keep it!' <right> cos like I don't know, it's not real here, it's literally like, camp is a fairy tale, you know, you can't live this way forever, but like it's nice having it for this period of time <right> cos it's a different way of a lifestyle <yeah> but it's just real you know" – Female, 15, USA

Participant: "I think like I won't be looking for it crazy like 'oh my god where's my phone?'" – Female, 15, Puerto Rico

One or two of the participants thought that the experience of taking a "media vacation" might change their behaviors when they return home and that

they could live without it, but one mentioned a barrier to this behavior in the

following excerpt:

> Participant: *"Yeah sometimes I wish that [I could be unplugged], but also*
> *people are just so dependent on people having their phones that it's like if*
> *I did I would feel like I would actually miss something because people*
> *know I have my phone, people are expecting me to have my phone on me"*
> *– Female, 15, USA*

One participant actually worried that her self-diagnosed "addiction" to

social media would come back once she returned home, and one participant said

she would actually use social media more to keep in touch with their new friends

from different parts of the states and from different countries. There was a

general feeling that the participants thought that it was a good idea to be

unplugged for small amounts of time, like they are when they are at camp, but

that back at home it would not be realistic because people have become so

dependent on each other having their cell phones and access to social media with

them 24 hours a day.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide some insight into the thoughts and perceptions about social media and friendship quality in a sample of teens who experienced a prolonged "media vacation" while away at a summer camp. As discussed previously, this was rare opportunity to capture the thoughts of teens when they had been unplugged from media in a location that has not been extensively studied in the field. Previous research has looked at populations who were introduced to forms of media, who had not had access to it previously, and with teens who had not been exposed to media for a maximum of only 24 hours (Moeller, 2010). Whereas this study examines perceptions when teens who are used to regular access to social media are deprived of it for a longer period of time.

The results of the Friendship Quality Questionnaire were not of a number large enough to analyze using quantitative methods, but they did provide anecdotal findings about teens' perceptions of friendship quality. The participants made a distinction on the questionnaire between friends who they considered were only friends on social media and friends who were face-to-face friends and most of their communications were in person. Most participants considered face-to-face friendships to be of a better quality than that of an online friendship with someone on Facebook. For those participants for whom this was true, their responses indicated that they were more likely to turn to face-to-face friends for advice or help with a problem, and could count on them more for honest feedback, to listen to their point of view, and to be there for them when they were

under stress or worried. These examples were supported by the interview data

that further explains what qualities the participants consider a friend should have,

and the differences between a friend they see face-to-face and a friend they

experience only online on a social media platform.

There are many themes that arose from the qualitative analysis of the

interviews with the participants that begin to enable a deeper understanding about

teens' views and perceptions about social media, its uses and its potential effects.

These themes are depicted and discussed below.
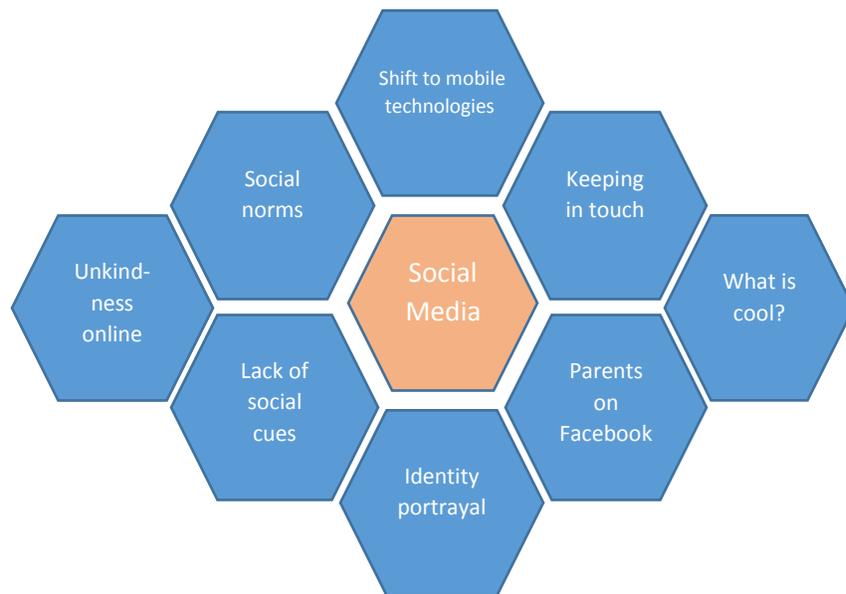
The findings showed that these teens recognized that there has been a shift

from using computer technology to access social media platforms, to using mobile

technologies such as cell phones and tablets. Almost all of the participants

indicated that cell phones were their device of choice when it came to most social

media use, with the exception of some participants who still preferred to use their

computer for certain platforms such as Flikr. This move to more mobile

technologies creates an interesting form of connection. On one hand it allows them to be connected to people anywhere at any time regardless of geographical location, but at the same time it has the potential to make them feel isolated and distant from real human connection. In a *New York Times* column entitled "Leaving and Cleaving," David Brooks (2015) discusses how distance from one another is no longer relevant with the communication technology that is available today; people are always just an email or a text away, no matter how far geographically they may be from each other. However, he explains that "communication technology creates a new type of challenge", and he suggests that we have become so accustomed to instant responses that when a text, a post or an email is not instantly returned we may question the non-respondents friendship or intentions. Gone are the times when you would eagerly await a letter in the mail, or a land line phone call. Now we seem to need instant responses and constant communication channels.

The participants in this study also commented on the ease of use of these new mobile technologies, and how easy it is to be connected to everyone, all the time. They commented on how instant access had become more important to a lot of people, that social media and texting were the ways in which people their age communicated, and that they did not make phone calls anymore. How then does this shift in mobile technology affect friendship patterns in teens and what are the changes in the way they operate their friendships? This shift to instantaneous communications means that friends can be there for each other all the time, which could be a positive outcome or a burden. These teens feel like they are no longer

able to unplug, even for a short amount of time for fear of missing out on

something, or not being up to speed on the latest social news. This might put a

strain on friendships but it could also make them stronger and encourage friends

to be there for each other whenever they are needed.

Looking back at what we know about friendships it would be important to

think about this constant access and its effect on social support for teens. In one

way it could have the potential to increase the amount of support that an

adolescent can get in a time of need, as friends are readily available through social

media and other mobile technologies. But will the quality of these supports be

effected by providing support though and online channel rather than face-to-face.

The participants in this study indicated that they used other forms of

communication than social media when the stakes were higher, for example if

they were talking to their best friend, or if the discussion was important or serious.

Therefore perhaps these teens are deciding themselves which form of

communication is best used for social support, and which are not.

The data from this study show that these teens can be very conscious

about the ways in which they feel that social media is also lacking. Many of the

participants picked up on what we might refer to as there being a lack of social

cues when you are using social media, or even texting as some had talked about.

They explained that when you are not face-to-face you can often not see the

feelings that the other person is portraying, through their eye contact and body

language.

The findings showed that many of the participants had seen unkind things about other people on social media, as well as other forms of cyberbullying. Their views about why this might be happening online are in line with the views of other researchers like Sherry Turkle who explained in an NPR interview in 2012 "When we are face to face, we are inhibited by the presence of the other. We are inhibited from aggression by the presence of another face, another person. We're aware that we're with a human being. On the Internet, we are disinhibited from taking into full account that we are in the presence of another human being." The participants from this study also picked up on this idea of being disinhibited by explaining that people can more easily say unkind things online because they can detach themselves from what they are saying, and there can be no immediate reaction or repercussions for their actions.

Many participants discussed how they would use this technology to keep in touch with each other. This particular sample of participants were from different parts of the world, and they indicated that they use platforms such as Facebook to keep in touch with the friends they have made from around the world, and also old friends from where they used to live. It is interesting to think about how this changes the way they keep in touch with each other, the frequency with which these exchanges happen and the context of these exchanges. As noted in the review of the literature, some research has found that teens often use online tools such as SNS to strengthen their offline relationships (Reich, Subrahmanyam, & Espinoza, 2012). This is clearly the case for a lot of the participants in this study due to the nature of them being campers at a summer camp where they

make friends from all over the world, and this technology enables them to be in

contact more often and for longer periods of time than if they were relying on

phone calls. And lest we forget, it is free for them to chat, message and post

through these social media platforms which makes them another good choice for

teens who may not be able to afford the long distance calls to their friends around

the world. In essence, the introduction of both mobile technologies, and free

social media platforms has made keeping in touch with each other much easier,

and have in a way shrunk the world to allow instant communications across very

vast distances.

One trend that was reported in the findings was about social presentation

on these media platforms. Data emerged about how these teens like to post

photographs, of themselves, of their friends, of what they are doing. Using

multiple platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat they are able to put

images out there, usually of their own choosing to depict a particular lifestyle,

image or persona. It is important to understand that the image they are putting out

there may not truly reflect the individual, and these adolescents may not be able to

distinguish between the traits and the qualities that are real and those that are for

show.

As one of the participants explained, she had a friend who she had met and

formed a friendship with face-to-face, and she liked the qualities that this friend

had when they were with each other, but when they both left camp and she saw

her Facebook page, the image that was portrayed did not resemble the girl that she

had gotten to know, and if being honest, the participant would not have been

friends with the girl on social media as she did not meet the qualities of a friend for her. Yet when she next saw her a year later in person, she was not the person from social media, she was back to the friend she had met face-to-face. Why then do these individuals feel it necessary to portray such a different image online, and what effect could this be having on teenagers today? According to Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, as discussed in the literature review, adolescents are going through a stage known as identity versus confusion, when they are exploring their own identity and developing a sense of self (Erikson, 1968). It is important to think about how social media may positively and negatively affect a teen's navigation through this stage. On the one hand it could allow for personal exploration and a sense of independence by the end of this stage, and on the other this new online world may leave these teens unsure and insecure about their identity.

This example also ties back to literature about the social support or lack thereof that social media sites can cause for teens as discussed previously. Isolation, low self-esteem and a lack of belonging (Tobin et.al, 2014) can be the outcomes for individuals who use social media frequently. Teens are seeing people lead supposedly fun and exciting lives, they could see other people posts and pictures receive more likes, and could feel their life is inadequate. But many profiles show what people want to portray themselves as, not necessarily the truth. It used to be that teens could find a sense of belonging in a group of friends who share the same interests, morals and viewpoints, but social media has made this shift so that teens need to also feel a sense of belonging online, which could add

to the "photo-shopping" of their profiles, and add to the anguish of shy teens and those with low self-esteem who are finding it even harder to fit in and belong.

The findings from this study indicated that it is important to these teens to demonstrate what is "cool" and that there is a need to keep up with the ever-changing landscape of social media as new platforms arrive and others drop off. As discussed in the review of the literature this changing landscape could have something to do with who is now accessing these platforms. As Boyd (2014) describes there is a mixture of wanting to get away from parents on Facebook, and the need for varied platforms with different uses. These findings indicate that these teens, too, were worried about the "coolness" of platforms such as Facebook, due to the presence of their younger siblings and their grandmothers. One participant also mentioned that a family member had Instagram and when they used it, it was the "cheesiest thing ever", indicating that the older generation is moving into other platforms, and teens may just not be okay with the way they are using them. The "cool" factor may even apply when joining these platforms; for example, one participant used it as the actual reason she decided to join Facebook, because everyone on there "seemed cool".

Lastly, the participants of the study suggest that there are some social rules that surround social media use. They touch on these when they talk about what people should and should not post on their profiles, how often they should update their statuses, and what would be appropriate for their parents to see. These rules are not given to teenagers in a manual when they start to use social media, they are not written down somewhere in a secret location that you are given the key to

when you come of age. These rules are something that they have to learn by trial and error. The participants of the study all gave different examples of social rules when it comes to behaviors on social media, from not posting too many pictures on Instagram, to posting statuses on Facebook being very outdated, and these teens must navigate through these social norms as they would in face-to-face communications. They may make mistakes to begin with but someone will soon point out that what they are doing is inappropriate, or not deemed as "cool". Some participants indicated that they thought there should be more freedom with these rules, and that people should be allowed to express themselves as they wish without being judged by a set of certain norms and rules.

The qualitative methodology of this study was a very important aspect in eliciting information about the meaning of technology and the meaning of friendships from the participants. Allowing them to discuss and answer freely in the interviews ensured that rich examples and perceptions were captured in the analysis of the transcriptions. Much like the work of Boyd and Turkle, as previously noted, it is the importance of understanding why teens use social media as they do and how they feel about and perceive their friendships both on and offline. For this particular study, the intended follow up interviews would have been extremely beneficial to understand these teens' thoughts and understandings about the meaning of new technologies and friendship once they had returned to the "plugged in" world.

This type of study has proven to be beneficial in beginning to understand the thoughts and perceptions of this population when it comes to social media and

friendship qualities, therefore we need to understand what the findings mean for those people who are in contact with these adolescents on a daily basis. For parents and teachers it is their own ability to critically understand why and how teens use social media that that should be addressed. Social media and these new technologies are here to stay for now, therefore they can be thought of as a tool that could help parents for instance better understand their child' beliefs, values and motivations. As we have discussed previously, social media platforms may be a place where teens can portray their intended identity, and often be more honest and true to themselves, which are behaviors that need to be noticed by parents and teachers to help assess development at this stage.

The findings from this study are somewhat different from Moeller's (2010) previous study where teens unplugged for 24 hours. There were similarities in that in both the participants noticed the things that they were missing out on once they had become unplugged, but in this study, as time went on, the participants no longer felt so strongly about being disconnected or not having their cell phones. Whereas in the previous study, many of the participants felt lost without connection, and talked about being "addicted" and "functionally unable to be without media links to the world" (Moeller, 2010). This could indicate that perhaps longer periods of "media vacation" could be more beneficial to teens. With this in mind for the future, parents, teachers and policy makers alike should consider the potential benefits for teens of unplugging from social media.

Limitations

This study was limited most importantly by the relatively small sample. It was initially hoped that a larger sample would be obtained and would allow for quantitative analysis. However, qualitative analysis produced some very rich findings that could be the basis for future study. The small sample number means that the findings are only relevant for these specific 11 participants that took part in the study, and we cannot say that these points of view and perceptions would be the same for all individuals in this population. It is also be hard to extract the meaning of taking a "media vacation" from the general positive effects of summer camp for teens. The participants may have changed their views or perceptions due to the positive effect of summer camp rather than from taking the "media vacation". MTC is only one particular type of summer camp, and its specialized population probably does not represent the entire population of teens, therefore we cannot assume any findings to the larger population. Due to the nature of the study the sample was effectively self-selected and not chosen at random which would have been the preferred method. It would have been desirable to analyze differences in responses of different genders, ages and country of origin, but due to the small sample, there was not enough variation in the findings to report any significant differences.

The initial information, consent forms and initial questionnaires were emailed to families prior to camp, and this could have been the reason for the low participation rate. It was not a requirement to complete these forms for the voluntary study therefore they may have gotten pushed aside due to the

mandatory paperwork that the camp required. Future studies should take this into account when planning the methodology. Also, the planned for time three data collection point gained no responses despite multiple follow-ups with the parents and the children. This could have been for many reasons including; the timing of the initial post-test questionnaire was around the Thanksgiving holiday, and follow ups were sent nearer to the holiday season and in the new year, all times when families may not have completing these at the top of their priority list. In future, more thought must be put in to the timing of these follow-up data points, especially because of the nature of attrition in long distance data collection. Another way to improve response rate for post-test data collection would be to make sure there is some real or perceived reward for participation. This could be something that is written into the study, to be able to provide either an incentive to the participants or provide enough information and evidence that their participation is of a great importance to furthering our knowledge in the field.

Future Directions

This study can be used as a pilot study for further research on the effects of taking a "media vacation". This study has just scratched the surface of understanding the effect this can have on the teenage population. It would be beneficial to use a multi-method approach to data collection on a larger scale, and increase analysis to look at differences between gender and age with regards to their response. With more time and planning, better efforts can be made to increase the sample number. Due to the confounding effects of this data being collected at a summer camp where other variables could affect the results,

research could be undertaken to find other potential sites or communities where a similar study could be executed. Previous research has investigated the effects of the introduction of televisions to places that had not had them before. In one study by Becker et al. (2002), they examined the impact of the introduction of television on disordered eating among Fijian schoolgirls. Other studies also have looked at the impact of television on culture in Australian and Canadian aboriginal populations (Baltruschat, 2004; Meadows, 1995). Due to the nature of the plugged in world, the summer camp seemed the only place where we could find unplugged teenagers, but a more varied demographic of teenagers would enhance any future studies. The types of study listed above indicate that there may be opportunities to study teenage populations elsewhere.

Conclusion

This study has capitalized on a rare opportunity to collect data from a small sample of teens who have had an enforced "media vacation". The unique environment and setting that this study took place in allowed the researcher to tap into a select population of teenagers' thoughts about social media, its uses, its flaws and its possible effects on friendship quality. By using a qualitative data analysis method the researcher was able to draw on the rich anecdotal data that was collected in the interviews. The findings indicate that teenagers have very clear and varied thoughts about social media, from the way that different teens use different platforms for different things such as keeping in touch, posting pictures and keeping up with the latest news from their friends, to the understanding that sometimes face-to-face conversations that include social cues can sometimes be more beneficial than a conversation over Facebook. The participants of this study indicated that the quality of their friendships depends on the quality of their friend's traits, and many made distinctions between their online and in-person friends. This suggests that, at least for this sample of teens, the pull of social media may be just temporal. They suggest that connections made online often did not share the same qualities, and so therefore would consider face-to-face friendships of a better quality than those online. But as research has found, social media can complement friendships for those, like our campers, who have friends around the world who they are unable to see face-to-face.

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Appendix A
<u>Friendship Quality Questionnaire – Part 1</u>

Please think of one of your friends. The individual you select should be someone that you see and speak with on a regular basis and with whom most of your communication happens face-to-face. Write only their first name or nickname on the line below these instructions. You will answer the questions below to describe your relationship with the friend you list.

_____ *(Remember no one will see this except the researcher)*

Please use the following scale to describe your relationship with the friend you chose. Circle your choice after each item.

Not at all	**A little**	**Quite a Bit**	**Very Much**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**

1. To what extent could you turn to this person for advice about problems?

Not at all	**A little**	**Quite a Bit**	**Very Much**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**

2. To what extent could you count on this person for help with a problem?

Not at all	**A little**	**Quite a Bit**	**Very Much**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**

3. To what extent can you count on this person to give you honest feedback, even if you might not want to hear it?

Not at all	**A little**	**Quite a Bit**	**Very Much**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**

4. To what extent can you count on this person to understand your point of view?

Not at all	**A little**	**Quite a Bit**	**Very Much**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**

5. To what extent can you count on this person to listen to you when you are angry at someone else?

Not at all	**A little**	**Quite a Bit**	**Very Much**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**

6. To what extent can you really count on this person to distract you from your worries when you feel under stress?

Not at all	**A little**	**Quite a Bit**	**Very Much**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**

7. If you wanted to go out and do something this evening, how confident are you that this person would be willing to do something with you?

Not at all	**A little**	**Quite a Bit**	**Very Much**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**

Friendship Quality Questionnaire – Part 2

Please think of one of your **Facebook friends.** The **Facebook friend** you select should be different than the previous FRIEND that you choose. The **Facebook friend** that you choose should be an individual with whom most of your interactions are via **Facebook**. Write only their first name or nickname on the line below these instructions. You will answer the questions below to describe your relationship with the friend you list.

_____ *(Remember no one will see this except the researcher)*

Please use the following scale to describe your relationship with the friend you chose. Circle your choice after each item.

Not at all	**A little**	**Quite a Bit**	**Very Much**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**

1. To what extent could you turn to this person for advice about problems?

Not at all	**A little**	**Quite a Bit**	**Very Much**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**

2. To what extent could you count on this person for help with a problem?

Not at all	**A little**	**Quite a Bit**	**Very Much**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**

3. To what extent can you count on this person to give you honest feedback, even if you might not want to hear it?

Not at all	**A little**	**Quite a Bit**	**Very Much**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**

4. To what extent can you count on this person to understand your point of view?

Not at all	**A little**	**Quite a Bit**	**Very Much**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**

5. To what extent can you count on this person to listen to you when you are angry at someone else?

Not at all	**A little**	**Quite a Bit**	**Very Much**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**

6. To what extent can you really count on this person to distract you from your worries when you feel under stress?

Not at all	**A little**	**Quite a Bit**	**Very Much**

7. If you wanted to go out and do something this evening, how confident are you that this person would be willing to do something with you?

Not at all	**A little**	**Quite a Bit**	**Very Much**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**

Appendix B

Teen Friendship Quality and the Effect of a "Media Vacation" Demographic and Facebook Use Questionnaire

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Amy Crowley
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1. Gender: M / F

2. Last grade completed:_____

3. Age:_____

4. Where are you from:_____

5. Do you have a Facebook account?   Yes / No   If yes, please continue to questions 6-9.

6. About how much time do you spend each day on Facebook? (approx. hours) _____

7. Do you access Facebook: (circle all that apply)

   a) Before school   b) During the day in your breaks

   c) During the day in classes   d) After school

   e) During meal times   f) Before bed

8. What device do you mainly use to access Facebook? (e.g. laptop, cell phone): _____

9. Approximately, how many Facebook "friends" do you have? _____

10. Do you think that you have different kinds of friendships with people? Please explain your different relationships below, and try to estimate how many friends you have in each group. *(e.g. are there some kids with whom you do certain kinds of activities, like sports? Are there some kids with whom you hang out? Are there some kids with whom you'd trust a secret? Are there some friends that you would invite to your birthday party and others you wouldn't?)*

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

11. Do you access other types of social media? (circle all that apply)

Twitter	Instagram
Vine	Flickr
Vimeo	Tumblr
Google+	YouTube

Other: _____

Appendix C

Teen Friendship Quality and the Effect of a "Media Vacation"
Interview Protocol

I am doing this research as I believe that media, especially Social media are an important element in teen's lives. So I would just like to ask you a few questions about if and why you use social media. And to find out if it is changing or evolving. Please ask if you do not understand any of the questions, and you do not have to answer any that you do not want to. Do you have any questions right now?

First I am just going to ask you a few questions about your social media use.

- Do you use social media(SM)?

    o What is Social media to you?

    o Can you tell me a little bit about what type of SM you use e.g. Facebook, Twitter etc.

    o What are some reasons you can think of that made you join this/these SM platforms?

- Do you find that SM is an important element in your life?

    o Why do you think this is?

    o What type of things do you commonly use SM for?

        ▪ Why do you do these things on SM instead of in real life?

    o Do you access it in different ways? Cell phone, computer etc.

    o Do you prefer to communicate via Facebook, rather than face-to-face, texting or calling?

- How often do you find yourself checking your social media in the average day?

    o Do you find you often have to hide the fact that you are accessing SM e.g. at school?

    o Does it cause you to miss out on other activities

    o On average how much time do you think you spend a day on social media?

    o Do you always enjoy checking your Facebook? Or do you sometimes wish you had not?

- On Facebook, for example. How many "friends" do you have?

- o Are you "friends" on Facebook with your real life friends, from school, clubs, neighborhood?

  - ▪ Why?

  - ▪ Do you think having them as a friend on Facebook too increases the quality of relationship with that friend?

  - ▪ Are there things you might say to them or share with them on Facebook that you might not face-to-face?

  - ▪ Do you think SM like facebook plays an important role in your social relationships?

- o Do you have "friends" on Facebook that you do not see face-to-face

  - ▪ Is this the best way to communicate with them?

  - ▪ How would you describe the quality of some of those relationships?

- − Are there any social "rules" about accessing social media?

  - o Are there certain people you would never message on Facebook, but would text or call them?

  - o And vice versa, would it seem weird to call a friend on Facebook that you usually only communicate via Facebook?

  - o Do you ever see unkind things on SM?

    - ▪ Do you think it is easier for people to be unkind on SM than in real life?

  - o Does it ever bother you when you are trying to talk to your friends and they are all using their phones/tablets/ipods etc.?

Next, I wanted to ask you a few questions now about being at a place like this where media and social media are prohibited and how that makes you feel.

- − How did it feel when you first got here to camp, when you had to hand over you cell phone and you knew you would not be able to check you SM for a while?

  - o Were you disappointed?

  - o Were you relieved?

  - o Did you think about it often, or forget about it quickly?

  - o Did you find yourself wanting to check it more over time (a few days) or did you forget about it?

  - o If you missed it, what was it you missed?

    - ▪ Did you feel disconnected from friends?

- Did you feel like you were being left out of things by not knowing what was going on with friends?

- Did you miss posting pictures?

- Did you miss reading nice comments

- Is there anything you didn't miss about it?

o Were there any certain times during your stay here at MTC that made you REALLY want to access you SM?

– Now that you have been without SM for 3 or 4 weeks, do you still have the same feelings about it?

o Is it the first thing you will do when you leave?

o Has being at camp and away from SM changed your views about using it?

– Do you ever wish you could unplug from Facebook or other Social Media for good?

o Or go back to a time before SM?

I just have a couple more general questions.

– Do you believe that the ways in which we access social media has changed?

o How has it changed?

o Do we use different devices?

o Do we use it for different purposes?

o Do different people use it?

o Why do you think these changes have come about?

– Do you think being disconnected from media has had any kind of impact on you?

o Your friendships?

o Your friend making skills?

o Quality of your relationships with friends here?

Thank you so much for your time; I appreciate you answering these questions for me!

Appendix D

Teen Friendship Quality and the Effect of a "Media Vacation"

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Amy Crowley
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Tufts Thesis Advisor: Professor Julie Dobrow Tel: 617-627-4744

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Amy Crowley and I am currently a Child Development Graduate student at Tufts University, outside of Boston, MA. I have had the pleasure of working at Maine Teen Camp for seven summers, and I can truly say that the positive outcomes of summer camps are evident in the teens after they have spent a few weeks at this amazing place. I'm writing to tell you about a research project that will be carried out this summer, and to gain your consent. This research will be part of my graduate program, but the study results will also be available to parents and camp staff.

My research that I will be conducting at MTC this summer tries to address not only the importance of summer camp in the lives of teens, but also the importance of disconnecting from media, and the effect this has on teens' perception of the quality of their relationships. My study looks at the quality of these online relationships that campers have via platforms such as Facebook, compared to the quality of real face-to-face relationships. The study will also aim to find out how and why teens access social media, and if perceptions of the importance of their social world changes over time, after being disconnected for a few weeks at summer camp.

This study is voluntary and you/your child do not have to participate if you/he/she does not want to. If you consent to your child taking part in this study, please read and complete the enclosed consent form which details the research that will be involved. Also enclosed is an assent form for your camper to read and complete, to give their own consent to take part in the research study.

The information collected will be completely confidential. Children will be identified via a number to ensure that the pretest data can be matched with post test data. Names and numbers will only be available to the researcher and her academic advisors, so no individual information will be available to anyone else, including anyone at the camp. Once this has been done, all data will be stripped of all identifiable information, and no research documents will identify you or your child except for the consent form. The consent/assent forms will be stored separately from your child's study results.

I look forward to meeting your campers, and gathering some meaningful research that I hope can inform future studies and provide parents with current information on the uses of media, and the effect on teenagers of disconnecting from media. If you consent for your child to participate in the study, please return the consent form and assent form either directly to me or to MTC. The campers first set of questionnaires should be placed in a sealed envelope with my name or the study title on the outside, and can sent to camp with your child when they arrive. Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me either my phone or email.

Kind Regards,

Amy Crowley
Graduate Student
Tufts University, MA

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PARENT/GUARDIAN PERMISSION FOR A MINOR TO PARTICIPATE IN
RESEARCH STUDY

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STUDY TITLE: Teen Friendship Quality and the Effect of a "Media Vacation"

PURPOSE AND DURATION: Your child has been invited to take part in a study of how teens view the quality of their relationships with online Facebook "friends" and real life face-to-face friends. I am a current graduate student from the Eliot Pearson Department of Child Development at Tufts University and looking into the differences in the quality of these relationships and the impact of being away from media at a place like a summer camp. I have received permission from the directors of Maine Teen Camp to carry out this research.

PROCEDURES:

If you agree for your child to be in the study, we will ask you and your child to do the following:

1. Prior to arriving at camp, we ask your child to complete a demographic form and information about their Facebook use. This questionnaire is enclosed, which should take no longer than 20 minutes to complete.

2. Second, we ask your child to complete 2 short questionnaires about the quality of relationships with their real friends and their online friends. These will be completed prior to camp, towards the end of their stay, and sometime after they return home. The first of these sets of questionnaires are also enclosed, each of which should take no longer than 20 minutes to complete.

3. Third, we would like to ask your child to take part in semi-structured interviews or focus groups at camp about their social media use, habits and perceptions. The interviews should take no longer than 30 minutes.

4. Lastly we would like to ask your permission to audio record these interviews or focus groups in order to transcribe the data.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORT: There are no known risks for taking part in this study beyond those of everyday life.

BENEFITS: The study may help us understand more about the ways in which teens use social media. The study will also inform future research into the many benefits of Summer Camps.

COMPENSATION: Campers will receive a small token for their participation in the research study.

CONFIDENTIALITY: The information you and your child give us will be kept private. I will not report any individual information, so none of the information you or your child personally provide will be shared with anyone at Tufts University or with others outside the university. All the information will have code numbers and not names, and any reports or presentations will only talk about the teens as a group. However, confidentiality will not be maintained in accordance to federal guidelines if information is ascertained that indicates potential harm to the child's well-being. If your child takes part in one of the focus groups, while I will maintain their confidentiality, I cannot promise that other members of the focus group will not share what they learned during the focus group.

REQUEST FOR MORE INFORMATION: You may ask more questions about the study at any time. Please e-mail the principal investigator at amy.crowley@tufts.edu or telephone (617) 627-4185 with any questions or concerns about the study. In addition, you may contact Lara Sloboda at the Office of the Institutional Review Board at (617) 627-3417.

WITHDRAWAL OF PARTICIPATION: Please know that taking part in the study is *voluntary*; your child does not have to take part in this study. If you and your child do decide to take part, you may choose to stop at any time. If you choose not to take part or to stop taking part, this choice will not affect your relationship with your Maine Teen Camp. You and your child have the right to skip or not answer any questions you prefer not to answer.

PARENT CONSENT FORM

Statement of Consent:
Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree for your child to participate in this research study. Please check the box for the research activities you agree to participate in.

☐ YES, I consent to my child completing a Demographic & Facebook Use Questionnaire prior to camp.

☐ YES, I consent to my child completing a set of Friendship Quality Questionnaires prior to camp, towards the end of their stay, and sometime after they return home.

☐ YES, I consent to my child participating in interviews or focus groups about their social media use.

☐ YES, I consent to my child being audiotaped for data collection purposes. There will be no reference to your child's first or last name, address or any other personal information.

Child Name: _____
This is for research proposes only, your child's name will not be reported in any findings.

_____ _____
Parent/Guardian's Signature   Date

_____
Printed Name of Parent/Guardian

_____ _____
Researcher's Signature   Date

_____
Printed Name of Researcher

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ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY

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Study Title: Teen Friendship Quality and the Effect of a "Media Vacation"

What is the study about? I am a current graduate student from the Eliot Pearson Department of Child Development at Tufts University and I am looking into the differences in the quality of some online relationships versus real life relationships. I will also look at the impact that being away from media at a place like MTC can have on how you feel about these different relationships. I am also attempting to find out how teens access social media, if there are any "unwritten rules" among teens about how to use it appropriately, and for what reasons teens choose preferred social media platforms, and what devices they use to access them.

What will I do in this study? We have asked your parents for permission for you to complete three sets of questionnaires and/or take part in an interview. You are asked to complete three short questionnaires about your use of Facebook, and some questions about your friendships. You will be asked to complete these questionnaires before you arrive at camp, and then also another one before you leave to go home and again a couple of months after you return home. These should not take more than 20 minutes each to complete. If you are chosen to take part in an interview you will be gone from your activities for no longer than 30 minutes to complete the study, and the interview will be audio recorded so that later it can be written down.

Who will know if I was in the study? When you complete the questionnaires or take part in the interview, you will only give your name to me. Everything you tell me will be saved with a number and I will erase your name from all the information, except this form. Only I will see and hear your responses, your parents and MTC staff will not. When I am finished with this study I will report what I learned. These reports might be published in papers or on websites, or presented to other researchers. If you take part in one of the focus groups, while I will not tell anyone what you have said, I cannot promise that other members of the focus group will not share what they heard during the focus group.

Could anything bad happen to me? Nothing bad will happen to you if you decide you do not want to complete the questionnaires or take part in the interview, it is completely voluntary. If you want to complete the questionnaire or interview, there are no wrong answers. You do not have to answer all the questions if you do not want to, and if you start the questionnaire or interview and decide you want to stop, you can whenever you want.

Do I get anything from the project? You will receive a small token for completing the questionnaire or taking part in the interview. Also, by taking part in the research study, you can help me to learn more about the impact of media and social media on the quality of friendships, and if summer camps have any effect on this.

What should I do if I have any questions? If you have any questions about this study, the questionnaires, or the interviews, either you or someone at your home can contact me. My phone number is (617) 627 4185 and my email address is amy.crowley@tufts.edu. Also, if someone at home has questions about your rights in helping out in this study, you can call Lara Sloboda at the IRB Office at (617) 627-3417 or email her at lara.sloboda@tufts.edu.

Assent to Participate

 Statement of Consent:
Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. Please check the box for the research activities you agree to participate in.

☐ YES, I consent to completing a Demographic & Facebook Use Questionnaire prior to camp.

☐ YES, I consent to completing a set of Friendship Quality Questionnaires prior to camp, towards the end of my stay, and sometime after I return home.

☐ YES, I consent to participating in interviews or focus groups about my social media use.

☐ YES, I consent to being audiotaped for data collection purposes. There will be no reference to your first or last name, address or any other personal information.

_____   _____
Child's Signature   Date

_____
Printed Name of Child

_____   _____
Researcher's Signature   Date

_____
Printed Name of Researcher