

A qualitative examination of the impact of social restrictions during COVID-19
pandemic on social relations and social interactions of adolescents aged 12-18
years in Ontario, Canada

by

Liza Imanzi

A thesis
presented to the University of Waterloo
in fulfillment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Master of Science
in
Public Health Sciences

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2022

© Liza Imanzi 2022

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSTRACT

Background: The novel coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19) was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) in March 2020 (WHO, 2020). The government of Ontario declared a stay-at-home order where schools were closed, and remote learning was used as an alternative to in-person learning. Adolescents were affected by these measures in many aspects, including experiencing elongated social isolation, social deprivation and losing in-person interaction with their peers (Orben et al.,2020). Adolescents undergo physiological changes, including changing neurotransmitters such as serotonin and dopamine, which affect the volatility and frequency at which their emotions changes (Bailen et al., 2019). Adolescents also experience change within their interpersonal relationships and interactions, mainly with their peers and parents (Brechwald & Prinstein, 2011). There is a need, therefore, to further research and understand how COVID-19-related stressful experiences such as social isolation could have potentially affected adolescents' relationships.

Objectives: This study aimed to examine how school closures, social distancing, and other types of social restrictions applied during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ontario, affected social relationships and social interactions of adolescents aged 12-18.

Methods: In this qualitative study, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to enable the researcher to examine the lived experiences of adolescents during the pandemic, focusing specifically on the changes in their relationships and social interactions. This goal was achieved through conducting open-ended interviews with 7 adolescents (ages 15-18) who live in Ontario. Participants were recruited through social media, emails and posters. Interviews lasted between 60-90 minutes in length were conducted through Microsoft Teams Video Tool, and the data was recorded and analyzed inductively using IPA.

Results: A difference between the male and female gender was observed, where male participants were less likely to mention their need for social interactions than female participants. The study also found that for adolescents, friends played a role in coping with the pandemic. Finally, the participants started to overcompensate for social interactions after the pandemic restrictions were relaxed, because of the opportunities they felt they missed out on during isolation.

Conclusion: Throughout the pandemic, adolescents' relationships were affected due to lack of social interactions during lockdowns. This study can be used to guide future policies to have less of a negative impact on adolescents as a further step to prepare for future potential social isolation situations. The findings can also be used as a baseline for future studies to understand the long-term effects adolescents have when exposed to long periods of social isolation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research project was a welcome challenge, and I am immensely grateful for the essential contributions of many people, without whom this thesis would not come to fruition.

To my committee, Dr. Hannah Neufeld, Dr. Jennifer Yessis, and Dr. Elena Neiterman, thank you for sharing your knowledge, experience, and time — I have learned so much from your instructions and guidance.

To my supervisor, Dr. Elena Neiterman, your unwavering support, guidance, and encouragement have made me, not only a better researcher, but a better version of myself. Observing your work ethic alone was a privilege, and having you cheer me on, as you provided invaluable feedback and professional development opportunities, has been paramount to my growth. I have been, and will always be, truly fortunate to have had you as a supervisor and confidante.

To my family and close friends, thank you for your support and encouragement every step of the way. I am grateful to have you all in my life.

To all the participants who agreed to share their experiences — I thank you for your willingness to offer, not only your time, but your confidence in me to share your perspectives and vulnerabilities born from a trying time in our history. Thank you for the detailed and intricate re-telling of your stories, they have breathed life into this research.

Finally, to my grandma, Sarah Katongole. I know you would be cheering me on, like no other, as you have always done. I miss you and thank you for showing me what love and care truly is. I dedicate this thesis to you.

Table of Contents

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES	viii
CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND	1
1.1 The Sudden Changes in a Daily Life of an Ontario Adolescent	1
1.2 Adolescents' Experiences During COVID-19 as a Distinct Challenge	2
1.3 The Connection Between Mental Health and Social Interactions in Adolescents.....	3
1.4 Adolescents' Social Development.....	4
1.5 Adolescent Interactions.....	5
1.6 The Effect of COVID-19 on Adolescents Interactions and Social Relationships:	6
CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES.....	8
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	9
3.1 Research Design and Theoretical Orientation.....	9
3.1.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) Definition and Use	9
3.2 Idiographic and Nomothetic embedded in IPA	10
CHAPTER 4: METHODS.....	11
4.1 Participants	12
4.1.1 Table 1: Participant Demographic.....	12
4.2 Recruitment	13
4.3 Data Compilation	13
4.4 Data Analysis	14
4.5 Ethical Considerations	17
CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS.....	19
5.1.1 Bart's Story	20
5.1.2 Reflecting on Bart's Story:	24
5.2.1 Ashley's Story.....	27
5.2.2 Reflecting on Ashley's Story:	32
5.3.1 Kathy's Story	35
5.3.2 Reflecting on Kathy's Story:.....	40
5.4.1 Hannah's Story	43
5.4.2 Reflecting on Hannah Story:	50

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION	54
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION	60
REFERENCES	60
APPENDICES	64
Appendix A: Workplan and Timeline	65
Appendix B: Interview Guide	66
Appendix C: Recruitment Email	68
Appendix D: Community and Online Post	69
Appendix E: Information-Letter (Parent)	70
Appendix F: Information-Consent Form (Participant Under 18 Years of Age)	73
Appendix G: Parent Consent Form	76
Appendix H: Consent Form (Participant Under 18 Years of Age)	77
Appendix I: Appreciation Letter	78

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Participant Demographic.....13

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

1.1 The Sudden Changes in a Daily Life of an Ontario Adolescent

The novel coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19) was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) in March 2020 (WHO, 2020). Subsequently, Ontario enacted a province-wide emergency and stay-at-home order on April 8, 2020 to contain the virus (Ontario Newsroom, 2020). By the time the emergency stay-at-home order was enacted, 25% of admissions to the Intensive Care Units (ICU) across Ontario were attributable to COVID-19 (Ontario Newsroom, 2020). As a result of the stay-at-home order, schools were closed, and remote learning was implemented. Additionally, restrictions on social gatherings with friends and leaving home, social distancing, as well as a complete city- and country-wide lockdowns all contributed to disruptions in adolescents' daily lifestyles (Carroll et al., 2020). Schools in Ontario were closed for 140 days starting from May 14th, 2020 to May 15th, 2021 during which remote classes were implemented (Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021). Orben and colleagues (2020) reported that, in comparison to their peers, those adolescents who have had their daily lives disrupted, struggled to maintain social relationships. Uncertain and changing communications about home confinement, school closures, social distancing and other social restrictions disrupted adolescents' daily lives and contributed to the uncertainty of their social relationships (Carroll et al., 2020). Subsequently, government preventative and restrictive measures could have affected the sense of security, predictability, and structure in adolescents' lives. A study by Hoffmann and Cerbone (1999) showed that adolescent life includes a variety of stressful events, but exposure to a persistent hostile social environment can lead to additional challenges, including the ability to manage social interactions. Being subjected to COVID-19 social restrictions is a stressful event

that impacted adolescents in multiple ways. **The goal of this research is to examine the impact of the lockdown in Ontario on adolescents' social relationships and social interactions.**

1.2 Adolescents' Experiences During COVID-19 as a Distinct Challenge

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, adolescents demonstrated varied responses to the social expectations in their environment (Cost et al., 2021). During the adolescent years, training for future social competencies is ingrained (Ha et al., 2019). As adolescents learn to cultivate independence from their guardians and parents, their attachment needs are shifted to romantic companions and friends (Nickerson & Nagle, 2005). Consequently, the change in attachments leads them to spend less time with their guardians and more time with their friends (Keijsers & Poulin 2013; Rogers et al., 2020). Also, reduced intimacy and rising conflicts within the child-parent relationship is expected during these adolescent years (Laursen et al., 1998; Whiteman et al., 2011). Adolescent experiences change within their interpersonal relationships and interactions, mainly with their peers and parents (Brechwald & Prinstein, 2011). Theories about adolescents underscore the weight of the social environment and how it can affect adolescents' long-term competencies (Gutman & Eccles 2007). As young people navigate the physiological changes during puberty, they simultaneously experience a heightened sensitivity to social belonging (Brechwald & Prinstein, 2011). During adolescence, neurotransmitters such as serotonin and dopamine change dramatically, affecting the volatility and frequency at which their emotionality changes (Bailen et al., 2019). Due to the physiological changes occurring throughout adolescence, it is necessary to ask how adolescents experience the stress resulted from COVID-19 restrictive measures.

1.3 The Connection Between Mental Health and Social Interactions in Adolescents:

Since the start of the pandemic, studies have shown how adolescents' mental health varied (Alonzi et al., 2020; Cost et al., 2021; Shah et al., 2021). As an example, some adolescents showed improvements in psychiatric and neurodevelopment diagnoses, including, but not limited to, depression, anxiety and irritability, while others experienced deterioration (Cost et al., 2021). Adolescents usually benefit from being able to share their challenges with their peers (McLaughlin et al., 2015). Emotions that are expressed fluidly in judgement-free environments do not impact health. However, negative and fearful emotions that are repressed affect health by zapping mental energy that could be used elsewhere (McLaughlin et al., 2015). Repression of adolescent emotions could have manifested during the social isolation as they were not able to interact with their peers in person and share their challenges. Emotional changes occurring throughout adolescent years lead adolescents to become sensitive to different stressors, increasing mental health risk factors (Bailen et al., 2019; Olino et al., 2011). The connection between mental health and emotional regulation can explain why the onset of many mental health disorders, such as depression and anxiety, are occurring during adolescence (Hankin et al., 1998). However, emotional regulation is also connected to positive mental health outcomes such as building strong connections with peers over shared challenges and struggles experienced by adolescents (Hankin et al., 1998). As a result, there is an interconnection between mental health and emotional developmental changes (Hankin et al., 1998). There have been studies showing that adolescents suffered elevated symptoms of depression and anxiety during the pandemic restrictions (Alonzi et al., 2020; Shah et al., 2021), but how adolescents experienced the pandemic, especially in regard to their social relationships and interactions, has not been studied. After examining the substantial number of studies such as

Alonzi and colleagues (2020) and Shah and colleagues (2021) that focused on mental health changes in adolescence during the pandemic, this question emerged as worthy of examination.

1.4 Adolescents' Social Development

Adolescents are continually restructuring their lives as they navigate their developmental stages and adapt to their surrounding environment (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2020). Adolescents require ongoing support to build their realities such as attitudes, norms, and values (Lock & Heere 2017). These realities are developed from multiple sources including both interactions with people who care about them, and people whom they feel indifferent or dislike (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2020). Therefore, the adolescent environment does not always consist of convenient sources (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2020). In addition to adolescents constructing their reality, they are also in the process of acquiring complex interpersonal skills, developing intellectual thoughts, adjusting to physiologically changing bodies, setting future goals, and navigating relationships with friends and caregivers, ultimately forming their self-identity (Lock & Heere 2017). As adolescents age, they are increasingly autonomous, choosing how to occupy their time and with whom they relate, all of which is contingent on the self-identity they seek to establish (Lock & Heere 2017). As per Erikson, for adolescents to arrive at their ideal self-identity, they have to experience multiple crises (Erikson, 1968). The adolescent period offers time to explore possible selves and potential future opportunities, while also being a time where they experience crisis after crisis (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2020). During adolescence, teenagers face major questions, such as career paths and forming romantic relationships (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2020). As they face pressure from their surroundings, adolescents may experience role confusion as they attempt to meet these expectations (Lock & Heere 2017). Identity crisis results from having to balance the desire to maintain social expectations of friends or significant others, with the desire to develop self that is distinct from

their surroundings (Lock & Heere 2017). Adolescents continue to create connections and establish distinctive expressions (Brechtwald & Prinstein, 2011). When adolescents show revolutionary opinions and hold unpopular positions, they are testing a possible self-identity and evaluating the acceptance of their current identity towards their behavior (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2020). Eventually, as individuals navigate through their adolescence, they courageously develop a sense of “self” which they present to the world (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2020). Therefore, the social restrictions applied during the pandemic and reduced contact may have changed the form of pressure and crises adolescents experience from their surrounding environment as they develop their “self”. As such, it is important to understand how they experienced the pandemic alongside their developing “self” that is distinct from their environment yet connected to family and friends.

1.5 Adolescent Interactions

To understand the impact of COVID-19 on the social interactions of adolescents, we must first understand the manner and context in which they interact. Adolescent’s social interactions is a form of exchanges that occur between the adolescent and those surrounding them, such as guardians, friends and peers. The quality and frequency of interactions builds relationships and creates a social network (Mesch, 2009). However, the intensity of each relationship is different, which is attributable to the unique ties an adolescent holds with a particular person (Mesch, 2009). During adolescence, it is understood that a relationship between friends and significant others tends to be more intense than the relationship the adolescent might have with their guardians, teachers or other people directly involved in the adolescent’s life (Bauminger et al., 2008). The intensity of relationships is usually influenced by both the duration and the relationship history (Mesch, 2009). Relationship history consists of the shared experiences that promote the adolescent’s sense of shared identity and belonging (Bauminger et al., 2008). As such, shared identity and belonging are

constructed through central characteristics such as reciprocity and trust within friendships (Bauminger et al., 2008). Additionally, both reciprocity and trust develop over time through shared disclosure of their intimate information and experiences (Bauminger et al., 2008). Typically, adolescents have stronger ties in relationships that are characterised by shared activities, long-term interactions, frequent intimacy exchange and sharing personal informational and experience more often (Mesch, 2009). As for weaker ties, they will have scantly exchanges and casual interactions (Mesch, 2009). From this point of view, it will be noteworthy to understand how during the COVID-19, these basic precepts such as trust, shared identity, and exchanging personal information, might have changed in frequency and manner of expression of adolescents' interactions, in addition to other unforeseen changes in relationship building that may have occurred during the pandemic.

1.6 The Effect of COVID-19 on Adolescents Interactions and Social Relationships

To address the risk factors adolescents are experiencing as a result of COVID-19 restrictions, it is imperative we understand adolescents' experiences with their family members and peers during the pandemic (Shah et al., 2021). COVID-19 was a unique challenge; the ever-changing government restriction measures, such as the opening and closing of schools, reconfigured the relationship scenery in which adolescents naturally operate. Normally, adolescents mold their sense of belonging through peer influence more than parents, however, the pandemic restrictive measures prevented them from observing their peers in-person (Nickerson & Nagle, 2005). From this point of view, the suboptimal social environment resulting from the social distancing measures, could have challenged the adolescent's developmental needs formed within relationships. As a result, these suboptimal social environment experiences could result in future challenges within the adolescent's abilities to interact with others. During the pandemic, social

isolation was experienced at a higher rate, placing adolescents in a high risk of negative outcomes due to their intense emotions (Cho et al., 2021; Orben et al.,2020). Nonetheless, the online learning environment during the pandemic was beneficial to some adolescents, as it provided them a break from social stressors (Cost at el.,2021). Therefore, due to negative and positive effects experienced by different adolescents during the pandemic, it is unknown to what extent and in what ways other than mental health, adolescents were affected. With that mind frame, it is important to understand how COVID-19-related experiences such as social isolation and other restrictions could have potentially affected adolescents' relationships and social interactions. COVID-19 remains a part of life for the time being, and the restrictive measures and social distancing continue to combat the spread of the virus. Hence, the adolescents' perspectives are vital to understand, as a result— leadership strategies should shift in response to the pandemic and coordinate safe milieus that are cognizant of adolescent experiences.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The proposed study sought to ask the question:

How did the social restrictions during COVID-19 pandemic impact the social relations and social interactions of Ontario adolescents aged 12-18?

Specifically, I explored:

How did the COVID-19 pandemic impact the social relationships between adolescents and their family members?

How did it affect adolescents' relationships with their peers?

What were the positive and negative changes within their relationships with family and friends?

The overarching aims of this study will contribute to the literature on adolescents' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and examined how these experiences shaped their social interactions with family and peers. These outcomes could inform policy makers, parents, guardians, and educators on how to implement strategies to support adolescents during lockdown or isolation.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Theoretical Orientation

3.1.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) Definition and Use

The questions this qualitative study sought to answer, required an analysis of different perspectives, point of views and experiences. As such, this study design required both an inductive approach and open-ended questions which allowed to explore the phenomenon of interest. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) seeks to answer in detail how participants try to understand their social and personal experiences (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). Phenomenological approach does not seek to create an event's objective statement; rather, it investigates how a participant make sense of their personal perceptions of an event or an object (Brocki & Wearden et al., 2006). The IPA approach evaluates the participant's experience in detail and considers the participant's perception; it also allows events of interest to be evaluated on their own terms, as they occur (Brocki & Wearden et al., 2006). Over the last 20-25 years, IPA has evolved as a qualitative methodology and has been gaining popularity as well as recognition (Smith et al., 2013). IPA approach rooted with psychology studies evolved to many other fields including sociology (Brocki & Wearden et al., 2006; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). IPA is particularly suitable for the analysis of open-ended interviews because it evaluates new phenomena that is complex and perpetual (Brocki & Wearden et al., 2006; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). Hence, the IPA approach is well-suited to study the pandemic's ongoing social restrictions, their effect on adolescents' interactions and relationships. Additionally, IPA is the suitable approach for the study because it enabled the researcher to gain insights into how adolescents perceived the changes in their relationships and social interactions. To capture the complexity of the adolescents' experiences, the interview questions were framed in an open-ended and broad manner. Consequently, the

questions asked were not testing a researcher's predetermined hypothesis, but rather were flexibly investigating in detail a phenomenon not well understood (Smith et al., 2013). While conducting a study with the use of IPA, a researcher should proactively get an insider perspective of the participant (Brocki & Wearden et al., 2006). Access to the insider perspective depends on the range of information provided by the participant, a detailed interpretative analysis and the researcher's existing conceptions about the area of concern (Brocki & Wearden et al., 2006). The detailed interpretative analysis in the IPA is achieved in two stages— the participants try to understand what is going on in their world and the investigator tries to make sense of what the participant is trying to understand of their experience of interest (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). IPA is focused on understanding how the participants are making sense of their experience, simultaneously asking questions or probes that can help the researcher to make sense of what is being conveyed (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). As such, these experiences will transcend the circumstances recounted by the participants to illuminate a new perspective to the readers (Smith et al., 2013).

3.2 Idiographic and Nomothetic embedded in IPA

IPA format allowed me to conduct the study with two different lenses - idiographic and nomothetic (Smith et al., 2013). Idiographic process refers to an exhaustive detailed analysis of a particular instance from a semi-structured interview (Smith et al., 2013). In contrast, nomothetic process is the transitioning from idiographic micro analysis to evaluating themes, differences and similarities across all participants' data (Smith et al., 2013). To elaborate on the idiographic process, a well conducted semi-structured interview with insightful data analysis applies the idiographic process to recognize what is important to the participant by acknowledging all the nuances that are essential to a particular event or object (Brocki & Wearden et al., 2006). Only through meticulously detailing data of the participant are we able to do justice to the complexity of a

participant's own experience and preserve the richness in each person's account (Brocki & Wearden et al., 2006). As a result, reflections of different participants create a refined description of patterns of meaning from their shared experiences (Smith et al., 2013). To achieve a wholesome IPA study, a researcher should be able to achieve variations, distinctive voices and shared themes (Brocki & Wearden et al., 2006). Meanwhile, the idiographic analytics from IPA studies connect the results to the existing literature (Smith et al., 2013). As a result, the IPA researcher helps the reader to understand how the study can shed light on the already known nomothetic research (Smith et al., 2013). The reader can further the theoretical transferability against the examination of their own experiences which can bring to light other implications (Smith et al., 2013). An IPA study's particular ways of interviewing participants and analyzing data are unique yet encompasses communal and shared experiences (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). This study methodology and design echoes Schleiermacher's (1998, P.93) sentiment that once said that "everyone carries a minimum of everyone else within themselves". As the IPA methodology reflects the complexity of the participants' experiences of the pandemic, it was tempting to refer to my own. To avoid potentially influencing the research with my personal experiences, I had to reflectively restrain from adding my positionality to the experiences shared with me. At the beginning of the pandemic, I moved to my family's house along with my three siblings and parents, and we isolated together. During the isolation, we enjoyed making meals, taking walks, and playing board games together. I then started my master's degree at home during the pandemic, and that was my first online learning experience. The lack of on-campus resources including libraries, study buddies and being in close proximity with instructors affected my ability to focus on schoolwork. Recognizing my positionality and refraining from using it within the participant's experiences, ensured the preservation of my participants' distinctive voices.

CHAPTER 4: METHODS

4.1 Participants

For this study, I interviewed 7 adolescents (ages 15-18). The participants needed to have been living in Ontario from the start of the pandemic to when the interview took place. The adolescents who were homeschooled prior to the pandemic were excluded from this study, because online school might have been less of a disturbance for them in comparison to the other students.

4.1.1 Table 1: Participant Demographic

Pseudonym	Age (start of the pandemic)	Age (time of Interview)	Geographic Location	Ethnicity	Level of education (beginning of the pandemic)	Gender
Kathy	14	16	Urban	Mixed (Black & White)	Grade 9	Female
John	16	18	Urban	White	Grade 11	Male
Bart	16	18	Urban	Black	Grade 11	Male
Katie	13	15	Urban	East Asian	Grade 8	Female
Hannah	13	15	Rural	Black	Grade 8	Female
Ashley	15	17	Urban	White	Grade 10	Female
Maria	14	16	Rural	Hispanic	Grade 9	Female

4.2 Recruitment

Upon ethics approval, the recruitment process began with the distribution of both recruitment flyers (*see Appendix D-Community and Online Poster*) and recruitment letters for this study (*see Appendix C- Recruitment Email*) via social media platforms, emails and printed posters. I shared recruitment flyers in public venues, such as in the Y.M.C.As, churches and sports centers. The recruitment flyers contained a visual summary of the study goals, contact information for the researcher, and a request to participate. Interview consent for adolescents under 18 years of age needed to be signed by a parent. In addition to the parent's signed consent form, I reviewed both, the information letter and the consent form, with the adolescent at the beginning of the interview to make sure the adolescent understood and provided verbal assent to take part in the study. Furthermore, I sent two information letters, one for parents and the other catered to participants. For parents or adolescents that expressed interest in taking part in the study, I thanked them and provided them with an information letter, and participant consent forms (*see Appendix E (Information Letter, Parent), Appendix F (Information Letter, Participant) , Appendix G (Parent Consent Form) & Appendix H (Consent Form -Participant under 18 Years of age)*). For additional clarity, I asked that parents to review both, the information and consent forms, with the adolescent prior meeting. At participant's availability, I conducted an online MS team, with cameras on to be recorded when permission was given.

4.3 Data Compilation

The interview guide (*see Appendix B- Interview Guide*) contained broad open-ended questions that allowed the participant to speak to topics that are important to the study in a flexible manner. Interviews lasted between 60-90 minutes in length were conducted through video to accommodate the provincial social distancing guidelines and participants' preference. Before the

interview started, the participant gave verbal assent that was saved securely on a password protected laptop. At the start of the interview, participants were asked to provide a pseudonym of their choice for their privacy. Participants were also advised to skip any question they were uncomfortable answering, take breaks or withdraw from the interview if they no longer wished to proceed. At this point, I asked some demographic questions to contextualize participants' accounts. I asked about the interviewee's location (urban or rural), age, ethnicity, grade and preferred gender identity. The interview questions focused on the participants' social experiences during the pandemic with friends and family. With the permission of the participant, the interview was audio-recorded. The interview started off with prompts from the interview guide but followed the participant's lead on how they chose to share their experiences. If themes apart from the guide repeatedly arose, new probes or questions were added to the following interviews. Therefore, this iterative structure allowed participants to speak to what was important to them individually. I informed the interviewee, that their transcripts will be securely stored and anonymized with their chosen pseudonyms on a secured laptop. An appreciation letter (*see Appendix I – Appreciation Letter*) was emailed to the participant upon interview completion. The appreciation letter also provided both the contact of the student investigator for follow-up information, and an expression of gratitude for the participant's participation.

4.4 Data Analysis

iOS software was used to transcribe the audio recording of the interviews and the investigator reviewed the transcriptions for accuracy. NVIVO Pro 12 software was utilized for coding and analyzing data. The original recordings were analyzed in concurrence to transcripts and then I identified themes and connections between the themes. I analyzed the data utilizing IPA approach developed by Smith and Osborn (2008). This method involves a guideline of six steps, and it

involves analyzing data iteratively, emphasizing an understanding of the experiences of the participants (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The following steps are suggested by Smith and Osborn and guided my data analysis process:

1. Reading each interview transcript multiple times:

I immersed myself in the transcript, one transcript at a time (Smith & Osborn, 2008). I read the transcript while listening to the interview (Smith & Osborn, 2008). For a more thorough analysis, I then read the transcripts while imagining the participant's voice (Smith & Osborn, 2008). This allowed the interviewee to remain the focus during the analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2008). As a graduate student, I am used to reading and summarizing a lot of complex materials. This step allowed me to slow down, reflect on what I am doing and prevented me from developing a reduced and quick synopsis from the transcript.

2. The first noting:

I utilized this step to explore the language and semantics used (Smith & Osborn, 2008). I noted or highlighted anything whatsoever that intrigued me while keeping an open mind (Smith & Osborn, 2008). This process enabled me to identify how the interviewee understood the topic of interest and allowed me to become more familiar with the transcript. This step allowed for clear and comprehensive notetaking with no rules or requirements, such as noting themes. Some of the ideas to note were differences, similarities, contradictions, amplifications, echoes from what the participants shared.

3. Identifying emergent themes:

I then analyzed my exploratory comments made in the initial noting stage with local level focus, a transcript chunk at a time (Smith & Osborn, 2008). I was also proactively recalling

what I read throughout the transcript as I went through one chunk of a transcript at a time (Smith & Osborn, 2008). This section involved breaking the transcript narrative into small fragments that may or may not be reconstructed with other parts of the transcript in order to form a concept (Smith & Osborn, 2008). My notes at this stage were less open or loose, such as the notes in the initial notetaking. Rather, they started to feel more reflective and captured some sort of understanding (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

4. Grouping and searching for connection with the evolving themes:

I reviewed evolving themes and chronologically ranked them in the order they emerged. Then I developed a plan for mapping or charting the themes' connections. This stage allowed me to innovate and explore how I wanted to organize my analysis. At this stage, I was able to remove some of the themes that I had identified, which no longer fit after going through the whole transcript.

5. On to the next transcript:

I then moved on to next transcript and repeated steps one to four, allowing for each transcript to maintain its individuality by following its own terms (Smith & Osborn, 2008). This stage required bracketing the ideas that emerged in the first transcript, so that new ideas can emerge during the second transcript I am working on (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Bracketing in phenomenology refers to the art of suspending judgement about what you know of the topic of interest and focusing on the experience of what you are analyzing (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

6. Finding patterns across transcripts—Translating:

This required me to look across my mappings and look for patterns across the transcript and presented them as a table themes (Smith & Osborn, 2008). This stage invoked a re-labelling of the previous themes, identifying the most compelling themes (Smith & Osborn, 2008). I narratively developed each theme by explaining and demonstrating the findings, providing an example quote with its analytic interpretation (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

4.5 Ethical Considerations

Given that I worked with minors, ethical considerations were established throughout all stages of the research process. I have made them reflexive and ongoing. I negotiated access to adolescents with guardians or parents, yet I prepared for both, granted permission or denial of research participation. When guardians provided permission to interview their teenage children, I ascertained whether the teenager was also consulted regarding this project. Similarly, when a teenager agreed to participate, and the parent was against it, I was able to handle this sensitive situation with care and ensure the teenager did not develop hard feelings for their parent. Since adolescents were likely less familiar with what research entails, consent needed to be an ongoing process and verbally renegotiated at each stage of the project. As an example, a participant could agree to participate, but feel less inclined to do so at the time of the interview. To prepare for this possibility, I ensured to create a comfortable environment during the interview and reminded them that they can pull out of the project anytime. To ensure that anonymity is practised, I encouraged adolescents to choose their pseudonyms. To help build rapport with the interviewees, I encouraged sharing and created trust at the beginning of the interview (Smith et al., 2013). Rapport-developing involved asking them about their day and also sharing a bit about myself as a person and interviewer. The open-ended interview questions have been constructed to encourage conversational discourse and allow adolescents to openly share their experiences (Alase, 2017; Creswell, 2009). I

compartmentalised my knowledge from one interview and head into another interview with a clear mind, to avoid influencing the next interviewee with my own preconceptions (Smith et al., 2013). Lastly, when I felt that the participant's wellbeing is a concern, or if they revealed that they feel distress, I reminded them that they can choose to stop the interview session or pause and resume at another time.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

The participants in this study had various pandemic experiences as each participant developed a unique adaptational journey throughout the pandemic. For participants such as Bart, the pandemic's new experiences including online schooling, sheltering in place and canceled ceremonies, were a welcomed break they needed in life. For others, such as Ashley, Kathy and Hannah, adapting to the pandemic's new lifestyle became a challenging journey. In this chapter, I will introduce four stories of Ontarian adolescents, Bart, Ashley, Kathy, and Hannah, in a case study format. This format will allow the reader to observe how these four adolescents narrated the personal perspective of their lived experiences throughout the pandemic. The four participants were chosen to be presented in a case study format due to the diversity intersection identities presented within their stories which summarized the majority of the participants' experiences. A reflection section will be included at the end of each story to examine their lived experiences alongside a systematic and sustained phenomenological analysis of the participants' "insider" perspective, similarities, and differences (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). The interviews of the three other participants, John, Maria, and Katie had powerful and important contributions that will be detailed within the chosen four stories when examining the differences and similarities across the cases. Therefore, allowing a comprehensive and fine-grained description of patterns captured from each individual's perception of their own lived experience. In the first chapter, Bart attested that the pandemic's online centred environment was preferable to his previous in-person life. Nonetheless, he recognized that his ability to socially interact effectively declined during the times he was sheltering in place. Ashley, on the other hand, shared how she struggled with weight gain, online communication, and loss of her mother during the pandemic. Kathy experienced a worsened relationship with her mother yet a strengthened connection and interaction with her father and her

friends. Finally, Hannah’s story gives us internal insights of how she experienced the pandemic as a child of essential workers, and how her friendships and future plans were affected.

5.1.1 Bart’s Story

Bart is a Black male living in an urban area who was in the eleventh grade when the pandemic first started. Bart recalled how he liked to spend time relaxing outdoors, enjoying long walks or rides on his bicycle, as well as playing soccer with his friends. He also described himself as an avid reader, taking a keen interest in autobiographies of influential political individuals. Bart shared that he used to spend some time socializing with his family doing various activities such as communal church visits. Regarding his in-person school experience, Bart expressed that he was not getting along with some of his peers as much as he would have liked to and added “my experience with going to classes wasn’t the one I enjoyed”.

During the pandemic, Bart was one of many adolescents who had to switch to online schooling. Bart found that the new method of education to be an unexpected boon. He was able to have more focus and get a lot more accomplished whilst online. He learned quickly to adjust to this new online centered environment “without having to deal with the distractions” of the classroom and his peers while enjoying the conveniences of being at home. Being away from distractions was not the only reason Bart liked his online learning experience. He also noticed an improvement in student-teacher communication and stated “they handed the assignments back to you faster and marked faster” in comparison to when he was attending school in-person. Given the choice, Bart would have preferred to take his schooling virtually for another year.

While Bart thrived in the online school environment, he did note that the lockdown periods, which were longer than he anticipated, strained his relationships with his close friends. During the lockdown periods, “the stretches of time” made Bart feel isolated and he spent most of his time

“playing games and watching television” to keep his mind distracted. He mentioned that he “unfortunately lost contact” with many of his friends which he had pre-pandemic and was unable to “make new ones” during that time. When Bart was asked about what could have caused the disintegration between him and his friends, he paused and momentarily looked up, then calmly answered as below:

Maybe because we all drifted away, we all had other things to do. And I guess, well, online school came up, probably university or college and stuff. People got new friends and new environments. So, maybe because of that? We were not able to see each other in person. That kind of made keeping in touch difficult as well.

Following his answer, Bart smiled slightly and asserted that he was able to keep in contact with a few friends “by playing online video games”. Him and his friends communicated over video conferencing software, as well as via social media group conversations. Interacting with his friends online made Bart feel “connected, entertained”, and less isolated. Yet, when in-person interactions resumed, Bart had a newfound awkwardness speaking to people he does not know, and difficulty to reconnect with people he once previously knew. Bart described some of his interactions this year and stated:

I went back to church a couple times this year, so it is starting to improve. The improvement is a big gradual change though. Like just saying hi to old Church family members. Now, talking a lot to some church members is a bit kind of awkward. It is strange because these are people, I used to see all the time, suddenly they become strangers to me, because I have not seen them in months or years. It has been like two years, you know?

Bart expressed that he was optimistic that with time, he will be able to recover his in-person interacting skills and be more comfortable with new and old acquaintances.

Bart’s relationship with his immediate family managed to remain quite strong during the pandemic. Whilst they commonly griped about the activities, they communally missed social events such as sporting events and outings with friends, they were not bothered by each other’s

presence. Bart reminisced that without the pandemic, they may not have had the chance to interact as much as they had. Bart provided details of how him and his family spent time together below:

There are times, though, we do find time to spend together, like when we are eating together. When we are picking up some groceries. So, like food or something or when we are doing certain activities together. Yeah, those are the times where we sometimes spend time together. With all of the sudden free time that we had, I think we spend a little more time doing things together than we normally would have.

During the lockdown, Bart got close with his brother, with whom he got a video game console, and they frequently played on it together, which strengthened their relationship.

Bart was able to look back on the pandemic years quite introspectively. He made a point to mention how it felt to take such a sudden disruption to his daily life. As Bart was sharing how he re-evaluated his purpose in life, he leaned back pressing his back against his chair, increased his hand gestures and affirmably explained his transitioning experience as below:

But the once in a lifetime thing where you just get to be with yourself, you know, do things on your own terms. You get to enjoy this unique experience and see how life is and where your life is heading? I just feel like I got serious with my life during the pandemic. I was a little bit at a crossroad when the pandemic hit and then, I had the time to reflect where I wanted my life to head. What kind of a future I envision for myself and what are the things that I do not care for and are not important, so, I need to let them go. I think because of the pandemic free time and allowing that alone time, it gave me clarity to my life and helped me map how I should get serious and prepare for the future.

Bart continued to reflect on what he wishes his future life to be and how best to achieve it. He even goes so far as to consider that the pandemic was “a blessing in disguise” for him, Bart stated:

I just drifted away from bad habits. Like leaving schoolwork behind and stuff. Like not studying on time. So, I will always give credit to online school, it helped me balance my life better. Yeah, just the lessons I learned like taking certain things seriously and trying to be accountable for my own life and learn how to manage certain things. So, there are lots of lessons that the pandemic brought to me. Ummm maybe not a lot of people might agree with me, but maybe the pandemic coming was a blessing in disguise. I just kind of feel like I got serious with my life during the pandemic.

The pandemic allowed Bart to purposely start reflecting for the betterment of his life and Bart expressed that he hopes to continually be reflective going forward.

Beside the aforementioned positive aspects of the pandemic that Bart experienced, he still implied a feeling of missing out on certain events. As an example, Bart held some resentment to the notion that his class missed out on events that other graduating classes in recent years experienced. Although many students had organized individual ceremonies, it did not give Bart the same sense of unity as having an official one ran by the school, as stated below:

The class of 2020 and class of 2021 did not, but the class of 2022, they are going to have both prom and graduation. So, they are the lucky ones. Some friends had their own private proms and graduations, but it wasn't really for everyone. It wasn't really like the whole school coming together. It was different and many did not get any invite at all [...] I also wasn't interested in having a prom, to be honest.

Bart also expressed missing out on family vacations which his family planned to have in the year of 2020. Seeing how his anticipated plans changed, Bart recalled learning that life does not always “shape out as expected”; that the future that one designs for oneself does not always shape out that way.

Nowadays, Bart feels that although challenges will still be faced, this experience has changed people for the better. Also, that people have been getting more compassionate, outspoken and society is starting to become aware of some long-belied issues. One issue Bart touched on was the “George Floyd incident” that transpired at the beginning of the pandemic. Bart elaborated on the new changes he has been observing in society since the pandemic started below:

I think we are on our way of getting nicer... I think people look back on like certain instances and how they happened, and they are like ohh, you know, that was racist for what this person did. We will try and get better and stuff. Ohh, we should include everybody, and you know. It seems like we are trying to get to a somewhat of a post racial world where we all treat each other and not because of skin color, social class or race and stuff. So yeah.

Bart followed up the latter quote and said that he currently feels hopeful and optimistic which implied that he is expecting a better future.

Bart's school and home lifestyle experienced some changes that came with the pandemic. However, Bart navigated these changes with ease and enjoyed some aspects of the new way of living the pandemic brought, such as remote learning.

5.1.2 Reflecting on Bart's Story:

Upon reflecting on Bart's perspective of his lived experience during the pandemic, two phenomena were observed. The identified phenomena were the appreciation of online school environment and the noticing of his declined social skills. During the process of navigating the pandemic, Bart asserted how positive his online school experience was. He accomplished more work while being away from "distractions" such as classmates. Contrary to Bart's experience, John, a white 18 years old male, was very critical of his online education. John noted that educators were frequently ill-prepared for the switch to online format reducing the whole experience to a "joke". He felt unchallenged with the oversimplification of the learning curriculum and the "free marks" that were being allocated to the students. Nonetheless, John noted that some teachers were able to successfully shift into an online format. He genuinely smiled and said, "we got more out of them [describing the classes supervised by these teachers] than others".

While John's online school experience varied, Maria, a Hispanic 16 years old female, described her experience as "scary". She was worried that she would underperform in comparison to her usual high school performance. Maria anxiously raised both of her eyebrows and scratched her hair talking about her parents' expectations saying, "my parents always want me to do well at school". Maria shared her thought process about her online school experience and the effects that came with it below:

Luckily, I had a few friends I had already made through high school. So, because I had started, I was able to ask them questions sometimes or we would FaceTime and just talk about how everything is hard. It made it a little better. But it was different because I couldn't study with them or compare some things with them. I started getting scared. What if I don't do well? I want to graduate with good grades so that I can go to a University I choose to go to. I didn't really enjoy it [online school].

Maria found working online independently challenging because she recalled always relying on her friends for studying and for motivation pre-pandemic. She started feeling nervous, worried, and frightened for her academic performance during the pandemic.

Maria was “worried constantly” about unclear expectations for academics, worried that she would forget to submit an assignment or under-prepare for an exam. Maria said, “I don't think my school experience has ever felt so hard and almost did not look forward to it”. She clarified that the hardship was not stemming from the difficulty of the content, but rather, her belief that she could thrive in a different environment. Maria started to feel despondent in the fact that she felt destined to underperform — a fear reinforced by her results, which she stated were poorer than usual. Comparably to Maria, Katie, an East Asian 15 years old female, also recalled being worried about underperforming and adjusting to the online learning environment without friends. While Katie described her journey of adaptation to online school where she faced challenges such as procrastination, she shared how that journey eventually transitioned into a lesson. Katie noticed that as she was embracing the challenging online environment, she started developing an improved sense of priorities regarding her school responsibilities.

Reflecting on the participants' perceived online environment, I wondered why they had a diverse understanding of their experiences. Bart intrigued my curiosity as to why he interpreted his isolated online school environment as a positive experience unlike Maria or Katie. Going back to the interviews, all the factors that could have influenced the above participants in adapting to

the new online environment were undisclosed. While reviewing the literature to understand the possible reasons for the participants' diverse reactions, a study by Boyd (2004) examined the characteristics of successful online students. The study mentioned that certain characteristics can help in easing adaptation to online learning. The characteristics suggested included a supportive environment, self-discipline, and high level of integrity. Bart mentioned that his family supported him during online learning showing the importance of a supportive environment. Contrastingly, Maria and Katie emphasized that studying in groups with their friends was their preferred studying environment which was taken away during online school.

A frequent theme amongst the interviewees, is the feeling of underdeveloped social skills due to a lack of attendance in social gatherings. Similarly to Bart—Katie, Maria, and John thought that their social skills were negatively affected due to isolation during the pandemic. The effect of prolonged isolation on participants varied from no effect on social skills, minimal effect, to developing anxiety in social settings. Even though John missed the fun interactions in high school, he did not share that the isolation period affected his ability to socialize once in-person school resumed. Maria wished to have continued improving her social skills as she was navigating high school, but she cited that there was “no mental growth or social skills growth” during the isolation period. Compared to the previous participants, John and Maria, Bart shared that not only new social skills were not developed, but he lost some of his ability to interact with his social groups. As for Katie, she expressed losing the ability to be as social as she was prior to the pandemic and described feelings anxious when approaching new people. Katie recognized that some of the changes brought about by the pandemic are going to be permanent, and she wished to prepare for the post-pandemic way of life that will come with returning to in-person events.

Overall, Bart's story highlights a positive navigation of the pandemic's experiences which was noted while discussing family relationships and academics. He was able to accomplish more during online learning, when many participants had an academic setback and felt unmotivated and isolated. Nonetheless, Bart felt a decline in his social skills which is a feeling resonated by many participants.

5.2.1 Ashley's Story

Ashley is a White female who lives in an urban area and was fifteen years old at the start of the pandemic. Ashley has Tourette syndrome, which she is getting more comfortable living with whilst growing up, as she notices many in her community also have it, and her personal symptoms are mild. Ashley found her life before the pandemic to be satisfactory, with a good balance between enjoyable experiences and challenging ones. Before the pandemic, she would take public transit to school, and after classes she would hang out with her friends or participate in sports such as badminton. Upon arriving home, she would do her chores and her homework, and then relax. She had a personal fitness trainer to work on her health as she considered herself overweight before the pandemic. She also held a part-time job to save up for a car, as her parents had promised to help her pay for one provided, she earned half the cost herself.

Ashley had a good relationship with her family. She has one older sister that she admires due to her academic work ethic and personal achievement. Ashley also has a close relationship with her father, confiding in him with personal matters both prior to, during, and after the pandemic. Ashley's face brightened up with a smile as she explained why she feels comfortable confiding in him:

It was always my dad, still is to this day, I don't know. He is just so easy going and not judgmental at all. His only expectation of me is to be happy. Who wouldn't fully trust such a person, right?

Ashley's mother traveled for business leaving Ashley with a greater share of the household chores when her mom was away to lessen the burden on her father. Additionally, Ashley's mother had had cancer and was in remission before the pandemic which had a big impact on Ashley's experience during the pandemic.

Before the pandemic, Ashley was in a new relationship, dating a guy she really liked despite feeling that he was "out of her league". Ashley described her boyfriend as follows:

So, he is on our basketball and football team. I believe a lot of girls like him, he is smart but also cool and nice looking. So, I was even shocked that he asked me out. I mean, I am not bad myself, but he has a lot of choices. So, I was extremely happy about it and that he liked me....

Ashley has always felt self-conscious about being overweight, which is why she was happy and surprised her boyfriend chose her regardless. When the pandemic began, Ashley and her boyfriend found it challenging to keep their relationship going as smoothly as it was before. Due to her mother's cancer diagnosis, Ashley took the pandemic restrictions very seriously, including limiting the times she could meet with her boyfriend. Moreover, Ashley and her boyfriend lived far apart and were scared to take public transport, thinking they would increase the risk of catching COVID-19. They ended up relying on family members to drive them around so they could meet up, which they also found challenging. This lack of personal connection eventually led to Ashley breaking up with her boyfriend, as she found it very difficult to maintain their relationship. When elaborating on her breakup, Ashley giggled (sarcastically) and said:

We started fighting a lot because we never saw each other as much. Sometimes he would try to see me, but I would decline because my mom was sick, and I did not want to put her at risk. So, I did not see it coming but he eventually broke it off. Let me tell you, that was hard, I cried for days, I missed school and it was online ha-ha it is funny now, but it wasn't funny then. I lost any motivation to work out on my own, [...] so after the breakup.... I was done, done trying, done with everything...

Ashley found it even harder to deal with her breakup as most of the classes she had attended were the same as her ex-boyfriend. She was constantly reminded of him which made her feel broken-hearted and anguished.

Ashley recalled wanting to spend time with her friends and her boyfriend, but she was more concerned about her mother's vulnerable health status. Eventually, Ashley did not just lose her boyfriend but also some friends because she could not see them when invited to in-person get-togethers. Losing her boyfriend and some friends left her emotionally broken and debilitated causing her to struggle to keep up with her daily responsibilities. Ashley avoided conversing with her family and isolated herself. She recalled her mental health taking a toll as described below:

I was feeling sad and sadder each day that went by, I would easily be tearful. I was hopeless. I would have outbursts of anger towards my parents. My sister was away at school so she wasn't home the whole pandemic, I mean she would visit sometimes But that was it I would get frustrated for no apparent reason oh and slept too much, ha-ha why do I feel like you are my therapist maybe I should get one? Ha-ha-ha...

As Ashley shared the above quote, she showed signs of being visibly bothered with voice tremors and randomly pausing mid-sentences.

Additionally, to Ashley's mental exhaustion, her newfound reliance on being in front of the computer for online school, entertainment, and social upkeep led to her having a sedentary lifestyle. This lifestyle alongside losing the motivation to independently work out during the pandemic, negatively impacted her physical well-being. Ashley recalled her struggle with her weight as she stated, "I started gaining weight at an unimaginable rate". She continued, "I believe I went from overweight to obese within just a year". These physical changes simultaneously transpired while Ashley was going through the breakup—which she recalled as a hard experience. Eventually Ashley started struggling in seemingly every way possible. Her academic standing was falling, her

self-esteem was ailing, she was gaining weight, and losing contact with many of her friends. Unfortunately, Ashley was unable to see when her problems would end, as she pointed out:

I suddenly started feeling that this pandemic will never go away, people are not complying, and I am now fat and lost the cutest guy that has ever asked me out. Now what? How do I move forward? Hmmm you know? There was no light at the end of the tunnel. Libraries were closed, malls were closed, there was no breathing space. I felt depressed, though this is self-diagnosed...

When asked about seeking help for her mental distress, Ashley said “there was so much going on for me to even start looking for treatment”.

Ashley’s problems worsened, as during the pandemic, her mother was in remission for cancer and had been instructed to do check-ups every 6 months — which were postponed twice. Ashley explained that it was too late for any treatment, and her mother ended up dying because of the missed check-ups:

By the time she was able to do the test in March of 2021 we found that the cancer had returned and was quite malignant to the first type she had. It had moved to the brain and spinal cord and really it was too late to do anything... We then tried treatments of all sorts, prayers of all sorts, desperation time at its finest... [a few tears falling down her face] ... and my mother left us this past December. If anyone asks me why my mother died, it is because of the pandemic mainly but alongside our incompetent health care system that chose to postpone a patient at risk and our incompetent corrupt leaders that could not handle the crises better.

After losing her mother, Ashley did not understand how her mother fell through the cracks of the system. Six months after her mother had passed away, she still felt despair as she was navigating the grieving process within the confines of the pandemic. As Ashley was feeling angered, abandoned, and disappointed; she elaborated upon her thought processes regarding her freshly experienced grief below:

It was dark for so many reasons such as why my mom? Why did the healthcare system and the government fail her? Who can I ask for help? Is there anyone able to help?

Ashley followed up to her unanswered questions with “But of course, none of these questions will ever be answered and the hurt and disappointment are here to stay”.

While Ashley was navigating the pandemic’s confinement and the loss of her mother, she also had to traverse the vaccine controversy. Ashley’s parents had different takes on whether to take the vaccine or not. This was challenging as she did not want to disappoint either of her parents by taking a specific stance. The mother believed she should not take the vaccine, and the father believed she should which would spark heated arguments between parents. As a result of these arguments, she alienated herself from her family causing her to have less time with her ailing mother. Ashley described the vaccine controversy in her own words:

Umm, so my mom was not for vaccines and my dad was for vaccines. I mean, I understood my mom somewhat because she was a cancer patient in the past and taken so much medicine. It would make sense to have hesitancy towards more medicine, but also my dad had a point that especially since my mom was considered a high risk person she should have gotten that protection [...] It was not that I was always for or against the vaccine, but I also respect both my parents and each one hoped I would take their side, so that stressed me as well.

Ashley felt that the vaccine debate was not unique to her family, but to some minors who wished to be vaccinated without parental approval. She recalled that the government and public health officials were not providing enough information to minors who had concerns of vaccines’ consent. She eventually took the vaccine later, at school when in-person classes resumed, which she never disclosed to her parents. Ashley elaborated on how she felt unguided whilst navigating the decision whether to take the vaccine:

To be honest nowhere on the news did the government remember that some people underage might be caught through such a predicament. So, I felt let down by everyone, my parents who couldn’t agree on how I am to move forward, the government that did not highlight such issues and provide guidance or support. It was quite a lot to the point that I asked myself if anyone is looking out for me. Am I supposed to walk alone through life? Because if no one is thinking about minors

why is it that we don't have the authority to make these decisions on our own? So, we were online ... It was not like I could go to school and get this vaccine.

Ashley expressed that sneaking out to get the vaccine without her parents' approval felt dishonest and her "conscience did not allow it".

Ashley had a variety of stressors that she faced during the pandemic—her distant friends, broken intimate relationships, and the loss of her mother. It is notable that the pandemic, whilst being a catalyst of many of these issues, impacted her social support. She believed that her social circle would have been there to support her had the pandemic restrictions not been an obstacle.

5.2.2 Reflecting on Ashley's Story:

Ashley's story represents many negative aspects related to the COVID-19 pandemic as she struggled with her social relationships, weight-related concerns, and her mother's death. The shift from in-person interactions to online communication throughout the pandemic was problematic to Ashley. She believed her romantic relationship did not survive without in-person interactions despite the existence of many social media platforms. Ashley also lost connection with many of her friends after the lockdown.

While reviewing transcripts to identify emerging themes, I noticed that some participants expressed lost closeness in relationships after exclusively relying on online interactions. Accordingly, reflecting upon my friendships during the pandemic, there were no drastic changes observed in the level of closeness within my friend groups. My participants are in stage five (12-18 years of age) of Erikson's developmental stages known as identity versus role confusion where adolescents align with the expectations of their social groups (Erikson, 1968; Lock & Heere, 2017). Meanwhile, I am in stage six (18-40 years of age) known as intimacy versus isolation where a person is no longer preoccupied by their social groups and focusing on establishing a stable romantic relationship (Erikson, 1968; Lock & Heere, 2017). The difference between my personal experience

and my participants' experiences made me wonder if different developmental stages respond differently to stressors surrounding social relationships and interactions. Interestingly, in an era dominated by social interactions through social media, adolescents felt distant from their friends after the limitation of face-to-face interactions (Fernandes et al., 2020). In an attempt to understand the adolescent's mindset, literature suggested that adolescents' intensity of relationships is usually influenced by both the duration and the relationship history (Mesch, 2009). The relationship history consists of the shared experiences that promote the adolescent's sense of shared identity and belonging (Bauminger et al., 2008). Correspondingly, it is possible that when their habitual shared experiences were reduced by the pandemic's restrictions, the participants missed opportunities to continually nurture their friendships.

Similar to Ashley, Maria did not find online interactions to be as emotionally deep or fulfilling. Maria found it difficult to be "emotionally open on online platforms" due to trust issues. She had concerns about the physical presence of "sensitive material" which can be misused or shared as a form of "bullying or gossip". While Ashley did not express trust concerns with online platforms, online communication was still not enough to replace in-person communication. Contrary to Ashley, Bart and John had a different experience with using online tools. Both participants were sympathetic to the online environment especially when using it as a main form of communication during online gaming sessions. John recalled how substantial the online venue with his friends was during the pandemic. John maintained eye contact as he stated assertively "Online games were the most common activity for me and my friends to do during the pandemic". Even with how substantial the online environment was to John and Bart to keep up with friendships, they still expressed a need for in person experiences with friends. John was not devastated that he "grew apart" from some friends because they could not meet in person as frequently, nonetheless

he recognized losing few friendships as a consequence of mainly using online communication during the pandemic.

Another experience that emerged in Ashley's interview was how she recalled being self-conscious about her weight prior to the pandemic. Ashley found herself relying on being in front of the computer for school, communication, and entertainment which led her to gain more weight. Ashley's experience resonated with many people during the pandemic according to a study by Pellegrini and colleagues (2020). The study used a multivariate regression analysis on 150 people and found that the reported Body Mass Index (BMI) increased significantly by 0.58 kg/m² during one month of lockdown in Italy.

Similarly to Ashley, Maria had weight-related concerns during the pandemic. Maria has always had a fear of gaining weight and developing obesity, as for most of her life she recalled fluctuating between her preferred weight to overweight. However, Maria counteracted her fear by always staying active through swimming and exercising pre-pandemic. When the pandemic forced her to shelter in place, Maria realized that she is unable to self-motivate and stay active when isolated. Maria did not disclose if she gained weight during the pandemic. I also did not ask her to clarify if she indeed gained weight during the pandemic. Reason being, while she was discussing her weight fluctuation, I noticed that she became uncomfortable as she was visibly retreating in her torso area. Maria stated that the fear of gaining weight became overwhelming over time during the isolation period. For Ashley and Maria, weight was a pre-pandemic concern. Both participants expressed that the pandemic restrictions, such as lockdown and isolation, could have contributed to the decline of their mental health wellness and the exacerbation of their weight concerns.

For Ashley, the pandemic was accompanied by many unexpected outcomes such as the death of her mother. This loss left Ashley with many unanswered questions as she connected her

mother's death to the two missed check-up sessions. As the pandemic progressed, the literature showed that the health care system was overwhelmed leading to many people falling back on their medical and non- medical treatments (Kearon & Risdon, 2020). Therefore, when Ashley recalled her mother's treatment experience that was modified by pandemic restrictions, she is left wondering if her mother's outcome would have been different.

5.3.1 Kathy's Story

Kathy was in the ninth grade when the pandemic began and is currently 16 years old. She is a mixed-race female, with a Black father and a white mother. Her dad is a pilot, and her mother is a grade seven teacher. She is an only child who likes to read, participate in CrossFit activities, play video games, train with her dad for scuba diving and go out with friends. Before the pandemic, her and her closest cousin's families would meet up once a week for a family dinner and spend time together.

When the pandemic started Kathy was excited, thinking that the sudden "break" would not last long. She took it as a break from schoolwork and other obligations, which allowed her time to herself and to sleep in longer. However, the "break" during the lockdown lasted much longer than the "two weeks" the provincial government initially suggested in her city. Over time, her absence from in-person classes caused her to start losing concentration. Kathy elaborated on her school underperformance when she was learning virtually stating that "I don't think I did a good job at it [online learning], because I would just be in bed and pretty much sleep through most of my classes". Kathy found herself socially isolated during the lockdown portion of the pandemic. She hated spending most of her time with her mother instead of meeting up with her friends. Her father worked abroad for an American airline and was not able to visit often due to the pandemic travel restrictions.

Kathy's relationship with her mother was strained even before the pandemic started, and the extended amount of time spent together only served to worsen tensions. Usually, her father was the one to mediate tensions between them, but as he was not able to come home as often, the mother-daughter relationship became more tenuous, and they had tendencies to quarrel more often than usual. As Kathy put it "until then...the pandemic ... we had never disagreed continually to that level." The realization that she is going to be stuck in the house with her mother for a long time was not something she found reassuring.

In contrast to the strained tone they habitually conversed in, Kathy would listen to her mother instruct her students online with a kind and calm voice. Noting the contrast between how her mother treated her versus how she treated her students, she felt the need to mediate their relationship. Kathy's attempted mediation was done by initiating the discussions about their differences so they can peacefully cohabitate during this time. She reached out to her mother and asked her why she has always treated her harshly. Kathy described the discussion with her mother as follows:

Well, I expressed how I have been feeling and asked why she reacted the way she always did to me. Then, she sorts of acknowledged that she knows we do not get along too well. She elaborated on the fact that when they found out they were pregnant with me it was on a day my older sister had passed away as a baby and mom struggled a lot with all of it. The death of my sister and being pregnant with me, she had been saying that she is only having one baby after my sister was born. And she says she has never been the same since. Never been the same to anyone... while I can understand that ...it has been years ago, and also, I feel like I am the target. So anyway, we hugged, cried, and I thought things would get better, but not really.

Kathy theorized that the struggles her mother went through teaching online at that time could have contributed to the tense atmosphere at home. She would frequently have to be switching between teaching in-person to online, often on short notice. Kathy recalled some ways in which her mother

was affected during the isolation period as she stated: “hmmm she also hated isolating, I think her mental health did not take it too well, she started gaining visible weight and shortly after it was back to the same mess...arguing constantly”

Eventually, Kathy noticed that even after her efforts of trying to mend the relationship, their interactions were still chaotic. Kathy recalled her strategy to try and resolve their conflict, saying that “...anyways at some point I just couldn’t take it anymore, it was getting toxic by the day, and I had asked dad to come home or let me join him in the states.” At the time, her father did not understand how serious Kathy considered the situation. Furthermore, he was also struggling with job security as, due to restrictions on air travel during the pandemic, a lot of pilots were laid off. The continual conflict between Kathy and her mother was impactful. As she said, “I think my mental health suffered as well or at least I got emotionally exhausted to the point that I sort of ran away from home.” This caused her to run away to her cousin’s family and refused to return home, only telling her father that she planned to stay there. After her running away incident, her father returned to Canada which enabled Kathy’s return to the family home. Kathy visibly expanded her upper body posture and she started moving her hands at a slower rate than before. She then proudly walked us through her father’s journey back home below:

I think from what I went through during the pandemic, fights with my mom and all, and then seeing my dad resigning his job to be with me despite their industry being very shaken by the pandemic itself. I noticed then, that I must be the luckiest girl in the world to have a father who would choose me before anything else... So, the challenges to him were many. One— he couldn’t fully explain to my mother why he must come home, because she wants nothing to do with me most of the time ...hm. Two—his coworkers thought he was also laid off and three— there was no guarantee he would find another job. Luckily, he did but it is not as good as the one before, but I know he is happy because he knows I am doing good, I am emotionally okay and that is why he is the one person I can confide in.

Kathy continued to appreciate her father as she explained that his return has reunited the family and improved the home environment. Even though Kathy is still not “besties” with her mother,

she is somewhat content. She described her father upon his return and said, “my dad is my hero that is for sure”.

As the isolation roles prolonged, Kathy’s parents changed their perception of the pandemic restrictions. In the beginning of the pandemic, her parents would not let her hang out with people outside of her family. Eventually, Kathy recalled that her mother changed her perspective stating that “my mom became relaxed with the whole restrictions and we would do what we thought was good enough but not follow the restrictions blindly”. Kathy appreciated that her mother allowed her to hang out with her friends and cousins. Kathy’s get-togethers with her friends provided an escape from the arguments with her mother. For example, she would often be able to go visit a friend to give herself some private space to relax. Kathy expounded on how her time with her friends was spent and what it meant to her below:

During the first lockdown, I would say that it was strictly over the phone or social media and after that or even any other lockdowns that happened, we were relaxed. I am so sorry to say this ...But I would have lost it staying indoors with my mom for that long. Luckily, I had good social support in that I could go to my cousin’s house and I could go to my two friends’ house. We would watch movies, shows, we would record tik-tok videos, we would have fun really and I would go home after recharging. Sometimes, I would sleep over and also, they were allowed to come home. So, truly it was that support that I am so grateful for.... I did not mean to undermine the regulations and have a bigger social bubble than that which was required but I needed it. To be fair, most people around me were fairly healthy. At least from what we know. So, I did not feel like I was exposing anyone [...] After having an argument with my mom, I would ask a friend to meet up or sneak into their basement and watch something and I would feel better. If it was like you cannot go out on top of it all.... then it would have been exhausting beyond what it was you know?

Kathy described her time “hanging out” with her friends as “means of survival” during the pandemic. She added that she is “thankful” for her friends and extended family members who became her safe space.

Kathy credited the part her family and friends played in the pandemic and expressed her appreciation of the role they took in aiding her during that time. During the interview, Kathy shed light on the current resolution between her and her mother. As the in-person interactions resumed, she developed a clear stance in regard to her relationship with both of her parents. Kathy explained her most recent perspective of her relationship with her parents below:

Yes, I think my relationship with my parents changed for sure. I always never knew where I stand with mom and why, and after all we went through during the pandemic. Now, I know that we will never be close, at least the closeness I need, but I don't know why. I don't think she knows why either ha-ha [sarcastic laugh] so that is a question that I always had, and the pandemic forced us to be in a situation where it was answered. The pandemic did change my relationship with my dad as well because he has always been this cool parent, but seeing that he was willing to change his job for my well-being, I respect him immensely and without a shadow of doubt I know he is all I need in a parent, and I am glad I have him.

Kathy shared that she is now proactively choosing to not need her mother's affection and solely relying on father's care. However, Kathy established that her mother will always be a parental figure in her life regardless of their contentions. Yet, she still expressed feelings of uncertainty and skepticism towards her future ability to control her need for her mother's affection.

While she valued her relationship with her friends, Kathy recalled learning "being herself" as an important lesson she learned from the pandemic experience. Kathy mentioned as an example that when she was fourteen pre-pandemic, she had a desire to "fit in more" with certain social groups. She imitated the lifestyles of others in an attempt to fit in. However, Kathy now believes that she should think independently and be herself. Kathy also expressed that the pandemic was a learning experience as much as a challenge. She believes that she is now putting extra effort into her academics and extracurricular activities so that she can catch up on lost time and personal development.

Throughout Kathy's story, she is grateful for her friends and extended family members for offering her a sanctuary during those times. Kathy also attributed her ability to cope with these frequent fights, and her pandemic experience as a whole, to their support. Moreover, Kathy learned to appreciate friends yet staying true to self.

5.3.2 Reflecting on Kathy's Story:

Kathy's story demonstrated an uncommon relationship dynamic with her peers during the pandemic. Some participants including Bart, Ashley, and John shared how friendships during the pandemic deteriorated due to various factors including communicating solely online and underdeveloped social skills. Unlike most participants, the opposite happened in Kathy's case as her friendships strengthened during the pandemic. I found it mesmerizing to observe friendships growing closer when the adolescents involved did not share the same roof daily. As per Kathy, friends were a source of comfort while she was struggling in her relationship with her mother. The space that Kathy's friends provided for her was a major factor in her managing the pandemic. The activities Kathy described in her interview such as watching movies or making TikTok videos with her friends gave Kathy a sense of normality. It was uncovered previously that absence of in-person activities led to weakening of friendships (Bauminger et al., 2008). Kathy's story aligned with this framework highlighting that in-person activities were an avenue to bond with her friends.

Kathy was not the only one who appreciated friendships after the pandemic experience. Other participants such as John and Maria shared the same feeling. John weighed in and said that he has now learned to value his friendships more than he did before. John said "...I missed them [friends], and I lost a lot of time I could have spent with them. —Yeah, definitely the pandemic played a role". As for Maria, she appreciated the value of friends in order to motivate her to achieve

her goals. She expressed that her and her friends “motivate each other to work out, study, and do better”. Maria hoped that going forward her friendships will grow stronger and she will develop a deeper bond with her friends.

While Kathy learned the importance of keeping a supportive social circle, she also learned how to be content with herself. She correlated her contentment and self-confidence to the free time she was afforded with during the pandemic. Nonetheless, it is perplexing to conclude that no other factors led to her change of mind. At the time the pandemic started Kathy was 14 years of age, making her an adolescent. Lock and Heere (2017) discussed that during adolescence, people construct their reality, perspective of life, and self-identity. So, as adolescents relate to their peers more than their parents, they also increasingly become autonomous and choose how to occupy their time (Lock & Heere, 2017). Therefore, Kathy's growth in being happy with herself might not be completely credited to the pandemic experience but to other factors such as age and her biological developmental stage.

Similarly to Kathy, participants such as Maria, Ashley, and Bart used their free time during the pandemic to introspectively reflect on their lives. For example, Maria shared her newly founded appreciation for others while recognizing the importance of spending time with oneself. Ashley also examined her identity and believed that she should not change her values including who to spend time with and what activities to participate in, in order to be accepted. She became more comfortable with distancing herself from friends who would not accept her for who she is. John was another participant who reflected on his life during the pandemic. He had previously kept an active lifestyle due to his frequent participation in sports and decided to attend more games and training sessions once in person activities began. John elaborated below:

So, I just need to make the most of what I have, especially with sports, for example, I lost a lot of years of playing. So, I am just trying to make the most of it, and

like the guys who I would have otherwise spent like two or plus years with which would have helped in getting to know them better. I only have like 2 months now. So, I am definitely enjoying the time we are trying to make the most of it. Yeah, definitely the pandemic played a role [...] Uh, I don't think I would have come to the same realization as I have now. I probably would still like enjoy the time, but I don't think I'd be looking at it the same way if you know what I mean.

John decided to dedicate more time to sports after he realized that such pandemic restrictions could take away his opportunity to participate in things that he is passionate about.

Kathy's story had insightful points regarding the parental relationship dynamic during the pandemic. Kathy described her relationship with her mother as "toxic" because they were constantly fighting. She connected the pandemic to the worsening relationship with her mother. Counter-intuitively, the same pandemic restrictions that contributed to the mother-daughter conflict allowed opportunity for Kathy to put a closure to her unanswered questions regarding their disagreements. Kathy was able to understand she is unlikely to ever achieve the mother-daughter relationship harmony she craved and has accepted this newfound reality. On the other hand, the pandemic restrictions enhanced an already effortless relationship between Kathy and her father. Even though her father's return could have been influenced by many other factors, Kathy correlated her father's return with her running away from home and reflected gratitude during the interview. Similarly, to Kathy, Ashley's relationship with her father was strengthened throughout the pandemic experience. Ashley was also close to her father prior and during the pandemic. After losing her mother during the pandemic, Ashley grew even closer to her father. This is expressed when Ashley stated "of course, one— is that now I have only one parent left, and I need to treasure him and make it a point to spend time with him".

Kathy's story reflected how central family and friends' relationships were to her pandemic experience and the changes that arose, and how she navigated them.

5.4.1 Hannah's Story

Hannah is an African Canadian female who lives in a rural area and is currently 15 years of age. Hannah was thirteen and in the eighth grade when the pandemic first hit. Her father works as a nurse in an emergency room and her mother works as a doctor at a local hospital. Before the pandemic, Hannah described herself as a passionate outdoors person who spent time walking, gardening, and participating in her school's track and field team. She recalled spending a lot of time with her immediate family, frequently playing soccer with her father and visiting various personal care hair and nail salons with her mother and sister. Before the pandemic, she recalled how her family spent time eating together, both at home with barbecues in the garden and out at restaurants. Hannah shared how her family spent quite some time with extended family, during vacations and video conferencing with her Ghanaian grandparents.

When asked about her virtual learning experience, Hannah recalled despising attending virtual classes as the learning experience was isolating and she developed intense feelings of loneliness. She also found the schoolwork itself to be "extremely difficult", as there was little semblance of support when she struggled with questions and assignments. Moreover, Hannah was not able to interact with her peers on the school track-and-field team due to distancing regulations, which further contributed to her sense of isolation. Hannah also described her school experience being "reduced to some boring thing". Hannah's negative experience with the online school environment transpired from the pandemic to even when the pandemic restrictions were getting relaxed. Hannah elaborated on some experiences she lived when school stated below:

When we finally went to school, there was no like tour to introduce the facility and stuff. The new students like me had to figure it out on our own, and that had its own challenges.

Overall, Hannah painted the online experience as unappealing and “negative”. At the time of the interview, she still felt that she was struggling to integrate “smoothly” back into the in-person school system after the isolation.

During the pandemic, Hannah's relationship with family changed. Hannah’s parents are frontline workers, so they were commonly away during the pandemic. Hannah recalled her parents only becoming available at the end of the day, causing strain within their relationship. Hannah elaborated on interaction changes with her family below:

So, actually because my parents are frontline workers, during the first wave of the pandemic they would stay away from us because they were worried if they would contaminate us unknowingly. So, it was very stressful to be in a situation that has many unknown factors to it, but also that my parents were dealing with this situation in-person and now we have to live in the same house but stay away from each other.

Hannah’s parents were unable to spend nearly as much time with the whole family as before when their frequent vacations and restaurant outings became impossible under the recently imposed stringent lockdown procedures. Hannah mentioned that her parents’ absence made her feel lonely and abandoned.

Due to Hannah’s parents' stringent observation of the pandemic rules and their willingness to support the health care system, tension arose within the family. Hannah made an astute observation about how her family sacrificed a lot during the pandemic when “many people were not following the lockdown regulations”. That made her wonder whether the sacrifice that she and her family made would even have an impact in any way. Hannah elaborated on some of the experiences her parents as frontline workers had to endure. While doing so, she showed signs of frustration as she furrowed her brow and deep folds appeared on her forehead, and said the following:

We would see news of people that are dying, healthcare workers that are dying or overworked. Then see news of people saying the pandemic is not that bad, it is probably not even true. It is just a flu. Meanwhile both my parents had to take a

PCR test every other day. This was taken up their nose, it was that time when putting the tester up further in the nose was a thing, I don't know if you have ever done one of those worst ones, but it is uncomfortable, and it hurts. My mother to this day is traumatized from them. She can't stand anything up her nose or even any story about it. It is to a point where when she has to treat a patient and it involves the nose, she feels uncomfortable. My dad is a nurse and mom is a doctor, they both work in the ER. Hearing their stories daily gave me chills. I wanted to tell them to quit.

Meanwhile, Hannah and her sister had to start taking responsibility for the household chores due to the pandemic regulations. Her sister had to cook most of the time because her parents were tired. Hannah had to clean because the housecleaner was asked to take a leave of absence to avoid the spread of the virus.

Having parents who are dedicated to their roles in the health care system, Hannah had to frequently question her parents' priorities. Hannah believed that her parents' job was a threat to the family's own wellbeing, and she explained her worries below:

I felt abandoned by them, as if they were choosing to save the world, even though I am here and need them. I worried if they caught the virus and had to go into a coma or if something worse could happen. They would just be part of the statistics to the world but to me I would have lost a parent. Like... you know what I mean? The world they were trying to help did not even believe in science anymore. There were times where I saw them as heroes but at times, I resented them.

Hannah was lonely with no parents to help with chores, or schoolwork, and the whole family was under risk because of her parent's job in healthcare. She could not help but think that her parents need to take time off work or a leave of absence. She believed it would be the best alternative as they did not do the work for financial revenue and had other revenues coming in. Hannah explained her thoughts and stated:

Well, here I am struggling with online school. They want me to do well, I want to do well but they are not there to help me because they get home tired. Also, they had to stay away from us to protect us. But truthfully, I needed them. Especially my dad, he is good at explaining things. To this day I wonder if they would choose me or to be so-called heroes. Both of them have some health issues and they could

have taken a break using those issues as the reason, but they did not...my mom mentioned I promised under oath to help as much as I can. Well, that was not as much as she can. It was requiring her more than she could do. I know you can say that they needed the money, but they do not. I don't know their finances exactly, but they have multiple rental properties for that matter. Those properties I know that bring in a revenue higher than they make, I have heard them say it, multiple times. Plus, we live way below our means, so money was not the issue. They could have taken time off; I am sure.

Hannah implied a shaken trust in her relationship with her parents after being convinced that they are prioritizing their work over her. Hannah expressed that as much as she loves her parents, she is not sure they will be available when she needs them in the future. To be heard, Hannah started to “act out” and avoid talking to her parents so they can see that she is hurt “but they just thought she was busy doing schoolwork”.

While her relationship with her parents worsened, Hannah faced another challenge with her friends. While Hannah was strict about the pandemic regulations some of her friends were not as strict. That created tension in Hannah's relationship with her friends and caused some of them to become distant. When asked about friendships during the pandemic, Hannah's friends negatively interpreted her refusal of social interactions as wanting to distance herself from them. Hannah implied that her friends did not consider the participants' dilemma with her parents' stance on following the pandemic restrictions. When asked about how she realized that some of her friendships have been affected, Hannah elaborated below:

When I was not busy and free then I sometimes would ask them to plan a hang out. They would agree but like ...then the day will pass, and then I find out that they're hanging out with other friends without me. That was like, OK... This is recent and that is how I started noticing that we are not friends anymore as I thought.

The newfound reality within her friendships transpired once the pandemic restrictions were relaxed, and Hannah was now able to spend more time with her friends.

Even though Hannah laments about her deteriorated friendships, she still self-reflected enough to recognize the role she played in worsening these relationships. Hannah expounded on her experience since the pandemic restrictions had been lessened. She shared how she has been learning to communicate effectively and express her intentions and feelings clearly. She believed clear communication will help her avoid miscommunicating her desires which can result in losing her friendships unintentionally, as explained below:

I feel like it changed a little bit because then I started to appreciate my friends more because I was alone at home all the time. So, I just like hanging out with them more like giving them my time just so that they wouldn't feel like ohh I'm not being a good friend or something like that. And I explain myself better to make sure my friends don't come to conclusions that maybe I am avoiding them. If I am busy but wished I was with them I let them know.

Hannah found herself being more understanding and forgiving of her friends. Yet for her parents, she “still have lingering fears there” and finds herself getting easily and unexplainably annoyed at them.

Hannah's relationships with family and friends was not the only stressor for her, she also expressed another problem regarding her orthodontic treatment. She believed that the lack of follow-up treatments she received meant that the entire treatment was ineffective and therefore delayed, as stated below:

I mean I had just started to wear my braces. My dentist told my parents that I should wear them when I am a bit older as my jaws that are the issue where changing continuously. So, I did not get to wear them when I was young. I am starting to wear them, for about 6 months in and boom the pandemic. I did not get to go to my orthodontist as they closed completely for a huge chunk of the year. I don't know if you ever had braces but sometimes, they would poke me, and I can't eat well or sleep well. But no one to help me, sometimes they would open for emergencies only but there was no ongoing treatment. And that delayed my treatment significantly and now two years later my treatment is as if it just started.

Hannah's delayed orthodontic treatment did not impact her physically but also socially. She expressed that wearing the braces created an impact on her appearance. Therefore, she had a timeline to have them removed before an international leadership conference she planned on attending. Not being able to have them removed on said timeline caused issues with her self-image, as Hannah explained below:

I care about my grades, and I care about how I look. I mean I am part of cadets and one thing we do is we take part in leadership programs. So, sometimes they send us to Ottawa, or we travel internationally to take part in meetings or debates. The big debates that I am to take part in, and hopefully gain popularity and be voted for a bigger leadership position is this year. If they do not cancel it. I was planning to be out of braces then...Who is going to vote for me with elastics and metals in my teeth? For people to like you, you have to be smart, kind, charismatic and really how you look plays a part.

Hannah believed that her international peers, who are supposed to vote for her, are charmed by appearances. As a result, she displayed continuing concerns during the interview that she might be out of the leadership race because of the pandemic's delayed treatment.

Braces were not the only medically related care that fell short for Hannah, as she had also started laser hair removal treatment pre-pandemic. Hannah elaborated on her experience that resulted in undergoing more sessions than initially needed below:

I was also starting hair laser removal treatment that we paid so much for, as it is hard to find an aesthetician that has a machine that can-do hair removal for a dark skin person like myself. And the beauty industry was hit the most so they would close and then open but it would be past my due time so the efforts made before would disappear. Just to be clear a permanent hair removal is expensive and painful so even having to do three more sessions than you had to do, it is torture. And I would hear or read online how people are planning to come out of the pandemic with a better body, with healthier habits, with better versions of themselves and I am here thinking well I will still have braces and won't be able to wear a bikini without a painful wax.

Missed middle school graduation was another item on Hannah's list that worsened her pandemic experience. Hannah shared how her "class did not have a graduation celebration" and sarcastically

giggled as she mentioned that her family arranged a parking lot drive by to congratulate her. Hannah recalled during the interview that missing her graduation made her feel less accomplished and unsatisfied in comparison to the feeling she expected to have after graduation. While Hannah explained that the circumstances related to canceling her ceremony were valid, she was still upset that she was not able to wear the dress she bought for the graduation. Nonetheless, Hannah found relief that she will be able to celebrate her high school graduation “in two years” giving her the opportunity to make up for what she missed. Hannah also experienced not being able to visit her grandparents overseas. She had not seen them since the year 2018 when she was in Ghana. Hannah recalled feeling discontent and unfulfilled because she missed out on memories she could have created with her extended family.

Hannah’s worries and frustrations grew beyond emotions and started affecting her mental well-being possibly along with other factors. She was soon diagnosed with a mental condition and luckily, she has an aunt who walked her through the condition and steps to seek help which was never disclosed to the parents.

So I started to sweat, feel like a racing heart, chest pain, random crying, tingly hand and chills all this with school work, negative news, death count numbers increasing daily and limited to seeing just a few people with my sister being the person I can closely hang out with ...So, I had never had an mental issue at all, not that I knew of at least, but when my sleep was being affected and all of the above. I called my aunt who is a psychologist and she put me in contact with a counselor. The counselor sent me to a psychologist and then I saw different professionals and six months into the pandemic I was diagnosed with panic disorder. All this help was online, and my aunt was taking care of the payments as I did not want to tell my parents. I have since stopped needing those sessions ever since we started in-person.

As previously shown, Hannah was concerned for her parents’ wellbeing in regard to their pandemic work schedule. Because of these concerns, she chose to keep her mental distress from her parents. She shared how she still had feelings of resentment towards their work scheduling

decisions yet cared for them as individuals. Therefore, she chose not to overburden her parents and she also feared that they might feel guilty thinking that their absence contributed to her mental distress. Hannah was thankful and recognized the role her aunt played to help her get the resources she needed.

Hannah missed out on some opportunities and experienced challenges in regard to her social and academic growth throughout the pandemic. Hannah experienced an exacerbated mental health state, a worsened relationship with her parents due to her parents' overwhelming work schedules. All the mentioned factors played a role in making Hannah feel disappointed and let down when recalling her pandemic experience.

5.4.2 Reflecting on Hannah Story:

Hannah's story presented the challenges she faced as a child of essential services providers during the pandemic. Her parents' busy schedule during the pandemic fueled the contention in her and her parents' relationship by diminishing their quality time together. Hannah's story also provided insights regarding missing opportunities and changing friendship dynamics during the pandemic. Hannah cited disappointment in missing family vacations, elective medical treatments, and ceremonial events such as her graduation. Similarly to Hannah, Maria missed out on family outings and overseas vacations to explore and visit extended family members while Katie missed out on some aspects of middle school graduation. Katie missed the complementary aspects associated with celebrating graduation, as she explained below:

I did not get a graduation. I got my diploma on a piece of paper and that is it. Honestly, I did not really care that much. I would have enjoyed experiencing it of course, like having a graduation, taking a picture and getting a graduation gift from my parents.

Katie along with other participants such as Bart, Kathy and Maria saw the pandemic restrictions as initially something resembling a nice break from multiple obligations. However, the participants

started resenting the pandemic as time passed. When asked about her general feeling towards the pandemic, Katie was convinced that the pandemic restrictions took away her “valuable middle school experience”.

The feeling of missing out was predominantly voiced in Katie and Hannah’s previously provided quotes. Thus, I wondered if that feeling commonly occurred among other adolescents. I then reviewed existing policies and strategies provided during the pandemic. The theme of missing out was a commonly shared feeling among adolescents during the pandemic (UNICEF, 2020). The significance of the missing out theme was recognized by United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) who elaborated on it in their strategic COVID-19 guidelines (UNICEF, 2020). The organization recognized that adolescents’ well-being will be disrupted by missed or postponed milestones and life events such as sport matches and graduation ceremonies (UNICEF, 2020). Katie, Hannah, and Maria related to UNICEF's concerns and implied in their stories that the pandemic restrictions lessened their life experience throughout their various adolescence stages of life.

As participants experienced various changes within their friendships, the changes in Hannah’s friendships were unique in that they were influenced by her parents’ professions. She shared how her friends had different points of views and degrees of compliance from her regarding the COVID-19 recommended public health measures. For Hannah, who recalled being very compliant with the pandemic restrictions, the different levels of compliance between her and her friends became a source of tension. It appears that the friendship deterioration stemmed from repeatedly turning down friends’ social gatherings. Dissimilarly to Hannah, Kathy recalled that some of her friendships worsened because those friends were not “hanging out” with her during the isolation period.

While both participants, Hannah and Kathy, had opposite points of views regarding following the pandemic restrictions, their relationship with some of their friends faded. I was intrigued that they both shared the unwillingness to accommodate their friend groups who did not share a similar point of view to them. When I examined the relevant literature, a behavior science study by Bavel and colleagues (2020) provided perspective on why people understood COVID-19 pandemic responses differently. The study theorized that these individuals who aligned with Hannah's perspective, assessed and rationalized the public health measures to be effective in subduing the pandemic (Bavel et al., 2020). Therefore, they changed their daily lifestyle behaviors such as small gatherings and opted to closely follow the public health measures (Bavel et al., 2020). The same study suggested two rationales as to why some individuals such as Kathy chose to ignore or loosely follow the pandemic restrictions (Bavel et al., 2020). The first rationale states that when faced with fear, some people develop a feeling of helplessness if their assessment of the available solution is not optimal or competent (Bavel et al., 2020). Once they feel helpless, as a defensive response they minimally engage in the available solution (Bavel et al., 2020). In the context of the pandemic these individuals lacked the will to change some or all of their usual behavioral lifestyles (Bavel et al., 2020). A second rationale suggested that some people are inclined to express "optimism bias" which is the idea that unfortunate circumstances are likely to happen to others instead of oneself (Bavel et al., 2020). In relation to the pandemic, it is possible that individuals such as Kathy believed that there is a low possibility of them catching the virus or becoming seriously ill, if infected.

The previous rationales suggested possible explanations as to why people might have different degrees of following the pandemic restrictions (Bavel et al., 2020). It is still unclear why participants' degrees of following the restrictions impacted some of their friendships. The

ambiguity arose from participants expressing that a better outcome would have been to maintain their lost friendships. I questioned what factors might have contributed to the participants' low ability to de-escalate and rationalized differences with their friends to preserve relationships. A possible factor considering both participants are adolescents aligns with a study by Andrews et al. (2020). The article suggested that teenagers can be overly sensitive towards social exclusion (Andrews et al., 2020). Adolescents may take a level of health risk or engage in illegal behaviors to avoid being ostracized (Andrews et al., 2020). Hannah found out she is getting excluded from some of her social circles and she felt betrayed. While Hannah did not express engagement in any risky behaviors to gain her friends back, she mentioned that the sense of trust towards her friends was lost.

All four stories represented different insights related to the adolescents' experience during the pandemic. Friendship challenges, missing opportunities, familial relationships, self and social development were among the main themes that emerged during the interviews. The stories of Bart, Ashley, Kathy, and Hannah allowed a comprehensive fine-grained description of patterns of meaning for their perception of their own lived experience.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

This study examined the impact of the government-mandated lockdown in Ontario on adolescents' social interactions and social relationships. In this qualitative study, I used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore the lived experiences of adolescents during the pandemic, focusing specifically on the changes in their relationships and social interactions. After conducting open-ended interviews with seven adolescents who lived in Ontario during the pandemic, the findings revealed that participants' experiences in regard to social interactions and relationships were diverse. The majority of the participants labeled their pandemic experiences as negative. Only one participant found the pandemic experience to be enjoyable while two participants felt that it was semi-positive.

One of the participants found the pandemic's online learning environment preferable to his previous in-person one, while the rest of the participants found the online learning experience challenging and the content harder to understand. Although I was able to relate to many participants who described the online learning experience as challenging, I actively reflected on my positionality and allowed every voice to be heard. In terms of the participants' relationships with family members during the pandemic, the majority of participants' relationships remained the same as pre-pandemic. However, for some participants, relationships with their parents were either worsened or strengthened during the pandemic. Relationships with friends were also changed during the pandemic. For some participants, relationships with their peers were entirely lost or experienced lesser closeness. However, other participants experienced enhanced closeness within their relationships with their friends. Other revealed themes were fluctuation in weight gain for some participants, whereas a sense of affected ability to socially interact with others was shared by all participants.

One of the key contributions of my study was the sense of time lost experienced by the participants and how they developed a need to make-up for the time lost after returning to in-person interactions. Similarly, to existing literature (MacDonald & Hill, 2021; Janssens et al., 2011), this study demonstrated frustration among participants after missing out on important events during the pandemic, such as high school graduation ceremonies, overseas trips, and family vacations. The fear of missing out is considered a serious threat to adolescents' well-being which has been correlated with some health concerns including loss of focus, sleep deprivation and reduced productivity (Hayran & Anik, 2021). However, in this study, what is noted is how the participants reacted after transitioning back to their in-person lifestyles. In comparison to pre-pandemic, when in-person interactions resumed, there was an increased eagerness to participate in social settings among the participants. Many of the participants expressed a newfound need to make new friendships, increasingly participate in extracurricular activities, and essentially throw themselves into any potential social situation. The sense of urgency the participants are currently exhibiting could be related to experiencing the feeling of missing out for extended periods of time.

Another key contribution of my study is highlighting the differences observed between young men and women and how they responded to the lack of in-person social interactions. While there is growing literature covering many aspects of COVID-19 impact on adolescents' wellbeing, studies did not look at how different genders coped with the lack of in-person social interactions (Cooper et al., 2021; Fontenelle-Tereshchuk et al., 2021; MacDonald & Hill, 2021). My research addressed this gap by exploring why female participants were more expressive and placed more emphasis on the effects that the lack of in-person relationships had on their mental and social well-being, whilst male participants expressed greater management over such feelings. It is important to note that the responses to the semi-structured questions might have

been in themselves gendered. The open-ended questions were centered around the participants' sharing their perceived personal experiences. Sharing personal experiences can be challenging for adolescent boys in comparison to girls who are more open to disclosing their intimate experiences and emotions (Bauminger et al., 2008). Additionally, gender was linked to different strategies of coping, which could have impacted the way adolescents effectively adapted to the pandemic and influenced their stress levels (Lengua & Stormshak, 2000). In regard to coping mechanisms, girls tend to cope with stressors through emotional-related strategies including relying on social support compared to boys (Lengua & Stormshak, 2000). Hence, girls expressed difficulty coping with isolation due to lack of in-person interactions and found the pandemic experience to be more challenging than boy interviewees. Keeping that in mind, a study by Cable and colleagues (2013) indicated that friendships are essential for both men and women at the same level. Two studies also demonstrated that inter-adolescents in-person interactions are required for both boys and girls to adequately develop personal identity, confidence and a sense of community (Bauminger et al., 2008; Twenge et al., 2019). Thus, the possibility that the boys were indeed craving in-person interactions at levels similar to the girls' interviewees, yet were unwilling to express it during the interviews, should henceforth be considered.

An additional key contribution of my study is the utilization of IPA methodology. IPA methodology was utilized throughout this thesis to understand the participants' experiences of their interactions and relationships during the pandemic. While research on adolescents' pandemic experiences is growing, there is scarcity of research that have utilized a phenomenological methodology to understand the adolescents' perceived experiences. This study did not just critically engage in participant's experiences, but it focused on producing comprehensive and persuasive accounts of social interactions and relationships during the pandemic (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Furthermore, this study ensured that greater reflexivity was utilized while engaging with the researcher's own preconception and experiences during the pandemic (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Most research dealing with adolescents utilized quantitative data methods and thematic analysis (Carroll et al., 2020; Cost et al., 2021; Cooper et al., 2021; Fontenelle-Tereshchuk et al., 2021; MacDonald & Hill, 2021). While these studies provided important insights about the adolescents' experiences during the pandemic, these studies did not shed light on how the adolescents felt during the pandemic. My research addresses this gap by utilizing IPA techniques to try and understand the adolescent's lived experiences, describing how they navigated the newfound lifestyle during the pandemic, and what lessons they learned throughout this unique experience.

This study had few limitations, IPA provided the introspection that prepared the investigator to explore the meanings of the participant's lived experiences (Smith et al., 2013). Nonetheless, IPA methodology depends on both the investigator and the participants' ability to articulate the experiences in question (Smith et al., 2013). To minimize the investigator's inability to interpret the meaning of the described experiences, the investigator attended many sessions with her supervisor. The supervisor supported the investigator and allowed her to gain confidence in conducting interviews with an IPA lens. The supervisor also discussed the study with the investigator to articulate the investigator's understanding of the study. These discussions enabled the minimization of the investigator's preconceived assumptions about the pandemic experiences. Additionally, to mitigate the challenge of missing on some details, all interviewees were encouraged to keep their cameras on during the interviews. However, given that these interviews were conducted through an online video tool, it is very possible that both the investigator and the participants missed some key communication traces that would have allowed a richer caption of the experience lived and all the nuances that reflects a more accurate meaning of the experiences in question.

Additionally, IPA inherently is more suitable for participants who are articulate in speech and understand their environment (Smith et al., 2013). These abilities allow the participant to cognitively able to collect information from the experience, recall experience and make sense of their already experienced personal and social world (Smith et al., 2013). This was an apparent challenge as some participants elaborated on their experiences in more detail than others. This was mitigated by trying to probe more details of certain experiences and rewording the question differently to allow more details from the participant.

The sample size of seven participants enabled case-oriented in-depth analysis of each participant and allowed each voice to be heard (Smith et al., 2013). Nonetheless, this sample did not account for factors such as race, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity which could have played a role in the participants' experiences, but were not examined. Therefore, the study's results cannot be extrapolated to a wider group and our findings are not the only occurrences that arose in adolescents' lives during the pandemic.

Future studies on similar cohorts of participants can examine the newfound behaviour of increased eagerness to participate in social settings. Such studies would be observing if the desire to eagerly participate is only temporary or whether the pandemic has made a long-term change in the social attitudes of the participants' way of interacting. Organisations that have missions aligning with public health such as UNICEF advanced strategies to guide adolescents during the pandemic's isolation addressed adolescents in general (UNICEF, 2020). These UNICEF strategies did not account for factors that might affect adolescents' experiences such as gender (UNICEF, 2020). Public health solutions should provide equitable policies to account for differences within adolescents in improving their determinants of health. Furthermore, using IPA methodology for adolescents should be encouraged as it allows participants to share their own narratives in their

own words (Smith et al., 2013). This gives adolescents an opportunity to voice multiple issues regarding their experiences during COVID-19 pandemic from their perspective. While solutions, strategies and policies can be suggested by public health officials, it is vital to ensure sufficient intake from adolescents for the suggested solutions to be inclusive and effective.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Throughout the pandemic, adolescents' relationships were greatly affected due to lack of social interactions during lockdowns. This study aimed to explore the impact of the government-mandated regulations in Ontario on adolescents' social interactions and relationships. The study utilised IPA methodology to capture the accurate meanings of the participants' experiences (Smith et al., 2013). A difference between the male and female gender transpired where male participants were less likely to vocalise their need for social interactions even though they might have craved it as much as female participants. The study also found that for adolescents, friends were a factor in coping with the pandemic and shaping their experience of it. The fear of missing out was another effect the participants experienced which caused them to overcompensate for social interactions after the pandemic restrictions were relaxed. With the support of the existing literature, this study can be used to guide future policies to have less of a negative impact on adolescents, as a further step to prepare for future potential social isolation situations. Such policies can minimize future challenges such as the removal of social interactions during isolation. These findings can be used as a baseline for future studies to understand the long-term effects adolescents have due to the prolonged period of social isolation.

REFERENCES

- Alase, A. (2017). The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA): A guide to a good qualitative research approach. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 5(2), 9-19.
- Andrews, Foulkes, L., & Blakemore, S.-J. (2020). Peer Influence in Adolescence: Public-Health Implications for COVID-19. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 24(8), 585–587. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2020.05.001>
- Ayanian, J. Z. (2020, April). Mental health needs of health care workers providing frontline COVID-19 care. In *JAMA Health Forum* (Vol. 1, No. 4, pp. e200397-e200397). American Medical Association. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamahealthforum.2020.0397>
- Bailen, N. H., Green, L. M., & Thompson, R. J. (2019). Understanding emotion in adolescents: A review of emotional frequency, intensity, instability, and clarity. *Emotion Review*, 11(1), 63-73. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073918768878>
- Bauminger, N., Finzi-Dottan, R., Chason, S., & Har-Even, D. (2008). Intimacy in adolescent friendship: The roles of attachment, coherence, and self-disclosure. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 25(3), 409-428. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407508090866>
- Bavel, Baicker, K., Boggio, P. S., Capraro, V., Cichocka, A., Cikara, M., Crockett, M. J., Crum, A. J., Douglas, K. M., Druckman, J. N., Drury, J., Dube, O., Ellemers, N., Finkel, E. J., Fowler, J. H., Gelfand, M., Han, S., Haslam, S. A., Jetten, J., ... Willer, R. (2020). Using social and behavioural science to support COVID-19 pandemic response. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 4(5), 460–471. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-0884-z>
- Boyd, D. (2004). The characteristics of successful online students. *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*, 18(2), 31-39. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nha3.10184>
- Brechwald, W. A., & Prinstein, M. J. (2011). Beyond homophily: A decade of advances in understanding peer influence processes. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 21(1), 166-179.
- Brocki, J. M., & Wearden, A. J. (2006). A critical evaluation of the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) in health psychology. *Psychology and health*, 21(1), 87-108. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1532-7795.2010.00721.x>
- Cable, Bartley, M., Chandola, T., & Sacker, A. (2013). Friends are equally important to men and women, but family matters more for men’s well-being. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* (1979), 67(2), 166–171. <https://doi.org/10.1136/jech-2012-201113>
- Cho, J., Bello, M. S., Christie, N. C., Monterosso, J. R., & Leventhal, A. M. (2021). Adolescent emotional disorder symptoms and transdiagnostic vulnerabilities as predictors of young adult substance use during the COVID-19 pandemic: mediation by substance-related

- coping behaviors. *Cognitive Behaviour Therapy*, 50(4), 276-294. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16506073.2021.1882552>
- Cooper, Hards, E., Moltrecht, B., Reynolds, S., Shum, A., McElroy, E., & Loades, M. (2021). Loneliness, social relationships, and mental health in adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 289, 98–104. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2021.04.016>
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis* (No. 7). WW Norton & company.
- Fontenelle-Tereshchuk D. (2021). 'Homeschooling' and the COVID-19 Crisis: The Insights of Parents on Curriculum and Remote Learning. *Interchange (Toronto, Ont. : 1984)*, 52(2), 167–191. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10780-021-09420-w>
- Guruge, S., Lamaj, P., Lee, C., Ronquillo, C. E., Sidani, S., Leung, E., Ssawe, A., Altenberg, J., Amanzai, H., & Morrison, L. (2021). COVID-19 restrictions: experiences of immigrant parents in Toronto. *AIMS public health*, 8(1), 172–185. <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.uwaterloo.ca/10.3934/publichealth.2021013>
- Gutman, L. M., & Eccles, J. S. (2007). Stage-environment fit during adolescence: Trajectories of family relations and adolescent outcomes. *Developmental psychology*, 43(2), 522. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.43.2.522>
- Ha, T., Otten, R., McGill, S., & Dishion, T. J. (2019). The family and peer origins of coercion within adult romantic relationships: A longitudinal multimethod study across relationships contexts. *Developmental psychology*, 55(1), 207. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000630>
- Hankin, B. L., Abramson, L. Y., Moffitt, T. E., Silva, P. A., McGee, R., & Angell, K. E. (1998). Development of depression from preadolescence to young adulthood: emerging gender differences in a 10-year longitudinal study. *Journal of abnormal psychology*, 107(1), 128. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0021-843x.107.1.128>
- Hayran, & Anik, L. (2021). Well-Being and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) on Digital Content in the Time of COVID-19: A Correlational Analysis among University Students. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(4), 1974. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18041974>
- How teenagers can protect their mental health during COVID-19*. UNICEF. (2020, August 24). Retrieved August 31, 2022, from <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-teenagers-can-protect-their-mental-health-during-coronavirus-covid-19>
- Janssens, Achterhof, R., Lafit, G., Bamps, E., Hagemann, N., Hiekkaranta, A. P., Hermans, K. S. F. M., Lecei, A., Myin-Germeys, I., & Kirtley, O. J. (2021). The Impact of COVID-19 on Adolescents' Daily Lives: The Role of Parent–Child Relationship Quality. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 31(3), 623–644. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jora.12657>

- Kearon, J., & Risdon, C. (2020). The Role of Primary Care in a Pandemic: Reflections During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Canada. *Journal of primary care & community health, 11*, 2150132720962871. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2150132720962871>
- Keijsers, L., & Poulin, F. (2013). Developmental changes in parent–child communication throughout adolescence. *Developmental psychology, 49*(12), 2301. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0032217>
- Laursen, B., Coy, K. C., & Collins, W. A. (1998). Reconsidering changes in parent-child conflict across adolescence: A meta-analysis. *Child development, 69*(3), 817-832.
- Lengua, & Stormshak, E. A. (2000). Gender, Gender Roles, and Personality: Gender Differences in the Prediction of Coping and Psychological Symptoms. *Sex Roles, 43*(11/12), 787–820.
- Lock, D., & Heere, B. (2017). Identity crisis: A theoretical analysis of ‘team identification’ research. *European Sport Management Quarterly, 17*(4), 413-435. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2017.1306872>
- MacDonald, M., & Hill, C. (2021). The educational impact of the Covid-19 rapid response on teachers, students, and families: Insights from British Columbia, Canada. *Prospects, 1*–15. Advance online publication. <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.uwaterloo.ca/10.1007/s11125-020-09527-5>
- McLaughlin, K. A., Garrad, M. C., & Somerville, L. H. (2015). What develops during emotional development? A component process approach to identifying sources of psychopathology risk in adolescence. *Dialogues in clinical neuroscience, 17*(4), 403–410. <https://doi.org/10.31887/DCNS.2015.17.4/kmclaughlin>
- Mesch, G. S. (2009). Social context and communication channels choice among adolescents. *Computers in Human Behavior, 25*(1), 244-251. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2008.09.007>
- Nakkula, M. J., & Toshalis, E. (2020). *Understanding youth: Adolescent development for educators*. Harvard Education Press.
- Nickerson, A. B., & Nagle, R. J. (2005). Parent and peer attachment in late childhood and early adolescence. *The journal of early adolescence, 25*(2), 223-249. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431604274174>
- Olino, T. M., Lopez-Duran, N. L., Kovacs, M., George, C. J., Gentzler, A. L., & Shaw, D. S. (2011). Developmental trajectories of positive and negative affect in children at high and low familial risk for depressive disorder. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 52*(7), 792-799. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2010.02331.x>

- Orben, A., Tomova, L., & Blakemore, S. J. (2020). The effects of social deprivation on adolescent development and mental health. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, 4(8), 634-640. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642\(20\)30186-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(20)30186-3)
- Pellegrini, M., Ponzio, V., Rosato, R., Scumaci, E., Goitre, I., Benso, A., ... & Bo, S. (2020). Changes in weight and nutritional habits in adults with obesity during the “lockdown” period caused by the COVID-19 virus emergency. *Nutrients*, 12(7), 2016. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu12072016>
- Ontario newsroom. (n.d.). Retrieved September 2, 2022, from <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/61029/ontario-enacts-provincial-emergency-and-stay-at-home-order>.
- Rogers, A. A., Padilla-Walker, L. M., McLean, R. D., & Hurst, J. L. (2020). Trajectories of perceived parental psychological control across adolescence and implications for the development of depressive and anxiety symptoms. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 49(1), 136-149. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-019-01070-7>
- Schleiermacher, F. (1998). *Hermeneutics and criticism and other writings*.
- Smith, J. A., & Shinebourne, P. (2012). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/13620-005>
- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2013). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780880903340091>
- Twenge, Spitzberg, B. H., & Campbell, W. K. (2019). Less in-person social interaction with peers among U.S. adolescents in the 21st century and links to loneliness. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 36(6), 1892–1913. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407519836170>
- Whiteman, S. D., McHale, S. M., & Crouter, A. C. (2011). Family relationships from adolescence to early adulthood: Changes in the family system following firstborns' leaving home. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 21(2), 461-474. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1532-7795.2010.00683.x>
- World Health Organization. (n.d.). *Gender and health*. World Health Organization. Retrieved September 2, 2022, from <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/gender-and-health>

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Workplan and Timeline

Figure 1: Timeline for the Workplan

Task	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct
Approvals							
Committee Approval	■	■					
Ethics Approval	■	■					
Data Collection							
Participants Recruitment	■	■	■				
Participant Interview	■	■	■				
Analysis							
Data Transcription	■	■	■	■			
Usage of NVivo 12 Pro Software	■	■	■	■			
IPA Analyzation of Data	■	■	■	■	■		
Report							
Expand and Update proposal literature Review and Other Sections					■	■	■
Defense							
Defend Findings							■
Consultation							
Committee consultation		■				■	

Note: the timeline and dates allocated are approximations and could change subjected to uncontrolled circumstances i.e. ethics approval.

Appendix B: Interview Guide

1. Can you tell me about yourself? What do you like to do? Are you involved in any activities outside of school?
 - a. What do you like to do for fun?
 - b. How did you and your family spend quality family time together before the pandemic?
 - c. Do you remember which activities you really liked to do before the pandemic?
2. Can you tell me about your experiences during the pandemic? What do you remember from the first lockdown? (think about when the pandemic started, it was two years ago—March 13, 2020 to the end of the term June 2020)
 - a. In what grade were you then?
 - b. How was doing online classes for the first time, what did you like about it, what did you not like about it? Etc....
3. How did you and your family manage the pandemic restrictions during the first lockdown? How about later on/ during most recent waves (e.g. when in-person classes were allowed).
 - a. Not being able to go to school
 - b. not being able to see friends.
 - Was it fun?
4. What were the activities you used to do with your friends before the pandemic?
 - How often did they happen?
 - Where they in-person or online/social media platforms?
 - What did you do in school and out of school with your friends?
 - Can you walk me through your typical day before the pandemic?
5. During the pandemic how did you spend time with your friends?
 - Did you spend time in-person or online/social media platforms?
 - How often?
 - How were they different to before the pandemic?
 - Can you walk me through your typical day during the first lockdown?
 - Can you walk me through your typical day after the first lockdown?

6. Prior to the pandemic who did you feel more comfortable to speak about personal issues/matters/struggles?
 - A family member or a friend?
 - Why did you choose these individuals?
 - During the pandemic did you share your challenges with the same person? (only if it is relevant).
7. Were there any good/bad things that happened as a result of staying home/ with family longer than usual/for so long?
 - What are they?
8. How did you make friendships before the pandemic?
 - Was this ability affected by the pandemic?
 - Did you make any friends during the pandemic?
 - How many and how?
9. During the pandemic, how did your relationship with your friends change?
 - Are these changes good or bad?
10. What are the new ways that you learned through the pandemic that you will use in your relationships and interactions going forward?
11. In case there was some of the desired demographic information did not come up in the interview: - Just to understand your experience better let me ask you a few more questions about you.
 - In what grade were you when the pandemic started, how old are you now?
 - Where are you located/live? (urban or rural)
 - What is your preferred gender identity? location (urban or rural), age, ethnicity, grade and preferred gender identity?
12. Is there anything else that you would like to add, before we come to an end?



Appendix C: Recruitment Email

Hello,

My name is *Liza Imanzi* and I am a Master's student working under the supervision of Dr. *Elena Neiterman* in the *School of Public Health Sciences* at the University of Waterloo. I am conducting a research study on *The Impact of social restrictions during COVID-19 pandemic on social relations and social interactions of adolescents aged 12-18 years in Ontario*. I would like to invite you to participate in this study to learn more about your experiences.

If you decide to volunteer for this study, your participation will consist of a one-on-one open-ended interview via video or audio call that will take approximately 60-90 minutes. During the interview you will be asked questions such as *Can you tell me about your experiences of the pandemic? What do you remember from the first lockdown?*

With your permission, I would like to audio-record the interview to ensure accurate transcription and analysis.


This study has been reviewed and received Ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board.

Please read the attached Information Letter for more details regarding participation. If you would like to participate, or you require additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please do not hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED]. You may also contact my supervisor at [REDACTED] *or email* [REDACTED]!

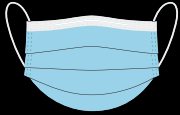
Sincerely,

Liza Imanzi

Appendix D: Community and Online Post



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO



PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH IN THE FACULTY OF HEALTH


Impact of social restrictions during Covid-19 pandemic on social relations and social interactions of adolescents aged 12-18 years in Ontario.

If you volunteer to be in this study, your participation will consist of an interview over video or telephone.

Your participation would involve one session, which will take approximately 60-90 minutes of your time.

For more information about this study, please contact:
Liza Imanzi, Candidate for a Masters of Public Health Sciences

E-mail: [REDACTED]



This study has been reviewed by and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board.





Appendix E: Information-Letter (Parent)

Title of the study: A qualitative examination of the impact of social restrictions during COVID-19 pandemic on social relations and social interactions of adolescents aged 12-18 years in Ontario, Canada

Faculty Supervisor: Elena Neiterman, PhD, School of Public Health and Health Systems, University of Waterloo. Phone: [REDACTED], Email: [REDACTED]

Student Investigator: Liza Imanzi, MSc Student, School of Public Health and Health Sciences, University of Waterloo. Email: [REDACTED]

Dear Potential Participant,

To help you and your adolescent make an informed decision regarding your participation, this letter will explain what the study is about, your adolescent's rights as a research participant, and the possible risks and benefits associated with participating in this research. If you do not understand something in the letter, please ask Liza Imanzi prior to consenting to participate in the study. You (parent) and the participant (adolescent) will be provided with a copy of the information and consent form if both of you choose to participate in the study.

What is the study about?

Your adolescent is invited to participate in a study conducted by Liza Imanzi, as part of her Master's thesis research. The purpose of this study is to learn how the social restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the social relationships and social interactions of Ontario adolescents aged 12-18 years. The overarching aims of this study is to contribute to the literature on adolescents' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and how these experiences shaped their social interactions with family and peers. The goals of this study will inform policy makers, parents, guardians, and educators how to implement strategies to support adolescents during lockdown or isolation in the future.

I. The Adolescent's responsibilities as a participant

If you and the participant decide to volunteer, the adolescent will be asked to take part in an individual interview that will take approximately 60-90 minutes. The interview will be scheduled at a date and time that is convenient for you and will take place online (e.g., Skype, MS Teams, WhatsApp) or via telephone. Privacy cannot be guaranteed when information is transmitted over the Internet. There is always a risk your responses may be intercepted by a third party (e.g., government agencies, hackers). University of Waterloo researchers will not collect or use internet protocol (IP) addresses or other information which could link your participation to your computer or electronic device without first informing you. If you prefer not to participate using this

online method, please let the researcher know so you can participate using an alternative method such a telephone call.

At the beginning of the interview, the adolescent will be asked to introduce their self. They will then be asked open-ended questions that will focus on their experiences regarding their relationship with their peers. What were the positive and negative changes within their relationship with family and friends? They will be asked to share their experiences and feelings about their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and how these experiences shaped their social interactions with family and peers. The interview will be audio recorded to ensure an accurate transcript. With both you and the adolescent's permission, anonymous quotations may be used in publications and/or presentations.

Who may participate in this study?

In order to participate, you must be an adolescent (ages 12-18) who speaks and understands English. Additionally, adolescents need to have been living in Ontario from the start of the pandemic to when the interview takes place. Adolescents who were homeschooled prior to the pandemic are excluded from this study.

II. Your Rights as a Participant

Is this study voluntary?

The adolescent's participation in this study is completely voluntary. They may decide to leave the study at any time prior to or during the interview by communicating their request to the researcher. During the interview, they may decline to answer any question(s) they prefer not to answer by requesting to skip a question. Following the interview session, they may completely withdraw from the study by contacting the researchers, Liza Imanzi or Elena Neiterman.

Will I receive anything for participating in this study?

You and your adolescent (participant) will not receive payment for your participation in this study.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

Participation in this study may not provide any personal benefit to you or your adolescent, but the knowledge gained from this study may be used to inform policy makers, parents, guardians, and educators on how to implement strategies to support adolescents during lockdown or isolation.

Are there any risks to participating?

The risks of participating in this study are considered minimal, but your child may feel mild discomfort talking about your personal experiences with changes experienced during the pandemic your relationship with your family and friends. We have attempted to minimize this risk by asking broad, open-ended questions that will allow you to share your experiences at your own pace

and on your own terms. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions, and the interview can be paused or discontinued at any point. Resources will be available, if wanted, to support you after your participation.

Will my personal information remain confidential? Will I be identifiable?

You and your adolescent's confidentiality are a priority throughout this research. Both you and your adolescent's verbal consents will be stored as separate audio files and will be encrypted and stored on the researcher's password-protected laptop. To ensure the confidentiality of the data, your adolescent will be identified by a participant pseudonym, which they may choose. With you and your adolescent's permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate the accurate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Within this audio-recording, the adolescent's name will not be used, but their voice may be heard. The audio recording collected during this study will be destroyed immediately upon transcription (within two weeks of the interview) and only the anonymized transcript from the interview will be retained. All information that could identify the will be deleted from the interview transcript. Only the research team will know which data is from your adolescent's participation, and any identifying information will be kept separate from the data. Only researchers associated with this study will have access to any study records. The interview transcript will be stored separately under an anonymous participant code, encrypted and stored on the password-protected laptop, which is only available to the researcher. Encryption of electronic files will be conducted according to University of Waterloo IST policy. Any paper data (i.e., researcher notes) will be stored in a secure location. We will keep your adolescent's data for the period seven years following the date of the interview, after which it will be destroyed according to University of Waterloo policy.

III. Questions, Comments, Concerns

How is this study funded?

This study has not received any funding and there are no conflicts of interest to declare.

Has the study received ethics clearance?

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee (ORE #42481). If you have any questions for the Committee, please contact the Office of Research Ethics at (519) 888-4567 ext. 36005 or ore-ceo@uwaterloo.ca.

Who should I contact if I have questions about my participation in the study?

For all other questions regarding this study, or if you or your adolescent would like additional information to assist in reaching a decision about participating, please contact me by e-mail at

[redacted] You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Elena Neiterman, at [redacted]
[redacted] or email [redacted].

Yours sincerely, Liza Imanzi
School of Public Health Science
University of Waterloo [redacted]



Appendix F: Information-Consent Form (Participant Under 18 Years of Age)

Title of the study: A qualitative examination of the impact of social restrictions during COVID-19 pandemic on social relations and social interactions of adolescents aged 12-18 years in Ontario, Canada

Faculty Supervisor: Elena Neiterman, PhD, School of Public Health and Health Systems, University of Waterloo. Phone: [REDACTED], Email: [REDACTED]

Student Investigator: Liza Imanzi, MSc Student, School of Public Health and Health Sciences, University of Waterloo. Email: [REDACTED]

Dear Potential Participant,

To help you make an informed decision regarding your participation, this letter will explain what the study is about, your rights as a research participant, and the possible risks and benefits associated with participating in this research. If you do not understand something in the letter, please ask Liza Imanzi prior to consenting to the study. You will be provided with a copy of the information and consent form if you choose to participate in the study.

What is the study about?

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Liza Imanzi, as part of her master's thesis research at the University of Waterloo. The purpose of this study is to learn of how did the social restrictions during COVID-19 pandemic impact the social relationships and social interactions of Ontario adolescents aged 12-18 years? The overarching aims of this study is to contribute to the literature on adolescents' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and how these experiences shaped their social interactions with family and peers. The goals of this study will inform policy makers, parents, guardians, and educators on how to implement strategies to support adolescents during lockdown or isolation.

I. Your responsibilities as a participant

If you decide to volunteer, you will be asked to take part in an individual interview that will take approximately 60-90 minutes. The interview will be scheduled at a date and time that is convenient for you and will take place online (e.g., Skype, MS Teams, WhatsApp) or via telephone. Privacy cannot be guaranteed when information is transmitted over the Internet. There is always a risk your responses may be intercepted by a third party (e.g., government agencies, hackers). University of Waterloo researchers will not collect or use internet protocol (IP) addresses or other information which could link your participation to your computer or electronic device without first informing you. If you prefer not to participate using this online method, please let the researcher know so you can participate using an alternative method such a telephone call.

At the beginning of the interview, you will be asked to introduce yourself. You will then be asked open-ended questions that will focus on your experiences regarding your relationship with your peers. What were the positive and negative changes within your relationship with family and friends? You will be asked to share your experiences and feelings about your experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and how these experiences shaped your social interactions with family and peers. The interview will be audio recorded to ensure an accurate transcript. With your permission, anonymous quotations may be used in publications and/or presentations.

Who may participate in this study?

In order to participate, you must be an adolescent (ages 12-18) who speaks and understands English. Additionally, the adolescents would need to have been living in Ontario from the start of the pandemic to when the interview takes place. The adolescents who were homeschooled prior to the pandemic will be excluded from this study.

II. Your Rights as a Participant

Is this study voluntary?

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may decide to leave the study at any time prior to or during the interview by communicating your request to the researcher. During the interview, you may decline to answer any question(s) you prefer not to answer by requesting to skip a question. Following the interview session, you may completely withdraw from the study by contacting the researchers, Liza Imanzi or Elena Neiterman.

Will I receive anything for participating in this study?

You will not receive payment for your participation in this study.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

Participation in this study may not provide any personal benefit to you, but the knowledge gained from this study may be used to inform policy makers, parents, guardians, and educators on how to implement strategies to support adolescents during lockdown or isolation.

Are there any risks to participating?

The risks of participating in this study are considered minimal, but you may feel mild discomfort talking about your personal experiences with changes experienced during the pandemic your relationship with your family and friends. We have attempted to minimize this risk by asking broad, open-ended questions that will allow you to share your experiences at your own pace and on your own terms. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions, and the interview can be paused or discontinued at any point. Resources will be available, if wanted, to support you after your participation.

Will my personal information remain confidential? Will I be identifiable?

Your confidentiality is a priority throughout this research.

Your verbal consent will be stored as a separate audio file and will be encrypted and stored on the researcher's password-protected laptop. To ensure the confidentiality of your data, you will be identified by a participant pseudonym, which you may choose. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate the accurate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Within this audio-recording, your name will not be used, but your voice may be heard. The audio recording collected during this study will be destroyed immediately upon transcription (within two weeks of the interview) and only the anonymized transcript from the interview will be retained. All information that could identify you will be deleted from the interview transcript. Only the research team will know which data is from your participation, and any identifying information will be kept separate from the data. Only researchers associated with this study will have access to any study records. Your interview transcript will be stored separately under an anonymous participant code, encrypted and stored on the password-protected laptop, which is only available to the researcher. Encryption of electronic files will be conducted according to University of Waterloo IST policy. Any paper data (i.e., researcher notes) will be stored in a secure location. We will keep your data for the period seven years following the date of the interview, after which it will be destroyed according to University of Waterloo policy.

III. Questions, Comments, Concerns

How is this study funded?

This study has not received any funding and there are no conflicts of interest to declare.

Has the study received ethics clearance?

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee (ORE #42481). If you have any questions for the Committee, please contact the Office of Research Ethics at (519) 888-4567 ext. 36005 or ore-ceo@uwaterloo.ca.

Who should I contact if I have questions about my participation in the study?

For all other questions regarding this study, or if you would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participating, please contact me by e-mail at [redacted]@uwaterloo.ca. You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Elena Neiterman, at ([redacted]) or email [redacted].

Yours sincerely, Liza Imanzi

School of Public Health Science
University of Waterloo [redacted]



Appendix G: Parent Consent Form

I have read the information letter concerning the research project entitled **A qualitative examination of the impact of social restrictions during COVID-19 pandemic on social relations and social interactions of adolescents aged 12-18 years in Ontario, Canada** conducted by Liza Imanzi of the Department of *Public Health Sciences* at the University of Waterloo. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions and receive any additional details I wanted about the study.

Your identity will be confidential. I am aware that permission may be withdrawn at any time without penalty by advising the researchers.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (ORE #42481). If you have questions for the Board contact the Office of Research Ethics, at 1-519-888-4567 ext. 36005 or reb@uwaterloo.ca.

For all other questions contact *[insert researcher name and contact information]*.

Child's Name: _____

Child's Birth Date: _____

Gender of Child: ___ Male ___ Female

Permission Decision: ___ Yes - I would like my child to participate in this study

___ No - I would not like my child to participate in this study

Signature of Parent or Guardian: _____

Date: _____



Appendix H: Consent Form (Participant Under 18 Years of Age)

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Liza Imanzi, under the supervision of Dr. Elena Neiterman. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details that I wanted.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.

I am also aware that the excerpts from the interview may be included in the findings of this study with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time by advising the researchers.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee (ORE #42481). I was informed that if I have any questions, I may contact the Office of Research Ethics, at (519) 888-4567 ext. 36005 or ore-ceo@uwaterloo.ca.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study. YES NO

I agree to have my interview audio recorded.

YES NO

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in future research projects/publications developed from this project.

YES NO

I give Liza Imanzi permission to retain the transcript from my interview for up to seven years and use it for research purposes as long as it has no identifiable information that ties it to me.

YES NO

By signing this consent form, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the investigator(s) or involved institution(s) from their legal and professional responsibilities. Participant Name: _____ (Please print) Participant Signature: _____

Witness Name: _____ (Please print) Witness Signature: _____

Date: _____



Appendix I: Appreciation Letter

University of Waterloo

[Insert Date]

Dear *[Insert Name of Participant]*,

I would like to thank you for your participation in this study entitled **A qualitative examination of the impact of social restrictions during COVID-19 pandemic on social relations and social interactions of adolescents aged 12-18 years in Ontario, Canada.**

The overarching aims of this study is to contribute to the literature on adolescents' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and how these experiences shaped their social interactions with family and peers.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (ORE #42481). If you have questions for the Board contact the Office of Research Ethics, at 1-519-888-4567 ext. 36005 or reb@uwaterloo.ca.

For all other questions contact *[insert researcher name and contact information]*.

Your identity will be confidential. Once all the data are collected and analyzed for this project, I plan on sharing this information with the research community through seminars, conferences, presentations, and journal articles. If you are interested in receiving more information regarding the results of this study, or would like a summary of the results, please provide your email address, and when the study is completed, anticipated by *[insert date]*, I will send you the information. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me by email as noted below.

Liza Imanzi

University of Waterloo
Public Health Sciences



Liza Imanzi

