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**Young adults' friendships:**  
**Over a network, over a drink**

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## Abstract

Friendship is a crucial relationship for young adults, yet their own sense-making of friendship within their everyday social lives remains under-explored. As a social practice, friendship is constituted through people's shared meanings within everyday contexts. Two central social contexts for young adults are social networking sites (SNSs) and drinking. It was theorised that young adults bring shared friendship meanings to these contexts which, in turn, engage with their friendship practices, and these interactions are key to young adults' understandings of friendship. The aims of this research were firstly to explore young adults' friendships in relation to their uses of SNSs; secondly, to explore their friendships in relation to their drinking practices; and thirdly, to explore their uses of SNSs within the context of their drinking and friendships. Twelve same and mixed-gender friendship discussion groups were conducted with fifty-one New Zealand European young adults (18-25 years). Seven participants also showed the researcher their own Facebook pages in individual interviews. This method is a form of a 'go-along' walking tour of an informant's significant places, adapted to navigating through an online SNS space. Foucauldian discursive analyses identified that friendship was constructed through discourses of 'social pleasure', 'time and effort', 'protection' and 'self-authenticity'. These friendship discourses were enacted in particular ways within Facebook and within drinking practices, involving pleasures and tensions that threatened and challenged friendships. Friendship as 'social pleasure' was a primary shared meaning to appropriate Facebook, and to engage in drinking practices. Uses of Facebook, however, required friends to perform intensive friendship response, protection, privacy and identity work, and drinking also required friends' protection from drinking harms. Friendship tensions were demonstrated in the effort required to maintain a 'bad but good overall' drinking night and to always have positive drinking photo displays; effectively airbrushing drinking practices offline and online. This research provides new knowledge of the complexities and work involved for young adults to 'do' their friendships within a technologically mediated social world, and within an entrenched societal drinking culture. This research contributes key insights for health initiatives (particularly alcohol harm-reduction strategies) that seek to promote healthier lives for young adults.



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# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

This research explores young adults' shared understandings and practices of friendship in relation to their social networking and drinking which are two key social arenas in their everyday lives. This research is relevant to everyone who is interested in engaging with, and understanding, young adults. This includes social science researchers, health authorities, youth agencies, policymakers, educationalists, parents, and young adults' themselves. For young adults who are reflexive about their friendship and social networking worlds, this research offers a way to voice 'how it works' for them. This research is also particularly important for health authorities and agencies that seek to reduce young adults' drinking harms, and for young adults who are reflexive about their drinking cultures.

This Introduction chapter provides the context to this research project by firstly situating myself as a researcher and then clarifying my orientation to boundaries of friendship within a range of relationships. I follow this with my rationale of including the social contexts of social networking and drinking in my exploration of young adults' friendships. Finally, I locate my positioning within a larger Marsden funded research project and provide an outline of the structure of this thesis.

### **My journey to friendship research**

As a social science researcher I bring a particular intellectual approach to the study of young adults' friendships. To own my perspective I will tell a story that locates my chosen epistemology, my approach to what can be known, and how it can be known. I was a psychology and anthropology undergraduate student in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) in the late 1970s, early 1980s. I was devoted to psychology as the study of what it means to be human. Yet over time I became uncomfortable with psychological explanations of human behavior. I was aligned to, but uncomfortable with, psychology's pursuit of universal laws of human behaviour through empirical induction and a logical positivist verification of these 'truths' through rigorous experimental observation. I knew this was a formidable and valuable tradition of knowledge imbued with scientific authority. At the same time I thought other meanings, perspectives and cultural variations were missing yet how could scientific psychology ever capture this? In response I would often be found in the university library in the anthropology section happily reading about interpretations of human behaviour within the world across times and cultures.

I began to question the logical deductive authority of initial theories and hypotheses in psychology experiments. Yet Behaviourism as a theory of human behaviour was credible; the rats and pigeons in our laboratory certainly obeyed positive, negative and intermittent reinforcement laws. The metaphors of cognitive psychology were also convincing. As a 'subject' wired up to a machine for perception experiments I found it exciting to probe the psychology of the mind in this scientific way. In social psychology the laws of social behaviour made common sense but I was concerned we would never control all those moderating and mediating variables to prove these laws scientifically. During this time I undertook a small exploratory anthropology assignment to investigate the meaning of 'friendship'. I interviewed family and friends and thematically analysed meanings of friendship from their shared interpretations. However, the scientific status of psychology still held sway for me as the proper study of human behaviour and I put aside my interest in anthropology. Yet I never forgot the sense of accomplishment that I had articulated people's meanings of friendship from their own perspectives.

Over twenty years later, as a postgraduate psychology student, I realised my early years in psychology were grounded within a paradigm shift. As Kuhn (1962) argued, science does not progress by steadily accumulating truth; rather it develops through a series of paradigms disrupted by revolutions in scientific reasoning. The paradigm shift I encountered was confronting for my ontological beliefs and my view of 'knowledge'. The natural science model of psychology had been challenged. It was charged that the 'truths' of the 'science of behaviour' were probable rather than absolute (Eacker, 1972) and general laws of human behaviour were not readily applicable to a fluctuating social world over time and place (Gergen, 1973). Further, to theorise human behaviour independently of socio-historical contexts invoked cultural biases and precluded a range of human values in psychological knowledge (Sampson, 1978). This made sense of the dilemma I had faced as an undergraduate psychology student. My small study of friendship was located within a discipline – anthropology – that while searching for cultural universals, did embrace a range of human values and meanings.

Another paradigmatic shift that was salient for me was Bruner's (1990) call for psychologists to move beyond post-industrial computer metaphors of the mind towards a conceptualisation of human behaviour as shared meaning-making. This view resonated with my earlier concerns about the ability of psychology as a science to fully capture the complexities of people's meaningful lives. This social constructionist position explored people's meaning-making largely through language, conceptualised as a social tool used to enter into and to constitute people's shared meanings and concepts (Bruner, 1990). This shift towards a linguistic ontology – a 'turn to language' - in psychology seemed to me such a radical way to view the psychology of human behaviour. Harre (1989) challenged notions that people use language to ascribe feelings or intentions to themselves such as to 'know' and to 'think' and my 'self' as

epistemic ‘truths’ deriving from internal states but they can be viewed as people applying a grammar or meaning that is grounded in their cultures. This view disrupted my sense of ‘self’ and it was the point where I became a cautious and inquiring social constructionist.

My next challenge was the argument that the ‘self’ was waning within a globalised world where boundaries of social and cultural forms and notions, including the ‘self’, had become blurred, opening up a multiplicity of perspectives Gergen (1991). Yet the idea that a ‘rational coherence’ view of ‘self’ was suspended with an ‘anything goes’ to constructions of our ‘selves’ and our knowledge was challenging. Further, it prompted me to question if any knowledge have a secure foundation? This question was central in the realist – relativist debate. A realist ontology that embraced rationality, theorising and experimentation was charged with being a social ‘science’ practice located within particular cultural and historical ‘truth communities’ (Feyerabend, 2010; Kuhn; 1962; Fleck, 1979). A relativist ontology where ‘truth’ was conditional on perspective was charged with abandoning any foundational truths (Bhaskar 1978). I appreciated this paradigm clash was “not a situation of either/or, but rather a situation where critical orientations argue for the consideration of another ontological level” (Tuffin, 2005, p.67). To justify an epistemological choice therefore involves a critical awareness and reflexivity:

It demands that we can be conscious of how we come to our knowledge and as conscious as we can be about the values that lead us to our perspectives. It asks that we be accountable for how and what we know. But it does not insist that that there is only one way of constructing meaning, or one right way... (Bruner, 1990, p.30)

To be accountable for my choice of social constructionism as my research approach I have outlined my particular intellectual journey towards this choice. I present further justification for this approach to my study of young adults’ friendships in Chapter 3 as well as an explanation and justification for my choice of Foucauldian discourse analysis as my analytical method. In the next section I clarify my orientation to boundaries of friendship within a range of relationships and present my rationale to include the social contexts of social networking and drinking in my exploration of young adults’ friendships.

### **A focus on friendship through social networking and drinking**

Due to my earlier study of friendship in anthropology, at the outset I recognise that to focus on friendship as a particular relationship is not straightforward. All our personal relationships involve different shades of conceptual and emotional meanings for friendship that are articulated through our platonic, romantic, sexual and familial relationships. In historical analyses of friendship, historians admit that a difficulty centres on the boundaries of

relationships such as marriage, non-sexual and gendered sexual partnerships (Caine, 2009). Within our families too, this same intersection ensues as Gurdin (1996) found when urban Canadians expressed that “the language, thought and emotions of friendship and kinship are experienced as intersecting and complementary, often at the same time” (p. 162).

This intersection was also recognised by Spencer and Pahl (2006) in their qualitative study of friendships in Britain. These authors acknowledged that friendship “may be found between spouses, partners, siblings, cousins or parents and their children” (p.2). To locate friendship, therefore, they asked people to identify friendships that are important in their lives. Their qualitative study of the meaning of friendship for 60 British men and women found that people had a number of ‘personal communities’ with great diversity in the number, type, roles and importance of ties and the initiation and maintenance of these ties. Such research highlights that friendship occurs in various shades in all our romantic, sexual, family and kinship relationships. Rather than setting pre-determined boundaries I was open to these intersections being included in people’s articulations of friendship.

I also recognise friendship is revealed through people’s shared meanings and practices within the context of their everyday social lives. In this sense people ‘do’ their friendship relationships as social practices that have shared meanings within particular contexts. For young adults, their uses of social networking sites (SNSs) and their drinking practices are two central arenas of their socialising. My study of young adults’ friendships therefore includes these two key sites to explore their meanings of friendship.

For young adults’ social networking, it is argued we may be witnessing a generational shift where the management of personal relationships and identity is increasingly occurring through social technologies (McMillan & Morrison, 2006). Young adults today, aged 18 to 25 years, are included in a globally culturally defined age cohort that is variously called Generation Y, Generation Next, the Net Generation (Net Geners) or the Millennial Generation. A survey of nearly 6,000 Net Geners from around the world portrays them as a generic cohort different from the baby boomer generation because although both groups are now immersed in social technologies, the Net Geners use them more frequently and differently (Tapscott, 2009).

For these ‘digital natives’ their use of these technologies differs because they are *producers* and *collaborators* rather than passive viewers of television and the Internet (Tapscott, 2009). They produce their own content by actively engaging with technologies such as blogs, Twitter, You Tube and social networking sites like Facebook and Bebo. They collaborate with each other through these social technologies on their computers and mobile smart phones with digital and video cameras, web browsers, iTunes music and games and Internet download and upload functions that give them a constant online connection with each other (Tapscott, 2009). Young adults are also among the most active users of SNSs such as Facebook and MySpace

(Duggan & Brenner, 2013) and they are used in their everyday friendship socialising (e.g. Coyne, Padilla-Walker, & Howard, 2013; Reich, Subrahmanyam, & Espinoza, 2012). This has led to a call for a critical exploration of what the ‘everyday sense of friendship’ means to young adults as they negotiate social lives that are embedded within social networking technologies (Beer, 2008).

In terms of drinking, a review of 40 years of international cross-cultural research finds that overall “most people drink for pleasure” and associate drinking with “friendship, good times, sociability, hospitality, and celebration” while being aware of problems of excessive consumption (Heath, 2000, p.193). For young adults in particular, qualitative research in Brazil, China, Italy, Nigeria, Russia, South Africa, and Scotland revealed that “a ‘successful drinking experience’ involved going out with friends, socialising, drinking, and ‘having fun’ but also avoiding problems and negative experiences that would detract from the pleasure” (Martinic & Measham, 2008, p.80). This finding highlights the centrality of friendship in young adults’ drinking experiences.

After reviewing the literature it became evident that to date published research on young adults’ friendships, social networking, and drinking, has predominantly been undertaken in the UK, Europe and the USA. Within this research, USA White college or university students have been the dominant research group. My research focus on young adults in Aotearoa NZ will therefore contribute to both local and international literature in these areas. In addition, the majority of young adults’ friendship, social networking and drinking research has studied college and university students only. My research includes students but also young adults’ in other occupational settings as well as a range of socio-economic statuses, sexualities and residential locations. This focus on young adults in Aotearoa NZ was made possible by my position within an Aotearoa NZ Marsden funded research project.

### **Marsden project: Young adults, drinking cultures and SNSs**

The opportunity to research friendship was presented to me through a PhD candidate position with a three year Aotearoa NZ Marsden funded research project. This project aimed to provide in-depth understandings of young adults’ (18-25 years) drinking cultures and the roles that new media technologies play in these cultures. It proposed to explore young adults’ negotiation of identities within these contexts, and within neoliberal discourses of individualism, consumerism and celebrity in contemporary society. The project was set up with five Aotearoa NZ academic principal investigators, and two overseas associate investigators, as well as three PhD candidates within Maori, Pasifika, and NZ European ethnicities. As a PhD candidate within this project I was given the opportunity to choose my area of study of young adults within a NZ European cultural context, and I immediately chose ‘friendship’.

As a PhD candidate within this research project I was now positioned within a social science paradigm where qualitative methods are accepted as a way to explore friendship. I was also located within a paradigm where epistemologies with differing intellectual traditions sit side by side, where the ‘truth’ is argued and values and intellectual choices are reflexively owned and justified by social science researchers. I was also now able to step across discipline boundaries, to visit anthropology and sociology to draw on these disciplines to synthesise differing knowledges of young adults’ friendships. The opportunity to study friendship twenty years later was an opportune and welcome challenge.

## **Thesis Outline**

This thesis initially reviews the research literature for young adults’ friendships, social networking and drinking (Chapter 2). These research areas are covered in separate sections that firstly locate broader socio-historical contexts that inform them. Research contributions are then detailed as well as my arguments (and research aims) for the ways a social constructionist lens of friendship will build on and extend current knowledge. Next a ‘Methodology’ chapter (Chapter 3) is presented to outline the relevance of a social constructionist approach, a Foucauldian analytic strategy and the research design. The next three chapters comprise the research undertaken and present the findings that address the three thesis aims stated at the end of Chapter 2.

These three chapters were written as manuscripts and submitted to relevant international journals for publication. The ‘young adults’ meanings of friendship and social networking’ manuscript chapter (Chapter 4) has been accepted subject to revisions by the Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology. The ‘young adults’ meanings of friendship and drinking’ manuscript chapter (Chapter 5) has been published in advance online by the International Journal of Drug Policy. The ‘young adults’ meanings of friendship, drinking and uses of SNSs’ manuscript chapter (Chapter 6) is to be revised and re-submitted for the journal of Psychology and Health. As these chapters are in journal article format they each have an introduction that makes specific arguments using the literature while Chapter 2 provides a broader conceptual overview and integration of the literatures. A ‘Conclusions’ (Chapter 7) chapter integrates these research findings and demonstrates how this research is consistent with and provides new knowledge of young adults’ friendships, social networking and drinking. It also considers research limitations and opportunities for future research of young adults’ social worlds.

## **Chapter 2**

# **Young adults' friendships through social networking and drinking**

This chapter comprises a review of social science research on young adults' friendships, social networking and drinking and my rationale for the current research. I firstly examine a Western societal 'pure relationship' notion of friendship and alternative social constructionist inspired views that contest this dominant notion. I identify dominant societal constructions of 'young adults' and present an alternative social constructionist view ('young adults in time and place'). With these broader influences in mind, I then consider the psychological qualities and sociological - social - variables of young adults' friendships from a positivist tradition. This foundational research informs ways young adults' friendships, social networking and drinking research has been approached over time. I argue that a social constructionist view of friendship will further our knowledge in this area. With my broader rationale in place, I then focus particularly on young adults' friendships and social networking; young adults' friendships and drinking; and the intersections of young adults' friendships, uses of SNSs and drinking. In each of these areas, I provide a socio-historical account of dominant informing discourses and I consider major research contributions. This leads to my arguments (and research aims) for the ways in which a social constructionist lens of friendship will contribute to this body of knowledge.

### **Socio-cultural views of 'friendship' and 'young adults'**

To consider friendship from a social constructionist perspective is to explore how friendship is interpreted by people throughout particular times and places, within broader social, political and economic contexts (Bauman, 2003; Bell & Coleman, 1999; Giddens, 1999a). These broader societal contexts are what Bruner (2008) refers to as the institutionalised, long lasting 'overall culture'; the political, economic, technological, spiritual, intellectual, ideological and societal systems in place at a particular time and place in history. This means that my review of the social science literature of young adults' friendships therefore firstly identifies dominant socio-historical discourses that inform notions of 'friendship' in social science research today.

Historians have charted the expression of Western friendship over 2500 years from classical Athens through to the present day world of 'cyberspace' (Caine, 2009). Friendship through these times and places emerges along a continuum of historical notions and new ideas that emerge from wider socio-economic, political and intellectual developments (Caine, 2009). The move from dominant Christian fellowship to more rational and personal forms of friendship

alliances during the Enlightenment is an example of the ways friendship notions have changed through time and place (James & Kent, 2009). Another key moment emerged when these more personal alliances were disrupted by the urbanization of communities in sixteenth century England. Francis Bacon bemoaned the difficulty of maintaining traditional 'perfect' friendships in large urbanised towns: "for a crowd is not company, and faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymbal, where there is no love" (Bacon, quoted in James & Kent, 2009, p. 154). This traditional notion of 'perfect' friendship was earlier espoused by Greek philosophers who set out normative ideals for good living. These ideals included the social, moral and ethical qualities of friendship. Aristotle classified three types of friendship: friendships of utility or advantage, friendships related to pleasurable pursuits, and pure friendship. Pure friendship is reciprocated by equal, morally virtuous people who accepted each other and wished each other only goodness (Vernon, 2005). This notion of friendship as a pure relationship has underpinned social science research throughout time.

Aristotle's classical notion of pure friendship is evident today when social scientists frame this relationship as individual, equal, private and voluntary (Bell & Coleman, 1999). Based on this view, positivist social scientists have sought the 'essence' of this freely chosen relationship of equality and affection. These researchers have identified a plethora of friendship qualities such as "voluntary, intimate, trust, respect, commitment, support, generosity, non-romantic, loyalty, acceptance, caring, liking, and confiding" (Rybak & McAndrew, 2006, p. 148). In addition, friendship relationships have been shown to involve an amazing range of purposes, modes, qualities, quantities and durations (Rybak & McAndrew, 2006). Yet the most consistently important friendship qualities are found to be levels of self-disclosure, help and support, shared interests and activities, and expressions of closeness (Parks & Floyd, 1996). These friendship qualities can be seen to mirror the classical Greek notion of friendship where people share a common social bond and know, accept and care for each other.

Yet Aristotle's idealised notion of friendship was challenged by a Roman philosopher – Cicero - who lived within a time when powerful Roman military and political forces overtook classical Greek city states (Mews, 2009). Cicero moved within a senatorial world dictated by powerful political families. In this milieu, ties of friendship - *amicitia* - were important for connecting socially *unequal* people. These friendship ties were necessary to maintain links to wealthy patrons and promote political and self-interests. Thus, Cicero exposed the tawdry realities of social and political forces that disrupted friendship as a noble ideal among socially equal people (Mews, 2009). Today social scientists have critically engaged with ways that friendship as a pure relationship is reinforced by a globalised and neo-liberally driven postmodern society (Bauman, 2000; Giddens, 1991; Putnam, 2000; Rose, 1990). Globalisation refers to the modern integration of networks of communication, transportation and trade across

countries, integrating national economies and societies (Giddens, 1991). In terms of friendship, social theorists marked this cultural change as a dissolution of modern solid assurances leading to a fluidity – a liquid modernity - where modern men and women freely and reflexively construct their own their individual lives, their identities, independently from traditional social, institutional and familial relationship supports (Bauman, 2000). This *individualism* reflects a dominant neo-liberal ideology in Western societies and it reinforces the ideal of friendship as a pure relationship chosen between equal and autonomous individuals.

A neo-liberal ideology is a market-driven approach to society's political, economic and social policies that defines them through efficiency, consumer choice and individual autonomy. The cultural influence of this ideology on our social practices is that people are exhorted to be 'individuals' in charge of their own destinies, free to achieve their own consumerist lifestyles (Giddens, 1991; Rose, 1990). The view that globalisation and neo-liberalism may influence our subjectivities and social practices leads to inquiries about their impact on our relationships. This is the context in which critical scholars have identified how friendship as a pure relationship is reinforced by neo-liberalism in a globalised society.

Globalisation and neo-liberal influences are not just 'out there', rather they are an 'in here' phenomenon (Giddens, 1999a; 1999b). It is argued that in our personal lives there is a global revolution happening in the way we conceive of ourselves and how we form our ties and connections with each other. In terms of friendship, Giddens (1991a, p.1) proclaims that there is a "swirl of change reaching right into the heart of our emotional lives" and the implied change lies in our subjectivities, our intimacies with each other. These changes are seen to be influenced by Western individualism – an ideology that promotes individual freedom, self-expression and authenticity within a society where we have 'free' choice to create our 'selves' (Giddens, 1991; Rose, 1990). When this argument is moved into a global computer networked space, it is argued individuals publicly broadcast their narcissist and consumerist self-identities, just like the celebrities, the icons of successful lives in this culture (Hollander, 2010). What does this mean for our personal relationships? A pessimistic view is that we merely use our friends as commodities for pleasure as we reflexively construct our identities through our lifestyles (Bauman, 2003). A more positive view contests the dominance of friendship as a pure relationship.

The view that globalisation and neo-liberalism is reinforcing our friendship relationships as individually focussed (Giddens, 1991; Putnam, 2000) has been countered by other views of friendship. To view friendship as a pure relationship can be construed as reinforcing a Western neo-liberal concept of *individual* selfhood (Bell & Coleman, 1999). Further, this premise constructs friendship based on an idealised individualism where people are free to actively choose their friends (Bell & Coleman, 1999). Yet the assumption that friendship

is a matter of choice is challenged by constraints of class, gender, age and ethnicity (Dyson, 2010) and economic, social and political frameworks that may enable or suppress friendships (Caine, 2009). As well as these broader influences, alternative *meanings* of friendship require consideration.

Anthropologists have provided evidence of socio-cultural variations in friendship meanings. A privileged Western ‘individual self’ notion of friendship, for instance, contrasts with friendship as a ‘connected self’ in Pasifika culture (Carrier, 1999). It also contrasts with middle-class Brazilians who oriented to individual intimate friendship yet also related to friends through affinity and relatedness rather than individual volition (Barcellos Rezende, 1999). In terms of connectedness, Smart (1999) contrasts privileged Euro-American ‘true friendship’ with Chinese people who asserted shared identities and valued reciprocal instrumental support as well as emotional satisfaction in their friendships. Smart therefore argues that scholars of friendship need to be wary of “dragging Western prejudices on board without careful scrutiny” (Smart, 1999, p.119).

A number of anthropologists have also argued that a globalizing and complex world is transforming social and cultural boundaries but they contest claims for a generic global reality for friendship (see Bell & Coleman, 1999 for a review). Instead friendship is viewed as a complex and culturally specific phenomenon that poses basic questions about volition, emotion, imagination and our sense of self (Bell & Coleman, 1999). In terms of our sense of self, our social ties are seen to reflexively produce and constrain our identities, so it is important to recognise new types of sociality may be forming and altering our perceptions of ourselves in a changing world (Bell & Coleman, 1999). The pessimistic notion that social relationships are weakening within a new global social reality has also been contested. A qualitative study of the meaning of friendship for 60 British men and women found people initiated and maintained ‘personal communities’ with great diversity in number, type, roles and importance of these ties (Spencer and Pahl, 2006). A value of Spencer and Pahl’s research is that predetermined contexts or categories of friendship were not used; people were simply asked who was important to them. Thus, people’s shared sense-making of friendship was explored within a particular socio-historical context. This is the approach I bring to my investigation of young adults’ friendships. This approach, however, also requires ‘young adults’ to be located within time and place because dominant societal values, notions and political agendas may shape how ‘youth’ are viewed.

### **‘Young adults’ in time and place**

In Western societies, young adults are deemed by many to be *troubled* and *troubling*, the victims and perpetrators of ‘storm and stress’ in their lives, particularly in their friendships and

in their transition to adulthood. The 'storm and stress' approach to youth derives from G.S. Hall's (1904) psychology of adolescence in the early twentieth century. Hall argued it was a biological universal truth that from the early teens through to the early twenties young people were problematic for themselves and for others. This trouble involved moody, conflicting and risky behaviours due to inherent difficulties in their life phase. The age range of adolescence in this model includes early and middle adolescence and late adolescence through to the early twenties, a phase known as young adulthood. A modified version of this view framed young adults as universally troubling but this was nuanced by individual, social, gender, ethnic and cultural differences (Arnett, 1999; Giordano, 2003). The 'storm and stress' of young adulthood is viewed as the peak time for risky drug, sex, alcohol and anti-social behaviours (Arnett, 1999; Brechwald & Prinstein, 2011).

This 'storm and stress' view also emerges in a youth transition discourse - a broader articulation of how young adults are troubled and troubling for society at large. Young adults are considered problematic to their parents and society as they negotiate the difficulties of transitioning to full scale independent adulthood (Settersten & Ray, 2010). Thus, they are troubled not so much by their own bio-psychological growth but by the difficulties of achieving privileged adult markers such as economic autonomy. Further, their dependence is troubling or costly to their parents and to social institutions. Many American and European social science researchers have promoted a raft of policy initiatives targeted as 'at risk' youth in education (Brock, 2010), economic aid (Danziger & Ratner, 2010), family welfare (Furstenberg, 2010), mental health, foster care, juvenile justice and special education systems (Osgood, Foster, & Courtney, 2010). In this dominant representation of 'youth' the attainment of 'adulthood' therefore is protracted and risky along dimensions of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status and disability (Griffin, 2001). This means that particular groups of young people are linked to societal problems such as teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, youth crime, and school dropouts. They are marginalised as 'problems' to be solved rather than as people who have less access to, and control over, societal resources such as education and employment.

This dominant 'storm and stress' representation of young adults as troubled or troubling and as 'near adults' in transition to becoming 'whole' persons can be challenged for its inherent assumptions. This representation of 'youth at risk' tells us as much about the social, psychological and political concerns of adult societies as it does about young people's lives, and it justifies forms of educational rehabilitation, clinical interventions and judicial correction that can be of dubious value to young people themselves (Griffin, 2001). This representation also tends to obscure young adults' own cultural practices by positioning them as 'unfinished adults' (Bucholtz, 2002). In contrast to the 'storm and stress' model, therefore, the current research

conceptualises young adults as active meaning-makers within their own worlds, and focuses on their own understandings of their friendships within their everyday social lives.

## **Young adults' friendships**

In this section I examine dominant positivist psychological qualities and sociological variables (e.g. class, gender and ethnicity) that impact on young adults' friendship formation. This psychological and sociological research has provided a valuable contribution to our understandings of young adults' friendships from differing perspectives. The 'storm and stress' model of youth has underpinned much of the research in psychology in the last two decades with strong empirical support for young adults' peer socialisation as a determinant of antisocial, deviant and health-risk behaviour such as smoking and drinking (see Brechwald & Prinstein, 2011 for a review). Similarly, in sociology much work on young adults' friendships has focussed on delinquency, sexual behaviour and academic achievement (see Giordano, 2003 for a review). After reviewing this research I identify that constructionist approaches are relatively absent and that to explore friendship as a social practice within social contexts is a valuable way to enhance knowledge of young adults' friendships.

### **The psychology of young adults' friendships: Qualities and behavioural outcomes**

In their search for the essential qualities of friendship positivist social psychologists have identified *self-disclosure* and *liking* as key elements in friendship formation. They argue that these elements are dynamically linked because we like people more when they disclose to us, we disclose to people we like more, and we like people more who we have disclosed to (Collins & Miller, 1994). It was also recognised that young adults' friendships were nuanced by gendered social norms (Collins & Miller, 1994). The relationship between disclosure and liking was more socially sanctioned for females whose sex-role stereotype was aligned to greater intimacy and closeness whereas males would be viewed as less dominant and manly if they were intimate (Collins & Miller, 1994). Intimacy is another key quality that defines friendship and psychologists have endeavoured to capture its content. The difference between intimacy and closeness as self-reported by 270 USA college students showed 13 different meanings for closeness although the most common meanings were "self-disclosure, support, shared interests and explicit expression of the value of the relationship" (Parks & Floyd, 1996, p. 85). The major difference for intimacy was that it implied a romantic or sexual dimension and it was more intense than closeness, but there was more variety of relationships for closeness (Parks & Floyd, 1996). Intimacy was further defined whereby USA and Polish college students perceived their best friendships, acquaintanceships and other friendships as decreasing in levels of intensity and intimacy respectively (Rybak & McAndrew, 2006, p. 147). These key qualities of friendship have been derived from *a priori* theorising that locates psychological explanations of

behaviour *within the individual*. This positivist approach utilises experimentation where friendship ‘qualities’ such as ‘trust’ are measurable dimensions that are correlated (related) to friendship theorised as a construct. This type of method reifies dimensions such as ‘trust’ as a universal intrapersonal phenomenon but this reductionist and individualised account of human behaviour (friendship) excludes more holistic and socio-cultural analyses (Tuffin, 2005). To theorise and explore friendship independently of socio-historical contexts invokes cultural biases (Gergen, 1973; Sampson, 1978) such as the dominant Western notion of friendship as a ‘pure relationship’ only. Developmental psychologists have expanded on the notion of friendship ‘qualities’ to explain young adults’ friendships. They locate this theorising within a broader psycho-social developmental phase of young adulthood and they have made a major contribution to the study of friendship (Giordano, 2003).

As developmental psychologists focus on life course adaptations, their study of young adults’ friendships has centred on major developmental transitions such as childhood and adolescence (Hartup & Stevens, 1999). Friendship here is viewed as a behavioural adaptation which supports transitions throughout our lives (Bowlby, 1969). For young adults in particular, it is argued that as they move beyond their families and assume a more self focussed life their friends become a crucial influence and support for these changes (Carbery & Buhrmester, 1998). Hartup and Stevens (1999) provide a reasoned argument for the developmental impact of friendship. They argue that the ‘deep structure’ or meaning of friendship across the life course is based on a mutual give and take, a symmetrical reciprocity of the ideal friendship qualities of support (dependability, understanding, accepting), self-disclosure and trust. Further, since these reciprocities occur across all life stages there should be certain outcomes at all ages such as secure attachment (Bowlby, 1969), self-worth and well-being. These outcomes in turn should support successful coping through developmental transitions such as leaving school, entering the workforce and marriage. Thus, we can expect friendships to encourage good outcomes for all ages. However, these outcomes depend on who our friends are and the quality of our relationships; a ‘high quality friendship’ has more positive prosocial behaviours like intimacy and less negative behaviours like conflicts and rivalry (Hartup & Stevens, 1999). The impact of positive and negative outcomes of friendship on young adults’ developmental outcomes has been much studied.

In terms of positive outcomes, friendship as social support has been found to buffer against stress and illness, particularly in the lives of women (Carbery & Buhrmester, 1998; Knickmeyer, Sexton, & Nishimura, 2002; Moremen, 2008; Walen & Lachman, 2000) and for people across all life stages (Umberson, Crosnoe, & Reczek, 2010). For young adults it is claimed their friendships support and protect them during this developmental phase of their lives (Benner, 2010; Demir, 2010; Oswald & Clark, 2003; Waldrip, Malcolm, & Jensen-

Campbell, 2008). It has been found that a lack of friends or good quality friends may impede adjustment to education settings (Waldrip et al., 2008) whereas the prosocial support of best friends may facilitate this challenge (Oswald & Clark, 2003) and promote academic achievement (Benner, 2010). Also, the emotional support of best friends may buffer young adults' challenges in forming romantic attachments (Demir, 2010) and platonic friendships may provide support for their emotional difficulties (Stanton-Salazar, 2005). Although a developmental approach to young adults' friendships embraces a social context, it is still a reductionist individualised account of behaviour that excludes young adults' own shared meaning-making of friendship within the contexts of their everyday social worlds. Further, this developmental approach locates negative outcomes of friendship as problems within the individual, obscuring broader societal influences such as lack of access to employment and educational resources which may impede developmental outcomes.

From a developmental perspective it has been found that a range of negative outcomes are prevalent in young adults' friendships. A lack of self-esteem due to the quality of friendships has been found to significantly predict depression in young adults (Cambron, Acitelli, & Steinberg, 2010). Self-injury in university students may be socially influenced by friends who self-injure themselves, discuss it openly and engage in this behaviour with their friends (Baril, Julien, Chartrand, & Dube, 2009). Malicious relationship manipulation such as friendship withdrawal may predict social anxiety over time in young adults (Siegel, La Greca, & Harrison, 2009). For young adults facing poverty and crime stressors, those with less supportive friendships were more likely to take sexual risks than those with more social support from friends (Brady, Dolcini, Harper, & Pollack, 2009). Further, the behaviour of adolescents' friends was found to be a major risk factor in their uptake or abstinence of smoking (McLeod et al., 2008) and their engagement in drinking and risky safety and health behaviours (Patrick, Morgan, Maggs, & Lefkowitz, 2009). It is also recognised that gender differences nuance friendship relationships and emotional and behavioural outcomes. A literature review of gender differences in peer relationships found that females were more likely than males to receive higher levels of closeness, affection, nurturance, trust, validation, acceptance and self enhancement from their friends (Rose and Rudolph, 2006). These friendship behaviours reflect a 'storm and stress' focus on young adults' mal/adaptive friendship behaviours which reinforces a 'youth at risk' framing and a reductionist account of friendship as located within the individual.

In summary, the focus on positive and negative qualities and outcomes of friendships and their impact on developmental outcomes for young adults is a major theme in the literature that reflects the 'storm and stress' model of youth. Although this approach moves beyond individual reified and quantified (through experimentation) 'qualities' of friendship to embrace

a psycho-social developmental perspective, it continues to approach the explanation of young adults' friendships within a universal individualised account of behaviour. The emphasis given to young adults' friendships reflects essentialist positive qualities such as 'trust' and 'self-disclosure', and prosocial behaviours such as 'support', which work to safely adjust young adults to adulthood. The prevalent focus on negative qualities such as conflict and rivalry or antisocial behaviours such as drinking and smoking reflects risks that may impede attainment of a well-adjusted adulthood. This type of research reflects a cultural bias towards Western 'adulthood' as the privileged explanation of young adults' friendships and it is not reflexive about influences of broader socio-cultural and political contexts that may influence ways friendship is made sense of. In this regard, a sociological approach to the study of young adults' friendships takes account of experiences associated with gender, race, social class, school and neighbourhood contexts as significant social dimensions that shape their friendships (Giordano, 2003).

### **The sociology of young adults' friendships: Social dimensions**

Sociologists have contributed significantly to knowledge of friendship by bringing in an awareness of friendship as a relationship influenced by broader social dimensions. A review of sociological friendship research identified that "locating friendship within its broader context is the *sin qua non* of a sociological understanding of the tie" (Allan, 1998, p.687). This broader context refers to the political, economic and social structures that are seen to determine the personal realm of friendship formation. Further, this context is dynamic because it changes historically through time and place therefore the social patterning of friendships change. These historical changes are seen in societal shifts such as industrialisation which confined women's social and economic lives to the domestic realm. This allowed them to develop intimate friendships whereas men formed working class friendships outside the home (Oliker, 1998). This societal shift to industrialisation also increased transport and communication so people had more dispersed individual friendship networks rather than just localised community based friendships (Wellman & Wortley, 1990).

In a comprehensive review of sociological research on adolescent and young adults' friendships, Giordano (2003) argued that this literature contests the dominance of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) in conceptualising young adults' friendship formation. A central tenant of attachment theory is that positive human relationships throughout life derive from a secure emotional connection between infants and caregivers (Bowlby, 1969). A major critique of attachment theory, however, is that it centres on 'individual' experiences whereas experiences in relation to gender, ethnicity, class, school and neighbourhood contexts all significantly influence young people's friendship relationships (Giordano, 2003). In this regard sociological literature has shown that levels of friendship intimacy may increase with age and females'

friendships may be ‘closer’ than males (Collins & Laursen, 1999); lower socio-economic status youth tend to have stronger friendship ties than higher socio-economic status youth (Giordano, Cernkovich, & DeMaris, 1993); and minority ethnic youths are likely to be more attached to their families than their friends (Larson, Richards, Sims, & Dworkin, 2001). Thus class, ethnicity and gender are significant social dimensions that appear to influence young adults’ friendships and they continue to be areas of study.

A sociological explanation of friendship is located beyond the individual, in societal dimensions such as gender, ethnicity and socio-economic location. Similar to the psychological qualities of friendship, these social dimensions have been linked to positive and negative qualities and outcomes of friendships and their impact on developmental outcomes for young adults. While this psychological and sociological research usefully posits individual notions of friendship and social dimensions that are used to construct friendship within a Western context, young adults’ own meanings and practices of friendship require further explication. Friendship qualities such as ‘trust’ and ‘self-disclosure’ are demonstrated to be important for young adults but how are they made sense of within the context of their everyday social worlds? Similarly, ‘gender’ and ‘class’ are interpreted as social dimensions, yet how do young adults construct meanings of femininities and masculinities and socio-economic status? Further, how are these meanings linked to their friendship practices? Qualitative researchers have studied young adults’ friendships from this interpretive perspective yet this research is scarce, perhaps due to the historical dominance of a positivist paradigm.

The dominance of a positivist paradigm in the study of young adults’ friendships is shown in a comprehensive review of adolescent (including young adults) development in interpersonal and societal contexts (Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006). This review identifies the major research areas of young people’s interpersonal relationships as family (parent, sibling and grandparent), romantic and community relationships. Further, it is shown that peer relationships have received less attention due to the greater emphasis on young adults’ romantic and sexual relationships (see Collins, Welsh, & Furman, 2009, for a review). This emphasis has been critiqued as a culturally hegemonic assumption that friendship is a secondary relationship to the primary commitment of heterosexual romantic love dyads (Rose, 2000). Smetana and colleagues (2006) attribute a lack of research attention to young adults’ peer relationships to a dominant ‘storm and stress’ (Arnett, 2000) problematic framing; hence the emphasis on family relationships. Further, these scholars argue that framing peer relationships as problematic has focussed researchers on the ‘dark side’ of relationships; bullying, jealousy, cliques, popularity, harassment and victimisation. This has meant that theorising has not recognised that young people “construct, interpret, and make meaning of the social contexts

they inhabit” (Smetana, et al., 2006, p.275). However, a constructionist approach to young adults’ friendship relationships has challenged the positivist ‘storm and stress’ paradigm.

### **Absences in young adults’ friendship research**

A constructionist challenge to positivist views of young adults’ friendships disputes the overly developmental notions of their friendships and offers alternative theorising and empirical methods (Frith, 2004). Researchers, predominantly through qualitative interviews and thematic analyses, have explored how young adults’ perform their friendships through normative gender constructions of masculinity (Ghail & Haywood, 2012; Woolwine, 2000) and femininity (Fallon, 2010; Ringrose, 2008). A major argument here is that young women’s friendships have been “romanticised as a haven of warmth and support, intimate self-disclosure and trust” (Frith, 2004, p.357) whereas young men’s friendships are dominated by hegemonic masculinities that resist such personal vulnerability (Levy, 2005). This means dominant heterosexual gendered discourses in relation to young adults’ friendships have been explored.

In terms of young women’s friendships, it has been shown that when teenage girls talk about bullying they construct their friendship relationships through a heterosexual femininity ‘nice girl’ discourse (Ringrose, 2008). This is demonstrated when friends position each other either outside (‘a slut’) or inside (‘nice girl’) feminine codes of sexual permissiveness. The importance of this research is that it shows how friendships may be shaped through dominant gendering discourses that involve power relations. In contrast to the ‘dark side’ of young women’s friendships, Fallon (2010) has shown how young British females (13-19 years) as friends played a crucial role in accessing emergency hormonal contraception. By helping each other overcome feelings of shame, friends negotiated a powerful discourse of risk and responsibility in young adults’ sexual relationships. An important insight of this study for my research is that friendship is understood as a practice – what friends ‘do’ - within a particular context; here the context is sexual health.

In terms of young men’s friendships, researchers have similarly focussed on ways dominant gendered masculinities (and femininities) may prescribe perceptions of friendship (Ghail & Haywood, 2012; Woolwine, 2000). A Foucauldian discursive study of teenage boys’ meanings of friendship contested adult-centric male gender norms in the area of mental health (Ghail & Haywood, 2012). These authors argued that male gender norms problematise ‘too much masculinity’ as repressed feelings and ‘not enough masculinity’ as rejection by other males; both leading to relationship isolation. Their study demonstrated that teenage boys constituted their friendships as a means to negotiate school life through “transient alliances” or “episodic joinings” that related to strategies to ‘get through lessons’ in a range of school contexts (Ghail & Haywood, 2012, p. 487). Thus males constituted their friendship

relationships as a means to negotiate life within their school context. Similarly a study with gay men in New York (including young adults) found they constructed their friends as people ‘like oneself’ with whom they could ‘relax and let one’s hair down’ (Woolwine, 2000, p.24). For these men, emotional attachment to their friends was their strongest experience of community, over and above their connections to gay organisations and political groups (Woolwine, 2000).

These studies are valuable because they focus on young adults’ friendships within particular contexts of their everyday social lives. Yet within this qualitative research there is almost no research to date that has employed a social constructionist – discourse analytic approach to investigate young adults’ friendships. This gap is highlighted by Chasin and Radtke (2013) in their discourse analysis of young adults’ meanings and practices of friendship. They note that:

...what is missing in psychological research on adult friendships is an understanding of friendship practices. Indeed, when this study was first planned, we found no studies of friendship using a discursive approach (p.276).

Chasin and Radtke (2013) employed a Potter and Wetherell (1987) form of discourse analysis. This is an approach which focuses on how people draw on linguistic resources to justify their stake in social interactions. They view friendship as a social practice and their study showed young adults, in dyad conversations with a researcher, drew on personal histories as resources to position themselves as insiders (‘friends’) in relation to the researcher as an outsider (‘non friend’). Although this study focussed on friendship as a social practice the authors analysed friendship in terms of the dynamics between researcher and participant, rather than the ways in which their participants may also have made sense of friendships in relation to each other and in interaction with their social worlds. Similar to Chasin and Radtke, my research focuses on friendship as a social practice but I employ a Foucauldian discursive approach (see Chapter 3) to explore young adults’ shared meanings of friendship.

A Foucauldian discursive approach to young adults’ understandings of friendship views them as active agents drawing on resources to constitute (justify and claim) their social realities. These resources are discourses – multiple ways of speaking about the world that constitute people as ‘subjects’, and their ways of knowing and ‘doing’, in particular ways (Burr, 2003; Willig, 2001). Dominant discourses are produced within broader societal conditions, and social institutions, structures and practices reinforce, limit, constrict and renew these ways of ‘knowing’, ‘being’ and ‘doing’ (Hook, 2001). This is a sense in which Foucault viewed power relations at a macro level, linking the power in language to external, material and tactical forms of power within broader societal contexts (Hook, 2001). As well as taking account of prevailing knowledges, however, we also need to explore perspectives that may resist these dominant understandings (Burr, 2003). This means that to explore young adults’ friendship sense-making,

we also need to take account of their ‘ways of seeing’ and ‘ways of doing’ - the discourses they draw on to make sense of and practice friendship.

Discourse can be viewed as social action – as a dialectic between people as active agents reflexively constituting, enacting and identifying themselves in interaction with the influences of societal discourses in their everyday social practices (Fairclough, 2012; Keller, 2005). Young adults’ friendship practices are enacted within their uses of SNSs. As digital technologies, these systems represent a material change in social structures, a new way of actively constituting social realities through software that may constrain, enable and shape people’s interactions (Beer, 2009; Lash, 2007; Thrift, 2005; Van Dijk, 2013). This interaction involves power relations in the sense that the structure and function of SNS technology as affordances to be taken up into friendship practices may constitute friendship in particular ways. Similarly, the broader structure of societal drinking cultures offers affordances (e.g. the night time alcohol leisure venues and alcohol products) that may be taken up into friendship practices, and may influence the ways in which friendship is constituted.

It is therefore crucial that when we explore young adults’ friendship practices within these social arenas, we also take account of how these contexts engage with and utilise these practices. This theorising enables us to examine young adults’ everyday sense-making and practices of friendship; how their friendship are constituted and practiced within social networking and societal drinking cultures, and the power relations involved. To explore power relations in these key social contexts is important because it gives us insights into how dominant discourses may shape friendship practices in particular ways. With this approach my research offers an original contribution to knowledge of young adults’ friendships. The way in which I applied this research approach and the methods I utilised are discussed more fully in Chapter 3. The following sections in this chapter focus on the research landscape of friendship and social networking, friendship and drinking, and the intersection of friendship, drinking and social networking and my rationale for how a social constructionist lens of friendship will contribute to this body of knowledge.

## **Young adults’ friendships and social networking**

In this section I firstly consider a dominant socio-historical view of young adults’ friendships and social networking that surfaced in the online/offline debate. This debate frames research on young adults’ friendships and SNSs through conflicting dystopian and utopian views of the psychological and social impacts for their friendships. More recently researchers have found young adults primarily use SNSs to socialise with known friends and attention has shifted to examining how SNSs may influence friendship as a relationship. I argue, however, that further insights will be gained in this area by exploring shared friendship meanings and practices young

adults bring to their SNS uses; ways in which SNSs technologies engage with young adults; and ways in which young adults appropriate these sites into their friendship practices.

### **Young adults' social networking in Aotearoa NZ**

Aotearoa NZ is included with 13 other Western countries in the World Internet Project report on the impacts of social technologies in people's everyday lives (Bell, Crothers, Gibson, & Smith, 2012). For Aotearoa NZ, access to and use of the Internet generally, and of social technologies in particular, is commensurate with these countries. The report shows that Facebook is the dominant SNS for people under 30 years, and more than 80 percent of young adults go online. Further, they spend the same amount of time with friends face to face as they do with them on Facebook. This suggests that social networking is a central social arena for young NZ adults' socialising and a key site to explore their friendship relationships. There is no research that has specifically investigated how social networking is used, and what it means, for Aotearoa NZ young adults and their friendship relationships. The lens of friendship may therefore contribute further insights into their social networking.

### **The online/offline debate**

Social scientists have extensively explored whether young people's friendships are changing for the better or worse in an online world. This research began with a general sense of alarm stemming from a foundational study that found "greater use of the Internet was associated with declines in participants' communication with family members in the household, declines in the size of their social circle, and increases in their depression and loneliness" (Kraut et al., 1998). These negative implications prompted concerns about the influence of the Internet on friendship formation, known forms of sociality and related self-understandings (Teske, 2002). For young adults in particular there were concerns their psychological development was at risk because the Internet offered easy and entertaining outlets that deflected the challenges and anxieties of psychological growth (Teske, 2002). It therefore became timely to examine the form and content of young adults' online relationships.

The examination of young adults' online relationships generated a central debate (which continues today, see Chapter 3) about whether online friendships were the 'real thing' as compared to traditional face to face friendships and whether their outcomes were positive or negative (see Whitty, 2008, for a review of this debate). Parks and Floyd (1996, p.81) summed up the tenor of the debate when they stated that "one vision is of relationships lost, while the other is of relationships liberated and found". In the early stages of this research effort Parks and Floyd (1996) called for a systematic research mapping of the prevalence, demographics and intensities of on-line relationships. This call reflected concern for the impact of online settings and a need for systematic inquiries to gain knowledge of this. In their own research of 22

newsgroup users aged 15-57 years, these authors found that rather than an exotic life-world, cyberspace was 'simply another place to meet' and online relationships frequently moved offline so their distinction was blurred (Parks & Floyd, 1996). Social science scholars have since examined the ways in which these everyday uses of online spaces may impact on the psychological qualities and social dimensions of young adults' friendships.

Developmental psychologists have focussed on concepts of attachment (Buote, Wood, & Pratt, 2009) and friendship qualities such as intimacy, self-disclosure and behavioural outcomes to investigate young adults' friendships and their uses of SNSs (Mikami, Szewo, Allen, Evans, & Hare, 2010). It was found that online relationships were rewarding if they mirrored offline 'measured' relationship qualities like closeness and self-disclosure but social deficits such as loneliness were not compensated for in online interactions (Pornsakulvanich, Haridakis, & Rubin, 2008). The Internet was found to reinforce social deficits like anxiety but at the same time it supported those skilled in social interactions (Mazalin & Moore, 2004). Further, research showed that online interactions promoted negative health outcomes like stress, loneliness and depression (Kraut et al., 1998) yet other research demonstrated these online interactions also engendered increased self-esteem and perceived social support (Shaw & Gant, 2002). The diversity of these positive and negative research outcomes reflects an emphasis on exploring individual positive and negative qualities of friendship rather than young adults' own shared meanings. While these insights are valuable they focus on pre-defined friendship meanings and they are inconclusive, and young adults' own voices, views and experiences are absent.

The examination of social dimensions of friendship in young adults' SNS activities has also received extensive research attention. Online socialising has been conceptualised and examined by social scientists from traditional notions of human sociality within a positivist paradigm. Computer-mediated communication researchers have theorised online relationships based on the view that people have abilities to communicate effectively to enable attachments to others. Social presence theory (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976), for instance, posits that face-to-face is superior to online communication because there are more cues to facilitate social interaction. On the other hand, social information processing theory (Walther, 1992; Walther & Burgoon, 1992) contends that online communicators use whatever social information is available and adjust their messages to interact socially. Alternatively, hyper personal theory (Walther, 1996) posits that online communicators experience more intense presence than face-to-face communicators because they can bypass undesirable information emitted by non-verbal cues and selectively present themselves positively. These theories reflect a positivist approach to seeking knowledge through *a priori* theorising and falsification testing; here 'truths' or 'laws' are sought to explain individual's behaviours. These theories were concurrently tested in on

online environment and hyper personal theory was supported (Ramirez & Zhang, 2007). More intimacy and social attraction occurred when social interaction remained online than when face-to-face contact also occurred (Ramirez & Zhang, 2007). While this positivist framing contributes insights into individuals' communication dynamics in online spaces, it precludes people's own shared meaning-making of relationships they bring to their online interactions. It also precludes the notion that SNSs are embedded into young adults' everyday friendship relationships. This latter perspective is taken up by researchers who have applied 'social capital' theory to explain young adults' friendships and social networking.

Social capital is a hotly debated concept but it can be broadly and simply defined as the "connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (Laberge, 2010). Ellison and colleagues (2007) provide an example of the type of research that links social capital to online friendships. They surveyed 800 White United States of America (US) college students and measured their online Facebook usage and intensity for initiating new connections or maintaining old connections, and their self-esteem and life satisfaction. A strong association was found between Facebook usage and bridging social capital (weak friendship ties), bonding social capital (strong emotional support friendships) and maintenance social capital which emerges in particular for young adults who overcome "friend sickness" through online contact with old friends (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). These types of finding are important because they capture ways in which young adults' social networking is embedded in their everyday friendship relationships.

More recent research findings demonstrate that young adults primarily use SNSs to engage with their everyday known (face to face contact) friends (e.g. Kuss & Griffiths, 2011; Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009; Reich, Subrahmanyam, & Espinoza, 2012). The online/offline debate has waned and a reason for this is captured by the observation that mundane technologies are "owned in some way, placed, perhaps physically, in the topology of the owner's life, absorbed into his/her rhythms and routines, and stabilised in their use so that they become both ingrained and.... invisible" (Dourish, Graham, Randall, & Rouncefield, 2010, p.176). The ingrained use of SNSs in young adults' daily social lives is supported by a literature review of 'emerging adults' (18-late 20s) and media uses over the last decade (Coyne et al., 2013). These authors report that new media such as SNSs are highly prevalent (used for a number of hours every day) for young adults and their uses complement and facilitate their everyday friendships through increased contact online. This perhaps accounts for the finding that status homophily (similar age, gender and ethnicity), a major organising principle of everyday friendships, was found in a content analysis of 129 early young adult (16-19 years) MySpace users' wall comments; the majority of 'friends' were similar in ethnicity, age and gender (Mazur & Richards, 2011).

With this recognition that young adults socialise everyday with known friends on SNSs, researchers have found that online friendships are still related to key psychological friendship qualities; and positive and negative behavioural outcomes continue to be examined. Young adults' face-to-face prosocial behaviours ( e.g. saying nice things, offering help) have been found to be similar to online (Facebook, IM, email and text messages) prosocial behaviours (Wright & Li, 2011). In contrast, when Facebook was used to monitor others' social lives because of jealousy or mistrust, it was linked to relationship dissatisfaction (Elphinston & Noller, 2011). In addition, it was found that the time spent online by young people with their face-to-face friends led to them neglecting school work and losing sleep (Reich et al., 2012). This research goes towards approaching young adults' friendships and social networking as everyday social practices. Yet young adults' own understandings of friendship within these social practices remain unclear. Further, it is notable that in their recent decade literature review of 'emerging adults' and media, Coyne and colleagues (2013) use a developmental framing to call for future research to chart young people's *uses* of new media and effects on their abilities to transition successfully to adulthood. My research approach in contrast calls for further understandings of young adults' own meanings of their friendships and social networking.

### **Rethinking young adults' friendships and social networking**

A social constructionist approach to friendship would be valuable to explore young adults' own meanings of friendship, and their understandings of the ways SNSs are related to their friendship practices. From a social constructionist perspective it is also valuable to consider the 'technology' in SNSs. Technologies are taken up through a process of initial unreliability to consistent operation so that as we trust their operation they become 'black boxed' and invisible (Latour, 1999). This 'invisibility' relates to the way technological devices (e.g. computers, smart phones and ipads) are used seamlessly within people's everyday lives. For instance the 24/7 accessibility of SNSs means this technology is 'always there', 'always on', instantaneous and taken for granted. Here the 'black box' of technology relates to a general lack of knowledge, in relation to those who actually use SNS sites, of the computation (e.g. programs, algorithms, databases) and infrastructure (e.g. commercial ownership that finances and operates SNS server networks) that sustain this technology. It therefore would be useful to open this 'black box' and consider how the technology of SNSs operates to engage with young adults in their friendships.

A relevant approach here is boyd's (2011) argument that people articulate their friendships online not simply as projections of 'tie strength' with others. Instead, because these sites are public online spaces, people *perform* their relationships in ways that are deeply influenced by SNS technological affordances. Through ethnographic research boyd (2007)

explored what USA teenagers were *doing* on the SNS MySpace. This research revealed that SNS affordance dynamics fundamentally alter young adults' friendship socialising. Affordances in this context are opportunities for action provided by technology (Norman, 1988). SNS affordances are the social channels (e.g. instant chat and messaging, photo uploads, 'search and display') friends can utilise to connect and socialise with each other on SNSs. While these social channels enable friends to communicate, however, they also engender affordance dynamics of wider, often invisible, audiences to a user's online participation; collapsed contexts where social boundaries are difficult to maintain; and the elision of public and private spheres (boyd, 2011a).

The affordance dynamic of wider invisible audiences is created by the digital networked connections of SNSs and the way in which users choose to link these connections through their profiles to others. Facebook, for instance, offers 'friend', 'friend of friend' and 'everyone' connections which are invoked by users through their privacy settings. If a user does not set their privacy it defaults to 'everyone' which means that anyone may view their Facebook content, opening up an 'invisible' audience to their social networking. At the present date Facebook has introduced a social graph search function that allows users to search anyone (non-friends) and view their photos that have not been delimited by privacy options. This opens up a wider invisible audience and reflects the ongoing privacy issues that inhere when system functionality is continually updated.

In terms of the affordance dynamic of collapsed contexts, the system 'friend' connection is a digital 'link' interpreted by users as people they want to connect to online. Yet a 'friend' in this sense may include parents, close family, extended family, college and university acquaintances and work colleagues. These connections with people in different social contexts means a user's behaviours online, enacted with close friends only, can potentially be viewed by all these connections. A prominent example here is young adults' online drinking activities (e.g. photos of partying) that may be judged by other viewers as socially inappropriate. The elision of public and private is related to these collapsed boundaries in that private behaviours can be more publicly displayed. It is also related to ways users may 'broadcast' their personal thoughts, feelings, activities, positive and negative interactions (e.g. intimate talk or fights) and life experiences on SNSs. The notion of a 'private' life is disrupted by users' ability to publicly share their everyday inner worlds with an audience on SNSs.

For young adults' friendships, an example of ways these affordance dynamics may influence this relationship is the finding that friendship intimacy, related to emotional disclosure, is performed more publicly through Facebook status updates to a wider friendship audience (Manago, Taylor & Greenfield, 2012). Manago and colleagues (2012) found that young adults' rated their use of Facebook status updates to convey their emotional states (e.g.

venting frustration, feeling happy) as primary compared to using them to keep people updated of their activities or voicing opinions. Facebook status updates are automatically published (via newsfeeds) to all of a person's friends' in their network. In this study 50% of young adults estimated their 'friend' network as 10-50 people and 24% estimated over 50 people. They acknowledged that these 'friend' networks were viewing their status updates. This suggests that emotional disclosures are performed to a friendship 'audience', hence more publicly, in an online environment. The importance of boyd's (2007; 2011a) research is that it opens up the 'black box' of technology by focusing on ways 'technology' as affordances may shape friendship socialising. The ways in which affordance dynamics may alter young adults' friendship practices therefore requires further exploration.

The friendship practices young adults bring to their social networking, however, also needs to be considered here. While SNS affordances may influence young adults' friendship practices, young adults may in turn shape SNS technologies through such processes (Beer, 2008). A useful way to theorise the intersection of young adults' friendship practices and social technologies is to draw on the 'embodied interaction' perspective which informs interactive computer system design (Dourish, 2001). A key notion of this perspective is that computation is fitted to our physical and social settings through social embodiment (Schutz, 1967). This means that people's shared meanings of experiences derive from their collective every day activities in a meaningful life world. Our social practices therefore are the shared actions and meanings we derive from being together in the world. Social embodiment is also articulated in anthropology as "the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves" (Geertz, 1973) and in psychology as the way we enter into a social world and learn to represent the meanings of our actions through shared meanings, principally our languages (Bruner, 1990). A useful principle of 'embodied interaction' that links shared practices and technology is 'appropriation', the process by which technologies 'reach out' to people within communities and are in turn adapted into their social practices (Dourish, 2001).

This theorisation of young adults' appropriation of social technologies therefore requires us to employ research approaches which provide in-depth insight and understandings of their everyday friendship practices. This perspective resonates with anthropologists who reject the idea of a 'space' based 'social networking culture' and instead focus on culture as emergent in the shared social practices of people as they orient themselves to worlds where social technologies are embedded (Coleman, 2010; Golub, 2010; Kelty, 2010). To apply this approach to young adults' friendships and social networking means that we must conceptualise that they bring shared friendship meanings and practices to their uses of SNSs and SNSs, in turn, offer affordances to be appropriated (taken up, resisted, altered, extended) by young adults in their friendship practices. The first aim of the current research therefore is to contribute further to our understandings of young adults' friendship and social networking practices by exploring their

shared friendship meanings and practices and how SNS affordances, and their uptake by young adults, relate to their friendship practices. The focus of this chapter now shifts to consider young adults' friendships in relation to drinking.

## **Young adults' friendships and drinking**

In this section I situate young adults' drinking within an Aotearoa NZ context. I then identify three significant phases in social scientists' theorising and exploration of young adults' drinking practices over the last two decades. These phases comprise the 'normalisation thesis' which identified the prevalence of young people's illicit drug and alcohol leisure-based lifestyles; a 'culture of intoxication' which locates young adults' drinking as 'determined drunkenness' within broader socio-economic and cultural contexts; and 'controlled hedonism' which further frames young adults' drinking as bounded pleasure nuanced by heterogeneous dimensions such as class and gender. Taken together this foundational and more emergent research informs ways in which young adults' drinking research has been approached over time. I also present my rationale to approach young adults' drinking as a friendship practice. I argue that to conceptualise and explore young adults' drinking as a friendship practice will extend our insights into their meanings of friendship and their drinking.

### **Young adults' drinking in Aotearoa NZ**

The societal context for young adults' drinking practices in Aotearoa NZ is similar to Britain's liberalised alcohol-based leisure lifestyle (McEwan, Campbell, & Swain, 2010) and excessive drinking and its harms were at the forefront of the New Zealand government's recent review of alcohol laws (New Zealand Law Commission, 2010). Many young adults in Aotearoa NZ regularly engage in drinking episodes with groups of friends to 'have fun' and 'be sociable' (Lyons & Willott, 2008; McCreanor, Barnes, Kaiwai, Borell, & Gregory, 2008; Willott & Lyons, 2012). It has also been shown that many young adults in Aotearoa NZ view heavy drinking as part of being a New Zealander (Braun, 2008) and that specific alcoholic beverages are consumed to signal taste and identity (McCreanor et al., 2008; McCreanor, Greenaway, Moewaka-Barnes, Borell, Gregory, 2005). Young adult university students (17-25 years) across ethnicities in Aotearoa NZ have similar drinking patterns (rates and amounts) to US and Canadian university students as well as similar types of alcohol harms (Kypri et al., 2009). Within Aotearoa NZ, university students are associated with higher rates of drinking than non-students and their tertiary environment (e.g. living away from home in dormitories) contributes to their student drinking cultures (Kypri, Langley, McGee, Saunders, & Williams, 2002; Kypri, Langley, & Stephenson, 2005). Drinking therefore is a central social arena for young Aotearoa NZ young adults' socialising and a key site to explore their friendship relationships. The ways

Aotearoa NZ young adults' friendship relationships are involved in their socialising with alcohol has received less analytic attention (Hebden, 2012; Tonks, 2012) suggesting the lens of friendship may contribute insights into this area.

### **The study of young adults' drinking practices**

There has been a wealth of research on young adults' drinking over the last two decades but three significant phases in social scientists' theorising and exploring of their drinking practices can be identified. These phases reflect increasingly nuanced views of young adults' drinking as a normalised recreational pursuit (Measham, Newcombe, & Parker, 1994; Parker, Aldridge, & Measham, 1998); secondly, as deliberate intoxication practices within the influences of broader socio-economic and cultural contexts (Measham & Brain, 2005; Griffin, Bengry-Howell, Hackley, Mistral, & Szmigin, 2009; Haywood & Hobbs, 2007); and thirdly, as hedonist (pleasurable) bounded consumption (Fry, 2011; MacNeela & Bredin, 2011; Szmigin et al., 2008), nuanced by dimensions of class, ethnicity and gender (e.g. de Visser & Smith, 2007; Karriker-Jaffe, 2011; Peralta, 2007). These phases of theorising and exploring young adults' drinking are considered in turn.

#### ***'Normalisation thesis'***

The first significant phase of theorising of young adults' drug uses (including drinking) emerged in Britain in the late 1990s. A foundational 5 year longitudinal survey study of 700 'ordinary' British young people tracked their exposure to, and consumption of, alcohol and illicit drugs (Parker et al., 1998; Measham et al., 1994). This study explored alcohol consumption based on availability, access, usage rates and social attitudes to alcohol and illegal drug use. These authors found conventional young adults integrated alcohol and drugs as a 'sensible' and socially accepted recreational pursuit into their every lives. Yet while this 'normalisation thesis' was recognised as a useful lens to chart broad alcohol consumption practices and social attitudes, and it confirmed national surveys of young people's increased drug and alcohol usage, it was challenged.

This challenge largely centred on the use of crude 'ever used/last month' drug usage measures which did not capture one-off use, ex-users and ongoing usage; aggregation of drug types that obscured usage differences; regional and neighbourhood variations in drug usage; and a lack of focus on young people's self-reported 'meanings' of drug use (Shiner & Newburn, 1997). Where young people's attitudes were examined, the complexities and diversity of their drug and alcohol experiences were identified (Shildrick, 2002; Shiner & Newburn, 1997; Wibblerley & Price, 2000). For instance, a drug use and attitude survey of 1,067 school pupils (15-16 years) in North West England showed a hierarchy of drug acceptance based on perceptions of risk; users and non-users accepted cannabis and alcohol as a recreational choice,

but hard drugs such as heroin were rejected (Wibblerley & Price, 2000). When young people's *meanings* were explored, diversity in drug and alcohol experiences was demonstrated.

A qualitative interview study of fifty-two 15-16 year olds in a deprived London borough, showed a majority of young people – users and non-users - held anti-drug views based on fears of addiction and losing control (Shiner and Newburn, 1997). The young people drew on folk-lore stories of bad drug and alcohol experiences and rules from health discourses to sanction their drug and alcohol uses. This type of finding disrupted the view of 'drug wise' young people pursuing a normalised drug-leisure lifestyle. The 'normalisation thesis' was further disrupted by taking account of young people's meanings of drug and alcohol use within their own cultural (youth) practices. In this regard, Shildrick (2002) explored young people's 'doing' and meanings of drug and alcohol use in relation to their cultural (youth) identities. This qualitative interview study with 49 Northwest England young people (aged 15-26 years) showed that 'ordinary' young people drew on folklore to resist and sanction their drug and alcohol use. In contrast 'spectacular' (distinct identities such as 'Goths') young people were more aware and educated and more likely to be recreational users. Further diversity was shown in the working-class lower socio-economic status 'trackers' (identified through sports clothes and hanging out around the streets) whose drug use was routine and involved harder drugs which affected their health.

The research that challenged the 'normalisation thesis' is useful because it explores young people's meanings of drug and alcohol within the context of their own 'youth' cultural practices. It also takes account of their socio-economic environments, the social structural variables that may influence the ways they practice and interpret their drug and alcohol uses. As well as taking account of young adults' own meanings of drugs and alcohol, researchers have examined the influences of broader socio-economic and cultural contexts in their alcohol consumption.

### ***'Culture of intoxication'***

In a second phase of theorising, social scientists conceptualised young adults' alcohol consumption within broader socio-economic and cultural contexts as a 'culture of intoxication'. A 'culture of intoxication' perspective identified young adults' drinking as 'determined drunkenness' and framed this within a Western culture of hedonistic consumption and leisure-based lifestyles; liberalised alcohol policies; a de-regulated alcohol industry; and youth targeted alcohol marketing (e.g. Haywood & Hobbs, 2007; Measham & Brain, 2005; Szmigin et al., 2008).

Young people were seen to deliberately pursue a 'determined drunkenness'; an intoxicated state achieved through a rational formula of maximum value (drunkenness) for

alcohol taste, strength and price (Brain, Parker & Carnwath, 2000). However, it was also found when young people pursued drunkenness they displayed a ‘controlled loss of control’; to be drunk was enjoyable but involved concerns for personal safety, health, security, finances, and ability to drive while out drinking (Measham & Brain, 2005). Young people’s drinking therefore was interpreted, not as ‘binge drinking’, but as a pursuit that allowed them to let go and enjoy being intoxicated within personal boundaries. Similarly, young adult Aotearoa NZ tertiary students’ drinking practices were identified as intentional heavy intoxication practices (Kypri, Cronin, & Wright, 2005) with hazardous physical, personal and social consequences (Kypri et al., 2002; McGee & Kypri, 2004). They were also found to pursue a bounded ‘determined drunkenness’ through intentional controlled intoxication; they monitored physical drinking effects such as ability to walk, head spinning and feeling sick to contain their consumption (McEwan, Swain & Campbell, 2011). This framing of young adults’ drinking as deliberate and bounded intoxication is located within a broader socio-economic, political and cultural context.

Young adults’ drinking can be located within dominant ‘pleasure’ and individual ‘risk’ societal discourses. A ‘pleasure’ discourse legitimates young adults’ drinking as always sociable with friends whereas an individual ‘risk’ discourse censors their drinking behaviours. A societal ‘pleasure’ discourse is based on Western capitalist consumerism and the neo-liberal social order which exhort ‘individuals’ to take charge of their own destinies and freely achieve the pleasures of consumerist lifestyles (Giddens, 1991; Rose, 1990). Alcohol pleasure therefore is rendered highly visible in national liberalised night time economies that drive hedonistic alcohol intoxication (Haywood & Hobbs, 2007; Measham & Brain, 2004; 2005). Further, a handful of global alcohol corporations exploit all product marketing potentials with limited accountability to national governments (Babor et al., 2010; Casswell, 2011; Room, 2006). These systemic drivers of drinking pleasure are enabled by liberalised alcohol policies and a de-regulated alcohol industry in Western countries (Measham & Brain, 2005). Similarly, in Aotearoa NZ, the NZ Sale of Liquor Act (1989) liberalised alcohol sale locations, licensing hours, drinking venues and alcohol marketing (McEwan et al., 2010). Further, these systemic drivers of drinking pleasure provide physical night time environments for young adults’ *to drink together as friends*, and they embed their branded products as ‘friends’ in social networking sites such as Facebook (Hearn, 2008; Hebden, 2012; McEwan et al., 2010; Murthy, 2008; Nicholls, 2012). In these ways the pleasure of *alcohol and friendship* is highly visible and celebrated by young adults within liberalised alcohol societies that reinforce drinking and friendships.

In contrast, excessive drinking pleasure in the neo-liberal social order is censored as one of many risks inherent in free choice consumerist lifestyles (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). When pleasure becomes risky, ‘individuals’ are exhorted to be discerning consumers, morally

accountable to reject excessive and unhealthy behaviours (Griffin et al., 2009). Alcohol harm reduction strategies that target young adults' drinking uphold this ethic in portrayals of a 'neo-liberal drug-using subject', a self-determining and regulating citizen who balances the risks and harms and pleasures of drugs (Moore, 2008). Where excessive consumption does occur, liberal governments use a range of 'pleasure-denying' techniques to govern unbounded unhealthy and anti-social behaviours (O'Malley & Valverde, 2004). These techniques include judicial, medical, and therapeutic interventions for alcohol offenders and abusers whereas 'free choice consumers' are educated in skills to avoid these deleterious consequences (O'Malley & Valverde, 2004). A 'free choice consumer' construction however is infused with power relations where economically active citizens freely self-manage pleasure/risks whereas state authorities manage them for less economically powerful citizens (Bunton & Coveney, 2011).

For young adults these power relations surface in a societal discourse of crisis for their welfare as they weather the 'storm and stress' (Hall, 1904) of transitioning to adulthood (Arnett, 1999, 2000; Settersten & Ray, 2010). Thus, their drinking practices are constructed as highly risky for their personal development and for social order (Szmigin et al., 2008). This concern is especially focussed on young women whose femininities in relation to drinking have been construed as troublesome throughout time; promiscuous drunk good time 1920s 'modern girls' and drunk, crude bawling 1990s 'ladettes' are societal portrayals of these concerns (Jackson & Tinkler, 2007). Overall therefore, young adults' drinking is bound up in conflicting ideologies that on the one hand celebrates their drinking with friends and renders harms to them invisible. On the other hand, they are vilified as a particular group of unbounded consumers at risk to harm themselves and society through excess drinking (Szmigin et al, 2008). In countries with liberal alcohol policies, young adults are targeted as a group of people who drink excessive alcohol amounts most often (Babor et al., 2010), and who have the most alcohol-related harms (Rehm et al., 2009). This dominant celebration and problematising of their drinking obscures ways in which they make sense of drinking in their own routine social lives. We therefore need to engage with young adults as experts in their own routine social lives. As well as recognising young adults' own youth cultural practices (Bucholtz, 2002; Griffin, 2001) this approach also affords a way to explore how friendships are performed in this context.

### ***'Controlled hedonism'***

A move towards linking young adults' friendships with their drinking is evident in the third phase of theorising and exploring young adults drinking. Here the focus on deliberate and controlled drunkenness was maintained, but drinking as 'controlled hedonism' (Szmigin et al., 2008) was explored. Young adults' were seen to be *doing* consumption by drinking for *pleasure with friends* and controlling negative impacts in the pursuit of this pleasure (Szmigin et al.,

2008). Yet while a friendship context is recognised, recent drinking culture research has largely focussed on young adults' sense-making of drinking pleasure from a 'calculated hedonism' perspective. This research has explored nuances of drinking pleasure and risk – the interplay of fun and control – in young adults' shared talk and story-telling about their drinking (Griffin et al., 2009; MacNeela & Bredin, 2011; Sheehan & Ridge, 2001; Szmigin et al., 2008). This pleasure and risk focus has found young adults' independent drinking fun is balanced with peer group sanctions for excess drinking (MacNeela & Bredin, 2011); drinking as a "happy state" is enjoyed while "putting on the brakes" to "maintain a sense of dignity" (Fry, 2011, p.11) and a fun time drinking is contained by the impact on "social and cultural credibility of losing control in a drunken state" (Szmigin et al., 2008, p.362). These shared meanings derived from friends' co-constructions of drinking yet the ways they are constructed from within an already constituted friendship context remains under explored. To take account of the friendship context of drinking also requires a recognition of socio-cultural constructions of classed and gendered identities in young adults' friendships and drinking practices.

As discussed previously, young adults' friendships are found to be gendered (Frith, 2004; Ghail & Haywood, 2012) and classed (Giordano, 2003; Smetana et al., 2006) and these aspects also play out in their drinking practices. The nuances of class and gender in their drinking practices have received considerable research attention, particularly to inform alcohol health and harm reduction strategies targeted at young people. For instance, a systematic international literature review of young adults' drinking and socio-economic status (SES) based on parental income and education, reports more frequent alcohol use with higher SES but greater quantities consumed and more harms associated with lower SES (Karriker-Jaffe, 2011). Ethnographic field work and focus group interviews with Danish teenage students found their bounded and controlled intoxication generally aligned with middle-class moderate drinking values but they also resisted this normality with uncontrolled and risky intoxication behaviours (Kolind, 2011). The nuances of class therefore need to be considered when considering young adults' friendships and their drinking practices.

Young adults' drinking has also been found to be nuanced by gendered – masculine and feminine - norms or constructions. Qualitative researchers have largely investigated meanings of 'masculinity' and drinking because problematic drinking and harmful alcohol consequences are more strongly associated with young men (de Visser & Smith, 2007). In their drinking stories young US adult students across gender, ethnicity and class constructed 'masculinity' through high alcohol tolerance and drinking too little was constructed as 'weakness, homosexuality, or femininity' (Peralta, 2007, p.741). However, for US college men and women masculine norms were also protective - primacy of employment and hetero-sexual presentation were 'masculine' reasons to resist heavy drinking (Iwamoto, Cheng, Lee, Takamatsu, Gordon, 2011). Other

resistances to traditional masculine drinking are seen in young adult English males ‘trading competence’ by resisting heavy drinking to play sport, focus on girlfriends, and exercise individual choice and responsibility (De Visser & Smith, 2007). Similarly, in Aotearoa NZ, young professional adult males resisted hegemonic masculine heavy drinking; suggesting their social class and financial status enabled them to construct alternate masculinities (Willott & Lyons, 2012). While ‘masculinity’ is seen to be important in shaping males’ drinking behaviours, the increase in women’s drinking internationally (Plant, 2008) has focussed attention on gendered femininities.

There is growing evidence that young women endorse masculine drinking norms and this has raised concerns for the risks of their drinking (Iwamoto & Smiler, 2013). However, while young women endorse masculine drinking norms, they are also judged by males, and wider society, and themselves, as deviant if their ‘femininity’ is disrupted by heavy drinking (e.g. de Visser & McDonnell, 2011; Griffin, Szmigin, Bengry-Howell, Hackley, & Mistral, 2013; Lyons & Willott, 2008; McRobbie, 2009). These gendered drinking performances give us further insight into the meanings and practices of drinking for young adults. They also highlight that we need to also take account of the intersections of masculinity and femininity constructions in young adults’ friendships and drinking practices.

### **Rethinking young adults’ drinking as friendship**

The ‘culture of intoxication’ framing recognised the socio-economic and cultural context of young adults’ drinking. It also contributed insights into their perspectives of drinking as intoxicated bounded pleasures. The ‘controlled loss of control’ framing of their drinking, however, reflects dominant ‘pleasure’ and ‘risk’ ideologies rather than young adults’ own meanings of their drinking. While they may pursue a controlled intoxicated pleasure, they do this *together as friends*, yet the dynamics of their friendship relationships and their drinking remains absent from this literature.

Young adults’ friendship practices are implicit in drinking cultures research that focuses on talk and story-telling of their drinking. Szmigin and colleagues (2008) found that for young adults while the “objective is to have fun and ‘let your hair down’ there is an awareness that this requires working out what might go wrong and being with trustworthy friends” (Szmigin et al., 2008, p.364). The young women in Sheehan and Ridge’s (2001) study articulated this trustworthiness when they talked about taking turns to look after each other when drinking. Particular ways in which friends look after each other can be located in passing out stories where friends are deemed responsible to look after each other when they lose consciousness (Griffin et al., 2009) and where they help each other to get home when drunk (MacNeela &

Bredin, 2011). Young adults' friendship practices therefore are implicated in the ways they make sense of their drinking.

In addition, the dynamics of young adults' friendship practices have been identified by Vander Ven (2011) as integral to their drinking. Based on his analysis of US college students' drinking stories, Vander Ven identified the ways friends support each other through 'drunk support' and he argues that young adults are *doing friendship* when they drink together. Their 'drunk world' stories revealed they looked after each other in the tensions inherent in having fun and adventures. This support occurred at the time when they were sick or threatened by violence, and they supported each other afterwards by re-casting events to protect each other's sense of self integrity. This re-casting was particularly reflected in framing friends' drunken actions as funny at the time and this recounting harmful events as humorous is prevalent in other drinking stories (Griffin et al., 2009; MacNeela & Bredin, 2011). This *doing friendship* when young adults drink together requires further exploration. This may also inform alcohol harm reduction strategies to be more relevant to young adults' everyday social practices.

Taken together, the context of friendship dynamics in young adults' drinking practices research and the *doing friendship* in Vander Ven's (2011) research supports my approach that friendship is a key lens to explore young adults' shared meanings of drinking. Viewing friendship as a social practice conceptualises it as a relationship that derives its meaning from people's shared activities and shared interpretations within an already socially constituted world (Schutz, 1967). This approach is useful because it opens up a way to explore how drinking alcohol is appropriated into friendship practices. Social practices are articulated through shared language (Bruner, 1990) and within their friendship groups young adults tell and re-tell 'good night' drinking stories that bind them together in memorable and happy experiences (Giles, 1999; Lyons & Willott, 2008; Sheehan & Ridge, 2001). To explore how young adults together make sense of their drinking provides a useful way to explore their understandings of their everyday social lives where alcohol is embedded. The second aim of this research therefore was to explore young adults' shared friendship meanings and practices in relation to their drinking practices.

### **Putting it together: Young adults' friendships, drinking and SNSs**

In this section I present my rationale for exploring young adults' uses of SNSs within their friendship and drinking practices. The research on young adults' uses of SNSs in their drinking practices has identified alcohol content in their SNS accounts; examined the relationship between this content and problematic drinking; and explored the relationship between this content and drinking as a socially learned (Bandura, 1977; 1986) peer practice. This largely positivist research shows young adults' SNS alcohol content is a socially normative peer

practice, suggesting friendship relationships are key to its meanings and uses. Similarly, qualitative research shows young adults' friendship dynamics are key meanings for their drinking as pleasurable socialising. Yet there is scarce examination of young adults' sense-making and uses of SNSs within the context of their friendship and drinking practices. My approach therefore investigates the intersections of young adults' meanings and practices of friendship, social networking and drinking to contribute to understandings of these convergences.

### **A social learning view of young adults' SNS alcohol content**

Social scientists initially examined young adults' uses of SNSs by documenting alcohol content on these sites. In particular, photos of partying and drinking have been identified as prevalent in young US college and university students' Facebook and MySpace profiles (e.g. Moreno et al., 2010; Morgan, Snelson, & Elison-Bowers, 2010; Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2010). This prevalence of SNS alcohol content has led to concerns that peer generated SNS alcohol content may influence particular ways of drinking as socially normative and influence young adults to drink in these ways (e.g. Egan & Moreno, 2011; Fournier & Clarke, 2011). This premise largely derives from the application of social learning theory and the concept of modeling (Bandura, 1977) to explain young adults' social behaviours including drinking.

Social learning theory posits that human behaviour is explained through an inter-relationship between cognitive (knowledge, attitudes and expectations) and behavioural (skills, self-efficacy and practice) factors, as well as social environmental (social and peer) influences (Bandura, 1986). This theory links social environmental influences to individuals through the concept of modeling. This concept is theorised as observational learning whereby individuals are more influenced if a model is similar to themselves and is admired, and the outcome behaviour has functional value for them (Bandura, 1986). Young adults are considered to be more vulnerable to the influences of others' modeled behaviours because they are undergoing a physical, social and emotional phase (Elkind & Bowen, 1979; Bell & Bromnick, 2003). Social learning theory is grounded within an empiricist epistemology whereby individual-environment interactions are investigated through a logical positivist method. For young adults' drinking, therefore, a 'causal' relationship is posited between their peer group influences and their alcohol use. This causal relationship is then tested through quantitative experiments that measure variables such as amount and frequency of drinking and number of friends who drink. This type of research reduces explanations of young adults drinking to a de-contextualised individual self whose behaviour is learned through reinforcement principles. This omits young adults' own meanings and the socio-cultural and political contexts in which these understandings are located. Further, this type of research omits any consideration of power relations and ways in

which dominant discourses or understandings play out for young adults in their friendship, drinking and social networking practices.

SNS alcohol content was initially quantified through content readings of US college and university students' social networking accounts (Kolek & Saunders, 2008; Morgan et al., 2010; Peluchette & Karl, 2008). These readings showed drinking alcohol and partying were positively portrayed in students' photos, 'interests', groups and 'about me' sections in Facebook and MySpace and in posts and views of videos on Youtube (Kolek & Saunders, 2008; Morgan et al., 2010). These alcohol-related postings were interpreted positively and humorously by USA students as their own social group experience (Morgan et al., 2010). Their own social experience was further demonstrated by USA undergraduate students who used privacy settings to prevent others, particularly employers, from viewing their drinking or alcohol-related photos, posts and comments (Peluchette and Karl, 2007). The link between social group membership and SNS alcohol content suggests this content is particularly related to friendship relationships and this *social* rather than *individual* focus requires further exploration.

This quantitative research approach has also examined the correlations between young adults' SNS alcohol content and their self-reported drinking practices to investigate whether peer generated SNS alcohol content may influence young adults to drink more. This investigation was particularly prompted by under-aged drinkers featuring prominently in SNS alcohol content (Glassman, 2011; Peluchette & Karl, 2008). A preliminary survey of American teenagers' Internet use (SNS, email, music downloads and school work) and self-reported past month's drinking rates found a higher drinking rate was associated with greater computer use (Epstein, 2011). A more explicit attempt to correlate MySpace SNS alcohol content with problematic drinking found no significant links; rather across socio-demographic communities alcohol references were prevalent despite a societal problematic stigmatizing of young adults' drinking (Moreno et al., 2010). However, a survey of US young adults' Facebook alcohol content was significantly linked to participants' results on a clinically defined problematic drinking measure (AUDIT), suggesting these displays were evidence of 'problem drinking' (Moreno, Christakis, Egan, Brockman, & Becker, 2012).

This positivist individualist type of research is a rather pathological framing of young adults' SNS alcohol content which reflects the 'storm and stress' view of their drinking as problematic as well as a particular therapeutic (clinical) intervention practice to control their drinking behaviours (O'Malley & Valverde, 2004). Yet the 'proof' for a link between young adults' SNS alcohol content and problematic drinking practices continues to be sought. In particular, it is argued that the greater alcohol-related SNS content, the greater the self-reported frequency of problematic alcohol use (Egan & Moreno, 2011; Fournier and Clarke, 2011; Glassman, 2012; Moreno et al., 2012; Ridout, Campbell & Ellis, 2012). However, it is also

recognised that these individually focussed survey and self-report studies have yet to explicate the nature of this relationship (Fournier and Clarke, 2011). Further, it may be concluded only that alcohol and drug content on SNSs *may* increase alcohol use among college students (Moreno et al., 2012; Ridout et al., 2012).

Researchers have more directly explored how young people's SNS alcohol content may be implicated in their social learning of drinking behaviours (Lefkowitz, Patrick, Morgan, Bezemer, & Vasilenko, 2012; Ridout et al., 2012) and whether peer modeling influences young adults to drink in this way (Litt & Stock, 2011; Stoddard, Bauermeister, Gordon-Messer, Johns, & Zimmerman, 2012). Ridout and colleagues (2012) provided greater insights into ways (problematic) drinking practices were normalised in Australian university students' Facebook profiles and pages. Their participants utilised a variety of photo and textual content to present alcohol as a component of their Facebook identity displays; over half of participants presented an alcohol-related profile photo. These authors concluded that for students to portray themselves as 'drinkers' was a socially desirable component of identity displays in the SNS environment. Further, this type of identity display perpetuated an online culture that normalised binge drinking. Young adults' identity performances are relational and co-constructed with friends on SNSs (Larsen, 2007; Mallan, 2009; Walther, Van der Heide, Kim, Westerman, & Tong, 2008), suggesting that portrayals of friendship relationships may be an important motivation for online drinking displays.

The particular ways in which peers socially normalised their drinking practices through Facebook was demonstrated in national holiday 'group' posts about drinking contexts (bars and clubs), a sense of belonging through t-shirts and holiday spirit; and getting drunk with few mentions of safety (Lefkowitz et al., 2012). To examine the influence of socially normative alcohol content on peer modeled drinking, Litt and Stock (2011) manipulated Facebook 'older normative drinkers' and 'older non-drinker' profiles. They reported that adolescents (aged 13-15 years) exposed only to the former profiles reported more positive attitudes to alcohol, greater willingness to use alcohol and lower perceived vulnerability to negative alcohol consequences. This study showed the influence of older peers' normative drinking behaviours as modeled by younger drinkers.

Taken together, a particular value of these findings is that they not only evidence peer generated SNS alcohol content as a socially normative practice, they also attempt to examine the effects of this content on young adults' drinking as socially learned (peer modeled) behaviours. This approach, however, is limited in that it reduces young adults' drinking to individual factors of reinforcement and learning, omitting the social context and ways in which shared meanings and practices are constructed within this context. This approach also omits any consideration of power relations, or the ways in which dominant societal discourses may shape

how young people understand their friendship, drinking and SNS practices, and indeed why they engage in them in the first place. As a socially normative practice, young adults' SNS alcohol content is linked to their friendship relationships. My research will explore dominant and shared friendship meanings and practices to provide insights into ways friendship is constructed in particular ways. This will go towards informing our understandings of *how* and *why* this content is socially normalised.

### **Rethinking young adults' drinking and uses of SNSs**

Although social learning theory provides insights into the interpersonal dynamics of young adults' socialised drinking behaviours, their own understandings of SNS and drinking practices remain under-researched. Young adults' themselves interpret SNS alcohol content as 'actual use' (what they actually do when they drink together) and they acknowledge this content may influence their peer-related drinking behaviours (Moreno, Briner, Williams, Walker, & Christakis, 2009). Further, qualitative research has been employed to explore young adults' meanings of their SNS alcohol content. For instance, US 11 to 18 year olds interpreted their SNS alcohol content as a way to 'broadcast' proof they were 'cool' and affiliated to groups that drink and party (Moreno et al., 2009, p.421).

This shift towards qualitative inquiries of young adults' understandings of SNS alcohol content also moves from viewing drinking as problematic to recognising young adults' drinking practices as pleasurable among friends (Duff, 2008; Fry, 2011). When young adults talk about their drinking they emphasise it is a welcome release from daily tensions and enjoyable social fun (Lyons & Willott, 2008; Sheehan & Ridge, 2001; Szmigin, Bengry-Howell, Griffin, Hackley, & Mistral, 2011). Further, young adults' drinking as pleasure notably involves friends and friendship dynamics have been identified in friends' drunk support for each other while drinking and in sharing adventures and stories afterwards (e.g. Vander Ven, 2011; Tutenges, 2012; Workman, 2001). It would be valuable therefore to explore young adults' sense making of SNS alcohol content in relation to their understandings of their drinking practices.

It has been shown that students' SNS drinking activities are related to friends, rather than individuals, tagging and commenting on photos of their socialising and drinking together (Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2010; Ridout et al., 2012), suggesting SNSs may be an important part of young adults' friendship practices. Further, some preliminary research shows young adults use SNSs to plan for their drinking and to post comments and photos while out as well as sharing drinking stories online afterwards (Bancroft, 2012; Brown & Gregg, 2012; Hebden, 2012; MacNeela & Bredin, 2011; Szmigin et al., 2008; Tonks, 2012). This suggests that young adults' SNS drinking activities - done with friends - may be an important part of their drinking practices, also done with friends.

Yet there is scarce examination of how young adults make sense of their uses of SNSs in their everyday drinking practices. Tonks (2012) undertook Facebook tour interviews with Aotearoa NZ university students. They logged on to their Facebook accounts and showed and talked about their photos depicting them socialising and drinking with friends. For these students Facebook photos were a normal, natural everyday part of their drinking practices. They provided fun, pleasurable and humorous ways for friends to share drinking stories online after drinking episodes. As friends they also negotiated the line between humorous and embarrassing photos, suggesting tensions in using Facebook as part of their drinking entertainment. Focus group research with Aotearoa NZ university students' also showed Facebook photos were of primary importance in drinking stories (Hebden, 2012). A photographer was routine and expected at these events and photos were a focal point in next-day discussions of these events. This preliminary research suggests young adults' uses of SNSs in their drinking practices are centred within their friendship practices.

The third aim of this research therefore was to explore young adults' sense-making of their uses of SNSs (Facebook) in their drinking as practices. From a social constructionist perspective, this exploration focussed on young adults' own perspectives – their meanings and practices – through ways they talked about their friendships and Facebook social networking activities in their drinking practices.

## **Research Aims**

The study of young adults' friendships has been underpinned by a 'storm and stress' (Arnett, 1999) view that focuses on friendship qualities and positive and negative developmental outcomes. Similarly, while recognising they routinely socialise with known friends on SNSs, inquiries into young adults' friendships and social networking, continue to centre on positive and negative consequences for their developmental well-being. An alternative approach which will further our understandings is to view friendship as socially constructed through shared meanings and practices in everyday social life. A way to gain insight into young adults' friendships and social lives through this perspective is to ask them to talk about these aspects of their everyday social lives. However, SNSs, through their affordances (e.g. 'search and display') may alter friendship dynamics (boyd, 2011a) and, in turn, young adults' may appropriate (take up, resist, alter, extend) these affordances in their friendship practices. An 'appropriation' approach (Dourish, 2001) is needed to focus not only on friendship meanings young adults bring to SNSs but also the *interactions* of SNS affordances and their uptake by young adults into their -friendship practices.

Young adults' drinking has been demonstrated to be a pleasurable activity which notably involves friends. Further, friendship dynamics (such as caring for drunk friends) is

involved in their drinking. This suggests that friendship in relation to their drinking practices may be another fruitful way to gain insights into their friendships. Further, friendship may be a key lens to provide insights into their drinking practices. Lastly, the intersection of young adults' friendships, uses of SNSs and drinking is a new area of inquiry. It has centred on the effects of SNSs in socially peer modeled drinking yet young adults' own meanings and uses of SNSs in their drinking practices requires further exploration.

In summary, this research seeks to contribute to an understanding of the complexities of young adults' friendships in their everyday social lives. The three aims of this research are to:

1. Explore young adults' shared friendship meanings and practices and how SNS affordances, and their uptake by young adults, relate to their friendship practices. This research aim is addressed in the set of findings presented in Chapter 4.
2. Explore young adults' shared friendship meanings and practices in relation to their drinking practices. This research aim is addressed in the set of findings presented in Chapter 5.
3. Explore young adults' sense-making of their uses of SNSs within the context of their drinking and their friendships. This research aim is addressed in the set of findings presented in Chapter 6.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

My research draws on a social constructionist approach to knowledge and employs a Foucauldian discursive analysis to explore young adults' friendships within the contexts of their SNS uses and drinking. In this chapter I firstly identify fundamental assumptions of social constructionism that informed my approach to conceptualising young adults' friendships. I then present the theoretical orientation – Foucauldian discourse analysis - which informed the way I explored young adults' friendships. Next the research design is outlined. The two methods of data collection – friendship focus groups and Facebook go-along interviews – are outlined. The data collection, transcription and file management for each method is then described followed by my Foucauldian discursive analytic approach. Finally, I discuss ethical and quality considerations in my research and some personal reflections on the research process.

#### **Epistemology: Social constructionism**

This research was situated within a social constructionist paradigm. Some fundamental assumptions from this paradigm informed my research approach and design to investigate young adults' friendships. Firstly, this epistemological position takes a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge. It assumes our “objectification of our social world can lead us to assume that the way things are, is the way things should naturally be” (Moghaddam, 2005, p.323). This premise is relevant for my approach to young adults' everyday social worlds. It means I do not take their world at face-value, but question the ways in which their co-constructed meanings have been produced.

A social constructionist position also makes the assumption that understandings of our worlds are historically and socio-culturally specific (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1973; Sampson, 1978). This means that our knowledge is grounded in and shaped by the particular times and places we live in. This context can be viewed as institutionalised, long lasting “overall culture” which includes the political, economic, technological, spiritual, intellectual, ideological and societal systems in place at a particular time in history (Bruner, 2008). A broader societal context that was pertinent for my research was a Western neo-liberal ideology that reinforces friendship as a ‘pure relationship’ of idealized self-hood (Bauman, 2003; Giddens, 1991; Rose, 1990). This ideology may frame young adults' social networking as narcissist self-displays rather than friendship activities (Hollander, 2010; Marshall, 2010; Mehdizadeh, 2010; Saculla, 2010). In terms of drinking, societal discourses of ‘hedonist pleasurable consumption’ and ‘individual bounded risk’ (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991) are relevant to ways young adults'

drinking practices may be framed within societies (Haywood & Hobbs, 2007; Measham & Brain, 2004, 2005; O'Malley & Valverde, 2004). My approach to friendship considered these influences because local meanings of friendship are articulated within dominant socio-historical and cultural representations that may prescribe or suppress expressions of friendship. An example of the way notions of friendship have changed through time and place is the recognition in the eighteenth century that women were capable of friendship. This notion was developed by novelists such as Jane Austen who wrote of women's fidelity and honourability in their relationships. This disrupted a dominant philosophically inspired theme that women were incapable of friendship (Baltzly & Eliopoulos, 2009).

A social constructionist position also embraces the assumption that our knowledge is produced through social processes. This means that rather than our 'truths' deriving from objective observations of the world, our knowledge is seen to be constructed within and through our shared everyday social activities. This approach was initiated by Schutz (1967) who applied a social embodiment perspective to Husserl's phenomenological view that realities derive from experiences of our actions within our life worlds. Schutz argued that realities deriving from our actions are inter-subjective. This means shared practical engagement gives rise to shared meanings within a life world that is already imbued with meaning. Berger and Luckmann (1966) – students of Schutz – posited the processes by which the social world becomes an objective reality and language is key to these processes. They argued that language is used to attach or externalise meanings to objects and experiences. Further, these linguistic signifiers act to detach or objectify these meanings so they can be internalised as objective reality through socialisation processes. These processes are reflected in Bruner's (1990) view that we 'enter into meaning' through learning the language (meanings) of the established broader institutional culture and this is used to actively engage in shared activities and meaning-making within our culture.

This emphasis on language as a social practice is reflected in the social constructionist assumption that "when people talk together the world gets constructed" (Burr, 2003, p.7). Language is viewed as a social tool that people acquire and utilise to constitute their concepts, categories, and meanings. To understand 'friendship' from this perspective is to orient to shared social practices and meaning making of friendship as articulated through language within particular socio-historical contexts. It is important to distinguish language as functional, as a social practice, rather than as a descriptive medium. This means that from a social constructionist position young adults' language is viewed as a tool they use to collectively produce meanings and practices of friendship. To gain understanding of young adults' friendships from a social constructionist perspective, therefore, is to focus on their shared talk

(language) about their friendship relationships and ways in which they constitute through language their meanings of friendship.

Taken together, these assumptions informed my research design decisions. Firstly, this research was exploratory and in as far as possible there were no pre-determined categories of friendship; rather the meanings and practices of friendship were explored as they are articulated by informants through language. This articulation is viewed as a shared social construction so my method of data collection was to ask young adults to talk together in their friendship groups about their friendships in their everyday social lives. I also used a semi-structured exploratory interview method to access individual's understandings that may sit outside dynamics of group co-constructions. These methods are outlined in the 'study design' section below. My decision to focus on participants' use of language to constitute their meanings and practices of friendship meant that discourse analysis was an appropriate theoretical and analytic approach to take.

### **Theoretical orientation: Foucauldian discourse analysis**

A Foucauldian discursive analytic approach in my research is aligned with the assumptions of social constructionism and is also related to my positioning as a researcher within the discipline of psychology. While my research is open to, and values, the knowledge of many disciplines, it is at heart a psychological analysis of young adults' friendships within a social constructionist epistemology. Psychology as a discipline has historically defined its research as 'psychological' through its methodologies rather than accounting for ways research relates to a psychological inquiry and interpretation (Parker, 2013). My research is psychological because the research questions seek to give an account of young adults' thinking, feeling and ways of doing friendship. The move a Foucauldian discursive analysis takes to give an account of 'subjectivities' and practices resonated with this aim to locate my analysis within a psychological interpretation of friendships.

There is no set way to undertake any type of discourse analysis; "it cannot be followed like a recipe" (Willig, 2001, p.94). A particularly useful entry point for me was to heed the advice of Potter and Wetherell (1987) that "there is no method to discourse analysis in the way we traditionally think of an experimental method or content analysis method. What we have is a broad theoretical framework concerning the nature of discourse and its role in social life..." (p.175). To employ a Foucauldian discourse analysis it is useful to understand Foucault's approach to knowledge and his conceptualisation of 'discourse'.

Foucault rejected his philosophical critiques as a body of knowledge; rather his works were to be 'used' by people in their own endeavours to understand their worlds:

I would like my books to be a kind of tool-box which others can rummage through to find a tool which they can use however they wish in their own area... I write for users, not readers (O'Farrell, 2005, p.50).

Thus, Foucault did not outline a prescriptive method for *doing* discourse analysis; rather his works were to be 'used' as 'tools' to investigate knowledge. Foucault's project is seen immediately in the beginning of his 'archaeology of knowledge' (Foucault, 2010, pp.21-22) where he disrupts our historical continuities; our notions of 'tradition' (temporal status), 'influence' (causality), 'evolution' (unifying principles) and 'spirit' (collective conscience). He argues we must suspend our beliefs, our taken for granted notions, and examine how they came about. To suspend our beliefs, frees our knowledge to be viewed as 'discursive fields' made up of the "the totality of all effective statements (spoken or written), in their dispersion as events and in the occurrence that is proper to them" (Foucault, 2010, p.27). This deconstruction of our explanations of the way the world allows us to question how we make sense of our world.

The answer to how we make sense of our world lies in Foucault's notion of what a 'statement' (language) is and the way he avoids interpretation because it infers an *a priori* meaning. Foucault's idea of a 'statement' is that it is a 'modality of existence' that allows it to be something "more than a mere trace, but rather a relation to a domain of objects; as more than the result of an action or an individual operation, but rather a set of possible positions for a subject" (Foucault, 2010, p.108). Foucault proposes the way to analyse statements within a discursive field is to look at the interplay of relations between them and beyond the discursive field to technical, economic, social and political events and the possibility of invisible, co-existent and reciprocally functioning discourses. This analysis defines the set of conditions in which statements can operate – the discursive formation. This leads to the question of how we can explore this discursive formation. Foucault specifically states that a discursive formation "divides up the general plane of things said at the specific level of statements" and there are four directions by which it can be analysed: through the formation of objects, subjective positions, concepts and strategic choices or practices. This analytic strategy is the basis for a Foucauldian discourse analysis.

A Foucauldian discourse analyst will ask "*what kind* of objects and subjects are constructed through discourses and *what kinds* of ways-of-being these objects and subjects make available to people" (Willig, 2000, p.146, emphasis in original). This theoretical orientation views people as active agents, drawing on language resources to constitute (justify and claim) their social realities. These resources are discourses – multiple ways of speaking about the world that constitute people as 'subjects', and their ways of knowing ('objects'), in particular ways (Burr, 2003). Discourses also include broader societal material conditions and social structures that inform language uses (Burr, 2003). Here experience is theorised as

subjectivities – the ‘subject positions’ (ways of thinking and feeling) offered by discourses, and taken up or resisted by people, and the implications for their practices or ‘ways of doing’ (Willig, 2001). Subject positions give us a sense of self – to take up a subject position “a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, story lines and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned” (Davies & Harre, 1990, p.46). Subject positions and ensuing practices derive from people embracing particular versions of knowledge as ‘truths’ and they are taken up (accepted, imputed on others, or resisted) as ‘relations of power’ between people (Burr, 2003).

This is the sense in which Foucault viewed ‘power’ as an indirect mode of action that is exercised by people to influence the possible field of action of others (Foucault, 1982). This exercise of influence involves drawing on dominant discourses (knowledges more ‘truthful’ than others) to privilege and prescribe certain subject positions and practices as well as resistances to these ‘truths’ which may open for people “a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible interventions” (Foucault, 1982, p.789). Foucault’s project involved tracing ways in which power relations were exercised through regimes of knowledge and the subjectivities and practices they produced in the areas of madness (Foucault, 1988), punishment (Foucault, 1977) and sexuality (Foucault, 1981). The value of this approach is that it explores prevailing knowledges and implications for ways we understand ourselves, and brings to the fore other ‘ways of seeing’ that may resist these dominant understandings (Burr, 2003). To take a Foucauldian discursive orientation in my research allowed me to explore young adults’ discourses of ‘friendship’ and the ensuing ‘ways of seeing’ and ‘ways of doing’ friendship in relation to their social networking and their drinking within their social worlds.

## **Research Design**

There were two stages of data collection - stage 1 friendship group discussions, and stage 2 Facebook go-along interviews. These two methods provided ways to approach young adults’ within the context of their everyday friendship dynamics and to capture their co-constructed meanings (friendship discussion groups) and personal sense making (in interviews) of their friendship, social networking and drinking. These methods go toward capturing the language utilised by young adults to construct their social realities in contexts of their everyday social worlds.

### **Stage 1: Friendship group discussions**

The first stage of data collection involved conducting friendship discussion groups. I aimed to capture shared understandings of friendship, SNS uses and drinking practices. It was therefore

essential to focus on how meanings about these practices were made collaboratively among young adults who call themselves friends and regularly socialise together.

Focus groups are commonly used to study meanings constructed during social interactions (Bloor, Franklin, Thomas, & Robson, 2001; Morgan 2004; Morgan, Gibbs, Maxwell, & Britten, 2002) and are especially useful for studying meanings constructed within particular groups (Bloor et al., 2001). A social constructionist position assumes language is used as a social tool to construct meanings and focus groups enable a space for shared realities and experiences to be articulated (Koro-Ljungberg, Bussing, & Cornwell, 2010). In addition, focus groups are a social space where people may share, contest and validate their knowledge claims (Lehoux, Poland, and Daudelin, 2006). A benefit of using existing friends in friendship discussion groups is that participants as friends will have already developed a sense of rapport as a group, and may find it easier to share personal opinions and experiences, and draw on shared experiences and events (Crossley, 2002; Lyons & Willott, 2008). Further, familiarity is linked with informality, resulting in freer debate and this enables a researcher to approximate a natural setting in which discussions take place (Barbour & Kitzinger 1999; Kitzinger 1994).

In terms of naturally occurring environments, friendship discussion groups can be viewed as 'local communities of practice' in that they form the group who socialise and drink together (Lyons and Willott (2008). Similarly, SNS usage is tied to groups of friends who predominantly interact face-to-face (e.g. Kuss & Griffiths, 2011; Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert, 2009; Reich et al., 2012) Friendship discussion groups therefore are also likely to form the basis for everyday social networking activities. A friendship discussion group method therefore is a credible method for this research because it approximates a natural environment, allowing a researcher to focus on young adults' language (sense-making) as they socialise within the familiar dynamics of their relationships.

There are, however, limitations to a friendship discussion group method. It is important to recognise systems of power operating during data collection processes and researcher reflexivity is required here (Balen, Holroyd, Mountain, & Wood, 2000). A researcher needs to be reflexive about the agency of participants and the degrees of disclosure associated with this (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2010). A particularly important limitation in this context is that the researcher is an 'outsider' (not a friend) and therefore in a sense the setting is contrived and may suppress more open sharing of histories, particularly drinking practices. The researcher as an 'outsider', however, may also balance out researcher-participant power relationships (Garcia et al., 2012; Kitzinger 1994), Participants as friends are given the space to talk together while the researcher is present but outside this group dynamic. In this regard an advantage of friendship discussion groups is the ease of conversational flows between friends. This flow, however, does post a challenge for transcribing the nuances of these conversations. The friendship discussion

groups were filmed to assist in this transcription. A further limitation of friendship discussion groups is that friendship group dynamics may suppress or limit more personal sense-making, especially if it is contradictory or resistant to the group's consensus views. To address this issue, the second stage of data collection involved individual interviews to explore personal sense-making of friendship as well as participants' uses and meanings of Facebook. The following sections describe the participant demographics, procedure, transcription and data management for the friendship group discussions.

### ***Participants***

Twelve same and mixed-gender friendship group discussions were conducted, with a total of 51 participants aged between 18 and 25 years (26 females; mean age 20.2 years). Participants were diverse in age, occupation, education and relationship status (refer Table 1). Their home locations ranged across, small towns, towns, cities and major cities in New Zealand. All participants were of New Zealand European ethnicity (70% of NZ population) except one Maori (15% of NZ population) male, and one female who originated from South Africa. Although not asked about socio-economic status explicitly, participants' SES rankings ranged from SES-1 (highest) to SES-5 (lowest) based on occupational income groupings and students and unemployed people ranked by earning potential based on educational qualification (Galbraith, Jenkin, Davis, & Coope, 2003). Although not asked about sexuality explicitly, most participants appeared to be heterosexual while one couple identified as lesbian, two females identified as bisexual and one male identified as gay. Friendship durations ranged from many years (from childhood) to a few months and years (from meeting mainly through work and education venues).

### ***Recruitment***

Participants for the stage 1 friendship group discussions were recruited through word-of-mouth and snowballing techniques. I approached friends and colleagues to suggest potential contacts. I also approached people in workplaces such as cafes and asked if they would be interested in being involved in this research. If a person was interested I met them in person and verbally explained the research and gave them the study details (Appendix A). This group member then asked their friends to participate and if they agreed they were given the study details. All participants had the opportunity to ask questions about the research and were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Once a minimum of three friends in a group agreed to participate, a suitable time and place were arranged.

TABLE 1: Friendship groups and participants (N=51)

Group	Participants	Ages	Geographic location *	Occupations
1	4 females (1 couple)	19-20	Major city	Cafe workers, actor, bank teller
2	5 males	18-19	City	University students, retail worker, electrician
3	7 females	19-20	Small town	College skills program students
4	3 males	18	Small town	Employment skills program students
5	4 males	20	City	University students
6	3 females	22-25	Major city	University student, lawyers
7	3 males	20	Major city	Computer programmer, law student, navy cadet
8	2 females, 2 males	20	Town	Cafe workers, university students
9	5 females	18	Major city	High School students
10	1 female, 4 males (1 couple)	23-24	Major city	Computer technicians, dentists
11	2 females, 1 male (1 couple)	22-24	City	Driver, HR manager, teacher
12	2 females 3 males (1 couple)	19-20	City	Polytechnic students

\* Cities by population: Major city > 400,000; City > 40,000; Town > 4,000; Small town > 2,000

### ***Friendship group discussion procedure***

The friendship group discussions began with providing participants with non-alcoholic food and drinks and I introduced myself and outlined the research topic and research processes. All participants signed a consent form (Appendix B) and a confidentiality agreement (Appendix C). They were advised that all transcribed talk would be anonymised, pseudonyms would be used and all video and voice data and transcripts would only be accessible by myself and Marsden project team Investigators. Further, they were advised that the voice and video recordings were

for transcription purposes only. They were encouraged to ask questions and were advised they could withdraw at any time without question.

To establish rapport and a relaxed atmosphere, and centre discussions on friendship relationships, I firstly asked how participants knew each other. I then facilitated discussions using exploratory open-ended questions (Appendix D) to prompt and guide general discussion. Discussions focussed on friendship activities, uses of social technologies (mobile phones, texting, SNSs) and drinking practices in everyday life. Questions referred to friendship and socialising (history, good times, bad times) and drinking (types, amounts, activities). Discussions lasted between one and two hours and were video and voice recorded with permission. The friendship group discussions were lively and fun as participants talked about their experiences together as friends. They shared stories and insights about friendship, social technologies and drinking in their everyday lives together. It was notable that they enjoyed these discussions together and were reluctant to finish these sessions. At the conclusion of the discussions each participant was given a support information sheet (Appendix E) and a \$30 (movie, music or petrol) voucher to thank them for their time. They were also advised if they were interested in being updated of the research they could contact me or visit the Marsden project website which provides ongoing summaries of research findings including presentations and updates for this research.

### ***Equipment***

The hardware used was a Sony video camera with tripod and Sony voice recorder. The Sony video camera recorded only 30 minute video files, so for 60-90 minute discussions, the files were joined (using Format Factory v2.70) into a single file. These files proved to be very large so they were compressed to a third of their size (without losing sound and picture quality) using Format Factory (2.70). The original files were retained on a separate back up password protected hard drive.

### ***Transcription and data management***

The compressed video files were imported into the transcription software Transana (v.2.43b). Transana transcription software was used as a tool to transcribe the data because it enabled the video files to play in a separate window and the transcription text to be typed into a separate window. Transana has been used to analyse students' computer-mediated interactions in educational software (Mavrikisa & Geraniou, 2011); behavioural interactions with a dietary assessment website (Probst, Agnoli, Batterham & Tapsell, 2009); video game playing (Woods & Dempster, 2011); and an international collaborative analysis of a financial economic crisis (Dempster & Woods, 2011). To use Transana a series of video/voice files (episodes) are

imported into a database and a transcript is created with associated notes for each episode. The transcript contents can be time-coded to sections of the video and these clips assigned key words which can be grouped into collections or higher level analytic categories. As well as a useful tool to manage large video and audio files for transcription and analytical work, Transana easily communicates this analysis because the time coded clips highlight the matching text in the transcript when they are played back. The transcripts and analytic categories can also be searched and reports generated to display coding schemas that have been created by the researcher.

I transcribed the friendship discussion group video files verbatim in the Transana transcription window. A standard, basic transcription notation was used (refer Appendix F). These transcriptions captured the participants talk, pauses, interruptions, over talking, laughter and prominent body movements and expressions during their group discussions. The video files were indispensable to capture who was talking in the flow of friends' conversations. The voice recordings were a backup in case of any technical problems with the video files. All the transcriptions were checked for accuracy by myself and I then anonymised each transcript by changing names to pseudonyms and altering all identifying information. The transcripts were re-checked by two Marsden project research assistants who shared the task. The voice, video and transcript data files were stored on a password protected computer and backups were stored on password protected shared drive. Backups were also stored on external hard drives which along with consent and confidentiality forms were stored and locked away separately. All data and consent forms will continue to be stored securely for the next five years. As the group discussions are a co-construction, the participants were not asked to read and edit friendship group discussion transcripts. If an individual altered their own talk within the group transcript, this would likely have changed the discussion at the time, so therefore changes were not practicable or sensible in this study.

## **Stage 2: Facebook go-along interviews**

It was recognised that friendship group discussions may involve social influence processes of censoring, conformance, coercion and conflict avoidance (Carey & Smith, 1994). These social influences, as well as acquiescence or 'going along to get along', may suppress more personal sense-making particularly if it is suppressed by more dominant or persuasive views (Kidd & Parshall, 2000). For instance, participants who feel they cannot make significant contributions to the already shared talk may refrain from sharing their ideas and experiences (Lehoux et al., 2006). It was considered important therefore to interview participants to give them a space to voice views that may sit outside their friendship group norms. Research demonstrates that individuals may have concerns about their own and others' online presentations, how they select

or reject friends on SNSs, and how they maintain privacy online (boyd, 2006; Livingstone, 2008). In terms of friendship, and drinking, individuals may have key personal sense-making that is positive, negative or contradictory to their friendship group sense-making and practices. Yet while interviews may capture more personal consensual or contradictory sense-making, they are limited as a method to capture the shared co-constructed meanings of friendship, social networking and drinking. It was considered that both methods would work towards capturing shared meanings and practices of young adults' friendships.

In addition, another key decision was to conduct these interviews with the participant logged on to their SNS accounts and leading tours of their everyday social networking. The reason for this Facebook go-along interview method was firstly, my commitment to approach young adults' from their own perspectives as users of social technologies. Secondly, it was based on my view that SNS practices are embedded, rather than a separate space, in their everyday social worlds (Kelty, 2010). It was considered crucial therefore to engage *with them* in their social networking rather than separate them from their online practices in an interview only situation. This view resonates with some anthropologists' approach to computers and culture. They argue that to 'make up a culture' focuses on a separate online reality and to 'return to behaviours and practices' reflects the merging of online and offline realities (Coleman, 2010; Kelty, 2010). This means that when researchers approach worlds that are actual *and* virtual they must engage with "systems of meanings and commitments which spread across multiple locations rather than discrete places which have a "culture" (Golub, 2010, p.20). Thus, it was important to engage with participants as they talked and interacted with their Facebook accounts as they do in their everyday social lives.

There have been very few investigations where a researcher has gone online with young adults to see their world *in situ* with them; to explore ways they use and make sense of SNSs in their social practices. To go-along with them as they negotiated their everyday social networking as well as conducting an open and flexible semi-structured interview was considered a challenge but crucial for understanding their meanings of friendship and social networking. Further, SNSs are evident in young adults' drinking practices (e.g. Moreno et al., 2012; Morgan et al., 2010; Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2010) so it was considered this method would also be useful for exploring this sense-making *in situ*. This method is also a more rigorous investigation of young adults' social networking because it goes beyond face-value content analyses of their SNS pages (Kolek & Saunders, 2008; Moreno et al., 2010; Morgan et al., 2010; Peluchette & Karl, 2007). This type of content analysis may reach conclusions without engaging with young adults as owners and creators of this content.

This was an innovative method and potential limitations were considered. Firstly, as with the friendship group discussions, these limitations centre on power relations and levels of

disclosure for myself as an ‘outsider’ (Balén et al., 2000; Kitzinger 1994; Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2010). This was considered most pertinent for myself as a ‘researcher’ and an ‘outsider’ in participants’ social networking worlds. To enter into participants’ worlds and go along with them as a ‘naïve inquirer’ works to balance these power relations (García et al., 2012; Radley, Chamberlain, Hodgetts, Stolte, & Groot, 2010). Young adults’ everyday social networking, however, is enacted with friends online and at some level a researcher’s presence interrupts a natural setting (Kusenbach, 2003). My presence therefore could potentially interrupt their SNS practices and suppress more everyday online routines. Another limitation to be considered was that participants were positioned as ‘guides’ to their online social networking but they may monitor and censor their talk and online activities to present a particular ‘self’ (Flick, 2009) to an ‘older female researcher’. It was recognised therefore that this method would capture a particular level of *in situ* social networking interactions. The Facebook go-along interviews were also filmed to enable transcription of participants’ interactions as well as their online screen recorded activities.

### ***Participants***

Seven Facebook go-alongs were conducted, with four female and three male New Zealand European young adults aged between 18 and 25 years. Participants’ occupations included three university students, a dentist, an actor, a bank employee, and an unemployed mother. Apart from one participant who was located in a small city, all participants resided in a major New Zealand city. Five participants identified as heterosexual and two females identified as bisexual. Although not asked about socio-economic status explicitly, participants’ SES rankings ranged from SES-1 (highest) to SES-5 (lowest) based on occupational income groupings and students and unemployed people ranked by earning potential based on educational qualification (Galbraith et al., 2003).

### ***Recruitment***

After each friendship group discussion the participants were asked whether anyone would be interested in taking part in a further interview in relation to their social networking. The participants who were agreeable were recruited to participate in the stage 2 Facebook go-along interviews. Each participant was given study details (Appendix G) and had the opportunity to ask questions about the research and was assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Once a participant agreed to participate, a suitable time and place was arranged. All of these Facebook go-along interviews took place in a university office as this was more convenient for all participants and provided a more private environment for them to go online and discuss their personal views.

### ***Facebook go-along interview procedure***

I began the Facebook go-along interviews by outlining the research topic and research processes and the participant signed a consent form (Appendix H). I advised the participant that all transcribed talk and online content would be anonymised and a pseudonym would be used. In addition, all video, voice and screen capture data and transcripts would only be accessible by myself and Marsden project team Investigators. The participants were also advised that the video recording was for transcription purposes only, and only screen recorded data directly linked to their talk would be included in analysis. Further, all information from any private pages opened during these discussions would be anonymised, and excerpts would not be used in reports or outputs. Rapport and trust had been established between myself and participants from the friendship group discussions and I conveyed that their personal views were now the focus of discussion. Each participant was encouraged to ask questions and was advised they could withdraw at any time without question. The screen capture software details were included in the research study details sheet (Appendix H) and in my verbal outline of the research processes. I also showed participants how this software was executed on the web-enabled laptop computer so they were fully informed about this online recording.

I began by asking participants what they did in Facebook and participants logged on to their Facebook accounts on the web-enabled laptop. These interviews were participant led as they navigated and showed their social networking and they were facilitated and guided by my exploratory open-ended questions (Appendix I) as required to prompt discussion. These Facebook go-alongs lasted approximately one hour and were video, voice and screen recorded with permission. At the conclusion of the Facebook go-along interview, each participant was given a support information sheet (Appendix J) and a \$40 (movie, petrol or music) voucher to thank them for their time. They were also advised if they were interested in being updated of the research they could contact me or visit the Marsden project website which provides ongoing summaries of research findings including presentations and updates for this research.

### ***Equipment***

The hardware used included a Toshiba laptop with Microsoft Windows XP (v.2002), Sony video camera with tripod and Sony voice recorder. The software used is detailed in Appendix K. A considerable amount of time was taken to access, test and stabilise the screen capture software, Hypercam. This software was recommended by friendship group participants who regularly game together. It took time to adjust the recording settings to the laptop screen size and performance. The recording also had to be tuned to ensure the best possible recording quality. Once it was thoroughly tested and stabilised Hypercam proved very reliable. As with the friendship group discussions, the Sony video camera recorded only 30 minute video files, so

the two 30 minute files for each interview were joined (using Format Factory v2.70) into a single file. These files proved to be very large so they were compressed to a third of their size (without losing sound and picture quality) using Format Factory (2.70). The screen capture files were also compressed due to their size. The size of the compressed files made them more manageable and the original video and screen recording files were retained on a separate back up password protected hard drive.

### ***Transcription and data management***

The compressed video and screen recording files were imported into the transcription software Transana (v.2.43b). Within Transana the interview video and associated screen recording file was time synchronised. This time synchronisation allowed video and screen capture files to play simultaneously in separate windows. I transcribed the Facebook go-along interviews verbatim in the Transana transcription window. A standard, basic transcription notation was used (refer Appendix X). For this transcription the time synchronised video and screen capture files were played in separate windows simultaneously and talk, body movements and facial expressions as well as online navigations and activities were included in each transcript. I completed all the transcription and checked it for accuracy. I then anonymised each transcript by changing names to pseudonyms and altering all identifying information. The transcripts were re-checked for accuracy by a Marsden project research assistant. As per the friendship discussion group data files, all electronic data was stored on a password protected computer with backups stored on a password protected shared drive. Backups were also stored on external hard drives which along with consent and confidentiality forms were stored and locked away separately. All data and consent forms will continue to be stored securely for the next five years. The participants were offered the opportunity to be emailed their interview transcript to review and return. All of the participants declined this offer.

### **Analytic Strategy – Foucauldian Discourse Analysis**

The friendship discussion group transcripts and Facebook go-along interview transcripts were analysed separately. The friendship discussion group transcripts were analysed first because I was attuned to exploring shared friendship, social networking and drinking meanings at the outset and these transcripts comprised friends' co-constructed meanings. The areas of analytic focus here were firstly, participants' meanings of friendship in relation to social networking and, secondly, their meanings of friendship in relation to drinking. I analysed the Facebook go-along interviews second because these transcripts comprised personal sense-making of friendship and drinking that could be compared with friends' talk about these topics. In addition, these transcripts were an 'actual' view of social networking that could be compared with friends' talk

about their social networking. The area of analytic focus for these transcripts was ways in which SNSs were used in friends' drinking practices. The Foucauldian discursive analysis (Willig, 2001) proceeded separately for the three areas of analytic focus. The areas of 'friendship and social networking' and 'friendship and drinking' were analysed separately in the friendship discussion group transcripts. The analytic area of 'SNSs in relation to friends' drinking practices' was analysed in the Facebook go-along transcripts.

The first stage of analysis was preliminary content coding and this was undertaken during each transcription in two ways. Firstly participants' talk about particular areas of focus (e.g. friendship or social networking or drinking) was time coded to relevant sections of the video. This was very useful for coding and later analysis as to click on a time-coded segment of the transcript played the associated segment of the video or screen capture file. Secondly, as common words, phrases, metaphors, tropes were identified within and across focus group conversations I highlighted them in each transcript and included them in a file with analytic notes attached to each transcript. I then copied all the analytical note files into one file to combine all the common words, phrases, metaphors and tropes to give me an initial analytic view of the range of participants' constructions of 'friendship', 'social networking' and 'drinking' through their language. Although Transana was invaluable for transcribing video and screen capture files and for preliminary content coding, it was used as a tool to do this only. In the next stage of analysis I printed out the transcripts and the combined analytic notes file, and proceeded with a Foucauldian discursive analysis (Willig, 2001).

The second stage of analysis involved a more detailed re-reading of all transcripts to identify and confirm particular groupings of words, phrases, metaphors and tropes used to discursively construct 'friendship', 'social networking' and 'drinking'. For instance, the phrases 'has my back', 'always there for me' and 'looked after me' were used consistently in relation to friends, and 'a good night', 'so drunk' and 'keep it balanced' were consistent phrases for drinking. I derived higher level analytic discourses from these various discursive constructions within each area of focus and this particularly involved identifying consensus, tensions and contradictions within these language uses. In the third stage of analysis I analysed how the participants drew on these discourses to construct their friendships, drinking and social networking in particular ways. The relevant questions here related to the *functions* of these discourses.

In the third stage of analysis I focussed on the action orientations in participants' language. The questions to ask here are what is gained from constructing the object this way; what is its function; and how does it relate to other constructions in the text? (Stenner, 1993; Willig, 2001). In particular, I asked what was accomplished by drawing on these discourses. Did their use justify, reinforce, privilege or suppress particular meanings and practices? In the

‘friendship and drinking’ analysis, for instance, it was pertinent to question how constructions of drinking may function to justify particular drinking practices. In the friendship and social networking analysis it was relevant to ask how constructions of friendship may function to legitimate or suppress friendship practices on these sites. In the SNSs in relation to friends’ drinking practices analysis (in the Facebook go-along transcripts) it was pertinent to ask how constructions of friendship and drinking may function to justify particular SNS photo practices. These types of questions were ways to explore the power relations involved in young adults’ discourses of friendship, drinking and social networking. It was a way to identify the dominant discourses that are drawn on to justify and privilege their understandings. It was also a way to identify the silences, the notions and practices that are suppressed or limited, leading to further questions of who benefits from drawing on these dominant meanings.

In the fourth stage of analysis I identified ‘subject positions’ within the discourses. To take up a discourses works to construct ‘subjects’ as well as objects by making available subject positions. Positions are not prescribed roles, rather they offer discursive locations from which to speak and act (Davies & Harre, 1990). They can be prescribed, taken up or resisted; therefore I focussed on ways participants did this in their talk. The questions I asked here were how did drawing on the discourses position the young adults and their activities in particular ways, and what were the implications for these positionings? Further, how did these positionings relate to ways of thinking about friendship, drinking and social networking, and what practices did they open up or close down? These types of questions are further ways to explore the power relations involved in understandings of friendship, drinking and social networking. Here I asked how more dominant discourses were used to prescribe, suppress or limit subject positionings and practices, and in what ways they were taken up or resisted by participants. I also considered the implications of these power relations for how negative drinking consequences were constructed and justified. This gave insight, for instance, into how participants drew on a ‘social fun’ discourse to privilege intoxication as a positive social friendship practice which suppressed harmful outcomes (e.g. vomiting, fighting) of drinking.

The final stage of analysis was an ongoing, iterative and challenging process whereby I presented my discourse analyses to my supervisors and we engaged in analytic discussions to examine and assess the validity of my interpretive work. These discussions provided me with a space to justify and debate my interpretations beyond my own positioning in the research. My supervisors each brought a different perspective to the analysis (critical health psychology, media studies, youth drug and alcohol cultural studies) and this set up a very challenging forum for me to develop and justify my analytic arguments. I struggled within this forum as I was a novice discourse analyst. I had to learn to move beyond *description* to a higher level of analytic meaning as well as ground my analysis in a coherent and convincing argument in relation to the

existing literature. I also had to learn that I had my own biases and ways of taking language and meanings for granted. My supervision sessions were invaluable for challenging me on this. I also presented particular excerpts of my data and my preliminary analysis to our whole project team meetings in Auckland. The team provided feedback about my analysis and their own interpretations of the content of the data from the focus groups and interviews. This was another valuable way for me to ‘try things out’ with others so that I could refine, elaborate and strengthen the validity of my analysis.

To ‘try things out’ was an important part of my analysis because although I recognised my own positioning, I came to recognise more fully that my interpretations were not neutral. I brought to the task my own way of constructing the world and as I was made aware of this I quickly came to know that discussions with others were an important part of the analysis. To get alternative views on what was going on, or how the discourses may be working, was initially very frustrating as I was highly invested in my interpretations. I was also highly invested in staying close to my participants’ meanings (their words) and I had to step back from this attachment to give consideration to others’ interpretations. The videos of the friendship groups and interviews were really useful in this respect. Although I was there with the participants during data collection, my supervisors and other team members were not. It was informative, therefore, for them to actually ‘see’ the participants and how they interacted together. The videos were an essential part of the analysis for this reason. Although it may have made participants more reluctant to share information, or increased their sense of surveillance, the benefits were substantial for the analytic process. .

Overall the analytic process was difficult and challenging. There were no ready answers to my research questions. I had to learn to go beyond *description* and fully engage with the concepts of discourse analysis, and always pay attention to the subtle power relations involved in participants’ discursive work. The three sets of findings for each Foucauldian discourse analysis for the three areas of analytic focus are presented in chapter three (friendship and social networking), chapter four (friendship and drinking) and chapter five (friendship, drinking and uses of SNSs).

## **Ethical considerations**

The processes involved in this research were approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Application 11/28 on 2 June 2011. The primary ethical consideration in my research was the potential benefits and harms for the participants involved. In terms of risks and harms, in the friendship discussion groups and Facebook go-along interviews participants discussed their friendships and it is possible that these discussions may have raised concerns or current life issues that may have upset them. Further, participants discussed their drinking practices, so

there was a possible risk that this discussion may have raised concerns about their own drinking behaviours. To address this issue I outlined before friendship group discussions and Facebook go-along interviews that participants' confidentiality and anonymity was assured. The participants also signed confidentiality agreements. I also advised that each participant had the right to withdraw without question or comment at any stage should they feel uncomfortable. Participants were also advised that if discussions raised any concerns for them they were welcome to discuss this with me afterwards in person or by email or telephone. Each participant was also given a list of contact numbers for support groups such as Youthline, ALAC (Alcohol Liquor Advisory Council – NZ Health Promotion Agency), the Alcohol Drug helpline, and Lifeline.

Although there was no direct benefit to participants, their participation gave them the opportunity to voice their own views about their friendships, uses of social technologies and drinking practices. To tell their stories is powerful as is the opportunity to challenge dominant discourses about young people, drinking, and social networking. They may have (depending on their interests) gained insight into the meanings of friendship, and the social arenas of social networking and drinking in their everyday lives.

Another ethical consideration in my research involved the cultural context in which this research was conducted. My research focussed on NZ European (Pakeha) culture. As a researcher I am a NZ European, embedded within this culture so cultural consultation and processes around reflexivity were pertinent. A wider consultation group was available to consult specifically on matters of NZ European culture and ethnicity that arose during the project. This group included an investigator on the Marsden research programme (Prof Christine Griffin), who sits outside New Zealand cultures, as well as Dr Avril Bell (sociologist at Massey University who has conducted research into Pakeha identity) and Professor Christine Stephens (School of Psychology, Massey University). Professor Stephens has much experience undertaking large research projects with Maori and NZ European (Pakeha) populations.

In addition, although NZ European participants were approached to participate in the research, they were welcome to invite their friends of any ethnicity to take part. It was planned that if the friendship discussion groups included Maori participants' and they wished to contribute within a Maori context they would be offered the opportunity of speaking with the researcher who was conducting a Maori focussed project. Further, the ongoing involvement of Dr Tim McCreanor and Associate Professor Helen Moewaka Barnes (Whariki Research Centre) was available to provide advice on any issues that might have arisen for Māori participants and ensured avenues and opportunities for sharing findings and insights from the research were available to Maori audiences. There was only one Maori participant and he did not elect to take up this opportunity. There were no other ethnicities involved in this research.

## Quality considerations

...the key question that the researcher should explicate for themselves and perhaps even indicate to their readers is 'by what should I be judged?' (Parker, 2004, p.96)

The criteria to assess qualitative research have been a contentious area within the social sciences (Chamberlain, 2000; Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999; Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992; Reicher, 2000). Sets of 'quality' guidelines (rather than prescriptive rules) have been proposed for a phenomenological –hermeneutic position (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992) and for a realist position (Elliott et al., 1999). These guidelines, however, initially prompted an outcry from discursive psychologists that this 'methodolatry' could not be applied to discourse analysis research (Chamberlain, 2000; Reicher, 2000). This reflects a broader realist-relativist debate whereby realists argue that an external world exists and can be known through empirical observation which in turn informs rational deduction of our truths or knowledge (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999). A relativist view asserts there is no access to truth or knowledge through sense-perception since theory always informs our observations (Popper, 1963), and our truths or knowledge are informed by our world views (Kuhn, 1962). A relativist position in this context, therefore, rejects the prescriptive 'rules' of a realist and positivist research paradigm as a way to judge qualitative research (Reicher, 2000). In this regard, Chamberlain (2000) warned against privileging 'method over meaning' in qualitative research because this research does "not have a clear canonical path to follow, regardless of the method of choice" (p.289). However, we still require a way to judge that a research method informed by a relativist position has achieved what it set out to do (Willig, 2001).

A reasoned view of applying 'quality' criteria to guide relativist research has developed alongside a cautionary concern that these criteria do not suppress innovative methods (Elliott, Fisher, & Rennie, 2000; Parker, 2004). A useful approach here is a 'trustworthy' framework for qualitative narrative research (Riessman, 2008). This framework can also be applied to other relativist approaches and methods. It sets out some facets of research 'trustworthiness', each of which has its 'dark side' that may cloud the 'truth' rather than reveal it. The relativist position that I embraced for this research is social constructionism (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1973; Willig, 2001; Nightingale & Cromby, 1999) and relevant issues of 'trustworthiness' for this position are correspondence, persuasion, coherence and resonance (Elliott et al., 1999; Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992; Riessman, 2008).

For a researcher to take a relativist position means the correspondence of participants' accounts to other sources is not considered relevant; rather the focus is on their meaning-making (Riessman, 2008). In addition, this position assumes there is no one particular truth or version of the world and multiple interpretations are always possible (Burman & Parker, 1993; Stenner,

1993; Willig, 2001). A primary implication of this for a researcher is that their discursive accounts of others' worlds may also be viewed as a construction that in some way reproduces or transforms their accounts (Burman & Parker, 1993; Edwards, Ashmore, & Potter, 1995; Nightingale & Cromby, 1999; Willig, 2001). Another implication is that this position involves ethical problems for a researcher in "having power and control over other people's words" (Stenner, 1993, p.131). These implications mean that researchers are required to achieve interpretive rigor and argue their version of the 'truth' by being transparent about their epistemic and theoretical standpoint and reflexive about their knowledge claims (Riessman, 2008; Willig, 2001). As a researcher, I have located my positioning within a social constructionist psychology paradigm (as set out in the prologue) and transparency of my knowledge claims was addressed in the epistemology and theoretical orientation sections of this chapter.

Persuasion refers to the systematic explication of the research design, data collection processes and analytic strategy (Riessman, 2008). The friendship group discussion and Facebook go-along interview method sections along with the Foucauldian discursive analytic strategy section of this chapter address this facet of research 'trustworthiness'. Coherence or integration of theory refers to a researcher offering readers an understanding that fits together to form an analytic data-based story, narrative, 'map' or framework for the phenomenon explained (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992; Elliott et al., 1999). Resonance refers to readers judging a researcher's account accurately represents their focus of study and it has clarified or expanded their understanding of it (Elliott et al., 1999). These two quality criteria may be judged in the final chapter of this thesis where the research findings are integrated with the conceptual framework employed to investigate young adults' friendship understandings in relation to their social networking and drinking.

## **Reflections and reflexivity**

The design, planning and execution of my research proved to be a valuable learning experience. Along the way I gained a wealth of experience in facilitating friendship group discussions. One of the greatest challenges was also a great advantage of friendship group discussions. Friends together are relaxed and enjoy laughing, talking, over talking and interrupting. This conversational flow is a challenge to transcribe but rewarding for capturing shared meanings. Another challenge was to manage the tensions in discussion as friends also confront, disagree, antagonise and become annoyed with each other. Some of the most insightful moments often arose in these tensions and I quickly learned to relax and not intervene in these friendship dynamics. I also learned to not share personal information or compete for conversation space.

There were technical challenges in the Facebook go-along interviews. It was essential to ensure the screen capture – Hypercam – software was reliable and of sufficient quality for

transcription. Once underway these interviews flowed smoothly. Participants were relaxed and moved with ease around their Facebook pages; talking, laughing, interacting with friends through posts, comments and ‘likes’ and chat. I gained experience in going along with the flow of participants’ Facebook activities while maintaining focus with semi-structured questions. Some lessons I learned were that to rely on technology in interviews required piloting and re-resting the software every time. The participants’ time and input was invaluable so I tested Hypercam before every interview. Although Hypercam recorded all participants’ talk, Facebook navigations and activities, the video camera was crucial for capturing their talk when they turned away from the computer screen. I also learned that the Facebook go-along interviews were lively and fun but also captured serious personal issues and tensions in participants’ lives such as conflicts with friends and family. Finally, the screen capture recordings captured a wealth of data so it was necessary to keep my analytic focus contained within the framework of my study.

I undertook all transcribing and it was challenging. There were twelve friendship group discussions (on average 90 minutes duration) and it took four hours on average to transcribe 30 minutes of talking. Participants were friends at ease in each other’s company and their talk was relatively natural, with lots of laughter, interruptions, over talking, asides and general noise. The video camera recordings provided an indispensable visual aide to transcribe these conversations. Facebook go-along interview transcription was also challenging because each participant’s talk and their online navigations, interactions and photo activities were transcribed. Significant navigations (e.g. clicks on photos) were time synchronised between the transcript and the video or screen recording file. This meant that later re-plays of the transcript/video or screen recording could be made by simply clicking on a particular segment of the transcript. This was time consuming but very useful for later analytic work.

Through the transcription task I gained considerable experience in the fortitude required to do qualitative research. Some particular insights gained about transcribing were that it was an arduous task but I also undertook preliminary coding as I transcribed. This made the task more interesting and gave an effective result for such a time consuming task. During transcription I got to know the breadth and depth of the data and found it rewarding to have participants share their lives with me.

My personal reflexivity as a researcher means that I recognised my positionings within the process. I am female, older and a mother of young adults so I bring particular ways of thinking and feeling about young adults. I was aware of my maternal orientation to them, particularly for their talk about drinking; it was concerning and painful to listen to at times. I recognised however that I needed to suspend my maternal feelings because their talk was their experiences and their stories. As a researcher I was trusted to listen without judgement. My

position as an older female mother also potentially set me apart from the young adults as an ‘authority’ figure. I was therefore aware that I needed to develop a sense of rapport and trust with them. I live with and among young adults in this age group so I am familiar with and at ease with them. This enabled me to establish a level of rapport with them. At the same time I was aware this rapport needed to be balanced with my position as a ‘researcher’.

I also recognised I was not a ‘digital native’ – a person who has grown up with social technologies such as SNSs. I am a non-native in social technologies and I live only lightly with them. This positioned me as a ‘naive inquirer’. This was an advantage because I am not immersed in the ordinariness of this ‘world’. I am not an expert so I could adopt a critical awareness to question the ‘everyday’. At the same time, however, I was not naive about social networking technologies. I worked in the information technology industry for 15 years so I am familiar with the hardware and software infrastructures of technologies. This experience positioned me as an ‘expert’ in how sites such as Facebook operate. I therefore needed to suspend this knowledge so I could focus particularly on how young adults’ use and make sense of sites such as Facebook from their perspectives.

The next three chapters address the three research aims. They are presented in the article manuscript format in which they were submitted to international journals. The first research aim was to explore young adults’ shared friendship meanings and practices and how SNS affordances, and their uptake by young adults, relate to their friendship practices. Chapter 4 forms the basis for a manuscript entitled ‘Friendship work on Facebook: Young adults’ understandings and practices of friendship’ that presents the findings from the friendship group discussions that address this aim. The second research aim was to explore young adults’ shared friendship meanings and practices in relation to their drinking practices. Chapter 5 is a manuscript entitled ‘“Everyone can loosen up and get a bit of a buzz on”: Young adults, alcohol and friendship practices’ that presents the findings from the friendship group discussions that address this aim. The third research aim was to explore young adults’ sense-making of their uses of SNSs within the context of their drinking and their friendships. Chapter 6 forms the basis for a manuscript entitled ‘“See it doesn’t look pretty does it?”: Young adults’ airbrushed drinking practices on Facebook’ that presents the findings from the Facebook go-along interviews that address this aim. These three sets of findings are inter-related and while they are discussed separately in each of the following three chapters, they are integrated conceptually within Chapter 7 (‘Conclusions’) to show how overall they provide new knowledge of young adults’ friendships, social networking and drinking

## Chapter 4

### **Young adults' meanings of friendship and social networking<sup>1</sup>**

This chapter forms the basis for a manuscript that addresses the first aim of this research which was to explore young adults' shared friendship meanings and practices and how SNS affordances, and their uptake by young adults, relate to their friendship practices. These findings are based on data analysed from the friendship group discussions.

#### **Friendship work on Facebook: Young adults' understandings and practices of friendship**

##### **Abstract**

Young adults' use SNSs such as Facebook to engage with each other as friends yet there has been little systematic research that has investigated young adults' own understandings of friendship, and their specific friendship practices, that they bring to their SNS uses. This qualitative study explored young adults' understandings and practices of friendship, how Facebook 'reaches out' to engage with them, and how they appropriate Facebook into their friendship practices. Twelve friendship discussion groups were conducted in urban and non-urban New Zealand, with 26 women and 25 men aged 18-25 years, in same and mixed-gender groups. Discussions were analysed using a Foucauldian discourse analysis. These young adults made sense of friendship through four main discourses: 'friendship as social fun', 'friends have your back', 'friends let you be yourself' and 'friends invest time and effort'. This sense-making of friendship was embedded within their uses of Facebook's technological affordances, such as 24 hour connectivity to their friends. In interactions between young adults and Facebook, the system offers welcome extensions, but also creates intrusions and tensions, to their friendship practices that lead to new forms of intensive friendship work. These findings are considered in terms of links between young adults' friendships, identity work and commercial SNS intrusions into their friendships.

#### **Introduction**

As young adults move beyond their families and assume a more self focussed life within their communities friends are a crucial influence and support for their life transitions (Carbery & Buhrmester, 1998). Supportive and intimate friendships underpin secure attachment (Bowlby, 1969), self-worth and well-being, smoothing life transitions such as leaving school, entering the

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter forms the basis of a manuscript which has been accepted subject to revisions by the Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology as at 19 October 2013: Niland, P., Lyons, A.C., Goodwin, I., & Hutton, F. Friendship work on Facebook: Young adults' understandings and practices of friendship (refer DRC 16 in Appendix L).

workforce, marriage and having families, while friendships engendering conflicts and rivalry may undermine these transitions (Hartup & Stevens, 1999). Young adults are also among the most active users of social network sites SNSs such as Facebook and MySpace (Duggan & Brenner, 2013), suggesting a generational shift that sees them increasingly engage in and manage their personal relationships through SNS (Tapscott, 2009).

Investigations into how SNS technology impacts on young adults' friendships have moved from questioning whether online friendships are as 'real' as face-to-face relationships to exploring how SNS uses promote or undermine everyday friendships (Whitty, 2008). More recently inquiries have shifted to interactions between SNS technological affordances that 'reach out' to young adults, and their appropriations of these affordances into their friendship practices (boyd, 2011a). Affordances are opportunities for action that technologies offer, which people can utilise (Norman, 1998). SNS affordances range from specific actions such as being able to upload and display photos, to more general actions such as being able to 'broadcast' photos beyond friends to a wider, and often invisible, audience. However within this focus on SNS affordances and young adults' friendships there has been little systematic research that has investigated young adults' own understandings of friendship, and their specific friendship practices, that they bring to their SNS uses.

Within psychology friendship has frequently been studied as a developmental issue, a behavioural adaptation which supports transitions throughout our lives (Bowlby, 1969; Giordano, 2003; Hartup & Stevens, 1999). Individual friendship qualities found to support young adults life phase development include self-disclosure and liking (see Collins & Miller, 1994, for a review) and intimacy, trust and closeness (Rybak & McAndrew, 2006). These qualities are positively associated with young adults' educational achievements (Benner, 2010) and emotional attachments (Demir, 2010;) whereas their absence is related to a range of negative outcomes including depression (Cambron, Acitelli, & Steinberg, 2010) and social anxiety (Siegel, La Greca, & Harrison, 2009). This developmental perspective underpinned early research exploring whether online friendships were the 'real thing' compared to traditional face-to-face friendships. A review of this research concluded there were negative impacts of relating online, such as more impersonal communication and increased loneliness, but these were outweighed by positive experiences, such as forming friendships (Whitty, 2008). Subsequent findings suggest young adults primarily use SNSs to socialise with known friends (e.g. Reich et al., 2012) with positive and negative outcomes. High numbers of Facebook friends may enhance young adults' subjective well-being (Kim & Lee, 2011) and college adjustment (Kalpidou, Costin, & Morris, 2011). Conversely Facebook intrusiveness (specifically jealous cognitions and surveillance behaviour) has been linked to relationship dissatisfaction (Elphinston & Noller, 2011) and adolescents neglecting school work and losing

sleep due to being online with face-to-face friends (Reich et al., 2012). These inconsistent findings have led to concerns about SNS technologies and their potentially negative consequences for young people's friendships and in turn their ability to become integrated into their broader social communities (Teske, 2002).

This tradition of research often conceptualises young adults as living through a particularly difficult developmental life phase (Arnett, 2000), or as 'emerging adults' who are negotiating their approach to 'adulthood' while being troubled by moody, conflicting and risky behaviours – although this is nuanced by individual, social, gender, ethnic and cultural differences (Settersten & Ray, 2010). However, to conceptualise young people as 'near adults' in transition to becoming 'whole' persons potentially undermines their autonomy by positioning them as 'at risk' to succeed in society, thereby obscuring their own youth cultural practices (Bucholtz, 2002). Rather than solely seeing friendship as consisting of specific individual qualities related to life course adaptations friendship can also be productively conceptualised as a relationship that is socially constructed (Burr, 2003) through people's shared practices and interpretations; situated within and shaped by particular socio-historical and culturally constituted times and places (Bruner, 1990). A thorough examination of young adult's own 'voices', and specific friendship practices (both online and offline), allows for fuller understanding of friendships and uses of SNS technology.

Today's young adults have grown up with social networking technologies (Tapscott, 2009) and, as Beer (2008) argues, the influence of SNS technology in their social lives may come to re-shape society's broader understandings of friendship. The distinctive properties of SNS technology, particularly its opportunities for action, or 'affordances' (Norman, 1998), have been discussed in depth by boyd (2011) who argues for considering the inherent dynamics of the digital environment with which young people must contend. These SNS affordances include status updates (personal posts), asynchronous and real time chat and messaging interactions, 'search and display' functions, photo uploads and displays, links to broader internet sites, and 'post' 'like', 'share' and 'comment' activities. SNSs also afford users 24 hour accessibility and availability through local, wireless and mobile connections from a variety of social settings and contexts. While these affordances are social channels through which friends can communicate, they also create wider, often invisible, audiences to a user's online participation. This in turn creates "collapsed contexts" where social boundaries are difficult to maintain, and effectively produces an elision of public and private spheres (boyd, 2011 a). SNS affordances therefore prescribe, limit and expand young adults' friendship experiences. For example inquiries into the influences of a wider, invisible audiences on young adults friendship practices - predominantly focussed on Facebook – show variously that young adults have evolved Facebook friendship interaction rules such as not saying anything disrespectful about

friends on Facebook (Bryant & Marmo, 2012) and Facebook friendship norm violations such as overly emotional status updates (McLaughlin & Vitak, 2012) alongside more intense surveillance and analysis of friends' activities (Karakayali & Kilic, 2013). Thus Facebook affordances may require more effort to 'do' new forms of friendship practices.

Interactions between young adults' friendship understandings and the ways in which SNS affordances shape friendship meanings is a recursive process (Beer, 2008). While SNS affordances may influence young adults' friendship practices, young adults may in turn shape SNS technologies through such processes. This interaction, or 'appropriation' (Dourish, 2001), takes place in relation to broader social, political and economic institutions. For instance, Facebook is more than a social networking site, it is also a capitalist commercial platform for business interests to market their products in branded 'friend' pages, and to access users' information to display advertising on their pages (Bucher, 2012). A focus on appropriation therefore helps overcome stark dualistic framings of online/offline friendship practices, and avoids overly deterministic understandings of SNS affordances. It enables a focus on how practice and meaning leads to specific forms of technological appropriation. In this way the manner in which young adults take up, alter, extend, or resist SNS affordances for their friendship practices can be examined in detail without making potentially misleading assumptions about the 'impact' of technology.

In summary, research shows us that young adults actively appropriate SNS technology through their friendship practices, and SNS technology 'reaches out' to engage with them in specific ways. These aspects of appropriation, however, cannot be fully understood without examining their interactions. The current study therefore explores: young adults' understandings and practices of friendship; how Facebook affordances engage with them in their friendship practices; and how they appropriate (take up, alter, extend, resist) these affordances in relation to their friendship practices.

## **Method**

This study took a social constructionist approach, which focuses on the social realities people collectively construct in particular socio-historical locations (Burr, 2003). Here language is seen as a medium to enter into social realities - shared meanings - and, as we learn to use language purposively, a social tool to constitute our meaning making (Bruner, 1990). As a social tool language is a site of consensus, variability, conflict and negotiation (Tuffin, 2005), used to claim, blame, attribute, and justify our sense-making; to actively construct and legitimate our shared meanings, subjectivities and practices (Burr, 2003). The language employed by young adults as they talk together about their friendships and social networking provides insight and understandings into their shared sense-making of friendship and social networking. New

Zealand ranks equally with America and Britain and 13 other countries on measures of internet access and types of usage and Facebook is the dominant social network for people under 30 years in New Zealand (Bell, Crothers, Gibson, & Smith, 2012).

### **Procedure**

Following ethical approval from the Institution's Human Ethics Committee, participants were recruited through word-of-mouth and snowballing techniques. As we sought existing friendship groups, one group member was approached in person and given study details. This person then asked their friends in person to participate and gave them study details; all had the opportunity to ask questions about the research and were assured of confidentiality and anonymity.

Discussions took place at participants' homes or the university and were facilitated by PN (female and older than participants) using exploratory open-ended questions to prompt discussion, including questions about friendship, socialising and use of social technologies.

Discussions lasted between one and two hours and were video and voice recorded with permission. A benefit of using friendship groups is that participants' familiarity and group rapport may allow them to more easily and informally talk and give their personal opinions in a relaxed social setting close to their everyday experiences (Crossley, 2002).

### **Friendship Groups and Participants**

Twelve friendship group discussions were conducted, with a total of 51 participants aged between 18 and 25 years (26 females; mean age 20.2 years). Details of groups and participants are provided in Table 1 (p.46). All participants were of New Zealand European ethnicity except one Maori male, and one female who originated from South Africa. Participants were diverse in their occupations, education, geographic locations and relationship status. Although not asked about sexuality explicitly, most participants appeared to be heterosexual while one couple identified as lesbian, two females identified as bi-sexual and one male identified as gay.

Friendship durations ranged from many years (from childhood) to a few months and years (from meeting mainly through work and education venues).

### **Analytic Procedure**

Friendship group video files were transcribed verbatim and captured participants' talk, pauses, interruptions, over talking, laughter and prominent body movements and expressions. PN led a Foucauldian discourse analysis (Foucault, 2010; Willig, 2001) of participants' talk. In an initial semantic coding stage we identified common words and phrases across and within all transcripts and then identified themes by friendship and social network conceptualisations (e.g. the friends 'protect' each other). A discourse located at the level of language statements comprises ways we use language to construct social concepts and objects (e.g. 'friendship'), subject positions (ways

to think or feel), and our ‘ways of doing’, our practices (Willig, 2001). Our discursive analysis therefore examined how participants’ talk – language - discursively constituted ‘friendship’ and ‘social networking’. We focussed on consensus, tensions, inconsistencies, functions (e.g. explaining and justifying) and ensuing positionings (e.g. ‘protector’) as well as consequences of taking up or resisting these positions and available ways of doing friendship and social networking. We had ongoing analysis sessions in which tentative discourses were discussed, refined, abandoned, and introduced.

## Findings

Although we were open to exploring a range of social technologies, Facebook was used by all participants, consistent with population statistics demonstrating a high use of social networking in this age group in New Zealand with Facebook as the dominant SNS (Bell et al., 2012). Most participants discussed being actively on Facebook through computers and phones for many hours a day and they constructed it as ‘just Facebook’, routine and mundane in their lives. Close familiarity with Facebook was evident when, as they talked, they made automatic hand gestures for Facebook actions such as typing comments, poking, clicking, and peering at photos. Participants drew on four primary discourses to co-construct friendship: ‘friendship as social fun’, ‘friends have your back’, ‘friends invest time and effort’ and ‘friends let me be myself’. Facebook’s technological affordances were central to these discourses, demonstrating the key role of Facebook within everyday friendship practices. The four discourses are described below, using quotes as exemplars of particular points.

### ‘Friendship as social fun’

The participants’ co-constructed stories of shared friendship activities such as talking, watching movies, sports, drinking, playing games and ‘hanging out’ centred on the enjoyment, laughter, entertainment – the fun - experienced. Social fun was a dominant co-construction to explain who was a good friend:

Jack    Oh it's it's gotta be someone who you can see through and they don't mind it  
and    um yeah you've gotta have a fun time with them otherwise it's just it's just an  
         awkward mess really. (FG7)

Here Jack rates a friend as someone who is well known and he implies a sense of intimacy (‘someone you can see through and they don’t mind it’) alongside someone to ‘have a fun time with’, showing how shared fun was constructed as central to the meanings and practices of friendship. Through this discourse friends were positioned as members of a group bound together in the pleasure of their socialising. This suggests friendship is not only strongly linked

to ‘entertainment’, but to miss out on friends’ social fun is to miss feeling positively bonded to a friendship group. Participants drew on this discourse in the ways they appropriated Facebook. Many activities were shared as social fun through Facebook, but in particular ‘stalking’ (searching and browsing other people’s profiles) was discussed with much laughter and accounts of shared fun, as the following excerpt demonstrates:

Emily Oh they go out with this person. Oh {all laugh}.

Carly I always see him at the blah blah {laughs}.

Beth It's basically just like keeping in the loop like knowing who everyone is kind of

Emily And I think before Facebook everyone was like it was more gossip. That went round and now it's like you can just link a photo.

(FG9)

These young women co-construct stalking as shared ‘gossip’, a way to find out ‘who everyone is’ which involves shared laughter and is constructed as easy given the technology - they ‘just link a photo’ – to keep ‘in the loop’ of what is happening with everyone. The ‘search and display’ affordances that enable stalking behaviour facilitate a shared sense of fun and the excitement associated with voyeuristically reviewing the romantic and sexual pursuits of others. However these ‘search and display’ affordances simultaneously create new tensions. The excerpt below highlights how knowledge gained through stalking on Facebook is also constructed as inappropriate:

Anna ... And I'm just like who are you? Like I've been stalking you for. This is awkward and you can't stop.

Emily I've stalked someone. I've walked past and I'm like I know you and then I'm like oh my God I've stalked you! {all laugh}.

(FG9)

Anna’s reference to ‘awkward’ viewing reveals that boundaries are constructed around stalking as social fun. Moreover, she is aware she sometimes crosses those boundaries, here it is an invasion of a non-friend’s privacy, but she ‘can’t stop’. Such tensions were prevalent for many participants, and were particularly intense when stalking was exposed in everyday life. Emily exemplifies this when she exclaims ‘oh my God I’ve stalked you!’ – a person she ‘walked past’ in the street – and her friends’ laughter here suggests they recognise their routine shared fun of stalking may be exposed beyond the boundaries of their friendship group and activities on SNS. As well as the tension of being ‘found out’ there was a reciprocal tension in being stalked, in turn, by others:

Jane ...we went to a club and he said to Dylan oh you've changed the colour of your hair and she's never met this guy in her life. Like have I met you somewhere before? And he's like oh I've just seen some photos of you on Facebook and she's like oh my god wow!

(FG1)

Jane's account of an anonymous stranger knowing that her friend Dylan has changed her hair colour demonstrates common exposure experiences when non-friends overstep privacy boundaries. Stalking therefore goes beyond shared fun by raising new tensions for friendship practices. The 'search and display' affordances enable anonymous inspections of non-friends' lives as shared fun but effort is required to conceal one's own behaviour, and to ward off privacy invasions. Thus the same affordances that provide new forms of 'fun', central to understandings and practices of friendship on Facebook, also simultaneously create new tensions for young adults.

### **'Friends invest time and effort'**

Participants also drew on a 'friends invest time and effort' to construct friendship. There was a consistently repeated phrase of 'what's the point?' for people who did not give 'time and effort' to friends:

Carla I'd say cherish them. Like your real friends. Make time for them. Even if you know there's all sorts of friendships and some might be here. Some might be far away. Friends here and all over the country and overseas but cherish them because I reckon that a lot of people you could be friends for life if you put the effort in.

(FG10)

Carla advises that friends should 'cherish' each other by making 'time' and 'effort', emphasising the serious personal investment needed to maintain friend relationships. In employing this discourse participants positioned friends as responsible to make the effort to be interested in each other's welfare and lives, and to make personal time for each other. This suggests that not making effort for friends may provoke feelings of guilt, and to be ignored by friends may engender feelings of neglect and isolation. Facebook's network connectivity and 'search and display' affordances were appropriated in partially alleviating the time and effort to keep up with distant friends. 'Closer' friends, in terms of intimacy rather than proximity, appropriated system functions such as status updates as relatively 'effortless' way to invest time

in friends. However, this effectively invoked a new form of friendship work, evident in the way participants constructed their regular viewing of Facebook as regular, episodic ‘checking’:

Beth ...I'll be studying and then I'll like look at Facebook and just like check up on stuff and so then so it's like I spend like two minutes on it cause I and then I do some more study and then I'll check it again for like two minutes. So it's not like I go there and have missed out on heaps and have to scroll down for ages.  
(FG9)

Beth constructs her viewing as a constant checking while she studies so she doesn't miss out ‘on heaps’ – a dominant construction of Facebook viewing as a regular checking routine. Routine checking of friends’ activities is thoroughly embedded in friendship practices and while it is used as an ‘efficient’ way to invest time in friends, it is also taken for granted as a new form of friendship work called into being by the system’s ‘always on’ affordances, and therefore becomes *expected* as a new form of friendship practice for ‘close’ relationships. The system further prompts this friendship ‘work’ when it sends (via pages, texts and emails) instantaneous notifications of friends’ activities:

Alex ... I used to get those notifications on my phone but I turned that off cause after a while it just got really annoying. I'd wake up with like nineteen texts and I'd be like yay! And then they're like from Facebook from Facebook from Facebook from Facebook.  
Ben ... All you do is deactivate it so no-one can see your profile but until you log back on all your information's still there so you can't get rid of Facebook {laughs}. You're stuffed.  
(FG5)

Here Alex voices common feelings that system generated notifications were ‘annoying’ as they were relentless - ‘from Facebook from Facebook from Facebook’. These system notifications are driven by participants’ use of the system’s affordances as an entertaining and efficient way to spend time with their friends. Yet when this friendship work becomes too intrusive they turn these notifications off, or in more extreme cases, ‘deactivate it’ as Ben tries to do but he ‘can’t get rid of Facebook’ so friendship activities afforded by the system are ‘always on’. These interactions reveal how Facebook ‘reaches out’ to assist young adults in personally investing in their friendships and also how they both utilise and resist friendship work generated through this interaction.

### **‘Friends let me be myself’**

Participants’ drew on a ‘friends let you to be yourself’ discourse to construct friends as people who did not judge others negatively when they disclosed their vulnerabilities, as people with whom they could be themselves, relax, not put on an act, be accepted for who they were:

- Lo: That's important aye, not judging people.
- Jane Yeah because if you tell something to someone and they judge you all the time then that's not really a friend.
- Lo: Nah.
- Tara: Just put you down
- Jane Someone you feel safe with as well.
- Tara: Someone you can have fun with as well just be yourself aye, like we're always just real goofy...
- (FG1)

In this excerpt the young women voice a dominant construction that a good friend does not ‘judge you all the time’ or ‘just put you down’. Rather with a good friend they ‘feel safe’, can have ‘fun’ and can ‘just be’ themselves. Participants drew on this discourse to justify the importance of friends for personal emotional security and to position friends as the arbiters of a person’s self-acceptance. This is a powerful positioning because it engenders feelings of self-worthiness or, if lacking, feelings of unworthiness. To have fun and ‘be themselves’ was central to friends’ appropriating Facebook’s status updates to share personal thoughts and activities. However, while the participants utilised this affordance to ‘be themselves’ there was major tension around ‘show off’ displays. For example participants felt annoyance and derision towards friends and other people who posted updates about life successes:

- Pam My most annoying one is when people say how amazing their life is.
- Eva Yeah all the time. I'm travelling on the Greek Islands and it's amazing and it's thirty two degrees and I just met the love of my life
- Jan Especially when you're having a bad day {laughs}.
- Pam And it's like and it's funny because you can make the connection cause those are the kinds of friends you don't want like in real life. You don't want friends that are like that in real life. Who are always talking about themselves and how great their life is.
- (FG6)

Pam, Eva and Jan identify types of annoying ‘show off’ displays as holidays ‘on the Greek Islands’ and fulfilling ‘love of my life’ relationships and Pam links them with ‘the kinds of friends you don’t want’. Thus while online engagement with their friends enables participants to ‘be themselves’, SNS affordances also create tensions that circumscribe the way the self is performed in relation to broader ‘audiences’ positioned as non-friends, or ‘friends you don’t want’. Cathy voiced a common construction of why show off displays may be so unsettling:

Cathy ... cause people on Facebook talk their life up to being more than it is. And it makes people feel inadequate and then oh I wasn't going to that party and there's all these pictures of people at this party and I didn't go to there you know. And this person's doing this great thing and I'm not doing that.

(FG11)

Here Cathy constructs people who ‘talk their life up’ on Facebook as people who make you feel ‘inadequate’. Thus SNS affords users a way to share being themselves, but it also exposes them to broader audiences of acquaintances, who are nevertheless linked as ‘friends’ through the system, whose self-aggrandising personal displays may disrupt a positive sense of self.

### **‘Friends have your back’**

The participants also drew on a ‘friends have your back’ discourse to construct friendship as unconditional caring and protection. Their use of this discourse accords with research that friends’ social support assists prosocial attachment and developmental outcomes for young adults (e.g. Wright & Li, 2011). Friends always looked after each other – ‘had their back’ - in experiences ranging from defenses against others’ verbal attacks to emotional support to more dangerous life threatening events. For males in particular friends protected each other from family and peer violence:

Brett Yes let's just say my parents, my parents at that stage didn't know that these two actually looked out for me. They had my back and told me to cut it out when I'm starting to get overboard.

(FG4)

For Brett his friends are protective when he drinks and starts to ‘get overboard’ – drunk or violent – and he values their care for him. This discourse functions to construct the physical, personal and emotional care and protection that binds friends. In drawing on this discourse a ‘good friend’ was positioned as always responsible to protect friends, and in turn be protected by them, engendering emotional bonding. An absence of friends’ caring and protection may

therefore provoke feelings of betrayal and insecurity. This friendship construction became central to how Facebook's technological affordances were taken up. To have friends' backs was a dominant construction, for example, when participants appropriated Facebook's photo sharing affordances (comment, tag, like) to share memories, and continue their 'offline' social fun online. As photo sharing affordances made this 'social fun' visible to 'invisible audiences', participants felt concerned about employers and family negatively judging their photos and activities, particularly their drinking. They therefore felt compelled to enact 'friendship-as-protection' for their friends Facebook displays, a new form of work and responsibility often centred on negotiations about the line between fun and embarrassing photos:

Brad Um obviously you think about how the person is going to feel about you posting a photo to their profile and if you think it's too embarrassing to put there then you won't.

Adam You might put it there because it is too embarrassing.

Brad I wouldn't want the person to be angry.

Adam Depends on the situation aye?

Brad Depends who it is and what the photo's of.

Adam Yeah.

Doug If it's like if it's supposed to be fun.

Carla If it's funny yeah but if it's emb-, like in a mean way.

(FG10)

This effectively brings to the forefront negotiations around privacy boundaries of young adults' online photo sharing activities that centres on their friendships (see also Tonks, 2012). For our participants privacy was constructed as 'protecting' friends' self-integrity. In the excerpt above Brad thinks 'about how a friend will feel' when he posts photos of them, while Adam counters a photo may be posted *because* it is 'embarrassing'. This is then resolved by Doug and Carla who construct 'embarrassing' as only acceptable in a 'funny' way, not a 'mean' way. Thus, while photo sharing affordances are appropriated to extend friends' social fun, this requires new ways of *doing* privacy in a context where traditional notions of both 'public' and 'private' are disrupted. This new form of friendship work highlights the nuanced complexities embedded in cultural meanings of privacy, and is intensified when the system sends continuous notifications of friends' photo actions through Facebook pages, text and email channels:

Hana ... but usually if I don't like a photo I untag myself.

Gary Yeah I have a notify-, yeah just use the notifications aye?

Hana Yeah you always check it and if you don't like it or whatever you untag it and ask them if they

Gary If you're going on it every day you're gonna see it pretty much instantly so you can just get rid of it instantly.

(FG12)

Routine photo work is exemplified in this extract where Hana and Gary 'use the notifications' to 'check' and 'untag' or 'ask them' – friends - to remove photos. Here 'checking' involves the friendship work of judging photo content to protect self and friends' integrity. The system's 24/7 photo notifications intensify this friendship photo work as seen in Gary's admission that being on Facebook 'every day' will 'instantly' show photos he can 'just get rid of...instantly'. Thus, young adults must continuously 'protect each other's backs', a key friendship construction they bring to Facebook, as they actively appropriate its affordances for socialising and fun.

## **Conclusions**

Our findings reveal young adults' drew on discursive constructions of friendship to appropriate Facebook – a routine and mundane SNS technology in their daily lives. Latour (1999) argues that technologies are appropriated through a process of initial unreliability to consistent operation so that as we trust their operation they become 'black boxed' and invisible. Our findings highlight how Facebook engages with and is absorbed into young adults' lives through specific processes of sense-making and social practices tied to their friendships. The 'friendship as social fun' discourse was drawn on to construct stalking (e.g. romantic and sexual attractions and knowing 'who is who') as a pleasurable friendship practice linked to Facebook's 'search and display' affordances. Similarly participants appropriated Facebook's photo sharing affordances (e.g. comments/likes/tags) to share memories and continue their socialising fun. Participants also drew on a 'friends invest time and effort' discourse to position Facebook as an 'effortless' way to personally invest time in close friends and friends across time and distance.

However, Facebook affordances also created tensions equally grounded within young adults' friendship practices. Facebook stalking raised new tensions and created additional friendship work because Facebook's 'search and display' affordances enable privacy invasions that must be either concealed or shielded from others. New forms of privacy 'boundary work' therefore become bound up with friendship, and 24/7 Facebook connectivity intensifies this new work in sharing friendship fun. Similarly Facebook status updates also generate 24/7 responses to friendship actions that required active forms of management. Here friendship becomes more labour intensive and intrusive, and was sometimes resisted by young adults 'turning off' system

notifications and deactivating their Facebook accounts. Yet it is generally accepted that this friendship work is now 'always on' because of Facebook affordances. Participants also drew on a 'friends have your back' discourse to construct photo sharing as not only crucial to friendship but as work: as labour now required to protect friends' privacy and reputations within wider audiences of SNS environments. Equally, digital connectivity calls for ever present instant responses by friends to ensure friendships are not undermined by the system that affords 24/7 extensions to friendship activities. Indeed Facebook has a *vested interest* in developing and sustaining such new forms of 'work'. As a business enterprise Facebook monitors users' 'friend' interactions, and their interactions with commercial 'friends' (company branded pages that may be 'liked') so that each response - 'click' - garners a wealth of consumer information (Bucher, 2012). This consumer information, gained from the 'free labour' of system users, is then exploited by Facebook to make a profit through third party advertising and other capitalist enterprises (Fuchs, 2010). Future theorising of young adults' friendships therefore could scrutinise commercial imperatives that encourage 'friendship' practices and influence the form Facebook affordances take.

Although our study did not specifically explore identity constructions and performances, much identity work was taking place within a friendship context. Identity work as a discursive process to constitute ways to think, feel and engage in practices of the 'self' was most strongly linked to friendship in two particular ways. Firstly, identity work, constructed as 'sense of self' (Erikson, 1959), was demonstrated when participants positioned friends as providers of emotional security and protection. Feelings of self-acceptance were crucial to friends sharing fun together, and underpinned their activities together as friends on Facebook. Secondly, being connected to an audience beyond friendship groups raised tensions for identity work constructed as self-performances (Goffman, 1959; 1971). Strong resistances to individual Facebook 'show off' displays suggest friendship practices may censor and suppress identity performances. Friendship practices therefore challenge a broader neo-liberal project of selfhood that constitutes identity as on-going work to produce an individualised, authentic self (Rose, 1996). Our findings suggest identity work is nuanced by participants' need to be 'authentic' or 'real' friends, that is, to be a 'relational self' rather than an 'individual self'. Facebook intensifies this tension because although it is a friendship forum, it is configured at an individual level around personal profiles, posts and photos.

Discussions with friends talking together was a fruitful method to gain insight into constructions of everyday friendship and Facebook use. However, this approach may have suppressed other sense-making that sits outside friendship group co-constructions. Individual personal accounts and exploration of individuals' online social networking activities may provide further insights not able to be voiced in group discussions. Future research could also

usefully explore meanings of friendship and social networking across diverse socio-cultural groups (e.g. ethnicity, class) where the Western view that friendship is a 'pure relationship' based on individual choice may not hold (Caine, 2009). The current small exploratory study with young (mainly NZ European) adult friends in New Zealand has generated some preliminary insights into these topics that are worth further investigation in other contexts.

In conclusion, a continuous connection to a hyper-visual and instantaneous friendship community, coupled with the requirement for authentic friendship, means more intensive friendship work for young adults. The system 'reaches out' with 'always on' friend activities, calling for responses 24/7, and a 'real' friend is always there to respond. Notably, Facebook allows commercial enterprises to participate as 'friends' (branded pages that may be 'liked') in friendship networks and these are also powerful as identity markers (Hearn, 2008). Future work could usefully explore ways in which friendships, SNS affordances, and discourses of authenticity and identity within these contexts may be re-shaping young people's social lives.

### **Research reflections: Friendship and social networking**

This first set of findings addressed my first research question, namely how do young adults construct their friendship meanings and practices, and how do they construct SNS affordances in relation to their friendship practices. The participants made sense of friendship through discourses of 'social pleasure', 'time and effort', 'have my back' and 'let me be myself'. I derived these friendship meanings inductively by discursively analysing their talk (within and across the transcripts) about their everyday social lives together. This finding was a basis for me to understand how they constituted friendship as a social practice across social contexts such as attending work and educational settings, watching movies, playing sport, talking, socialising at parties, going on holidays and generally just 'hanging out' together. At this point in my analysis the participants' friendship discourses were not related to particular social contexts; rather they gave me an orientation to their understandings of friendship within their everyday socialising. With this basis in place, my next step was to explore their friendship understandings more specifically within key areas of their socialising – their social networking and their drinking practices.

While I recognised that these two social domains intersect (e.g. Facebook is used to plan, 'broadcast' and re-live their drinking), I decided to focus on them separately at first in order to gain a more systematic view of ways friendship was constructed within each context. I therefore extended my analytic focus to participants' constructions of friendship in relation to their social networking. These findings showed how participants' brought their friendship discourses to their uses of Facebook, and how Facebook, as a system of technological affordances engaged with their friendship practices through response, privacy, boundary and

identity work; new forms of friendship practices. These were significant insights gained from my decision to focus on friendship and social networking through the lens of appropriation (Dourish, 2001) whereby social practices develop around technologies and technologies are adapted and incorporated into social practices.

This first set of findings demonstrated that participants' constructions of friendship were reinforced, disrupted and challenged by uses of SNSs and this led me to question whether the context of drinking would show similar findings. For instance, would the friendship discourses be relevant in this context and/or would other friendship meanings and practices be drawn on? My focus therefore now shifted to how participants constructed friendship in relation to their drinking. My analytic approach here was similar to my initial 'appropriation' focus for friendship and social networking. I aimed to explore ways in which young adults constructed their drinking practices within discussions with their friends; ways they appropriate drinking into their friendship practices, and the power relations involved when a societal drinking culture engages with their friendship practices. This was the context for my second research aim - to explore young adults' friendship meanings and practices in relation to their drinking - which is reported in the next chapter.

## Chapter 5

### Young adults' meanings of drinking as a friendship practice<sup>2</sup>

This chapter is a manuscript that addresses the second aim of this research which was to explore young adults' shared friendship meanings and practices in relation to their drinking practices. These findings are based on data analysed from the friendship group discussions. The analytic focus here shifts from meanings of friendship and social networking (Chapter 4) to meanings of friendship and drinking.

**'Everyone can loosen up and get a bit of a buzz on': Young adults, alcohol and friendship practices.**

#### Abstract

In countries with liberalised alcohol policies alcohol harm reduction strategies predominantly focus on young adults' excessive drinking harms and risks. However, research shows such risks are largely irrelevant for young adults, who emphasise the sociability, release, pleasure and fun of drinking. Friendship is a central part of their lives and an integral part of their drinking experiences. This study aimed to explore everyday friendship practices, drinking, and pleasure in young people's routine and shared social lives. Twelve friendship discussion groups were conducted in urban and non-urban New Zealand, with 26 women and 25 men aged 18-25 years. Our Foucauldian discursive analysis enabled us to identify how the young adults drew on drinking as 'friendship fun' and 'friends with a buzz' discourses to construct drinking as a pleasurable and socially embodied friendship practice. Yet the young adults also drew on 'good always outweighs bad experiences' and friendship 'caring and protection' discourses to smooth over disruptive negative drinking experiences. Together these discourses function to justify young adults' drinking as friendship pleasure, minimising alcohol harms, and setting up powerful resistances to individualised risk-based alcohol-harm reduction campaigns. These findings are discussed in terms of new insights and implications for alcohol harm reduction strategies that target young adults.

#### Introduction

Alcohol harm reduction strategies have become increasingly important in Western and European countries with thriving city night life economies and liberalised alcohol policies.

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These government initiated strategies encourage citizens to drink responsibly and minimize alcohol-related harms. Young adults have increasingly been the target group for these campaigns as they have been identified globally as a group of people who drink excessive alcohol amounts most often (Babor et al., 2010), and have the most alcohol-related harms (Rehm et al., 2009).

A dominant strategy for alcohol harm reduction defines ‘units of alcohol exceeded’ as the biomedical measure of harmful drinking alongside an ethos of individual accountability to protect personal health and welfare by not drinking to excess (Jayne, Valentine, & Holloway, 2011). Alcohol health campaigns for young people reflect this dominant strategy with their focus on excessive or binge-drinking risks (particularly female vulnerabilities) and the assumption that mobilizing “an appropriate level of regret among individuals will lead to greater mindfulness and responsible behaviour” (Brown & Gregg, 2012, p.357). Yet Heath’s (2000) 40 year international cross-cultural drinking research finds that overall “most people drink for pleasure” and associate drinking with “friendship, good times, sociability, hospitality, and celebration” while being aware of problems of excessive drinking (p.193).

Similarly, qualitative research in Brazil, China, Italy, Nigeria, Russia, South Africa, and Scotland revealed that although young people acknowledged the negative consequences of extreme drinking, they were powerfully motivated to drink to ‘have fun’ – which involved being sociable, meeting people, feeling good, and enjoying drunkenness (Martinic & Measham, 2008). This growing body of research demonstrates when young adults talk about their drinking they emphasise the sociability, release, pleasure and fun they have drinking together (Lyons & Willott, 2008; Sheehan & Ridge, 2001; Szmigin, Bengry-Howell, Griffin, Hackley, & Mistral, 2011). Further, they claim drinking is a learned experience (Harrison, Kelly, Lindsay, Advocat, & Hickey, 2011), a highly sociable rather than an individual activity (Guise & Gill, 2007), and risk-based alcohol harm messages are largely irrelevant to them (Hutton, 2012).

Alcohol harm reduction strategies may be unrealistic and ineffective because they do not recognise the pleasure and sociability involved in young adults’ drinking practices (Duff, 2008; Fry, 2011). It would be valuable therefore to further explore young adults’ drinking as a shared *social* practice that is pleasurable and undertaken within friendships. Previous research focusing on friendship and drinking suggests young adults’ drinking is linked closely to the intimacy of bonding with friends in the fun and adventures of nights out together ( e.g. Lyons & Willott, 2008; ; Tutenges, 2012; Vander Ven, 2011; Waitt, Jessop, & Gorman-Murray, 2011; Workman, 2011). To investigate friendship dynamics within drinking may therefore be a useful focus to inform alcohol harm reduction strategies, ensuring they are relevant to young adults’ everyday social worlds.

Drinking alcohol is “essentially a social act”; its meanings inhere within different socio-cultural contexts as rituals that mark out work and leisure time, identity and status, boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, and shared communality (Douglas, 1987, p.4). Turner (1995) captured shared communality as ‘*communitas*’, a spontaneous human bonding “richly charged with affects, mainly pleasurable ones”, that evolves when people are together outside everyday social responsibilities and routines (p.139). The ‘pleasurable’ experiences of drinking can therefore be understood as “both a cosmic initiation (loss of self) and an erotic initiation (collective aggregation)” (Maffesoli, 1982, p.188). Maffesoli’s construction of peoples’ social life as fluid and coalescing in shared affective experiences, particularly through hedonistic pleasures, aligns young adults’ drinking as pleasures with friends.

Qualitative research on meanings of alcohol use for young people shows their drinking is fundamentally about pleasure. This pleasure involves fun, enjoyment, feeling good, relaxing, having a good time, a good laugh, and being sociable (Fry, 2011; Guise & Gill, 2007; Lyons & Willott, 2008; Sheehan & Ridge, 2001). Notably, pleasure is *social*, involving friends planning and getting ready for a night out (MacNeela & Bredin, 2011; Szmigin et al., 2008) and experiencing the bodily pleasure of being drunk, which stimulates a collective sense of fun of socialising together (Fry, 2011). There are also shared embodied contextual pleasures, the corporeal experience of space – ‘feeling’ the music in a large night club space – and performative practices such as dancing together (Duff, 2008). In these social spaces the bodily pleasure of consuming alcohol lies in the sociality it induces: inhibitions are loosened, sexual desire heightened, social boundaries lowered and attractive strangers are approached; it is emotionally liberating (Jayne, Valentine, & Holloway, 2010). These embodied pleasures are evident in young Danish adults’ holiday drunken and sexual adventures where they are moved “far beyond the mundane and into states of abandon and memorable excess” (Tutenges, 2012, p.147). Afterwards pleasure is continued in jointly told narratives of entertaining adventures (Workman, 2009) with laughter and happy memories shared among friends (Lyons & Willott, 2008). Together this research suggests young adults’ drinking is largely about friendship and pleasure, and these deserve further investigation.

Some research highlights how friendship dynamics are important in young people’s drinking practices. In their interviews with homeless young Canadian adults Foster and Spencer (2013) found “trust and intimacy, belonging and sharing” were central to friends’ drinking and drug practices, rather than subculture peer pressures (p.1). Vander Ven’s (2011) seven year exploratory study of US college students’ drinking behaviour shifts us towards understanding young adults’ drinking as a friendship practice. Drinking was found to be a collective practice rather than an individual experience, and college students’ written drinking stories showed ways they *do friendship* when drinking. Their ‘drunk world’ stories revealed friends looked after

drunk sick friends and when others threatened violence. Vander Ven (2011) also found 'drunk support' occurred after drinking events when young adults humorously re-cast drinking stories to protect friends' self-integrity. This finding is consistent with young Norwegian adults' drinking stories sessions where friends' teasing transformed negative feelings to positive ones (Fjaer, 2012). Szmigin and colleagues (2008) explored young UK adults' sense-making of drinking and found that while the objective is to have fun there is an awareness things may go wrong and being with 'trustworthy friends' is important (Szmigin et al., 2008, p.364). This also involves caring and protection with one sober friend responsible for diffusing any physical and social troubles (Szmigin et al., 2011), as well as friends looking after each other when they lose consciousness (Griffin, Bengry-Howell, Hackley, Mistral & Szmigin, 2009). Young female friends in Australia also took turns to look after each other when drinking (Sheehan & Ridge, 2001), while female students in Ireland helped friends get home when drunk (MacNeela & Bredin, 2011) and young Danish students also cared for drunk sick friends (Frederiksen, Bakke, & Dalum, 2012).

This *doing friendship* within young adults drinking practices deserves greater exploration, especially given the saturation of alcohol marketing in young people's social worlds. Alcohol enterprises market alcohol to young adults through the social context of fun and support of friends (Szmigin et al., 2011) and they embed branded alcohol products as 'friends' into young adults' social networking friendship activities on sites such as Facebook (Hebden, 2012; McCreanor et al., 2013; Nicholls, 2012). Addressing drinking alcohol as an integral part of friendship may be more relevant and meaningful to young adults than addressing an individual's 'units' of alcohol consumed, as seen in 'binge-drinking' campaigns that target individual drinking behaviours as excessive.

The current study explores everyday friendship practices, drinking, and pleasure in young New Zealand adults' routine and shared social lives. New Zealand's drinking culture is similar to Britain's liberalised alcohol-based leisure lifestyle (McEwan, Campbell, & Swain, 2010) and excessive drinking and its harms are at the forefront of the New Zealand government's recent review of alcohol laws (New Zealand Law Commission, 2010). The New Zealand Sale of Liquor Act (1989) liberalised alcohol sale locations, licensing hours, drinking venues and alcohol marketing. The drinking age was later lowered from 20 years to 18 years in the late 1990s. From the late 1990s up to 2004, drinking quantities for all New Zealanders (14-65 years) has increased. Young adult women (18-24 years) are included in the increasingly heavier consumption group and young adult men (18-29 years) continue to be the heaviest consumers in the population (Huckle, You, & Casswell, 2011).

## **Method**

This study is situated within social constructionism, an approach which queries our taken-for-granted knowledge (Moghaddam, 2005) and views social reality as collectively constructed by people largely through language in particular socio-historical locations (Burr, 2003). Language as a social tool is used purposively to create shared meanings and it is the medium through which we enter into these shared realities (Bruner, 1990). Friendship is viewed as a social practice, a relationship that derives its meaning from people's shared activities and shared interpretations within an already socially constituted world (Schutz, 1967). To explore young adults' meanings around drinking pleasure and friendship we asked young adults in New Zealand to talk about these aspects of their everyday lives within existing friendship groups. Their language provides insight and understandings into their sense-making of friendship and drinking practices. Ethical approval for this study was obtained through the Institution's Human Ethics Committee.

### ***Procedure***

Participants were recruited through word-of-mouth and snowballing techniques. The research team approached friends to suggest potential contacts and people were approached in workplaces such as cafes. As we sought existing friendship groups, one member of a group was contacted and asked their friends to participate. Friends of the contact were given study details; all had the opportunity to ask questions about the research and were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Once a minimum of three friends in a group agreed to participate, a suitable time and place were arranged based on participants' preferences. Eight friendship group discussions took place at a group member's home while four were conducted at a quiet room at the university. Friendship discussions were facilitated by PN (female and older than the participants) using exploratory open-ended questions to prompt general discussion. Questions referred to friendship and socialising (history, good times, bad times) and drinking (types, amounts, activities). Discussions lasted between one and two hours and were video and voice recorded with permission. A benefit of friendship groups is that participants' familiarity and rapport may allow them to converse more easily and informally in a relaxed social setting close to their everyday experiences (Crossley, 2002; Lyons & Willott, 2008).

### ***Friendship Groups and Participants***

Twelve friendship group discussions were conducted, with a total of 51 participants aged between 18 and 25 years (26 females; mean age 20.2 years). Details of groups and participants are provided in Table 1 (p.46). Participants were diverse in their occupations, education and relationship status. Their geographic locations ranged across, small towns, towns, cities and

major cities in New Zealand. All participants were of New Zealand European ethnicity (77% of NZ population) except one Maori (15% of NZ population) male, and one female who originated from South Africa. Participants' socio-economic status (SES) rankings ranged from SES-1 (highest) to SES-5 (lowest) based on occupational income groupings and students and unemployed people ranked by educational qualification (Galbraith, Jenkin, Davis, & Coope, 2003). Although not explicitly asked about sexuality, most participants appeared to be heterosexual while one couple identified as lesbian, two females identified as bi-sexual and one male identified as gay. Friendship durations ranged from many years (from childhood) to a few months and years (from meeting mainly through work and education venues).

### ***Analytic Procedure***

Video files were employed to transcribe the participants' talk verbatim. Video files allowed access to non-verbal forms of communication (e.g. hand-waving, gesturing) which were also transcribed where relevant to the talk. Additionally, the talk within the groups was fast, and participants had a lot to say. There were lots of interruptions, friends completing each other's sentences, talking over the top of each other, and laughter. Video files assisted in transcribing these intricate conversations.

PN led a Foucauldian discourse analysis (Foucault, 2010, pp.106-117; Willig, 2001, pp.106-123) of the transcripts. A preliminary semantic coding stage was undertaken where common words and phrases were highlighted across and within all transcripts. This coding was then discussed within the research team to identify friendship and drinking themes (e.g. the 'protection' participants talked about in various drinking activities). The next stage involved discursively analysing the themes. Here we focussed on identifying 'discourses'; a discourse is located at the level of language statements and comprises ways we use language to construct social concepts and objects (e.g. 'friendship'), subject positions (ways to think or feel), and our 'ways of doing', our practices (Willig, 2001). This allowed a focus on how language is used to produce meaning and the implications of these meanings for our subjectivities, ways of thinking and feeling, and available choices and actions. In addition, subject positioning and available practices are viewed as forms of power relationships because they can be prescribed, suppressed, limited, taken up or resisted depending on wider dominant - more powerful - socio-political discourses. Our discursive analysis focussed on consensus, tensions, inconsistencies, and positionings (e.g. 'protector') in the participants' talk. We had ongoing analysis sessions in which tentative discourses were discussed, refined, abandoned, and introduced.

## Findings

In their discussions and story-telling of their drinking experiences the participants drew on four discourses to construct their drinking as a friendship practice. The ‘friendship fun’ and ‘friends with a buzz’ discourses were drawn on to construct drinking as a pleasurable friendship practice. Alongside this, negative drinking experiences were constructed through the use of a ‘bad but good overall’ discourse (good experiences always outweigh bad experiences) as well as a friendship ‘caring and protection’ discourse. Together, these discourses functioned to explain and justify drinking as a pleasurable friendship practice and smooth over any disruptive negative drinking experiences. These four discourses are described individually below.

### ‘Drinking as friendship fun’

The participants drew on a ‘friendship fun’ discourse to construct their drinking as a pleasurable friendship practice, and to justify their drinking and drunkenness as everyday pleasurable socialising for friends. This discourse constructed drinking as an inherently social pleasure, rather than an individual experience, and friendship is key to this pleasure. Drinking was predominantly constructed as ‘friends’ having ‘fun’ and friends were positioned not as ‘individuals’ or as ‘people drinking alcohol’ but as members of a group bound by friendship:

Pam ...The best thing is when it's a group and it's your closest like closest friends and it's just so fun cause you don't have to worry about what anyone thinks. You feel totally safe and like in saying that it's also fun when you go to parties and you don't know anyone and you have a really good night with randoms. But like yeah that's the coolest time I reckon.

(FG6)

To explain what she enjoys about drinking Pam constructs her drinking as a pleasurable friendship practice. Her account of drinking enjoyment does not focus on the alcohol consumed, and although drinking is fun with non-friends (‘randoms’) the pleasure is linked to having fun with her closest friends. Pam also links pleasure with feeling protected and being herself, not worrying ‘what anyone thinks’, suggesting drinking and being drunk involves vulnerabilities as well as fun. The ‘fun’ of friends and drinking was co-constructed by participants as an ongoing flow of fun social activities throughout a night out. These activities included getting ready together and drinking (pre-loading), then going out and talking, singing, playing games, dress-ups, dancing, hook ups (sexual liaisons), and afterwards sharing stories in person and through Facebook photo sharing activities:

Beth Yeah so she'll be waiting for me to get ready so she might like do you want a glass of wine. I'm like yep... so it's just like you kind of have your. You get your night started...there's a flow on effect...

(FG12)

Tara: And we had the whole floor at the Lotus pumping because we were just this big circle {makes circle with her arms} and then everyone else in the background were just covering us trying to get into the circle. So it was real cool.

Dylan Yeah. So we felt real cool. Yeah I just remember looking at my sisters and seeing how happy it was.

(FG3)

Dave ... there's some pretty good fun stories. Like your mates come out on like a Saturday night. You know like the next day you've sort of got those stories=

Alex =Sunday morning yarn is a good one {laughs}.

(FG5)

PN And okay so you upload the photos on Sunday?

Emily Oh yeah Sunday.

Anna Where are the pictures? Where are the pictures? {typing motion with hands} {all laugh}.

(FG9)

These excerpts demonstrate drinking is co-constructed by friends as a flow of fun social activities rather than drinking alcohol per se. Beth explains you drink at home with friends to start the night and there is a 'flow on effect' to being out. When they are out, Dylan and Tara dance with a 'big circle' of female friends. Dave and Alex look forward to stories the next day and Anna and Emily eagerly await Facebook photos of nights out. This pleasurable flow of friendship activities suggests that being drunk is interpreted as normalised social fun with friends, rather than as extreme drinking (see Martinic and Measham, 2008). People who do not drink or get drunk alone were constructed negatively:

Evan But we probably don't get drunk by ourselves or like cry or something {all laugh and a chorus of 'no!'}

Brad Got a problem if you do aye? {all laugh loudly}...

Carla ...For people with no friends.

(FG10)

To drink alone was unanimously constructed in derisive and negative terms as a ‘problem’ to be avoided and ‘for people with no friends’. This positions a lone drinker as a person with problems and more importantly, a person with no friends. The participants strongly resisted this positioning in their derision and humour (laughing, joking and loud choruses of ‘no!’) and instead positioned themselves as sociable – friends - drinkers only. This positioning legitimates drinking as a fun friendship practice and renders drinking and getting drunk alone as a negative, friendless and illegitimate activity. Friends who do not stay together when sharing drinking fun were also positioned negatively:

Jack =Mark is the worst. He's the worst.

Alex =Mark always bounces. Mark goes home way too early. Bit of a puss.

Mark Yeah.

Jack Mark is the worst.

(FG7)

Here Mark is positioned as the ‘worst’ of his friends for leaving the group and going home. Such positioning renders friends responsible for the group’s fun, obligated to be sociable, present and accountable during their drinking. It also encourages greater drinking, as to go home early is to stop drinking, suggesting a powerful friendship incentive to continue to consume alcohol. Drinking here is strongly sanctioned as friendship fun only, engendering powerful resistances to ‘individual’ negative alcohol-harm messages. This ‘social’ construction of drinking as a friendship practice was reinforced further when participants linked physical sensations of being drunk (the ‘buzz’) with the sociality of being with friends.

### **‘Friends with a buzz’**

The participants consistently constructed the physical sensation of being drunk as being ‘happy’ and having a ‘buzz’. Yet rather than an *individual* experience, the pleasurable ‘buzz’ was explicitly constructed as involving and requiring friends. Being with friends and having fun was not quite enough to generate this ‘buzz’, rather it came from consuming alcohol and drinking together, as the following quotes demonstrate:

Sam Yeah it kind of. It takes the edge off socialising cause often even good friends can still occasionally be not quite {pause} connected. So alcohol is social and it makes it easier=.

(FG8)

Ian ... you can sit around and chat and catch up um sober. Of an evening. Or you can have a few drinks and everyone can loosen up and get a bit of a buzz on and things can take a different turn and different flow and that...

(FG12)

These excerpts demonstrate the overall shared understanding that drinking alcohol *adds* to the pleasure of friends socialising together. Sam states that friends socialising may not be 'connected' while in the second excerpt Ian explains that with alcohol 'things can take a different turn' when everyone has their 'buzz on'. The way in which the 'buzz' is constructed here suggests the physical sensation of being drunk is interpreted as a shared social feeling among friends rather than an individual physical sensation. This construction justifies being physically drunk (the 'buzz') as a friendship activity and minimizes physical alcohol effects. The importance of 'friends with a buzz' was further demonstrated in common assertions that not sharing this 'buzz' from consuming alcohol with friends made people feel alone when they were with friends who were drinking:

Evan It's like being at a party where everyone's drinking and you're the one person not drinking and instead you're just {laughs and shakes head} by yourself really you know.

(FG10)

Beth ...oh it was hard because people would be like do you guys want to meet us at the pub for a beer? And it doesn't seem as fun sitting there drinking an orange juice than it does drinking a lemon lime and Vodka. Like {pause} I know it sounds silly but I think it's also cause you get that tiny bit of a buzz from alcohol.

(FG12)

Here participants construct drinking alcohol not just as drug consumption, a physical sensation, but as a pleasurable friendship activity. When friends are together socially at a party, as Evan admits in the first excerpt, people not drinking feel left out of the fun. In the second excerpt Beth is at the pub with her friends but without the 'buzz' sensation of being drunk. This suggests drinking alcohol adds to friends' social activities in a way that *requires* everyone to share the 'buzz' from alcohol to have the sociable fun. Drinking alcohol is thus constructed as inextricably linked to socialising with friends because to be without alcohol is to feel alone among friends. Friends therefore are positioned as *together* sharing the sensation of alcohol, but *alone* when with friends but not drinking alcohol, outside the friendship fun experience. In this

discourse, alcohol consumption is a *required* feature for friendship fun, and it is not surprising that alcohol companies reinforce such understandings in their marketing.

### **‘Bad but good overall’**

As the friendship groups recounted their drinking stories they frequently contradicted their constructions of drinking as a pleasurable friendship practice, as they also recounted many and varied negative drinking experiences. However, these ‘bad’ experiences were always constructed as part of an overall ‘good’ drinking experience. This ‘bad but good overall’ drinking construction is demonstrated in the following excerpt where friends had just previously claimed they did not have ‘bad nights’ as a group:

Brad He came home with a {pause} bruised eye one day. Yeah.

Adam Oh yeah that guy aye?

Carla That's just=

Evan =But that wasn't a bad night in town cause I didn't even realise {Carla laughs} I had a great night. I came home at four a.m.

(FG10)

Here Evan is punched in the face while in a nightclub but he ‘had a great night’, minimizing his negative violent experience. He also minimises himself being drunk by asserting he ‘didn’t even realise’ it happened while he was out drinking. This ‘bad but good overall’ construction of negative drinking experiences was common for other negative experiences such as hangovers, drunk hook ups and being drunk sick:

Pam Bad is all being hungover.

Eva That's usually the sign of a good night! {everyone laughs}.

(FG6)

Chris And [shakes head] I dunno I just don't do that {everyone laughs}. So yeah. And um {pause} Yeah. Nah {shakes head} bad experience that one [a drunk hookup]. Um but nah it was it was still a good night.

(FG5)

Carly Yeah. Vomited so much it's an art form. Now I can do it with my. Like I think this is bad but also good at the same time.

PN Yep.

Carly Um but been drinking for so long we've got so used to vomiting we can look after ourselves.

(FG9)

As these excerpts demonstrate, negative experiences such as Eva's hangovers, Chris's drunk hook-up, and Carly and her friends' vomiting are all 'bad but also good'. This 'bad but good overall' construction of drinking experiences suggests a strong imperative for drinking with friends to be pleasurable despite negative experiences. This imperative that drinking with friends can be 'bad' but is 'good' overall was evident in participants' drinking advice to balance positive and negative drinking effects:

Evan Yeah. Gotta find good balance. Gotta find a good balance.

(FG10)

Ian ... So it's being able to get the balance just right and remembering that as you are drinking.

(FG12)

Alex ...Just make sure you have a mediocre time [Jack smiles] Keep it. Keep it balanced with everything else you do and still have fun.

(FG7)

Here Evan and Ian advise finding a good balance, and Alex advises to 'keep it balanced' to maintain drinking 'fun'. This construction suggests a balancing act takes place when friends drink together and experience the 'good' and 'bad'. Negative experiences are justified because 'good' experiences always outweigh 'bad' experiences to balance out drinking as a good night overall. This discourse functions to minimize when things go wrong – the other side of pleasure - and therefore justifies the negative effects of alcohol consumption.

For all participants, the important aspect of the balancing act was not attributed to the traditional negative effects of alcohol, such as health and welfare risks. Rather, the important balance was the risks to drinking as a pleasurable friendship practice. This is shown in Carla's advice below:

Carla Be at your happy level whatever that is. And don't be that don't become that person that everyone has to take care of or clean up the spew of or try to pick off the ground or put in a taxi or stuff like that.

(FG10)

Carla reflects the shared tensions in drinking as a friendship practice. Her balancing advice is to 'be at your happy level' but at the same time 'don't become the person everyone has to take care of'. These tensions in negative drinking experiences were predominantly constructed through participants' friendship practices to care for and protect each other when drinking together.

### **'Caring and protection'**

The participants drew on a discourse of friendship 'caring and protection' when co-constructing accounts of their drinking. This discourse functions to smooth over the tensions of alcohol harms by privileging drinking to intoxication as friendship caring and protection. Friends' responsibilities to care for and protect each other when drinking together was evident in a deliberate positioning of the 'good friend' when negative experiences were encountered:

Carly ...so I was bawling my eyes out and then Gina slipped over in the bath and so she was crying and then Jane started crying because Gina was crying and then. It was just. It was an awful night for me. I hated it. Worst birthday ever {laughs}...

Emily ...But then all the girls stuck around and cleaned {all say 'yeah'}. It was the funniest thing to watch because like you know because like when you're at a party everyone's in like yeah nice dresses. Like high heels. And everyone took their heels off and were like hands and knees scrubbing the floor.

(FG9)

Carly's account of her birthday party in this excerpt was preceded by an account of drunk fighting that upset everyone prior to Gina falling in the bath and everyone becoming upset. Here Carly has her 'worst birthday ever' yet her friends focus on how they all helped her to clean up the mess and this was the 'funniest thing' because they were at a party dressed up yet 'scrubbing the floor'. This discourse reinforces the 'bad but good overall' discourse, with events reconstrued as bad but good overall, minimising and smoothing out harmful drunk violence and amplifying drinking pleasure. In this way even 'bad' experiences are constructed in retrospect as pleasurable; as friends caring and protecting each other and having fun. Positioning friends as 'carers' and 'protectors' was evident for all participants, particularly when discussing being drunk sick:

Gina Like you know drinking is serious business and I'm like trying to look after Anna and this guy's trying to get with Anna... and I'm like dude she's puking in a bin. Bugger off {Anna laughs}. (FG8).

Jack ...Alex started vomiting outside and I was holding his hand and giving him hugs and stuff and I started to get sick as well... So we had this little vomiting duet {Alex smiles and Mark laughs} and then after that we decided oh nah let's get to town boys.

(FG7).

Here Anna and Alex are each positioned as needing care because they are 'puking' and 'vomiting' and their friends are positioned as the protector - Gina tells a predatory male to 'bugger off' - and the carer - Jack comforts Alex and then joins in with him, as a friend, in a 'vomiting duet'. Anna and Alex vomit and puke because of excessive drinking, yet simultaneously friendship caring and protection are privileged as the good overall. This positioning engenders powerful feelings around friendship caring and protection, and consequently that vomiting – an alcohol-harm - is minimised. A key message here for alcohol-harm reduction strategies is that physical alcohol 'harms' go beyond individual bodily effects to shared meanings of 'caring and protection' within the context of drinking as a friendship practice.

However, there were tensions and resistances in friendship caring and protection. These tensions and resistances threatened *friendship* rather than *drinking behaviours*, further revealing the powerful way in which drinking as a friendship practice minimises alcohol-related harms. A dominant tension in the friendship practice of caring was when the 'carer' (male and female) resented and resisted this positioning:

Gina But I'm sick of like yeah I personally drink now cause I was sick of getting puked on and people not remembering it the next day. I'm like you know I'm looking after you guys and I want to puke on you. Revenge! {laughs}.

(FG8)

Andy Yeah but you gotta do it because that's the thing. You look after them. You know they'd look after you. So you do it you know. I got some mates that I'm like nah fucken sort your shit out man I'm walking. I'm going. I'm out. You know because I know they wouldn't do the same. So why should I help them you know? But I'm not really like that. I would actually help them...

(FG11)

Here Gina is tired of 'looking after' her drunk friends, and she now resists this caring position and personally drinks for her own drinking pleasure. Andy is less forthright and definite as he swings between doing the right thing – 'you gotta do it' – of looking after his friends while

resenting friends who would not look after him. Yet overall he ‘would actually help them’ suggesting a strong friendship caring imperative despite tensions raised for personal drinking pleasure. A justification for this strong friendship imperative while drinking is suggested by the threat of losing friends:

PN     Okay. So do you think that there are any bad consequences for your hard nights out?

Mark   Oh you could die.

Alex   {Scoffs} You can't die. Oh you can die but there's heaps of other bad consequences that are gonna happen way more likely than you dying. You're gonna lose friends in situations. You're gonna. You're gonna you know if it's gonna affect=

Mark   =Relationships with girls.

(FG7)

For these young men their assertions they can ‘die’ as a negative consequence of excessive drinking relates to their earlier stories of ‘hard’ drinking yet here the ultimate harm of drinking alcohol – dying – is minimized by the importance of not over-stepping friendship boundaries, of being too drunk to *do friendship*. Friends are positioned as responsible to not demand excessive care and protection as this undermines friendship, in particular friends’ drinking fun. Friendship caring and protection therefore is a primary safeguard for drunk vulnerabilities but it also involves sanctions that safeguard friendships.

## **Discussion and Implications**

Our findings demonstrate how young adults drew on ‘friendship fun’ and ‘friends with a buzz’ discourses to construct their understandings of friendship and drinking as a pleasurable friendship practice. Yet they also reframed negative drinking experiences by employing two further discourses, namely ‘bad but good overall’ and friendship ‘caring and protection’. Together, these discourses function to explain and justify drinking as a pleasurable friendship practice, smoothing over tensions or negative experiences and minimising alcohol-related harms. Our findings suggest that a focus on friendship dynamics in young adults’ drinking may improve the relevance of alcohol health campaigns. Two key approaches evident from our findings are: to challenge young adults’ collective constructions of drinking as always friendship pleasure; and to foreground friendship tensions when they drink. These two approaches firstly need to be grounded in young adults’ friendship practices and the sociality (‘social buzz’) context of their drinking.

Consistent with previous research (e.g. Fry, 2011; MacNeela & Bredin, 2011; Szmigin et al., 2008, Tutenges, 2012), the pleasure of drinking was first and foremost about being with friends. Our participants' constructions of drinking as feeling safe and secure and free to be themselves is consistent with the friendship dynamics of homeless young Canadian adults drinking practices (Foster & Spencer, 2013, p.1). Further, friends sharing fun social activities also required a shared 'buzz' and to drink alone was for people without friends, reinforcing this drinking sociality. It is argued that new ways of conceptualising pleasure through the "dynamics of *space, embodiment and practice*" (Duff, 2008, p.384, italics in original) and understanding how personal and collective experiences work with drinking as shifting emotions, bodily sensations and affective experiences (Jayne et al., 2010) has much to offer policy and popular debates. For our participants, when friends did not share the alcohol induced 'buzz' (through not drinking or drinking smaller quantities) they felt left out, demonstrating friendship practices are central to their embodied and affective drinking experiences, and a powerful prescription to consume alcohol.

However, as Race (2008) argues, recognition of alcohol pleasures does not mean that alcohol health campaigns need only identify and classify them to control them. Rather they need to engage with drinking pleasures in ways that encourage both pleasure and safety. Our findings suggest alcohol health campaigns may do this by challenging young adults' collective constructions of drinking as always friendship pleasure and by foregrounding their friendship tensions when they drink.

Our participants also constructed drinking as negative experiences that were 'bad' but part of an overall 'good' drinking experience, consistent with young Danish adults playing down negative experiences and promoting pleasure in their drinking stories (Tutenges, 2012). This discourse functioned to minimize things going wrong and justify drinking as always friendship fun. Fjaer (2012) argues that 'day after' drinking co-constructions also make the 'party collective' - friendship drinking adventures and positive emotions - endure. This 'party collective' is also evident in young US university students not sharing 'tragic' drinking stories because they would "bring everybody down" (Workman, 2001, p.442). The implication for alcohol health campaigns here is that young adults as friends explicitly work together to justify drinking fun, thereby minimizing alcohol harms. An alcohol health campaign in this context could challenge these constructions. A potential scenario is a group of friends together the day after drinking, humorously telling their drinking story - full of adventure and excitement - and re-casting negative events and the night as 'bad but good overall'.

Our participants gave advice to not become the friend who needed to be looked after when drinking. Here negative aspects of drinking threatened friendship, highlighting tensions for friends' drinking and socialising. Participants drew on a friendship 'caring and protection'

discourse to make sense of these tensions, consistent with previous research (e.g. Frederiksen et al., 2012; Szmigin et al., 2011; Vander Ven, 2011). However, for our participants if friends did not act in line with their role as ‘carer’ or ‘protector’, or if friends caused too much trouble and spoiled drinking fun, friendship loss was viewed as the ultimate negative outcome. These tensions and resistances threatened *friendship* rather than *drinking behaviours*, further revealing the powerful way friendship dynamics may minimise alcohol-related harms. A key message here for alcohol-harm reduction strategies is that tensions and resistances in friendship caring and protection may be worth harnessing for alcohol harm reduction campaigns. A New Zealand government funded youth drink driving campaign harnesses friendship caring dynamics and drinking pleasures. This ‘The Legend’ campaign (New Zealand Transport Agency, 2013), colloquially named ‘Ghost Chips’, depicts a young adult Maori male’s interior monologue as he seriously and humorously weighs up the consequences of telling his friend not to drunk drive. He doesn’t want to look ‘dumb’ yet he doesn’t want his friend to die because he will haunt him, offering him his ‘ghost chips’ every day. He decides he can risk looking stupid and tells his friend to ‘crash here’ (sleep over). This movie clip on Youtube has received almost 2.5 million views.

Our study employed friendship discussion groups, which were valuable in gaining further understandings of young adults’ drinking practices. This approach, however, may suppress more personal sense-making that sits outside friendship group co-constructions. Interviews with young adults about their friendships and drinking activities may reveal further insights unvoiced in group discussions. This approach is supported by findings that young adults do tell ‘tragic’ drinking stories in personal interviews (Tutenges and Rod, 2009). Exploring friendship practices and drinking across other cultural groups is another important focus for future research. Western friendship as an individual’s relationship of choice (Bell & Coleman, 1999; Caine, 2009) is challenged by views that friendship is shaped by constraints of class, gender, age and ethnicity (Dyson, 2010). This small exploratory study with young New Zealand European adult friends has generated some preliminary insights into young adults’ friendship dynamics and drinking, and implications for alcohol health campaigns, suggesting further investigation is warranted in this context in other countries and socio-cultural contexts. In conclusion, the current study demonstrated that young adults’ drinking pleasure is grounded in friendship practices of having fun and caring and protection. There are tensions and disruptions involved, but importantly these are seen to threaten *friendships* rather than *drinking behaviours*. The balancing act where drinking pleasure always outweighs bad experiences and friendship caring and protection, play a powerful role in minimizing negative drinking experiences. Together these discourses explain and justify young adults’ drinking and being drunk as a pleasurable friendship practice. Traditional harm-reduction messages target individual young adult drinkers to make the decision to reduce their alcohol consumption; the

current findings suggest that such messages are effectively asking young adults to *break* strong and highly-valued friendship bonds.

## **Research reflections: Friendship and drinking**

This second set of findings address my second research question, namely how do young adults construct friendship in relation to their drinking. These findings show that drinking is a highly valued friendship practice. To drink together for the participants was not constructed as an individual act of imbibing alcohol; rather it was constructed as an added ‘buzz’ to the pleasures of being together with friends. This is a subtle but significant insight because young adults’ drinking is predominantly viewed from the perspective of individual risk and responsibility. This view informs alcohol health initiatives whereas alcohol marketers align their products with young adults’ friendship socialising.

These findings also show that the ‘has my back’ friendship discourse as found in the previous chapter was highly integrated into drinking practices as protection from alcohol harms which in turn minimised these harms. The ‘bad but good overall’ discourse highlighted another context for the significant relationship between friendship and identity that was found in the previous chapter. To fit into friendship drinking fun as a successful social player (a positive social identity construction) was privileged more highly than suffering individual drinking harms. To compare these findings to the friendship and social networking findings, is to see that both these contexts are taken up for friendship as social pleasure; both raise tensions for friendship (e.g. SNS privacy invasions and drinking harms) that call upon ‘have my back’ friendship protection; and both require identity work because friendship was constructed as integral to sense of self and identity performances through social networking and drinking.

With this second set of findings in place, I now had two sets of findings that addressed my first two research questions. These findings together demonstrated meanings and practices of friendship within social networking and drinking and ways these contexts engage with friendship as a social practice; reinforcing pleasures, raising tensions, disrupting and challenging friendship. I was now positioned to explore the intersections of young adults’ friendships, social networking and drinking. The research questions here related to ways young adults constructed their friendships and drinking when SNSs are embedded in this practice. In particular, how do they construct their uses of SNSs within their drinking practices?

To explore these questions I made the decision to engage in semi-structured interviews with participants as they logged on and talked about their Facebook social networking. The move to use interviews was prompted by my awareness that friendship group dynamics may suppress personal sense-making. In addition, to conduct these interviews ‘in situ’ with participants *doing* their social networking on Facebook was important because of my

commitment to engage with them in their worlds rather than simply view their SNS content at face value as previous research has done. This next stage of my research addressed my third research aim – to explore young adults’ sense-making of their uses of SNSs within the context of their drinking and their friendships – and this is reported in the next chapter.



## Chapter 6

### Young adults' meanings of friendship, drinking and uses of SNSs<sup>3</sup>

This chapter forms the basis for a manuscript that addresses the third aim of this research which was to explore young adults' sense-making of their uses of SNSs within the context of their drinking and their friendships. These findings are based on data analysed from the Facebook go-along interviews. It is argued that this method is crucial to engage with young adults' as the producers of their SNS content. Further, these interviews were employed to explore more personal sense-making that may sit outside the friendship group discussion findings presented in Chapters 5 and 6.

#### **'See it doesn't look pretty does it?': Young adults' airbrushed drinking practices on Facebook**

##### **Abstract**

A range of negative health outcomes are associated with young adults' drinking practices. One key arena where images of, and interaction about, drinking practices occurs is social networking sites SNSs, particularly Facebook. This study investigated young adults' sense-making of SNSs in their drinking practices and what this may mean for their understandings of their drinking. To more fully engage with young adults' own perspectives, Facebook go-along interviews were conducted with seven male and female New Zealand young adults. Facebook photos were primary in participants' drinking practices. Our Foucauldian discursive analysis showed they drew on a 'friendship group belonging' discourse to construct drinking photos as reinforcing friendship group relationships. They also drew on a 'balanced self-display' discourse to justify particular kinds and amounts of drunken photos and an 'absences in positive photos' discourse when they discussed negative drinking events not displayed, but prompted by their 'positive' drinking photos. Together these discourses function to delimit socially 'appropriate' online drinking displays, effectively airbrushing young adults' drinking practices as always pleasurable and, for photos posted online, as without negative consequences. Implications are considered for understandings of young adults' drinking and key messages for alcohol health initiatives that seek to engage with young adults.

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<sup>3</sup> This chapter forms the basis of a manuscript which is to be revised and re-submitted for the journal of Psychology and Health as at 31 October 2013: "See it doesn't look pretty does it?": Young adults' airbrushed drinking practices on Facebook (refer DRC 16 in Appendix N).

## Introduction

Young adults have been globally identified as excessive drinkers (Babor et al., 2010) and while alcohol accounts for 4.6% of the global burden of disease, a third of this falls within the age range 15–29 years (Rehm et al. 2009). Young adults' heavier drinking is more prevalent in countries where liberalised alcohol policies allow greater access to alcohol (Chikritzhs, Allsop, Moodie, & Hall, 2010; Huckle, You, & Casswell 2012) and this has led to widespread concerns due to the short and long term health consequences of such drinking practices (Babor et al 2010).

Yet for young adults, their drinking is a highly sociable activity (e.g. Martinic & Measham, 2008; Niland, Lyons, Goodwin, & Hutton, 2013; Guise & Gill, 2007), and risk-based alcohol harm messages are largely irrelevant to them (Hutton, 2012). To gain greater insight into and understanding of their drinking practices it is important to obtain young adults' own perspectives within their everyday social worlds (Brown & Gregg, 2012; Fry, 2011; Jayne, Valentine, Holloway, 2010). One key social arena where young adults' drinking practices are apparent is on social networking sites (SNSs), particularly Facebook. The research in this area to date has centred on identifying alcohol content in young adults' SNS accounts, and examining its relationship to heavy drinking and peer practices, as we review below. However, young adults' own meanings and uses of SNSs around their drinking practices remains largely unexplored, particularly within the context of alcohol harm reduction strategies that seek to reduce health risks. Greater understanding may inform ways in which these strategies can align to young adults' everyday drinking practices.

The prevalence of young adults' SNS alcohol content has been examined through quantitative content analysis – predominantly in US college and university students' social networking accounts (Kolek & Saunders, 2008; Moreno et al., 2010; Morgan, Snelson, & Elison-Bowers, 2010; Peluchette & Karl, 2007). Positive references to alcohol and drinking were openly depicted in students' Facebook 'interests', groups and 'about me' sections and in photos of them partying and drinking alcohol (Kolek & Saunders, 2008). A wider content analysis of alcohol content (using search words "stoned, wasted, hammered, weed, drunk") in Facebook, MySpace and Youtube revealed young people frequently posted, viewed, commented and rated videos of themselves socialising and inebriated in social venues (Morgan et al., 2010). In addition, Morgan and colleagues (2010) reported that the majority of 314 US undergraduate university students perceived these alcohol-related postings positively and humorously as part of their own experience of social group membership. Social group membership was further emphasised by US undergraduate students who used privacy options to stop others - particularly employers - viewing their drinking or alcohol-related photos, posts and comments (Peluchette

and Karl, 2007). This prevalence of young adults' SNS alcohol content has led researchers to examine how it is implicated in drinking as a socially normative peer practice.

Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977; 1986), particularly the concept of modeling, is considered principally important for young adults because their developmental phase renders them more vulnerable to others' influences (Elkind & Bowen, 1979; Bell & Bromnick, 2003). Modeling, as applied to young adults' drinking, means their drinking behaviours are seen to be learned through peers' alcohol socialising (e.g. Sanders, Engels, Knibbe, & Meeus, 2007; Urberg, Degirmencioglu, & Pilgrim, 1997). Social learning theory has been employed to examine how peer generated SNS alcohol content may create social drinking norms (Lefkowitz, Patrick, Morgan, Bezemer, & Vasilenko, 2012; Ridout, Campbell & Ellis, 2012) and whether peer-modeling influences young adults to drink in particular ways (Litt & Stock, 2011; Stoddard, Bauermeister, Gordon-Messer, Johns, & Zimmerman, 2012). This latter question was particularly prompted by a concern that under-aged drinkers featured prominently in SNS alcohol content (Glassman, 2011; Peluchette & Karl, 2008).

The creation of social drinking norms through SNSs has been linked to US students' portrayals of themselves as 'drinkers' in their SNS identity displays (Ridout et al., 2012). These displays include their Facebook posts about where to drink (bars and clubs) and plans to get drunk together (Lefkowitz et al., 2012). In terms of peer modeled drinking, Litt and Stock (2011) presented Facebook 'older normative drinkers' and 'older non-drinker' profiles to adolescents (aged 13-15 years). Participants exposed only to the former profiles self-reported more positive attitudes to alcohol and lower perceived vulnerability to alcohol harms. In addition, US high school adolescents (15-16 years) whose close friends did not drink but whose friends posted alcohol content (drinking and partying) online, self-reported more susceptibility to drinking alcohol (Huang, et al., 2013).

Taken together, these findings show peer generated SNS alcohol content as a socially normative practice, and suggest it may influence drinking as a socially learned behaviour. This approach, however, has to date largely focussed on face-value readings of young adults' SNS alcohol content rather than the meanings they bring to it. To explore these meanings from young adults' own perspectives will give us greater insight into SNS alcohol content as a socially normative peer practice. Research exploring young people's own meanings of their drinking highlights that their drinking practices are pleasurable experiences they enjoy with friends (Duff, 2008; Fry, 2011; Hutton, 2012). Further, a growing body of qualitative research demonstrates when young adults talk about their drinking they emphasise the sociability, release, pleasure and fun they have in their everyday drinking practices (e.g. Lyons & Willott, 2008; Niland et al., 2013; Szmigin, Bengry-Howell, Griffin, Hackley, & Mistral, 2011). Yet we

currently know little about the meanings that young adults attach to their SNS activities within their drinking practices.

Some preliminary qualitative research demonstrates that SNSs are routinely used by friends to organise socialising and drinking, to post photos and other content while out drinking, and to share the fun and humour of photos after a night out drinking (Brown & Gregg, 2012; Hebden, 2012; Tonks, 2012). For a night out, Facebook status updates are used by young adult Australian women to share the ‘excitement’ of planning the event and the ‘peak’ of the night is routinely documented by live posts and photos which are shared by friends as ‘insider jokes’ the next day (Brown & Gregg, 2012, pp.10-11). For New Zealand university students these ‘in-jokes’ and ‘personalised knowledge’ are created through Facebook photos, tagging, commenting, and ‘liking’; perpetuating their fun times together when drinking (Tonks, 2012, p.85). Drinking photos in particular were of primary importance in New Zealand university students’ drinking stories, eliciting post-event discussion, and a photographer is routine and expected at social drinking events (Hebden, 2012). This preliminary research suggests that young adults’ uses of Facebook are entwined with their drinking practices. Yet there is scarce research that explores what young adults’ uses of SNSs in their drinking practices may mean for their understandings - and the dynamics - of their drinking.

The current study therefore aimed to further explore young adults’ sense-making of their uses of SNSs (Facebook) in their drinking practices. From a social constructionist perspective (Burr, 1995), this exploration focussed on young adults’ own perspectives – their meanings and practices – through ways they talked about Facebook activities and their drinking (in contrast to quantifying and analysing SNS alcohol content independently of the young adults who created it). To more fully engage with young adults within their Facebook practices, a go-along interview method (Kusenbach, 2003), was extended to social networking and employed in the current research.

## **Method**

### ***Methodological approach***

This study took a social constructionist approach - a perspective that queries our taken-for-granted knowledge (Moghaddam, 2005) and views social realities as collectively constructed by people through shared practices in particular socio-historical locations (Burr, 1995). Social realities are largely achieved through language, used as a social tool to purposively create and enter into shared meanings (Bruner, 1990). Language is used to make claims, blame, attribute, and justify our sense-making; to actively construct and legitimate our shared meanings, subjectivities and practices (Burr, 2003). The language used by young adults as they talk about drinking and their uses of Facebook therefore provides insights into these social arenas as

everyday social practices. Ethical approval for this study was obtained through the Institution's Human Ethics Committee.

### ***Study context***

Facebook is the dominant SNS for young New Zealand adults, and New Zealand ranks equally with America and Britain and 13 other countries on measures of internet access and types of usage (Bell, Crothers, Gibson, & Smith, 2012). The societal context for young adults' drinking practices in New Zealand is similar to Britain's liberalised alcohol-based leisure lifestyle (McEwan, Campbell, & Swain, 2010). Although the rate of young New Zealand adults' (18-24 years) hazardous drinking has decreased significantly from 2006/07 (49%) to 2011/12 (36%), both males (46%) and females (26%) continue to have a higher risk of negative social, physical and mental health drinking outcomes (New Zealand Ministry of Health, 2013).

### ***Facebook go-along interviews***

To explore young adults' meanings around drinking and their uses of Facebook, PN asked participants to go online to their Facebook accounts and show, and talk about, their everyday social networking and drinking practices. These Facebook tours were a form of go-along method used in qualitative mobilities research which embraces "how social entities comprise people, machines, and information/images in systems of movement" (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p.210). Young adults' social networking is ubiquitous – it may be accessed instantaneously, continuously, and seamlessly through computing devices and smart phones which are embedded in everyday physical and social spaces (Dourish & Bell, 2011). Some recent online SNS go-alongs have involved a researcher using exploratory interview questions and filming or screen recording a participant's activities and their talk on their MySpace or Facebook accounts. This type of SNS go-along research has investigated young adults' online identity constructions (Salimkhan, Manago and Greenfield, 2010) friendship behaviours (Davies, 2012) and drinking practices (Tonks, 2012).

As a method, the go-along, typically a 'walking' tour of informants' significant places has been shown to elicit rich data narratives stimulated by place compared to sedentary interviews (Evans & Jones, 2011; Hitchins & Jones, 2004). Interviews can be limited because they separate informants from everyday experiences and practices so the most routine lived experiences may remain invisible (Kusenbach, 2003). The go-along overcomes these disadvantages because researchers can observe informants' practices *in situ* and their interpretations of these experiences (Kusenbach, 2003, p.432). However, we recognise this method is limited in that it does not capture participants' day-to-day SNS usage. Further, this method works towards balancing researcher/participant power dynamics, encouraging a more

collaborative approach (Garcia, Eisenberg, Frerich, Lechner, & Lust, 2012). While our go-alongs were physically sedentary – we were seated in a room with a computer - the participants took PN with them on a tour of their ‘online’ space enabling elicitation of the meanings they attach to their Facebook content.

### ***Participants and Procedure***

Participants were recruited from a larger study involving focus group discussions to explore young adults’ friendships and drinking practices (Niland et al., 2013). Seven Facebook go-alongs were conducted, with 4 female and 3 male New Zealand European young adults aged between 18 and 25 years. While previous research has provided valuable insights into New Zealand university students’ SNS and drinking practices (Kypri, Langley, McGee, Saunders, & Williams, 2002; Kypri, Langley, & Stephenson, 2005), the current study also included the perspectives of young adults from other educational and occupational backgrounds.

Participants’ occupations included three university students, a dentist, an actor, a bank employee, and an unemployed mother. Apart from one participant who was located in a small city, all participants resided in a major New Zealand city. Five participants identified as heterosexual and two females identified as bi-sexual. Participants’ socio-economic status (SES) rankings ranged from SES-1 (highest) to SES-5 (lowest) based on occupational income groupings and students and unemployed people ranked by educational qualification (Galbraith, Jenkin, Davis, & Coope, 2003).

Each participant was given study details and had the opportunity to ask questions about the research and was assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Once a participant agreed to participate, a suitable time and place were arranged. The Facebook go-along interviews took place in a private room on university premises and were facilitated by PN (female and older than the participants). The Facebook go-along interviews were participant led and PN used exploratory open-ended questions (e.g. ‘Can you show me what you do in Facebook?’) as required to prompt discussion. The Facebook go-along interviews lasted approximately one hour and were video and screen recorded with participants’ written permission.

### ***Analytic Procedure***

The Facebook go-along interviews were transcribed within Transana software which time synchronises and plays video and screen recording files simultaneously. This enabled PN to record in each transcript the participant’s talk as well as their simultaneous Facebook page navigations, clicks, photo displays and activities such as comments and *likes*. PN led a Foucauldian discourse analysis (Foucault, 2010, pp.106-117; Willig, 2001, pp.106-123) of these transcripts. A discourse located at the level of language statements comprises ways language is

used to construct social concepts and objects (e.g. 'drinking photos'), subject positions (ways to think or feel), and our 'ways of doing', our practices (Willig, 2001). Power relationships are also central here because subject positions and practices as offered through language can be prescribed, suppressed, limited, taken up or resisted. Our discursive analysis firstly identified common words and phrases within and across transcripts. The research team then discussed this coding to identify 'drinking photo' themes (e.g. 'checking' drinking photos). The ways participants' language constructed 'drinking photos' and consensus, tensions and inconsistencies in these constructions were then examined. For instance, participants constructed drinking photos positively as 'fun' and 'good times' but also negatively as 'ugly' and 'bad', suggesting a contradiction in their meanings. We also focussed on how participants' language worked for them – its action orientations – such as explaining and justifying their meanings, and ensuing subject positionings (e.g. 'a friend shares drinking fun'). In addition, the consequences for taking up or resisting subject positions as well as the availability and limitations of particular practices were explored. Analysis sessions were ongoing during which tentative discourses were discussed, refined, abandoned, and introduced.

## Findings

In their Facebook go-alongs participants talked and checked notifications, read newsfeeds, viewed and 'liked' photos, accepted events, commented on posts, read personal messages, responded to chat messages, accepted friend requests, clicked on posted links and wrote on walls. Our aim was to explore participants' uses of Facebook in their drinking practices and we found quite quickly that their main activities were almost exclusively centred on Facebook photos. Participants' drinking photos depicted them with friends during the day at large social events such as sports tournaments, music concerts and alcohol festivals. Night time events more extensively portrayed them with friends together at house parties, bars and clubs, 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> birthdays and further afield on holidays.

In these photos participants were dressed up, holding drinks, smiling, laughing, making funny faces, close together or hugging friends, and looking directly (posing) at the camera. Participants talked in happy tones and laughed a lot when showing these drinking photos. They used cameras and photos routinely and seamlessly while drinking ('anyone can pick up the camera', Sarah; 'I just click upload', Adam) yet photos were not an *ordinary* practice. Participants highly valued these photos ('These are gold, good times', Pam) as ways to capture and re-live perfect moments of drinking fun ('that medium happy good drunk', Pam) and to continue this fun through Facebook photo activities (e.g. comments, *likes*, tags). Our discursive analysis showed that participants drew on three main discourses when discussing drinking photos: 'friendship group belonging', 'balanced self-display' and 'absences in positive photos'.

These discourses together function to effectively airbrush young adults' drinking practices on Facebook and to normalise and reinforce drinking as always pleasurable without harmful consequences. Each of these discourses is discussed below.

### **'Friendship group belonging'**

Drinking photos were not simply casual routine representations or memories of drinking pleasures. Rather, participants drew on a discourse of 'friendship group belonging' to construct these photos as identifying, connecting to and reinforcing their friendship group relationships. Participants' use of this discourse to make sense of their drinking photos provides insights into why they so highly valued these photos. In relation to identifying their friendship group relationships, participants rarely constructed drinking photos as depictions of themselves – 'this is me' – rather they primarily constructed their photos as their 'friends':

Sarah And that's another drinking night at **my friend's** house.

Sam Uh we went up to **my friend's** house ...

Pam These are all **my friends** at Oktoberfest and stuff...

Dylan ...**My friends**. I like that's like my um {pause} virtual {pause} um photo album.

Adam There you go. **My friends**. Back at yeah third year at university.

(Emphasis added).

These excerpts demonstrate the way participants first and foremost constructed their drinking photos as their friendship group relationships ('my friends'), suggesting the importance of belonging to a group of friends. To connect to their friendship groups, participants predominantly constructed themselves in their drinking photos as *with* friends - 'this is us' – rather than alone:

Sarah ...yeah **this is us** drinking {photo of females holding drinks and dancing}. **This is us** dancing and having our own little party in the lounge getting ready to go. And then **this is us** the last time I went out {photo of females holding drinks and laughing}.

Alex Here's another one here {photo of male friends laughing and drinking}. **Just us.** Photo of us while we're drinking. **This is us** before we went out one night {photo of male friends drinking shots}.

Sam All dressed up {photo of friends wearing suits and holding up beers}. Smart {smiles}. **This is us** drinking. Posing like idiots...

(Emphasis added)

In these excerpts Sarah and Alex and Sam each construct their drinking photos as themselves and their friends together ('this is us') having fun times drinking. Sarah and her friends have their 'own little party in the lounge' - their getting ready to go out routine - as do Alex and his friends. Sam and his friends are out at a ball 'all dressed up', drinking and acting humorously. In this way, participants positioned themselves as connected – belonging – to a friendship drinking group. This positioning gave rise to a prescriptive practice for drinking photos, as exemplified by Pam:

Pam Um it's more acceptable if you're with a friend. It's kind of fun and your. It's social. You're with someone {laughs}. Taking a photo by yourself it's like you're by yourself taking photos of yourself {laughs} and it's like just not kind of acceptable. It's weird...

Pam describes how to be alone in a drinking photo is to be 'by yourself' and not 'acceptable'. Indeed, participants' drinking photos never showed them drinking alone. This suggests a strong imperative to be connected to and recognised as part of a friendship group when drinking, and to display the 'self' (Goffman, 1959; 1971) as popular and connected. Having friends in this context appears to enable a successful and highly-valued identity display.

In terms of reinforcing their friendship group relationships, participants constructed their drinking photos as good times, social enjoyment and adventures with friends:

Sarah So yeah. That's just yeah. Oh this. This night was actually kind of funny. We got so drunk {laughs} that me and my cousin ... Yeah so it was it was a bit of an adventure.

Jane ...It's Jim Beam Homegrown. So there was a lot of like young drunken people there. Dancing. And going crazy {laughs}. In broad daylight. But it was so fun like it was the best I've ever been to...

Pam I love this. I think this has got to be my favourite photo.

PN Right. Now why?

Pam ...Um I really like it because it's kind of. It's like sporadic. It's like in the moment and it's really fun. There's a lot going on. There's a lot of people in it. Um and it's obviously. Well not obviously. At Sevens. So and I remember it being a really fun day and I feel like it kind of just captures the moment really well.

These excerpts exemplify the way in which drinking photos were constructed as reminders of positive and pleasurable experiences with friends. Sarah constructs her photo as a drinking 'adventure' with her cousin while for Jane, one of her photos is about her and friends sharing 'drunken crazy' fun at a music concert. Pam constructs her favourite photo as capturing the perfect 'moment' of being with friends at the 'Sevens' - a New Zealand rugby tournament famous less for the rugby games and more for friendship groups in themed costumes drinking and partying. These meanings re-invoke feelings of excitement, adventure and intimacies *created by a group of friends*, thereby reinforcing their relationships. In addition, these experiences can also be linked to the need to construct a coherent life narrative for the 'self' (Giddens, 1991). The memorialising of particularly prominent events, the 'perfect moment', that can be re-lived and re-told constructs a coherent meaning for the self within this context of friendship.

Friendship group relationships were also reinforced when participants' constructed their drinking photo practices – tags, *likes*, comments – as shared fun among particular friendship groups:

Sam Heaps of my friends have *liked* it. Look {points cursor to 'likes' on a photo of him at a party making funny face behind female friend}. Cause it's just so funny cause that's our mate Sarah and she um I don't know. We always have a good laugh with her so when they see that they're just gonna think oh no! Which is kinda funny...

Sam constructs *liking* a photo as friends' sharing the enjoyment of an in-joke about Sarah as a particular character in their friendship group. The meanings drawn from this photo therefore are grounded in friends' intimate knowledge of each other, suggesting that meanings of drinking photos cannot be simply 'read off' their face-value content. These photo practices were

constructed as sharing particular meanings, familiarities and intimacies and this works to enhance friendship group cohesion. Through this construction participants are positioned as insiders within a friendship group, engendering feelings of camaraderie, acceptance and belonging. The feeling of belonging to a friendship group suggests a powerful reason for drinking photos to be prevalent and highly valued in young adults' drinking practices. This may explain previous research demonstrating a high prevalence of drinking photos on young adults' SNSs (e.g. Kolek & Saunders, 2008; Moreno et al., 2010; Morgan et al, 2010; Peluchette & Karl, 2007). There were, however, tensions and disruptions to this construction of drinking photos as a highly valued group friendship practice.

### **'Balanced self-display'**

Participants also drew on a 'balanced self-display' discourse to judge and justify their intoxicated appearances. It was risky for participants to look personally unattractive in drinking photos, but to fit into drunk fun, to belong to a friendship group in this context, some drunk photos were necessary. Participants discussed needing a proportion of unattractive drinking photos to demonstrate they were part of drunk fun, thereby claiming some authenticity in their drinking practices. This tension was evident when they negatively constructed their appearances as 'retarded, stupid, horrible, ugly, disgusting, wasted, weird, messy and bad'. Yet these photos were still displayed:

Dylan See. Out. Drinking. Smoking. Drinking. See it doesn't look pretty does it? {clicks through photos of friends drunk} Not really. No {laughs}. We just look like goof balls {laughs}.

Sarah .Look at my face. I'm 'nergh' {pulls a face and laughs}. And then that's us taking our shots.

Pam Um these are borderline photos here {clicks on profile page photos} that I was tagged in where I was quite drunk and I've commented here attractive {reads comment} {laughs}. Um what's but yeah I still haven't um {clicks on photo} I still haven't untagged myself {clicks on photo again} because I feel like maybe you need some crazy photos in there now and again.

These excerpts demonstrate ways in which female participants judged their drunk appearances in photos. Dylan judges her photos as not 'pretty' but she justifies them overall by humorously calling herself and friends 'goof balls'. Sarah judges her face as drunk ('nergh') but she also

uses humour – pulls a face and laughs - to justify her drunk face as funny. Pam constructs her indecision as ‘borderline photos’, using humour to write a Facebook comment ‘attractive’ on these photos, and justifying them as required – ‘you need some crazy photos’ – to show she is part of drunk social fun. These appearance judgements were not limited to female participants:

Adam ... Ah me looking like a fool but I'm eating a burger so. That's just me looking horribly disgusting {laughs} {scrolls up to previous party photos}.

Adam is harsh in judging his drunk look as ‘horribly disgusting’ yet he justifies himself humorously as a ‘fool’ because he is drunk. Males as well as females judged and justified their personal appearance in drunk photos, suggesting these drunk appearances are precarious positionings for them because to fit into drunk fun they risk looking personally unattractive.

While a proportion of ‘ugly’ or ‘crazy’ drinking photos were required and justified through humour, it was equally important to actively maintain an overall display of attractiveness in drinking photos. This was demonstrated in participants’ photo untagging practice where they removed their identity (names) from drinking photos:

Dylan ...the only thing I really care about is {clicks on her Wall} Is like photos. And people. So these are all my tagged photos. I didn’t take any of them. And I just look at those and then if I didn’t like them I just untag myself.

Alex I perceive the attractiveness of myself or the people I'm with. So if I don't look nice in the photo or I'm with two ugly people or something. I'm being blunt on this you know. It's um like I don't really want to put that on my wall...

In the first excerpt Dylan demonstrates participants’ concern for their photos and the routine underplayed – ‘I just look’, ‘I just untag’ – photo untagging practice. Alex is more ‘blunt’ and serious about untagging. He judges others’ attractiveness in relation to himself when out drinking and he untags ‘ugly’ photos so they do not display on his profile. This seemingly casual but *required* practice was more intense in participants’ responses to system photo notifications alerting them they were tagged in photos. This is demonstrated in Pam’s explanation of her responses to notifications:

Pam Yes. And I do it pretty quickly usually cause I'm as I said earlier um always {laughs} I guess on Facebook through my phone anyway {laughs}. Twenty four seven. Wake up {laughs} when it goes off at like two in the morning.

[...]

- PN Do you respond at two in the morning?
- Pam Um I wouldn't. Don't think I'd respond to it at two in the morning unless {pause} no I wouldn't respond to someone's message in the morning. If it was. If I was tagged in a photo though that I didn't like I'd untag myself immediately.

Here Pam pauses to consider her routine response to photo notifications and the importance of a seemingly casual practice is emphasised by her disrupted sleep and untagging herself 'immediately' from a drinking photo she 'didn't like'. Overall this photo practice involves work - responding to photo notifications, judging the acceptable 'border' between drunk and unattractive photos and untagging. This is an effort for participants, suggesting this is an important self-display practice called for by tensions between belonging to a friendship group (having a small proportion of drunk 'ugly' or 'crazy' photos) and maintaining an overall successful 'self' (having a majority of 'attractive' photos). This 'balanced self-display' discourse implicates a range of 'photo work' practices, which function to normalise and reinforce drinking as always a sociable pleasure for friendship groups.

### **'Absences in positive photos'**

Participants also constructed their drinking photos as personal upsets and injuries that were absent from – not displayed – in their photos. These meanings were prompted when participants showed and talked about photos of pleasurable drinking events *and* recounted negative experiences, including upsets and injuries, which had occurred during these events. These upsets and injuries were absent from these photos. Here participants constructed their drinking as 'spewing, crying, too drunk, falling over, fights, black eyes, losing teeth', regretted sexual encounters and emotional upsets; physical and emotional upsets and injuries that occurred when drinking with friends:

- Dylan ...Obviously I'm not a mother but like I kind of. That night I kind of felt what she [her mother] was feeling {hands on heart}. Like that's. I'm the youngest. She was thinking you know that's my baby going out. Like she's drinking. She's drunk. She's doing drugs. Like it's so scary to see her like this. And um that {pause} that made me really upset and I didn't want to hurt her like that and I didn't want to end up like my family. Drunk. Dead.
- Jane ... Like with me and Sarah. Me and Sarah can go out and drink bottles and bottles and bottles of wine and then {pause} well we kind of fight...

Dylan constructs her night drinking as a traumatic event where she felt her mother's emotional pain – 'that's my baby' - for her heavy drinking. Yet the photo that prompted this description depicted her laughing and drinking with her friends. Jane constructs her drinking with her friend as heavy – 'bottles and bottles and bottles' – and their night is conflicted as they 'kind of fight'. Yet the photo that led to this explanation depicted them as smiling and hugging each other. Specific drinking photos prompted participants to describe drinking episodes that led to personal injuries or violence, although these were also not displayed in the photos themselves:

Sarah Yup and then there's one of me at the front of the boat too.

PN Was that a good night?

Sarah It was. I fell down the stairs. You see these stairs here?

PN On the boat. Yes.

Sarah I fell down them. I went {hand moves downwards} kerduff.

PN How did you feel about that?

Sarah Very sore. {laughs} Very very sore.

Alex ...we were waiting outside a party and the party was over and some guy was bored so he just came up and punched me in the face.

These excerpts demonstrate participants talking about physical injuries and violence, yet this is absent in drinking photos. Sarah constructs her drinking experience as a 'very very sore' fall down the stairs at a boat party yet these photos show her poised and smiling with friends. Alex describes physical violence (more prevalent in male participants' accounts) yet his party photos portray him happily laughing with his friends. In addition to drinking photos where negative drinking events were absent, some participants also had *no photos* of particular drinking occasions:

PN: Have you got photos of your eighteenth?

Sam: No. Luckily. Luckily no..... I don't think. Oh I did have Facebook when I was eighteen but no photos that night because it was just the boys so no-one had a camera {laughs} hence {pause} hence why there was no photos.

PN: What did the boys say about it the next day?

Sam: Oh they were laughing. You know they were like as bad as it was that whole shenanigan about me spewing all over his house they thought oh it was his eighteenth he's excusable for it.

Sam constructs his drinking at his eighteenth birthday as him ‘spewing all over’ his friend’s house and he justifies ‘no photos’ because it was ‘just the boys’. Sam’s justification here relates to the male participants’ gendered construction that females, rather than males, take and upload photos (e.g. ‘It’s not a manly thing to do’, Alex). Sam draws on this gendered construction here to justify not having photos yet in an earlier group discussion with his friends, they had talked humorously about looking after him and filming this event on their iphones.

While it is apparent that photos are commonly aligned to positive rather than negative events, the absence of drinking injuries and upsets has significant implications for meanings of drinking photos. Negative drinking events can be viewed as ‘out of control’ consequences that are openly talked about among friends who are ‘in the know’ with the full story of events, yet these are absent in drinking photos. Friends can discuss “what happened” or “that night” by looking at a particular happy photo, because *the people who were there* know what negative events occurred. This functions to further solidify friendship group belonging, providing in-group meanings and leaving a wider audience (whoever else is viewing the photos) ignorant. A major implication here for young adults’ drinking practices is that drinking photos are a powerful way to normalise and reinforce drinking as always pleasurable without negative consequences.

## **Discussion and Implications**

Our findings demonstrate Facebook drinking photos were constructed and used in particular ways, with consequences for young adults’ friendships, drinking practices and identity performances. The high value participants placed on drinking photos as ways to capture, re-live and continue memories of their drinking fun accords with the prevalence of alcohol content in young adults’ SNS accounts (Kolek & Saunders, 2008; Morgan et al., 2010; Peluchette and Karl, 2007). However, our findings extend this research because our Facebook go-along interviews provided a way to move beyond face-value content readings and engage with participants’ as they talked about and interacted with their Facebook drinking photos. This enabled us to extend research into young adults’ online drinking practices by gaining insights into their sense-making of this content, including tensions, effort and absences in their drinking photos. Our participants drew on three primary discourses to construct their drinking photos: ‘friendship group belonging’, ‘balanced self-display’ and ‘absences in positive photos’. To take up these discourses works to effectively airbrush young adults’ online drinking practices as always pleasurable without harmful consequences. These findings have implications for alcohol health initiatives that seek to reduce alcohol harms for young adults.

One dominant meaning of drinking photos was ‘group friendship belonging’ whereby our participants used photos to identify, connect to, and reinforce friendship group relationships.

Such photos were prevalent and highly valued in young adults' drinking practices. Further, SNSs afford an instantaneous and continuous (24/7) connection to friends' photo displays. This hyper-connectivity and hyper-visibility (through visual displays) to an online friendship audience thoroughly embeds drinking photos within young adults drinking practices. A key message here for alcohol-harm health initiatives is that drinking photos and friendship groups and wider audiences are part of young adults' drinking practices. In particular, health alcohol-harm initiatives need to consider that drinking photos are a useful site to focus on because they are so highly valued by young adults' friendship groups. This may be a way for such initiatives to encourage young people to think about their friends' drinking and online posting, and a way to intervene at this more social level of young adults' drinking.

However, there were tensions between drinking as a group friendship practice and more individual online identity performances. Our participants discussed requiring a 'balanced self-display' online, to manage tensions between fitting into drunk ('ugly' and 'crazy') friendship group drinking displays and to maintain an overall 'attractive' online identity which involved time and effort on Facebook photos. This finding offers a way for health alcohol harm initiatives to engage with young adults in their online drinking practices. Young adults' own meanings of their online drinking displays can be reflected back to them to show their thinking and feeling about their drinking photos and the effort involved. To have their own meanings in focus may provoke a deeper awareness of their own drinking practices.

Our findings also showed what is absent in drinking photos. Our Facebook go-along interviews revealed participants' happy drinking photos prompted meanings of drinking as personal upsets and injuries that were absent from these photos. There were absent events that were meaningful to friends 'in the know', solidifying friendship group belonging and excluding a wider audience. This sets up powerful and dominant resistances to messages that focus on individual negative emotional and physical consequences. Alcohol health initiatives might usefully focus on friends talking together or commenting online about a positive and happy drinking photo, while re-telling their negative and painful recollections of this drinking event. This might both identify and reframe the airbrushed nature of representations of drinking on Facebook.

Although our study was not focussed on gendered drinking photo practices, it was evident there were gendered understandings of uses and meanings of drinking photos. Young adults' gendered drinking practices have been revealed in their meanings of public drunkenness as acceptable masculine behaviour whereas females are judged as more deviant and disrupting codes of femininity (Lyons & Willott, 2008; de Visser & McDonnell, 2011). For our participants, males constructed carrying cameras and taking and displaying photos on Facebook as feminine behaviour. A male participant also drew on this gendered construction to justify

having no photos of his drunk sick eighteenth birthday, suggesting gendered meanings may be used to suppress negative drinking outcomes. To take account of gendered dynamics in uses and meanings of drinking photos therefore would be a fruitful area for future research on young adults' drinking practices.

Our Facebook go-along interview method was useful to access young adults' everyday SNS and drinking activities. This method enabled us to move beyond face-value readings of Facebook drinking content, to explore in-depth their meanings for users, and to explore drinking content that is *not* posted on SNS profiles, and reasons for these omissions. However, it is recognised these practices are usually enacted with friends. It would be useful therefore to explore drinking photo practices through friendship group discussions, to reveal further understandings of how these practices are co-constructed by friends. Although go-alongs ideally capture informants' everyday routines, a researcher's presence and curiosity inevitably disrupts this experience (Kusenbach, 2003). Our Facebook go-along interviews involved a 'curious' researcher and perhaps more importantly, a person positioned outside friendship groups, potentially disrupting everyday SNS routines participants may enact alone or with friends.

Our go-along interviews posed different challenges to walking go-alongs (see Garcia et al., 2012) including stabilising screen capture software, managing large data files and considerable effort to transcribe participants' talk and online activities but the rich data content made this well worth it. While our Facebook go-along interviews extended a mobilities approach into online spaces, digital environments do not eliminate physical mobility, instead with smart phones, we move through merged digital and physical spaces (Frith, 2012). Future research within health contexts could therefore be challenged to go-along with informants as they engage with social technologies as well as physically moving through their social environments. Our study is a small exploratory investigation within the context of young New Zealand adults, yet the insights gained suggest further investigation is warranted in this context in other countries and socio-cultural, gendered, ethnic, occupational and age-related contexts.

### **Research reflections – Friendship, drinking and uses of SNSs**

This third set of findings address my third research question, namely how do young adults construct their uses of SNSs within the context of their drinking and their friendships. These findings showed participants' uses of SNSs – drinking photos – are highly integrated into their friendship drinking practices. Drinking photos were used to reinforce group friendship relationships by memorialising drunk fun adventures and entertainment together. This finding accords with the previous findings of a 'friendship as social fun' discourse (Chapter 4) and a 'drinking as friendship fun' discourse (Chapter 5) but extends this understanding by demonstrating how integrated a SNS such as Facebook is within these understandings of

friendship drinking practices. The current findings also show tensions in these online visual displays in the 'balanced self-display' and 'absences in positive photos' discourses and this builds on the previous findings where identity work was required within Facebook as friendship fun (resisting and suppressing 'show off' displays) and a 'bad but good overall' drinking experience that privileges friendship drinking pleasures over personal alcohol harms. These findings also demonstrate that my decision to take an 'appropriation' perspective was valuable because as well as identifying the friendship meanings and practices, participants constructed Facebook's technological affordances as key to their friendship practices. For instance, the affordance of a wider networked audience is a major influence on *doing* friendship because it sets up a space where self-identity displays need to be negotiated alongside friendship activities. Further, the discourses that participants drew on demonstrated the importance of Facebook for identity performances. To take up Facebook means that new forms of friendship and identity work are now required when this technology is involved within everyday socialising. The participants constructed drinking photos as a key site where intersections of friendship, social networking and drinking practices are located. This knowledge was gained by systematically focusing on friendship and social networking (Chapter 4), friendship and drinking (Chapter 5), allowing me to explore their intersections based on young adults' own understandings.

The Facebook go-along interview proved a valuable method because it enabled me as a researcher to record participants' interactions with their Facebook accounts as well as their talk about this and their drinking and friendships. These interviews flowed smoothly and it was evident that this was due in part to participants' seamless ease of being online and interacting face-to-face at the same time. At times they would talk to me while simultaneously writing comments, *liking*, scrolling and reading their pages. The screen capture software captured all these actions and talk so there was a wealth of multi-modal (talk, text, actions, photos, navigations) data for transcription. My analysis was on the meaning of drinking photos and this was a particular area of focus within the wealth of data that this method captured. This dataset therefore provides a rich source of content for further qualitative analyses. I would therefore highly recommend this method for qualitative research. For my research, this method allowed me to explore young adults' friendship meanings and drinking practices in a real-world context – their own uses and meanings of Facebook - and the findings are grounded within their everyday social worlds.

The following Conclusions chapter more fully draws together the three sets of findings and integrates them within the conceptual framework that was employed to investigate young adults' friendship understandings in relation to their social networking and drinking. This final chapter will demonstrate how this research provides knowledge that is consistent with, but also extends, understandings of young adults' friendships.

# Chapter 7

## Conclusions

This final chapter firstly re-visits the research questions and the conceptual framework employed to investigate young adults' friendship understandings in relation to their social networking and drinking. It was proposed that a concept of 'appropriation' as aligned with a social constructionist orientation to knowledge and Foucauldian discursive analytic strategy was a valuable way to conceptualise and empirically investigate young adults' friendships. The research findings are integrated within this conceptual framework to demonstrate how this research provides knowledge that is consistent with, but also extends, understandings of young adults' friendships. This is followed by a consideration of research limitations and opportunities this research offers for future explorations of young adults' social worlds.

### Conceptual framework

This research investigated how young adults' make sense of friendship in two prominent social arenas – their social networking and their drinking. The three research aims addressed this question by inquiring specifically into how young adults' make sense of friendship and social networking (Chapter 4); friendship and drinking (Chapter 5); and uses of SNSs in their friendship drinking practices (Chapter 6). This research is important because friendship is a key relationship for young adults (Carbery & Buhrmester, 1998; Hartup & Stevens, 1999; Parks & Floyd, 1996) and SNSs are entrenched in their everyday social lives (Duggan & Brenner, 2013; Tapscott, 2009) as are their drinking cultures (Guise & Gill, 2007; Lyons & Willott, 2008; Szmigin et al., 2011).

The research findings derive from a research approach that embraced a social constructionist epistemology (Burr, 2003; Moghaddam, 2005) and an 'embodied interaction' perspective that informs computer system design (Dourish, 2001). A primary notion of this perspective - 'social embodiment' (Schutz, 1967) – was taken up to propose that young adults make sense of their worlds through their social practices which are the shared actions and meanings they derive from being together in the world. Further, the principle of 'appropriation' was employed to conceptualise the link between shared practices and technology (Dourish, 2001). Appropriation is the process by which technologies 'reach out' to young adults and are, in turn, adapted into their social practices. This notion was also applied to drinking cultures that 'reach out' to young adults and are taken up in their social practices.

From this perspective young adults bring shared friendship meanings and practices to their uses of SNSs and to their drinking cultures. These contexts, in turn, offer affordances to be

taken up (accepted, altered, resisted, extended) by young adults' in their friendship practices. It was argued these *interactions* between young adults' shared friendship meanings and practices and their uptake of affordances offered by SNSs, and drinking cultures, are key to understanding what happens when these social contexts are embedded in young adults' everyday friendships. A Foucauldian discourse analysis (Foucault, 2010; Willig, 2001) was a useful analytic strategy to explore these interactions. The research findings (and implications) are now integrated within this conceptual framework to demonstrate how this research has provided knowledge that is consistent with, but also extends, understandings of young adults' friendships, social networking and drinking.

### **Interactions: Friendship, SNSs and drinking cultures**

The young adults drew on four primary discourses to make sense of friendship: 'friendship as social fun'; 'have my back'; 'time and effort'; and 'let me be myself'. These friendship discourses, in interaction with SNS and drinking culture affordances, constructed friendship as a highly valued social practice involving *pleasures* and *tensions* that threaten and challenge friendship. This approach extends conceptualisation of friendship as a social practice whereby people draw on linguistic resources (shared histories) to constitute their positionings as 'friends' in social interactions (Chasin and Radtke, 2013). A Foucauldian discourse analysis also views language as social tool and inquires into co-constituted meanings, ensuing positionings and practices; ways of thinking and feeling and 'doing' friendship. The ways these meanings, subject positions and practices are taken up or resisted are viewed as relations of power that people exercise in constituting their social realities (Burr, 2003; Foucault, 1981). This offers an in-depth perspective of ways friendship is constituted within everyday social life. The findings of this research are consistent with current knowledge of young adults' friendships, social networking and drinking and they contribute further knowledge in significant ways as discussed in the following sections.

### **Friendship as pleasure in context**

Friendship for young adults was first and foremost constructed through a discourse of social pleasure ('friendship as social fun'). The meaning of a 'friend' centred on the enjoyment, laughter, entertainment – the fun – experienced when friends were together. Social science research has largely not identified this friendship meaning for young adults. This is perhaps due to a dominant 'storm and stress' (Arnett, 1999) developmental focus on their friendships that relates friendship to prosocial and maladaptive individual behaviours (Giordano, 2003; Smetana et al., 2006). Further, young adults' platonic friendships have received less research attention due to a greater emphasis on their romantic and sexual relationships (Collins et al., 2009). The 'friendship as social pleasure' discourse is based on young adults' own co-constructed meanings

of friendship. It is significant that ‘fun’ is an important meaning for them. It demonstrates the value of investigating their shared meaning-making and opens up a new perspective – pleasure – that can be explored in their friendship practices.

Shared fun was central to the meanings and practices of friendship and SNS activities (e.g. photo sharing, stalking, comments) were appropriated to share friendship fun. Shared fun amongst friends is consistent with research that demonstrates young adults primarily use SNSs to socialise with known friends (e.g. Reich et al., 2012). Previous research has traditionally (e.g. the online/offline debate) focussed on ways SNS uses promote or undermine young adults’ everyday friendships (Whitty, 2008) rather than friendship pleasures. Similarly, previous research has used a developmental framing of young adults and social networking and finds they socialise with known friends but the focus is on positive and negative social, emotional and educational outcomes (Kalpidou et al., 2011; Kim & Lee, 2011; Elphinston & Noller, 2011; Reich et al., 2012) rather than friendship pleasures. The meaning of friendship as pleasure in relation to SNS uses is important because it identifies young adults’ own sense-making of their friendships and social networking. This may help to explain why research on young adults’ media uses over the past decade has shown they socialise with friends for many hours every day on SNSs (Coyne et al., 2013).

Similarly, drinking was constructed through a discourse of ‘friendship fun’ – a central meaning of drinking as a pleasurable friendship practice. This finding accords with qualitative inquiries that show young people’s meanings of drinking are fundamentally about pleasure – the fun, excitement and enjoyment of relaxing, feeling good and sharing a laugh together (e.g. Guise & Gill, 2007; Lyons & Willott, 2008; Sheehan & Ridge, 2001). This finding also supports research that finds the pleasures of young adults’ drinking are related primarily to being with friends (MacNeela & Bredin, 2011; Martinic & Measham, 2008; Szmigin et al., 2008; Vander Ven, 2011). The importance of friendship was demonstrated when alcohol was appropriated as an *added extra* to the pleasures of friends being together. The physical sensation of being drunk was constructed as a ‘social buzz’ *requiring* friends, whereas to drink alone was to be without friends. This finding supports young adults’ drinking theorised as embodied bodily, social and contextual pleasures (Fry, 2011; Duff, 2008; Jayne et al., 2010; Tutenges, 2012). Young adults appropriate bodily pleasures of being drunk within alcohol-leisure venues into their friendship socialising, demonstrating friendship practices are central to embodied and affective drinking experiences, and are a powerful prescription to consume alcohol.

SNS drinking photos were similarly constructed through a discourse of ‘friendship group belonging’ as good times, social enjoyment and adventures with friends that reinforced group friendship relationships. This finding accords with young adults who perceive their SNS alcohol content (posts and photos of parties and drinking) as positive and humorous indications

of their group membership (Moreno et al., 2009; Morgan et al., 2010; Peluchette & Karl, 2007). It is also consistent with research that reports Facebook drinking photos are part of young adults' friendship drinking pleasures (Brown & Gregg, 2012; Hebden, 2012; Tonks, 2012). This discourse demonstrates a convergence between young adults' friendships, uses of SNSs and their drinking practices.

Taken together, these insights of 'friendship as pleasure' have implications for societal views of young adults' friendships and uses of SNSs, and their drinking. It has been previously argued that when young adults 'do' their friendships through globally networked SNSs, they do not have 'real' friendships; rather they are publicly broadcasting their narcissist and consumerist self-identities (Hollander, 2010; Marshall, 2010; Mehdizadeh, 2010; Saculla, 2010). Friendship as pleasure, however, demonstrates that SNSs are appropriated by young adults to enhance friendship as a pleasurable social practice. This means that SNSs do not determine what 'friendship' is. Instead they are systems that are utilised within, and may influence, friendship practices. This finding supports anthropologists who counter a generic global reality for friendship (Bell & Coleman, 1999) and recognise alternate socio-cultural meanings of friendship (Barcellos Rezende, 1999; Carrier, 1999). Young adults' 'friendship as pleasure' is another meaning that needs to be considered as relevant to their social worlds.

Young adults' drinking was also constructed as a pleasurable friendship practice which counters societal views of them as individual unbounded 'binge drinkers' (Szmigin et al., 2008). Alcohol is taken up within their friendship practices to enhance the pleasures of friendship and this is a key insight for alcohol health initiatives that seek to reduce young adults' alcohol harms. If young adults' meanings of drinking are embedded in their 'doing' of friendship, it may be more relevant and effective to focus on this sociality rather than individual risks and harms of drinking. Alongside 'friendship as pleasure', it was also found that young adults' friendships involved tensions which threatened and challenged their friendships.

### **Friendship as tensions (threats and challenges) in context**

The interactions between young adults' friendship meanings and practices and their uptake of SNSs and drinking disrupted and challenged friendship as a social practice. Young adults brought other friendship meanings and practices to their uses of SNSs and drinking to negotiate tensions evoked. The 'have my back' and 'time and effort' friendship discourses in interaction with SNS and drinking affordances are discussed in this section. The 'let me be myself' friendship discourse is discussed in the following section (Tensions – friendship and the 'self').

To draw on a 'have my back' discourse meant that friends *always* looked after each other in experiences ranging from defenses against others' verbal attacks to support for emotional issues, to physical violence and more dangerous life threatening events. This

discourse is consistent with ‘support’ – a major psychological friendship quality that is theorised as the amount of mutual emotional and instrumental assistance friends reliably give each other (Carbery & Buhrmester, 1998; Hartup & Stevens, 1999; Parks & Floyd, 1996; Rybak & McAndrew, 2006). For the young adults in the current research ‘support’ was central to friendship as demonstrated when they drew on the ‘have my back’ discourse to position friends as providers of unconditional social, emotional, physical caring and protection. In addition, participants drew on a ‘time and effort’ discourse which involved the personal effort to be interested in and involved in each other’s welfare and lives. This discourse can be viewed as a more day to day ongoing ‘support’; an everyday investment required by friends. The current research, however, shifted beyond ‘support’ as an individual friendship quality to explore young adults’ ‘have my back’ and ‘time and effort’ discourses within the context of their everyday social worlds of social networking and drinking.

To invest ‘time and effort’ the young adults constructed Facebook’s affordances such as ‘search and display’, photos and status updates as a relatively effortless and fun way to invest time in friends. This finding is consistent with ‘social capital’ theorists who show that Facebook is appropriated by young adult friends to maintain strong emotional contact and weaker ties (acquaintances) with each other (Ellison et al., 2007). The current research, however, demonstrates this appropriation effectively invoked a new form of friendship response work. Friends were *required* to continually monitor and respond to each other and this was intensified by 24/7 system notifications of their actions. This means that the SNS affordances (e.g. instantaneous access to a friendship network) that offer young adults ease of personal investment in friends’ lives also create friendship work; a friendship practice called for by SNS systems. This extends insight into why young adults are seen to be living life online (e.g. boyd, 2007; Livingstone, 2008) – in their world they are *required* to be online to ‘do’ friendship. This is also a reason why the interactions between young adults’ friendship meanings and SNS affordances need to be understood.

Tensions were involved in drawing on a ‘have my back’ discourse when young adults’ took up Facebook’s photo sharing affordance as a pleasurable friendship practice. The interaction between protecting friends and using Facebook photo activities called for a new form of *required* friendship privacy work. This involved friends negotiating and filtering (not uploading) photos to protect friends’ privacy and social integrity in an online space. Further, the system intensified this friendship privacy work with 24/7 photo notifications that required continuous responses. Another form of friendship privacy work (boundary work) was also *required* when friends’ pleasure of ‘stalking’ on Facebook enabled privacy invasions that had to be either concealed or shielded from others. These new forms of friendship privacy work were invoked by an ‘always on’ networked group of friends which sets up a wider (invisible)

audience and collapses social contexts such as friends/family/employers/acquaintances who may potentially all view young adults' SNS friendship activities. These affordance dynamics blur 'public' and 'private' spheres and this is recognised by young adults who express a need to control their privacy settings to limit who sees their posts and photos in SNSs (boyd, 2006; Christofides, Muise, & Desmarais, 2009; Dey, Jelveh, & Ross, 2012; Gross & Acquisti, 2005).

Privacy as a new form of friendship work extends qualitative research that finds young people view their private social world as their 'public' Facebook friends and this is 'private' to others (West, Lewis, & Currie, 2009). Further, young people disclose private experiences to their friends on SNSs to sustain intimacy but they want to control and manage this disclosure (Livingstone, 2008). Friendship privacy work shows the tensions and work involved when young adults engage with SNSs in their friendship practices. This new form of friendship work highlights the nuanced complexities embedded in cultural meanings of privacy (Dourish & Bell, 2011). A review of Facebook research over the past decade cites Facebook privacy as an increasingly important area of research (Wilson, Gosling, & Graham, 2012) yet we still know little about how young adults' make sense of friendship, 'privacy' and ways SNS affordances may alter the form of disclosure in their friendship practices. The current research goes toward providing knowledge in this area.

It is also important to recognise that young adults are not necessarily 'experts' in the SNS technologies they utilise in their friendship practices. Livingstone (2008) noted that when asked about Facebook privacy, the young people in her study "hesitated to show how to change their privacy settings, often clicking on the wrong options before managing this task" (p.406). It was noteworthy that the young adults in the current research similarly represented themselves as 'expert' users yet many were uninformed about managing their privacy options. This suggests a reason for the discrepancy between their self-reported privacy concerns and their lax privacy settings (Debatin, Lovejoy, Horn, & Hughes, 2009; Stutzman & Kramer-Duffield, 2010). While young adults bring their own meanings of 'privacy' to their uses of SNSs, they do want to control and manage their disclosures, so they may benefit from knowing more about how SNS 'privacy works' on a functional level. This information, however, needs to be provided from within their worlds and this requires an emphasis on ways to engage with them to enhance this knowledge.

Tensions in drinking as a friendship practice arose when drinking led to negative behaviours such as vomiting, falling over and fighting, and friends were required to 'care for and protect' each other. This finding is consistent with previous research which has found friends looked after each other - 'drunk support' - when drinking together (Griffin et al., 2009; MacNeela & Bredin, 2011; Sheehan & Ridge, 2001; Vander Ven, 2011). It was found, however, that a dominant tension in 'drunk support' was when friends needed excessive 'care and

protection' when drinking. The friends who became too sick and had to be taken home, or who got lost and had to be searched for, took up too much time and spoiled the pleasures of drinking. Thus, rather than alcohol harms being recognised, friendship was threatened. This extends literature on young adults' drinking as 'pleasure' (Fry, 2011; Guise & Gill, 2007; Lyons & Willott, 2008; Sheehan & Ridge, 2001) by demonstrating the complexities of this pleasure. Young adults' drinking as 'pleasure' is not necessarily as straight forward as this previous research suggests and as has been demonstrated in the current research.

The implication of this finding for anyone who engages with young adults' and their drinking practices is that their drinking is a pleasurable friendship practice which they will reinforce and justify over and above any negative drinking consequences. This means the pleasures and tensions involved in their drinking primarily relate to their friendship relationships rather than negative drinking consequences. This sets up dominant resistances to individual alcohol-harm campaigns and is a timely message for alcohol health initiatives that seek to reduce harms of alcohol consumption for young adults.

### **Tensions – friendship and 'self'**

Some anthropologists argue that friendship is a complex and culturally specific phenomenon that poses basic questions about volition, emotion, imagination and our sense of self (Bell & Coleman, 1999). A 'sense of self' (Erikson, 1959) was implicated in young adults' friendships when they drew on a 'let me be myself' discourse to construct friends as non-judgemental accepting people with whom one could relax, disclose vulnerabilities and freely be themselves. Through this discourse they positioned friends as providers of emotional security and acceptance. This 'friendship in relation to self' meaning accords with the friendship qualities of 'acceptance' and 'confiding' which are found to be strongly associated with young adults' friendships (Hartup & Stevens, 1999; Parks & Floyd, 1996; Rybak & McAndrew, 2006). These qualities have been theorised as individual interpersonal factors that enable young adults as friends to aide each other to negotiate developmental challenges such as forming romantic attachments (Demir, 2010) and overcoming emotional difficulties (Stanton-Salazar, 2005). The current finding extends this developmental framing to demonstrate ways young adults negotiate their sense of self in relation to their friendships within everyday social contexts. Feelings of self-acceptance were crucial to friends sharing fun together through Facebook activities and through their drinking activities. To 'be themselves' was central to friends' appropriating Facebook affordances (e.g. status updates) to share fun activities. Similarly, the pleasure of consuming alcohol was linked to being with friends - feeling safe, free to be yourself within the potential vulnerabilities of drinking.

There were, however, personal tensions in being involved with friends in these social arenas. For social networking, these tensions related to ‘identity work’ conceptualised as self-performances (Goffman, 1959; 1971) which are now enacted by young adults in online spaces (Livingstone, 2009; boyd & Ellison, 2007; Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin, 2008). It is argued that young adults construct and perform their identities online in relation to a group of friends rather than as individual narcissist self-displays (Larsen, 2007; Livingstone, 2008; Mallan, 2009). For instance, group online photo displays of friends dominate individual photo displays (Livingstone, 2008; Mallan, 2009; Zhao et al., 2008) and young people form impressions of each other’s authenticity based on friends’ text comments on their Facebook pages (Hong, Tandoc Kim, Bokyoung, & Wise, 2012; Walther et al., 2008). Young people therefore are seen to co-construct their identity online not only by using SNS affordances (e.g. a networked friendship audience) but by also representing themselves in relation to their friends (Larsen, 2007); as “this is who we understand ‘me’ to be” (Mallan & Giardina, 2009, para.22).

The current findings extend this theorising by demonstrating tensions involved in co-constructing self-performances in relation to friends. Although friends were able to be themselves through sharing Facebook activities, strong resistances to individual Facebook ‘show off’ displays threatened friendships; requiring identity work to resist and suppress these self-performances. In addition, in the intersections between friendship, drinking and SNS uses, there were tensions to balance fitting in to friends’ group drinking (photo) practices with a small amount of ‘ugly’ drunk photos within an overall ‘successful self’ (attractive photo) display. These findings demonstrate the complex and time-intensive work that is involved in online displays and meeting expectations and norms around friendship. These ‘friendship and self’ tensions were also demonstrated in a drinking context when negative drinking experiences were smoothed over through a ‘bad but good overall’ discourse. This discourse functioned to justify friendship groups’ drinking pleasures and minimised an individual’s drinking harms.

Further insight into the intersection of young adults’ friendships, drinking and uses of SNSs was demonstrated when negative drinking events were shared by friends as part of their adventures - reinforcing shared intimacies - but they were absent from happy and fun drinking photos. This effectively air-brushes drinking as always a pleasure without harms and suggests that online drinking displays may alter the way negative drinking consequences are constituted by young adults. This finding contributes to social learning theory (Bandura, 1986) approaches to peer-modeled drinking practices (Hawkins, Catalano & Miller, 1992; Sanders et al., 2007; Urberg et al., 1997). It goes toward demonstrating *how* drinking may become a socially normative practice through the friendship meanings and practices young adults’ bring to their drinking, and ways SNS affordances may shape their drinking practices. These insights are relevant for alcohol-health initiatives because they demonstrate how SNS affordances, in

particular drinking photos, are embedded in young adults' drinking practices as a new form of friendship and drinking pleasure.

## **Limitations and future research**

There are limitations to this research that can usefully be addressed as avenues for future research. As noted in chapter one, gendered masculinities and femininities, class (socio-economic status – SES - based on education and occupation) and ethnicity nuance young adults' friendships, drinking and their uses of SNSs. The current research, however, focussed on shared meaning-making which meant that analysis of gendered constructions was limited as was analysis of class (participants were mainly middle-class). Analysis of other ethnicities was precluded by the particular research focus on NZ European young adults. Gender and class were clearly identified in the participants' talk and meaning-making and they are addressed in this section in relation to opportunities for future research. The limitations encountered in friendship group discussion and Facebook go-along interview methods are also considered to inform future use of these methods in researching young adults' understandings of their social lives.

### **Gender, class, ethnicity**

Masculinity and femininity constructions were noteworthy in participants' talk and this suggests a fruitful area for future research into the intersections of young adults' friendships, social networking and drinking. Male participants, for instance, constructed the friendship meaning of 'caring and protection' in a drinking context through a 'men at war' discourse. When out drinking in bars and clubs they positioned each other as comrades in battle action rolling in a pack, bleeding, bringing out the guns and throwing grenades, and notably they blamed their fighting on 'the girls'. High alcohol tolerance is related to traditional meanings of 'masculinity' as physical strength, resilience and risk taking (de Visser, 2011; Peralta, 2007). Resistances to 'masculine' heavy drinking have been identified when males construct their masculinity through sports, relationships (de Visser & Smith, 2007) and professional occupations (Iwamoto et al., 2011; Willott & Lyons, 2012) that censor heavy drinking. To draw on a 'men at war' discourse (a broader societal ideology of male military power and protection) suggests this may be a dominant meaning of friendship that is privileged over other meanings of masculinity in a drinking context. Future research is needed to explore masculinities in relation to meanings of friendship and what this means for males' understandings of their drinking practices.

An instance of gendered constructions in the intersection of friendship, drinking and uses of SNSs was that males constructed taking and uploading drinking photos as a purely feminine 'posing' activity ('a girl thing') for a friendship audience. In contrast, they constructed their own appearances in photos through social recognition ('we just get tagged in them') and

masculine camaraderie and humour. This suggests insights for knowledge of young adults' gendered uses of SNSs and drinking. This knowledge is currently grounded in demographic surveys of US young adults' SNS accounts which find females have more photo activity and friendship socialising whereas males use SNSs more for dating (Lewis, Kaufman, Gonzalez, Wimmer, & Christakis, 2008; Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2010; Thelwall, 2008). There is scarce discursive research on gender constructions in SNS uses (Brickell, 2012; Dobson, 2012). It has been shown that US young male and female adults were uncomfortable constructing males as physically attractive in MySpace photos as this was a traditional cultural meaning of femininity (Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008). The 'feminine' meanings that males in the current research attributed to taking and uploading drinking photos may distance them from 'feminine' portrayals of physical beauty whereas to 'just get tagged' may be a masculine construction of social recognition. This type of insight requires further investigation, particularly as this relates to ways meanings of 'masculine' and 'feminine' may shape young adults' uptake of SNSs into their friendship drinking practices.

The dimension of class was also noteworthy in participants' talk, suggesting a useful avenue for future research into the intersections of young adults' friendships, social networking and drinking. Some lower SES female sole parents, for instance, constructed friendship 'caring and protection' as friends who looked after their babies while they were out drinking. For some lower SES males, this friendship meaning was allied to protection from ongoing violence when drinking. These friendship meanings suggest insights for research that finds greater quantities of alcohol are consumed and more harms associated with lower SES young adults (Karriker-Jaffe, 2011). Ethnicity and class are implicated in young adults' uses of SNSs with MySpace users more likely to be younger and Hispanic and have a lower SES whereas Facebook users tend to be older with a higher educational status and higher SES (Ahn, 2012; boyd, 2011b; Hargittai, 2007; Huang et al., 2013). In the current study lower SES participants were financially challenged to own computers and to afford internet access, setting up tensions for them to belong to friendship groups in this way. To take account of the meanings and practices of class that intersect with friendship and drinking will further unpack how these intersections may shape young adults' uptake of SNSs into their friendship drinking practices.

As noted, ethnicity and class are implicated in young adults' uses of SNSs, and in their friendships as identified in anthropological studies of cultural variations in meanings and practices of friendship (e.g. Caine, 2009; Carrier, 1999; Dyson, 2010). It would be valuable therefore to further explore ethnic meanings in the intersections of young adults' friendships, social networking and drinking. In this regard, a research project exploring young adults' drinking cultures and new media technologies in Aotearoa NZ identified variations in identity negotiations and performances across Pakeha (NZ European), Pasifika and Maori ethnicities

(Lyons et al., 2013). Drinking and social networking were highly valued friendship practices for these young adults. Pakeha young adults shared their drinking practices on Facebook with less reflection or sanction than Pasifika and Maori young adults who often avoided online drinking displays and took actions within SNSs (e.g. untagging photos) to avoid family, work and community members viewing their drinking. Overall, identity negotiations in relation to drinking and social networking involved more reflexivity by Maori and Pasifika young adults, although class and gender also nuanced this self-surveillance. This research highlights the need to further investigate ethnic and cultural meanings and practices that may shape young adults' uptake of SNSs into their friendship drinking practices. As noted in chapter 1, Smart (1999) argued that scholars of friendship need to be wary of "dragging Western prejudices on board without careful scrutiny" (p.119). As a researcher I am located within a Western culture and may have inadvertently brought these cultural meanings on board. I was reflexive about my cultural positioning and I recognise the current research presents a particular cultural NZ European perspective of young adults' meanings and practices of friendship.

### **Friendship discussion group method**

Friendship discussion groups were used to approximate a natural setting for friends to share personal opinions and draw on shared experiences and events (Crossley, 2002; Lyons & Willott, 2008). There were, however, limitations to this method of data collection (as identified in chapter 2) that centred on power relations and levels of disclosure for myself as an 'outsider' (Balén et al., 2000; Kitzinger 1994; Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2010) and for participants' own group dynamics (Kidd & Parshall, 2000; Lehoux et al., 2006).

As a researcher I was an 'outsider' in these friendship groups so at times I was positioned as an 'expert psychology researcher' and an 'older person' and I was not a 'friend'. This surfaced in some participants tending to monitor their talk to present a 'good image' (Flick, 2010). There were also moments where talk was censored – often subtly through eye contact – to shut down group disclosures. This was particularly evident when drinking stories reached moments of violence or sexual tensions. For some male participants my positioning as a 'female' sometimes tempered their friendship 'banter', particularly about fighting and heavy drinking. As a researcher I worked to balance these dynamics by developing a rapport with participants, being a 'naive enquirer', and most importantly, to be non-judgemental of their talk.

As identified in chapter 2, the power relations of focus group participants may also impact on levels of disclosure with more dominant or persuasive members suppressing others' views and less assertive members 'going along to get along' in the group (Kidd & Parshall, 2000; Kitzinger 1994; Lehoux et al., 2006). Yet, in contrast, in the friendship group discussions, more dominant friends' talk tended to be curtailed by friends and less dominant friends' were

encouraged to talk. There were, however, subtle alliances among friends within a group that at times prescribed or suppressed more personal sense-making. While these types of friendship group dynamics were valuable in accessing shared meanings, the Facebook go-along interviews provided another more personal perspective on this sense-making. Further, the friendship group discussions were limited in the sense that they separated participants from their everyday friendship and social networking experiences and practices (Davies, 2012; Murthy, 2008; Salimkhan et al., 2010). The Facebook go-along interview method went toward overcoming this disadvantage by engaging with participants' practices *in situ* and their interpretations of these experiences.

### **Facebook go-along interview method**

Facebook go-along interviews were a fruitful innovative method to engage with young adults' *in situ* in their sense-making of social networking. The participants were relaxed, open and happy to be guides to their social networking. The potential limitations of this method recognised at the outset of this research (as discussed in chapter 2) were also evident. At some level a researcher's presence interrupts a natural setting (Kusenbach, 2003) and at times participants limited their photos and personal message displays and shut down chat sessions with friends. It was apparent too that at times they presented a particular 'self' (Flick, 2010) as 'expert' of Facebook's functionality, particularly their privacy settings despite their knowledge being limited. They also often presented themselves as less involved in Facebook but their activities on Newsfeeds revealed they were heavily involved. In these ways their 'self' presentations were implicated in levels of disclosure (Balen et al., 2000; Kitzinger 1994; Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2010). Thus although I was a 'naive inquirer' and had a sense of rapport with participants as they guided me through their social networking worlds it must be recognised that this method captures a particular level of *in situ* social networking interactions.

A major value of this method was participants confided more personal sense-making of friendship and drinking that often contrasted strongly to their talk in their friendship focus groups. A prominent contrast in their talk was when they re-told a drinking experience that had been recounted by their friendship group as positive and funny. Their personal accounts of these stories often revealed negative and painful drinking consequences. This highlights the value of using more than one method (methodological triangulation) to explore young adults' sense-making as it opens up more perspectives that sit alongside each other (Denzin, 2012; Flick, 2009). Denzin (2012) has recently called for a 'triangulation 2.0' to update the politics of the 'multi-method quan/qual' debate. He calls for a new metaphor – the 'crystal' – to reflect the need for researchers to synthesise multiple forms of analysis, different methods, representational genres, paradigms, and ideologies within a research project.

The current research was not as radical as this approach but it did embrace methodological triangulation to access young adults' perspectives of friendship, and the Facebook go-along interview was an innovative attempt to capture these perspectives. Digital multi-modal data collection and analysis is emergent in social science research (see Bezemer & Mayers, 2011 for a review) and has begun to be applied to social networking on SNSs (e.g. Davies, 2012; Murthy, 2008; Salimkhan et al., 2010). The National Centre for Research Methods now offers seminar workshops for social scientists to develop multi-modal methodologies (NCRM, 2013) in digital environments. The Facebook go-along interview method contributes to this emergent area in social science research because it demonstrates a way for multi-modal qualitative research to be employed within SNS digital environments.

### **Looking ahead - future research**

As well as offering a conceptual framework to explore young adults' friendships within their social worlds, this research offers a way for social science researchers to address broader political and economic influences on young adults' friendships. Although I did not set out to explore these influences, it was noteworthy there were clear indications of a commercial presence (e.g. company branded pages with 'likes' linking 'friends' to users' profiles) in young adults' friendship and social networking practices. Future theorising of young adults' friendships therefore also requires scrutiny of commercial linkages to their friendship practices in social networking environments. Facebook is not just a SNS; it is also a commercial platform that enables global corporations to 'be friends' with young adults within SNSs (Bucher, 2012). Similarly, global alcohol corporations align alcohol branded products with young adults' friendship sociability, and SNSs enable these products to 'be friends' with young adults (see McCreanor et al., 2013).

To theorise young adults' friendships and social networking through an appropriation perspective focuses on the interactions between their friendship meanings and SNS technology affordances. These interactions take place within a broader societal context and this means we need to take account of the complexities of SNS technical, political and socio-economic infrastructures in research designs. Social technologies such as SNSs are globally networked in system hardware and software infrastructures that incessantly execute software objects to collect, store, compute, retrieve and display 'data' or information. This computational work is accessible to anyone who can engage with it, but it is predominantly created by professional system architects, engineers, designers and developers in local and global corporations. These specialists engage users in system abstractions (e.g. click 'ok' to send a message) that conceal the computation involved in the actions represented by these systems. These infrastructures are becoming ubiquitous through increased functions and performance for lower costs and ease of

use as they move off desktops and are embedded tangibly and socially within our everyday lives (Dourish & Bell, 2011).

When young adults use social technologies in their friendship practices they enact them within these system infrastructures. An important area for future research therefore is to explore how SNSs such as Facebook may infiltrate young adults' friendship practices. For instance, as well as the 'friend' connection in Facebook, users may interact with corporate branded pages through the 'like' action and this action is published to their timeline, and their friends' newsfeeds and tickers. Further, Facebook filters user actions (e.g. 'like', 'upload photo') to their newsfeeds based on 'relevancy' criteria, and this functionality is marketed to corporate organisations (Bucher, 2012; McCreanor et al., 2013). It is therefore crucial that when we explore how young adults bring these technologies into their friendship practices we also take account of how the structure and function of social technologies may engage with and utilise these practices (Beer, 2009). This theorising embraces not only a way to understand how young adults interact with social technologies, but also how social technologies 'reach out' to engage with them.

Similarly, young adults' drinking theorised as a friendship practice and conceptualised through appropriation means they bring friendship practices to their drinking and in turn alcohol affordances enable friendship pleasures and raise tensions for friendships. These interactions take place within a broader societal context and this means we need to take account of the complexities of political and economic infrastructures – in particular, commercialised alcohol marketing. Alcohol companies embed branded alcohol products as 'friends' into young adults' social networking friendship activities on sites such as Facebook (Mart, 2011; McCreanor et al., 2012; Nicholls, 2012) and Bebo (Griffiths & Casswell, 2010) as well as taking their drinking photos while they are out and uploading them to alcohol entity pages like bars and clubs (Hebden, 2012; McEwan, Campbell & Swain, 2010).

To date there are no standards for alcohol marketing on SNSs. In Facebook, alcohol advertising is prevalent (Mart, 2011) but it does not enforce alcohol advertising standards beyond warning about exposing content to minors (Mart, Mergendoller, & Simon, 2009). Further, the New Zealand Law Commission (New Zealand Law Commission, 2010) recognised the alcohol industry has moved beyond print media advertising and now embeds its product branding in youth culture (Casswell & Maxwell, 2005). It has also recognised that it is crucial to investigate the role of alcohol marketing in social networking. The Health Committee of the House of Commons in the United Kingdom calls for such research and has proposed that alcohol promotion should not be permitted on social networking sites (New Zealand Law Commission, 2010, p.330). The current research offers future researchers a way to address ways broader commercial interests may infiltrate young adults' friendships and social networking and

drinking practices. The Facebook go-along interview method would be useful to capture the SNS text of alcohol sponsored 'friend-like' pages and user actions such as 'likes' linking the alcohol industry as 'friends' with young adults on SNSs. This method also offers social science researchers a way to engage with multiple modes of practice and meanings across physical and online spaces.

### ***Conclusion***

This research set out to explore how contemporary young adults make sense of and practice friendship in relation to their social networking and drinking practices. It was found that friendship for young adults in these contexts is a highly valued positive social practice. This social practice involves pleasures, tensions, disruptions and challenges to friendship relationships and to senses of identity and identity performances. These complexities were demonstrated in the meanings of friendship young adults bring to their uses of SNSs and drinking; their appropriations of these social arenas into their friendship practices; and ways these social arenas engage with their friendship practices. These interactions provide new insights into young adults' understandings of their friendships. In addition, the lens of friendship has provided significant insights into young adults' meanings and practices of social networking and drinking. These insights may usefully be used by health initiatives that seek to engage with young adults. Overall, this research offers a way for social science researchers to conceptualise and explore young adults' own social worlds.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Information sheet for stage 1 friendship group discussions

The Social Networking Project



#### Young adults' friendships and social technologies

#### Information Sheet for Stage 1 – Friendship Groups

##### *What is this research about?*

The aims of this research project are to gain further knowledge and insight into young adults' friendships, identities, socializing (including drinking) and the role of social technologies in their lives.

##### *Who is conducting this research project?*

My name is Trish Niland. I'm undertaking this project as part of my PhD work, in the School of Psychology at Massey University. This project is part of a larger 3-year funded research programme that is exploring friendships, connections, identities, uses of new technologies, and drinking cultures of young adults in Aotearoa New Zealand, including Māori, Pasifika and Pakeha young people. You can read about this research at The Social Networking Project website: <http://drinkingcultures.info>.

##### *Who can take part?*

Males and females between 18 and 25 years of age can participate in this study. I'm approaching people who identify as Pakeha New Zealanders, and asking them to get together a group of between 3-6 friends to participate. These groups of friends can be people of any ethnicity, can be same sex or mixed sex groups, and will need to be aged between 18 and 25 years. To say thanks for your time and contribution, all participants will be given a \$30 movie or music voucher.

##### *What will happen in the study?*

In each of the friendship discussion groups, people will talk about a range of topics including their friendships, their use of social technologies like texting and Facebook, their leisure time, and their drinking activities. I will ask some broad questions to help get the group started. You

will be video and audio taped as you talk. A laptop will also be set up so you can show me websites or online material that might be relevant to the discussions. The discussions will take between 1–2 hours and snacks and non-alcoholic drinks will be provided.

The friendship group should be engaging and fun, and no risk or harm is anticipated to arise from taking part. However, I will ask all participants to sign an agreement maintaining the confidentiality of what is said in the groups. I will also remind people not to provide any information that they do not want recorded. At the start of the discussion participants will be able to choose their own pseudonyms (i.e. select your own name for this research project). All other identifying information (e.g. employers, town names, names of friends, etc) will be omitted or changed in the transcript of the group discussion.

### ***What will happen to the information collected?***

The recordings of the friendship group discussions will be transcribed into text by the researcher. The recordings, transcriptions and any associated notes or findings will be used solely for the purposes of the research project. Recordings and transcriptions will be stored securely and only the researcher, supervisors and broader research team will have access to the data. No identifying information will be used in transcripts, analysis, findings or reports. Where comments or anecdotes are attributed to an individual they will be referred to by a pseudonym. Participants will be able to read ongoing summaries of the project findings at my project website at: <http://drinkingcultures.info/>.

Once the project is completed the research team will store the all the data securely for five years, at which time it will be destroyed. The anonymous data will be added to a larger research data archive from a Marsden-funded project on drinking cultures in New Zealand, and will be available to the 7 investigators on the research programme team. Their details are available at: <http://drinkingcultures.info> .

### ***Where will the research take place?***

The friendship groups will be held in rooms at Massey University's Wellington or Auckland campus, or somewhere mutually convenient, and at a time mutually agreeable to all participants.

### ***What are my rights as a participant?***

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question or opt out during any part of the discussion;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;

- be sent an email telling you when an overall summary of the project findings is available on the project website: <http://drinkingcultures.info> . I'll ask you to give me your email address if you are interested in receiving this.

***What support processes may participants need?***

No risks or harms are likely to occur as the result of participating in this project. However in the event any participant experiences distress or concern in relation to topics under discussion, they will be provided with information about services that are available for support or assistance with their concern.

***Project Contacts***

You may contact me or my supervisors at any point if you have any questions about this project, or to discuss concerns or give feedback. Contact details for all of us are provided below:

Trish Niland      [p.niland@massey.ac.nz](mailto:p.niland@massey.ac.nz)

02102913770.

Supervisors      Associate Professor Antonia Lyons, School of Psychology, Massey University Wellington

[a.lyons@massey.ac.nz](mailto:a.lyons@massey.ac.nz); 04-8015799 extn: 62164

Dr Ian Goodwin, School of English and Media Studies, Massey University Wellington

[I.goodwin@massey.ac.nz](mailto:I.goodwin@massey.ac.nz); 04-8015799 extn: 62175.

Dr Fiona Hutton, School of Social and Cultural Studies, Victoria University, Wellington

[Fiona.hutton@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Fiona.hutton@vuw.ac.nz); 04-463-6749

*This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application 11/28. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Ralph Bathurst, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telephone 09 414 0800 x 9570, email [humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz).*

## Appendix B: Friendship group discussion participant consent form

The Social Networking Project



### Young adults' friendships and social technologies

#### Friendship Group Participant Consent Form

- I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me.
- My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.
- I also understand that I may withdraw from this project without question or comment at any time.
- I understand that any information that I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and research supervisors. All identifiable information will be omitted or changed by the researcher.
- I am aware I will be able to check the progress of the project at The Social Networking Project website (<http://drinkingcultures.info>) and will be emailed when a final summary of the findings are available.
- I am aware and consent to the material I provide being used by the team members in the larger Marsden funded project on young adults, social technologies, and drinking cultures in NZ, on the understanding it does not identify me in any way.
- I agree not to disclose anything discussed in the focus group.
- I agree to the focus group being video and audio recorded.
- I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the study Information Sheet.

Please complete this section

Your full name .....

Your signature .....

Email address .....

Date .....

## Appendix C: Friendship group discussion participant confidentiality agreement

The Social Networking Project



### Young adults' friendships and social technologies Friendship Group Participant Confidentiality Agreement

I ..... (Full Name - printed)

agree to keep all information discussed within the focus group on young adults' friendships and social technologies confidential.

**Signature:**

.....

**Date:**

.....

## Appendix D: Friendship group discussion guides and prompts

The Social Networking Project



### Young adults' friendships and social technologies

#### Friendship Group question guides and prompts

##### Introductions

Starting with the researcher, each participant will give their name, age, what they do, where they come from and how they identify as Pakeha New Zealander or another ethnicity. Participants will be reminded of confidentiality and each will be asked to choose a pseudonym. Participants will be reminded that they can ask for the video or digital recorder to be switched off at any time, and have the right to withdraw without question or comment at any stage. The topic will then be introduced by the researcher – and participants will be offered a chance to ask questions, and reminded that questions are welcome anytime throughout the discussion. Here possible questions under each topic are provided as an indication of the research focus.

##### Socialising and friendship

How often do you meet?

What sorts of things do you do together?

How do you organise your socialising?

Can you tell me about a really good time you've had together? Have you got a favourite story?

Can you tell me about a bad time you've had together?

What makes someone your friend? What are the things that make a good friend?

Who isn't your friend? What are the things that make a bad friend?

Can you tell me about a time when a friendship hasn't worked out?

##### Social technologies and friendship

How do you keep in contact with your friends? Examples: face-to-face, phone, social networking sites?

How often do you go on SNSs? Which ones most often?

Can you tell me about the time you first set up your SNS?

What advice would you give people about setting up an SNS profile?

Who do you interact with online? Are they any different from those you know offline?

How many friends do you have on your SNS?

How do you accept a friend on SNS? Who is a friend on SNS?

Who isn't a friend on SNS? Have you rejected someone on SNS? Can you tell me what happened?

Have you deleted a friend on SNS? Can you tell me what happened?

What sort of things do you do with your friends online?

What's your best / worst experience of using SNS?

What advice would you give others about using SNS?

### **Privacy**

Do you feel you have a sound knowledge of the privacy settings/options available on the SNS site(s) you use? What privacy settings do you have in place?

Who can see your profile, and do you have different 'views' for different sets of people?

### **Posting content**

What do you post online? (general content & format: text, video, audio, image.)

What profiles do you use?

Do you post photos of yourselves or others? Who to? What's an example of such a post?

Who takes these photos, and what with?

How do you decide what photos to post?

What alcohol related posts do you do?

### **Alcohol**

How often do you drink together?

Where do you drink together?

Who else might you go out drinking with?

How much alcohol do you typically drink? What changes that amount?

How do you organise your drinking?

What do you tend to do when you're drinking together? Can you think of a typical example?

Why do you drink together?

What do you enjoy about drinking together? What don't you enjoy about it?

## Appendix E: Friendship group discussion support information

The Social Networking Project



### Young adults' friendships and social technologies

#### Support Information

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research project. Your time, effort and opinions are sincerely appreciated.

If you have any further questions for me regarding this research project please do not hesitate to contact me on 021 02913770 or via email; p.niland@massey.ac.nz. On completion of the project you will be given the opportunity to view a summary of the research findings.

If today's discussion has prompted you to seek further information about alcohol or you would like advice about alcohol related issues, please consider contacting one of the following groups.

#### **Youthline:**

National Helpline: 0800 37 66 33  
Wellington information: (04) 801 6924  
Free TXT 234  
Email/MSN: talk@youthline.co.nz  
Website: <http://www.youthline.co.nz>

#### **Lifeline:**

National Helpline: 0800 543 354  
24/7 Service 365 days a year  
Website: <http://www.lifeline.org.nz>

#### **ALAC National Office and Central Region**

Level 13, ABN Amro House  
36 Customhouse Quay,  
PO Box 5023,  
Wellington 6145.  
Phone: (04) 917 0060  
Email: central@alac.org.nz  
Website: <http://www.alcohol.org.nz>

#### **Alcohol Drug Helpline:**

Phone 0800 787 797  
10am – 10pm daily  
Website: <http://www.adanz.org.nz/Helpline/Home>

## Appendix F: Transcription notation

(Silverman, 2010)

[	C2: quite a [while Mo: [yea	Left brackets indicate the point at which a current speaker's talk is overlapped by another's talk
=	W: that I'm aware of= C: = Yes. Would you confirm that?	Equal signs, one at the end of a line and one at the beginning, indicate no gap between the two lines.
(4)	Yes (2) yeah	Numbers in parentheses indicate elapsed time in silence in seconds
_____	What's <u>up</u> ?	Underscoring indicates some form of stress, via pitch and/or amplitude.
WORD	I've got ENOUGH TO WORRY ABOUT	Capitals, except at the beginnings of lines, indicate especially loud sounds relative to the surrounding talk.
{laughter}	{laughter}	Any other significant behaviour – laughter, sighing, intake of breath, etc.
( )	Future risks and ( ) and life ( )	Empty parentheses indicate transcriber's inability to hear what was said.
(word)	Would you see (there) anything positive	Parenthesized words are possible hearings.

## **Appendix G: Information sheet for stage 2 Facebook go-along interviews**

The Social Networking Project



### **Young adults' friendships and social technologies**

#### **Information Sheet for Stage 2 - Individual Interviews**

##### ***Thanks for your participation***

Thanks very much for taking part in the group discussion for this research on young adults' friendships, identities, socializing (including drinking) and the role of social technologies in their lives. As you clearly use new technologies as part of your everyday life, I would like to invite you to now take part in the second stage of this research. In this second stage I am conducting individual interviews with some of the participants from the first stage (group discussions).

##### ***Who is conducting the interviews?***

My name is Trish Niland. I'm undertaking the interviews as part of my PhD work, in the School of Psychology at Massey University. This project is part of a larger 3-year funded research programme that is exploring friendships, connections, identities, uses of new technologies, and drinking cultures in young adults in Aotearoa New Zealand, including Māori, Pacifica and Pakeha young people. You can read about this research at: <http://drinkingcultures.info/>

##### ***What will happen in the interviews?***

The interviews will take place in a quiet room on one of the Massey University campuses. There will be a computer or laptop with an Internet connection. I will ask you to show me the websites and social networking areas that you most frequently use online, and other online material that is relevant to you. I will ask some questions about the sites you show me, and also ask questions about how you engage with your friends online. I will be recording the activity you show me on the Internet with digital file recording on the computer, and our talk will also be recorded on video, so I can transcribe it (type it up) and look at it later for analysis. I will keep using your pseudonym that you chose in the group discussion, and I will also change or omit all other identifying information (e.g. employers, town names, names of friends, etc). To say thanks for your time and contribution, you will receive a \$40 movie or music voucher.

##### ***What will happen to the information collected?***

The recording of our web-browsing, and the transcription of the interview, will be used solely for the purposes of the research project. Recordings and transcriptions will be stored securely

and only the researcher, supervisors and broader research team will have access to the data. No identifying information from the interview, or from any websites that you have shown me, will be used in transcripts, analysis, findings or reports. Participants will be able to read ongoing summaries of the project findings at my project website at: <http://drinkingcultures.info/>.

Once the project is completed the research team will store the all the data securely for five years, at which time it will be destroyed. The anonymous data will be added to a larger research data archive from a Marsden-funded project on drinking cultures in New Zealand, and will be available to the investigators on the research programme team. Their details are available on The Social Networking Project website (<http://drinkingcultures.info/>).

### ***What are my rights as a participant?***

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question or opt out during any part of the interview;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- ask for the video recorder to be turned off at any time during the discussion;
- withdraw from the study completely, provided you notify the researcher within 1 week after the interview.
- be sent an email telling you when an overall summary of the project findings is available on the website (address stated above). I'll ask you to give me your email address if you are interested in receiving this.

### ***Project Contacts***

You are invited to contact me or my supervisors at any point if you have any questions about this project, or to discuss concerns or give feedback. Contact details for all of us are provided below:

Trish Niland      [p.niland@massey.ac.nz](mailto:p.niland@massey.ac.nz) - 02102913770.

Supervisors      Associate Professor Antonia Lyons, School of Psychology, Massey University, Wellington. [a.lyons@massey.ac.nz](mailto:a.lyons@massey.ac.nz); 04-8015799 extn: 62164

Dr Ian Goodwin, School of English and Media Studies, Massey University Wellington. [I.goodwin@massey.ac.nz](mailto:I.goodwin@massey.ac.nz); 04-8015799 extn: 62175.

Dr Fiona Hutton, School of Social and Cultural Studies, Victoria University, Wellington. [Fiona.hutton@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Fiona.hutton@vuw.ac.nz); 04-463-6749

*This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application11/28. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Ralph Bathurst, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telephone 09 414 0800 x 9570, email [humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz).*

## Appendix H: Facebook go-along interview participant consent form

The Social Networking Project



### Young adults' friendships and social technologies

#### Consent Form for Stage 2 – Individual Interviews

- I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me.
- My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.
- I also understand that I may withdraw from this project without question or comment up until one week following our interview.
- I understand that any information that I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and research supervisors. All identifiable information will be omitted or changed by the researcher.
- I am aware I will be able to check the progress of the project at the research programme website (<http://drinkingcultures.info/>) and will be emailed with a final summary of the findings.
- I am aware and consent to the material I provide being used by the team members in the larger Marsden funded project on young adults, social technologies, and drinking cultures in NZ, on the understanding it does not identify me in any way.
- I agree to the interview being video and audio recorded, and my online browsing and navigation being digitally recorded.
- I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the study Information Sheet.

Please complete this section

Your full name .....

Your signature .....

Email address .....

Date .....

# Appendix I: Facebook go-along interview question guides and prompts

The Social Networking Project



## Young adults' friendships and social technologies

### Interview question guides and prompts

#### Introductions

The researcher and participant are known to each other as the participant has been recruited from a friendship group. The participant will be reminded of confidentiality and will use the pseudonym they chose in the friendship group. The participant will also be reminded that they can ask for the video or digital recorder to be switched off at any time, and have the right to withdraw without question or comment at any stage. The topic will then be introduced by the researcher – and the participant will be offered a chance to ask questions, and reminded that questions are welcome anytime throughout the discussion. Here possible questions are provided as an indication of the research focus.

#### Social technologies and friendship

How do you keep in contact with your friends? Examples: face-to-face, phone, social networking sites?

Can you show me your Facebook or other SNS site(s) that you use?  
What do you do on these sites? What do you mostly use them for?

Can I look at your friends? Can you tell me about them?

How do you accept a friend on SNS? Who is a friend on SNS?

Who isn't a friend on SNS? Have you rejected someone on SNS? Can you tell me what happened?

Have you deleted a friend on SNS? Can you tell me what happened?

What sort of things do you do with your friends online?

Can you tell me about the time you first set up your SNS?

What's your best / worst experience of using SNS?

What advice would you give people about setting up an SNS profile?

What advice would you give others about using SNS?

**Posts online**

Can I look at any of your own posted stories, photos and videos?

Do you post photos of yourselves or others? Who to? What's an example of such a post?

Who takes these photos, and what with?

How do you decide what photos to post?

What sort of things are you thinking about when you choose these photos?

**Alcohol posting**

Are there any posted stories, photos and videos that involve alcohol and drinking episodes?

What other sites do you visit? Can you show them to me?

Do you know of any alcohol-related websites? E.g Tui?

Do you see much alcohol-related marketing or advertising? Can you show me?

What privacy settings do you use? What profiles do you use?

**Privacy settings**

Do you feel you have a sound knowledge of the privacy settings/options available on the SNS site(s) you use?

What privacy settings do you have in place?

Who can see your profile, and do you have different 'views' for different sets of people?

Do you have multiple profiles on your SNS or just one?

Have you ever deleted a profile?

If so, why?

## Appendix J: Facebook go-along interview support information

The Social Networking Project



### Young adults' friendships and social technologies

#### Support Information

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research project. Your time, effort and opinions are sincerely appreciated.

If you have any further questions for me regarding this research project please do not hesitate to contact me on 021 02913770 or via email; [p.niland@massey.ac.nz](mailto:p.niland@massey.ac.nz). On completion of the project you will be given the opportunity to view a summary of the research findings.

If today's discussion has prompted you to seek further information about alcohol or you would like advice about alcohol related issues, please consider contacting one of the following groups.

#### **Youthline:**

National Helpline: 0800 37 66 33  
Wellington information: (04) 801 6924  
Free TXT 234  
Email/MSN: [talk@youthline.co.nz](mailto:talk@youthline.co.nz)  
Website: <http://www.youthline.co.nz>

#### **Lifeline:**

National Helpline: 0800 543 354  
24/7 Service 365 days a year  
Website: <http://www.lifeline.org.nz>

#### **ALAC National Office and Central Region**

Level 13, ABN Amro House  
36 Customhouse Quay,  
PO Box 5023,  
Wellington 6145.  
Phone: (04) 917 0060  
Email: [central@alac.org.nz](mailto:central@alac.org.nz)  
Website: <http://www.alcohol.org.nz>

#### **Alcohol Drug Helpline:**

Phone 0800 787 797  
10am – 10pm daily  
Website: <http://www.adanz.org.nz/Helpline/Home>

## Appendix K: Research Software

Software name	Used for...	Settings required
<p><b>Transana</b> (licenced) www.transana.org -version 2.42b-WIN</p>	<p><b>Transcription</b></p>	<p>Create: Database – Series – Episodes – Transcripts.</p>
<p><b>Format Factory</b> (freeware) www.formatoz.com version 2.70</p>	<p><b>Convert, join and compress data files.</b></p> <p>Transana does not play camera .mpg files so convert to .avi.</p> <p>Camera records video .mpg files of 30 minute duration only so join these files.</p> <p>Video .avi files are very large so compress them to reduce their size to a third.</p>	<p>Advanced – Video joiner Output settings:</p> <p>All to AVI</p> <p>HD640x480XVID</p>
<p><b>Hypercam</b> (freeware) www.hyperionics.com version 2.25.01 copyright 1996-2011 Hyperionics Technology LLC. Free worldwide usage.</p>	<p><b>Screen capture</b></p> <p>Recording performance through a wireless connection may be too slow – buffered – so direct cable access may be required.</p> <p>To improve recording quality: Right click on desktop -&gt; Properties -&gt; Settings -&gt; Advanced -&gt; Troubleshoot -&gt; Hardware acceleration - slide to 'none' -&gt; Ok -&gt; Ok.</p>	<p><b>Screen Area:</b> Select Region X (0) and Y (0) Select window: Width: 1280 and Height: 736</p> <p><b>AVI file:</b> Rate in frames per second: Record (10) and Playback (10) Cursor/Full frame capture ratio (1) 1 to capture every frame Key frame every (100) frames Video compressor: Auto select – Strongly recommended Frame compression quality (85%)</p> <p><b>Sound:</b> Record sound from (default sound recording device) Number of channels (2 stereo) Sample size (16 bit) Sample rate (22050 samples per second)</p> <p><b>Options:</b> Record cursor (yes) Star size pixels (6) Mouse click volume (0%)</p>

# Appendix L: DRC 16 – Chapter 4

DRC 16



MASSEY UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOOL

## STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION TO DOCTORAL THESIS CONTAINING PUBLICATIONS

(To appear at the end of each thesis chapter/section/appendix submitted as an article/paper or collected as an appendix at the end of the thesis)

We, the candidate and the candidate's Principal Supervisor, certify that all co-authors have consented to their work being included in the thesis and they have accepted the candidate's contribution as indicated below in the *Statement of Originality*.

**Name of Candidate:** Patricia Niland

**Name/Title of Principal Supervisor:** Associate Professor Antonia Lyons

**Name of Published Research Output and full reference:**

Friendship work on Facebook: Young adults' understandings and practices of friendship.

Accepted subject to revisions by Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology on 19 October 2013.

**In which Chapter is the Published Work:** Chapter 4.

Please indicate either:

- The percentage of the Published Work that was contributed by the candidate:  
and / or
- Describe the contribution that the candidate has made to the Published Work:

The candidate has undertaken preliminary coding and analysis, and written the initial version of this paper. This paper was further refined through ongoing analytic discussions between the candidate and supervisors as well as their guidance through comments on the candidate's iterative versions of this paper.

Digitally signed by Patricia Niland  
DN: cn=Patricia Niland, o=Massey University,  
ou=School of Psychology,  
email=patnil@massey.ac.nz, c=NZ  
Date: 2013.09.20 17:20:25 +1200  
Patricia Niland  
Candidate's Signature

30/10/2013  
Date

Digitally signed by Antonia Lyons  
DN: cn=Antonia Lyons, o=Massey University,  
ou=Psychology,  
email=na.lyons@massey.ac.nz, c=NZ  
Date: 2013.11.01 09:28:20 +1200  
Antonia Lyons  
Principal Supervisor's signature

31/10/2013  
Date

GRS Version 3– 16 September 2011

# Appendix M: DRC 16 – Chapter 5

DRC 16



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## STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION TO DOCTORAL THESIS CONTAINING PUBLICATIONS

(To appear at the end of each thesis chapter/section/appendix submitted as an article/paper or collected as an appendix at the end of the thesis)

We, the candidate and the candidate's Principal Supervisor, certify that all co-authors have consented to their work being included in the thesis and they have accepted the candidate's contribution as indicated below in the *Statement of Originality*.

**Name of Candidate:** Patricia Niland

**Name/Title of Principal Supervisor:** Associate Professor Antonia Lyons

**Name of Published Research Output and full reference:**

Niland, P., Lyons, A.C., Goodwin, I., & Hutton, F. (2013, July). 'Everyone can loosen up and get a bit of a buzz on: Young adults, alcohol and friendship practices. *International Journal of Drug Policy* (2013). Advance publication.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2013.05.013>

**In which Chapter is the Published Work:** Chapter 5.

Please indicate either:

- The percentage of the Published Work that was contributed by the candidate:  
and / or
- Describe the contribution that the candidate has made to the Published Work:

The candidate has undertaken preliminary coding and analysis, and written the initial version of this paper. This paper was further refined through ongoing analytic discussions between the candidate and supervisors as well as their guidance through comments on the candidate's iterative versions of this paper.

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# Appendix N: DRC 16 – Chapter 6

DRC 16



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## STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION TO DOCTORAL THESIS CONTAINING PUBLICATIONS

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We, the candidate and the candidate's Principal Supervisor, certify that all co-authors have consented to their work being included in the thesis and they have accepted the candidate's contribution as indicated below in the *Statement of Originality*.

**Name of Candidate:** Patricia Niland

**Name/Title of Principal Supervisor:** Associate Professor Antonia Lyons

**Name of Published Research Output and full reference:**

"See it doesn't look pretty does it?": Young adults' airbrushed drinking practices on Facebook.  
Currently revising and re-submitting for Psychology and Health, 31 October 2013.

**In which Chapter is the Published Work:** Chapter 6

Please indicate either:

- The percentage of the Published Work that was contributed by the candidate:  
and / or
- Describe the contribution that the candidate has made to the Published Work:

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