

How Has Socialising Been Affected in University Students

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Abstract

Considerable attention has been devoted to understanding the impact of socialising on individuals, as it has been shown to reduce loneliness and enhance happiness. While previous studies have examined various factors influencing socialising individually, limited research exists, particularly among university students, that comprehensively assesses the influence of multiple factors and the interplay between them. This study primarily investigates the contributing factors to socialising among undergraduate students. The study utilised opportunity sampling to select 19 Psychology with Education undergraduates at University College London (UCL), who were readily available and willing to participate. The research question was explored through semi-structured interviews. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, supported by NVivo software, to effectively categorise and interpret interview data. The results identified four key factors: cultural background, academic pressure, personality, and social media. Notably, academic pressure was found to impact personality among other factors. Given the limitations of the sample, future studies are recommended to include a more diverse and gender-balanced sample.

Keywords: Academic pressure; cultural background; interview; social media; socialising

1. Introduction

Socialising plays a crucial role in daily life. It works on both physical and psychological aspects. Roseth et al., (2008) reviewed the study conducted by the University of Minnesota and suggested that those with stronger social relationships had a 50% lower risk of dying young. In addition, Arrigo and Bullock (2008) examined that prisoners in solitary confinement are more emotionally unstable. Although the example of solitary confinement is an extreme type of isolation, it nonetheless emphasises the importance of socialising and being near others for our mental health.

Many factors would affect people's socialising. Knight et al., (2021) investigated that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, self-isolation is required, and therefore there is a lack of opportunities for people to socialise, which leads to lowered mood and loneliness. Besides, Allen et al., (2014) claimed that the impact of social media on socialising is significant and can be two-sided, on the one hand making communication easier and on the other hand causing alienation and exclusion.

Despite existing studies have evaluated different factors that impact socialising respectively, there is insufficient literature to consider the influence of different factors as a whole and explore how they may relate, especially among university students. To fill this literature gap, this study aims to investigate the common factors that would impact undergraduates' socialising and the relationship between these factors.

In order to enable participants to express themselves as much as possible and thus collect a greater variety of data, the semi-structured interview is applied.

2. Method

2.1 Design

The study used the qualitative, individual semi-structured interview design. By giving interviewers far greater freedom to pursue any aspects they think are crucial, a semi-structured interview can better utilise the knowledge-producing potentials of dialogues (Brinkmann, 2014).

2.2 Participants

Nineteen participants (females=84.21%, males=15.79%) were selected from the second year Psychology with Education students at University College London, through opportunity sampling. This sampling method was chosen for its practicality and convenience, allowing for the efficient collection of data from a readily accessible pool of participants. Participants were aged from 19 to 20 ($M=19.32$, $SD=0.22$). Nationalities represented were Chinese

($n=13$), British ($n=4$), Korean ($n=1$), and Burmese ($n=1$).

2.3 Materials

The variables of interest were factors that would impact socialising. The interview was conducted by applying the designed semi-structured questions (Appendix). Specific questions are raised in terms of the different aspects that may have an impact on socialising and are progressively detailed. The interview questions that are related to “safety”, particularly regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, were inspired by Ward, (2020). In addition, the effect of students’ social addresses such as gender and race are considered while creating interview questions based on Giordano, (2003)’s study.

2.4 Procedure

The research team comprises a total of seven members. To generate the question list, we conducted a two-round review procedure. In the first round, seven group members shared their ideas and came up with the initial interview questions together. Subsequently, the pilot study was conducted among group members in order to delete or refine any unclear or biased questions, which aims to make the interview schedule easy to follow and avoid potential ethical issues.

Each of the seven group members approached at least two participants for the interview. Two of the group members, one interviewed three participants, and the other interviewed six, thus 19 sets of data were collected eventually.

All the participants expressed their consent before the interview. Following the interview, participants were briefed. Interviewers organised participants’ answers through both note-taking and recording, then turned them into transcripts as the source of data analysis (Appendix).

2.5 Data analysis plan

Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis with six steps was applied. Starting analysis with familiarising data by reading through the whole transcripts several times. Marking keywords with high frequency and thinking about initial codes. Seven codes were raised, followed by allocating them into four themes. Key findings from the entire transcript are summarised and categorised into themes (Appendix). This process was facilitated by the use of NVivo software, which aided in the effective categorisation and interpretation of interview data.

3. Results

Participants shared their thoughts regarding factors that may affect their socialising by answering progressive questions. The interview concludes with four main factors summarised below as the final themes.

3.1 Cultural background

Cultural background refers to the context of a person's life experience as it is influenced by membership in groups based on geography, ethnicity, race, financial status, gender, and other characteristics. During the interview, most of the participants indicated that it is easier to interact with people who identify with the same ethnicity as them. Specifically, speaking the same native language is considered an essential factor, since accurate expression and in-depth communication are important ways to promote social interaction.

P3: "As an international student, I feel that language is a big barrier, sometimes I just can't pick up their words immediately."

P9: "I normally hang out with female friends, and they are from my own ethnic background."

3.2 Academic pressure

Academic pressure indicates the time and energy that students have to take, in order to complete their academic goals. As undergraduates, socialising is significantly affected by academic aspects in both positive and negative ways. Although too much workload would reduce people's social time, it could also bring students closer together through learning and group work.

P5: "...most of my time is for studying, so I seldom have time to do other things until on vacation."

P9: "Group work can help me make new friends because we have more time to communicate and get along with each other."

3.3 Personality

Personality includes the traits and characteristics that make up a person's unique way of thinking and behaving. The main manifestation in the interviews is whether participants are outgoing and have the willingness to initiate social interaction. Besides, personality could be affected by academic aspects.

P9: "I am very indoorsy. I only meet new friends in the classroom and sometimes in the student dormitory."

P15: "I often initiate socialising with people, like starting conversations."

P4: "I became relatively extroverted in completing the group assignment because we needed to collaborate and communicate to complete the assignment well".

3.4 Social media

Social media refers to applications and websites that facilitate people to take part in social networking. Interview participants showed different attitudes to social media, someone considers it a useful tool to keep in touch with friends even at a distance, while others think it could weaken relationships.

P2: “When we seldom meet face to face, the most frequent way for us to keep in touch is through WeChat or WhatsApp.”

P5: “Online chatting, unlike face-to-face interaction, could alienate us and weaken our relationships.”

4. Discussion

The aim of this study was to unearth the key factors influencing socialising among second-year Psychology with Education students at University College London. Our findings converge on four pivotal elements: cultural background, academic pressure, personality, and social media. Each of these factors plays a distinct yet interconnected role in shaping the social dynamics among the participants.

Regarding the influence of cultural background. Uzzell et al., (2002) state that critical barriers to social inclusion include a lack of interest in different cultures and little to no socio-cultural identification with the area. Social inclusion means friendships, social connections, group activities, social networks, and social support (Friedrichs and Jagodzinski, 1999, as cited in Seeland et al., 2009). The result of the interview study also shows that it is easier to socialise with people with similar cultural backgrounds, therefore, this aligns with Uzzell’s conclusion. In addition, the close relationship between academic pressure and socialising suggested by Rayle and Chung (2007) is supported by this study. However, the impact of COVID-19 as indicated by Knight et al., (2021) has not been proven by this study’s results. Participants felt that COVID-19 no longer affected their daily social life. The difference between this study and previous literature may be due to the passage of time, the pandemic situation has improved.

The study, however, is not without its limitations. The predominance of Chinese female participants narrows the scope of the generalizability of our findings. Future research should strive for a more diverse and gender-balanced sample to enhance representativeness. Additionally, the familiarity between participants and interviewers, all belonging to the same course, might have inadvertently influenced the authenticity of responses. Future studies

could mitigate this by employing a more varied interviewer pool and possibly anonymising the interview process.

Considering these limitations, subsequent research should explore a broader demographic to examine whether these factors hold true across different cultural and educational backgrounds.

The validity of the interview was strengthened by using qualitative questions, thematic analysis, and fundamental statistical techniques to analyse the results. Specifically, the use of semi-structured interviews allows for flexibility and depth, enabling participants to express their views and experiences more fully. This approach can lead to more nuanced and detailed data, enhancing the validity of the findings.

From a practical standpoint, universities could leverage these insights to foster more inclusive and supportive social environments. For instance, organising social events that cater to diverse cultural backgrounds and academic interests could enhance social inclusivity. Additionally, understanding the role of academic pressure in shaping personality traits can inform student support services, such as counselling and stress management programmes.

To conclude, the findings of the study include four main factors that would affect socialising. Firstly, the language barrier is an influential aspect of different cultural backgrounds. Secondly, although academic pressure would hinder socialising, some people would enjoy the learning discussion and collaboration to promote social interactions. In addition, personality as another factor could be affected by compulsory academic tasks that promote an introverted student becoming more extroverted. Finally, social media would both facilitate social interaction and reduce interpersonal communication. To improve undergraduates' socialising, the university could organise more social events based on courses, together with considering these influencing factors.

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Appendix

What factors affect the social life of Year 2 Psychology with Education students at UCL?

Codes and themes: Cultural background-Green; Academic pressure-Red; Personality-purple; Social media-Pink

1Participant 1:

Hello and thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. We are conducting research on whether academic pressure hinders the ability for 2nd year undergraduate students to socialise. I just wanted to ask if you consent to participating in this interview. You may withdraw at any time

Yes, I do.

Okay so I will just start by asking some questions about yourself

How old are you?

19

What gender do you identify with?

Male

Where are you from?

China

And is that where you grew up?

China for 9 years and in Singapore for 9 years

What languages do you speak?

2 being English and Chinese

How are you finding your assignments and doing lectures in general?

Boring. Slightly too easy.

So it does not take up much of your time?

It takes a little time but it doesn't take mental effort

I understand

Would you say it's affected other areas of your life?

Well sometimes there is a lot of work but I wouldn't say it has affected other areas of my life

How often do you meet with people from university outside of classes?

2 or 3 times a week

And for how long do you meet them during those times?

Around 3 hours

Are you part of any societies?

I am currently a part of a society. Its just an EdTech society

What is the main composition of your friends in university? So like how did you meet them?

Mostly course mates who share a similar **background** with me, in life experiences or **ethnicity**.

Did you feel the need to make friends at university?

Making friends at university is a very important thing for me because I came to study here without any friends

Would you say UCL encourages you and provides opportunities to socialise?

Yeah

How so?

There are a lot of events organised by different people like UCL organises events and IOE does too, there are societies and you meet people in class, there is many ways.

Do you think your university could do more to promote socialisation?

More in person lectures

Do you think that covid might have been a reason for not many in person lectures?

Yes but before it was an issue. Now they can resume to doing in person lectures again

Are there any factors that may hold you back from socialising? (work, covid, family)

Factors? Probably my interests. I am interested in very specific things

So from what I understand, academics is not something that stops you from socialising with your friends

No not at all.

2Participant 2:

Hello and thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. We are conducting research on whether academic pressure hinders the ability for 2nd year undergraduate students to socialise. I just wanted to ask if you consent to participating in this interview? You may withdraw at any time

Yes I do

Okay so I will just start by asking some questions about yourself

How old are you?

19

What gender do you identify with?

female

Where are you from?

London

And is that where you grew up?

yes

How are you finding your assignments and doing lectures in general?

So far I am finding it okay. Sometimes I find myself in certain weeks playing catch up or I realise I am not as prepared for the next live session.

Would you say it's affected other areas of your life?

Yes because I have to plan everything around doing work like even if I go to meet friends, it would be all of us doing our **university work**. I want to be on top of my work so I can actually be able to see my friends for a bit. No matter where I go, I am doing work

Would you say that having to do all this work has affected your ability to communicate with friends?

In a sense yes, I can't communicate the way we would have like usually we would meet up and have a chat but I haven't been able to do that at all. We are able to communicate on the phone through **social media** but a lot of it is just catching up with each other online instead of in person

How often do you meet with people from university outside of classes?

Not often

And for how long do you meet them during those times?

Its never longer than 2 hours

Are you part of any societies?

Yes. I am part of acs and netball society this year

What is the main composition of your friends in university? So like how did you meet them?

Friends are mainly from my course and some are from the societies. My friends are mainly based around **the work** I am doing

Did you feel the need to make friends at university?

Yes, not that I felt pressured to make friends but it was something I was always going to do

Would you say UCL encourages you and provides opportunities to socialise?

Me personally no, but I see they do offer socialising like they do meet ups and coffee and chats to do. I don't join those because they are not the things I like to do. Its not very activity based. For example, if Psych and Edu can have a bowling meet up like that's my type of thing

Are there any factors that may hold you back from socialising? (work, covid, family)

Just the **amount of work** I have to do because when I do work like I can multitask but I will be in a very "I am doing work" mindset so I wouldn't be able to socialise the way I would like to. There is sometimes where there will be weeks where I choose socialising over doing work but that comes with its consequences for the next week because I'll be behind on work. I don't enjoy the anxiety that comes with trying to catch up on work. I hate having work pile up so making sure I'm up to date with work is my main priority this year.

Transcript (Jiayang Chen) :

3Participant 1:

Thank you for joining the interview. I want to let you know that you have the right to withdraw at any time in the interview. Are you sure you want to participate in this interview?

Yes, I am.

Do you have any concerns or worries about the interview?

Not really.

1.Okay. Now we will start from the background question. How old are you?

I'm 19.

2.What gender do you identify yourself with?

Female.

3.Okay. Where are you from?

I'm from China.

4.And are you grow up in China?

Yeah, I grew up in China. But I went to New Zealand for my high school. Yeah.

5. Do you think your gender or ethnicity affects how you interact with people, or how you make friends?

Like last year, when I'm in a group full of foreigners and they don't wear masks, I feel stressed when I'm the only one wearing a mask. They can't see my facial expressions, which makes it difficult for me to communicate.

Another thing is that I'm not a very good drinker, so when I go out drinking with locals, I don't feel like I fit in because I'm not a very good drinker due to my health. I think the difference in wearing a mask is a **cultural difference**, and the way I socialize by going out for drinks, going to pubs etc. is also a **culture shock** for me. As an international student, I also feel that **language** is a big barrier, sometimes I can't understand what they are saying, and I can't pick up their words immediately. This makes it difficult for us to discuss academic issues in class, but it is difficult for us to communicate more deeply because of the **differences in language and upbringing**, and we cannot build a deeper friendship.

6. So do you think that as an international student you will find it more difficult to communicate with others in teamwork than locals? (extended question)

I think this is fine, the difference is not that big. The cultural differences I felt were mainly in the social aspect, but the academic aspect was fine.

7.Okay. What languages do you speak? What about the friends around you?

Well, I speak Chinese. Yeah, Chinese is my first language. Most of them speak Chinese.

8.Are you willing to take the initiative in socializing?

I think it depends on different person. For people from the **same country** as me, I am happy to initiate socialising with them because of the language connection, but for people from different countries, I would be afraid of not being able to communicate well with them and not socialise with them.

9. Do you feel the need to spend a lot of money on socializing?

I don't think it's necessary. I think socialising and making friends comes naturally and there is no need to spend more money to enrich your social life.

10.Okay. How are you finding your curriculum or syllabus?

Oh, I think most of it is quite difficult. Well, before year two, I think it is more difficult than year one. It's sometimes hard to handle it.

11. Would you say it's affected other areas of your life?

Oh, yeah. Well, sometimes I cannot get enough sleep. Because I have **too much work** to do. And when it gets to the exam period, I have less time for social. I just don't have much to spend time with my friends and it feels like it's affecting my social life a bit.

12: So, are you think when you doing these assignments you would shorten the time to meet with your friends? (extended question)

Yeah, I don't think I'd be in the mood to meet up with friends when I'm doing something like that. I think at that time I would not want to socialize even if I was glued to the computer or **studying**, I would not want to meet up with any of my friends.

13: Oh, so you think it will affect your communication with your friends, right?

Yeah, because I put too much time on the **assessments**.

14: Okay. Do you feel that a heavy academic load also affects social interaction with your family? (extended question)

I know that some people get some psychological comfort from socializing with their families, but I feel that when I'm really busy, I might ignore them. Because I'm an international student, I used to talk to my family once every three days, and when I had a lot of homework, I might talk to them once a week, and I'd naturally forget about it.

15: Okay. And next question is how often do you meet with people in and outside university?

Oh, well, from Monday to Friday, I went to school. So, I meet people from university every day. And for weekend, I also tend to spend time with friends in the university because most of my friends are from UCL. So yeah, I stay with them all the time. I think.

16: Okay, and are you part of any societies?

Well, you mean for this year or last year?

Both years.

Okay. Well, last year I went to the UCL badminton society, but I seldom attend yeah. For this year, I go to you know, CSSA, which is Chinese students and scholars' association. And I'm also the member of a hiking society.

17: What is the main composition of your friends in university?

You mean the culture background?

Yeah.

Well, most of my friends are Chinese, you know? Yeah. I don't think I have any foreign friends because I'm studying at IOE. Yeah. Everybody here is international students.

18: Do you friends all students, or they are people from societies? (extended question)

Oh, well. I think most of them are from, like, my module, like psychology with education or education. Yeah, and some of them are from my society. Yeah. And some of them are from my dormitory.

19: Where did you meet them?

I think it's usually at school, or in the dorm, or maybe a date to go out and meet up.

20: Do you feel the need to make friends at university?

Yeah, I think so. Making friends at university makes me feel more like I'm in the group and close to my classmates and we can talk about our studies together and their opinions are very important to me. Right. Because I spend most of my time at school, I think it's important to make friends at school.

21. Do you have any friends like from home?

I have one. She's in the same high school with me. And we come here together, and we live together. Yeah. just one.

22. Would you say UCL encourages you and provides opportunities to socialize?

Yeah, I think so. Because UCL has many societies, and everyone can find their favorite society. In this society, you can make a lot of friends. But also, I don't think UCL hosts enough events? If I want to make friends with people from different cultures, it might be a bit difficult.

23. So, you think UCL should increase activities in the society to promote socialization?

Yes. Because I'm an introvert. I need more activities for me to socialize.

24. Are there any factors that may hold you back from socialising? (work, covid, family)

I don't think there's any more, it's all covered.

Okay. This is the end of our interview. You still have the right to withdraw. Do you want to withdraw, or you feel good?

I'm good with it.

Okay, thanks a lot.

4Participant 2:

Thank you for joining the interview. I want to let you know that you have the right to withdraw at any time in the interview. Are you sure you want to participate in this interview?

Yes.

Do you have any concerns or worries about the interview?

No.

1. Okay. Now we will start from the background question. How old are you?

I'm 19.

2. What gender do you identify yourself with?

Female.

3. Okay. Where are you from?

I'm from China.

4. And are you grow up in China?

Yes.

5. What languages do you speak? What about the friends around you?

Chinese. Chinese.

6. Do you think your gender or ethnicity affects how you interact with people, or how you make friends?

I think ethnicity might be something that wouldn't affect. Race doesn't affect me very much because I think everyone is friendly, I think the most important thing is the **language**. When I talk to my native speakers, for example, I say something interesting, and they understand it. But when I speak to someone who speaks another language, I can't express it. I think it has something to do with the **environment** I grew up in and the culture I was exposed to, as well as my language. And for gender, I tend to be more social with girls socially because I'm a girl, so we might have more in common, but with guys we might not have as much in common and hobbies. So, I still prefer to communicate with people of the same sex.

7. You've just mentioned culture and growing environment as factors that may affect your social life, can you expand on that? (extended question)

I think it's like I'm Chinese, in Chinese society, we still have a strong sense of boundaries between people in social situations. But I think now that I'm in the UK, I feel a different culture. For example, if you meet someone for the first time, they will be very warm and will talk for a long time or they may talk about something personal. It just feels like I might not know people that well, but people will still talk to me a lot. But with Chinese people, you might not be so enthusiastic about talking to people you don't know that well. So sometimes I feel a bit uncomfortable because of this different sense of boundaries. And then they often have parties to make friends, but in our country, there might not be so many parties, which would also make me less comfortable. For me, I prefer to have a few people to talk to in peace and quiet.

8. So apart from these points do you think there are any other aspects that affect your social interaction with others?

I think it also has to do with my own **personality**, I think I'm the type of person who is willing to go and socialize with people, so I'm probably more likely to interact with people as well. If I'm going to go and make friends with people, I'm going to look for people who have the same personality as me as well. And then I think it has to do with the three outlooks as well, if I can't talk to someone, it could be because we have different outlooks. Maybe we would have a big difference in communication and that would also hinder me socially.

9. So do you think your being an international student will affect your ability to interact with locals? (extended question)

To a certain extent I do, because I don't feel very fluent in English, so I don't feel confident and awkward when communicating with others in English.

10. Are you willing to take the initiative in socializing?

I think it depends on my mood. If I'm in a good mood or full of energy, I'm probably more likely to socialize. But if I'm in a bad mood, I might not socialize. Because I think it takes a lot of energy to be social with people. And I think the occasion is also important, if I'm going to a social situation, I'll also initiate to talk to people.

11. Do you feel the need to spend a lot of money on socializing?

I don't think it's necessary because I don't think if your friend is going to cost you a lot of money, it's not worth having that friend.

12. How are you finding your curriculum or syllabus?

I think the lessons are fine, but the level of difficulty varies a bit from lesson to lesson, for me the knowledge is still relatively easy, it's mainly the language, maybe I will have a bit more difficulty than the local students in remembering and understanding.

13. Do you find your assignments difficult?

Yes.

14. Has it affected your communication with friends?

Yes. If I have to watch a lot of videos sometimes or write very difficult papers, I won't have the energy to drink time to socialize. For example, if I'm tired from Monday to Friday, then I might just want to stay home at the weekend.

15. Would you go out with friends if you were writing your assignments?

If my assignments are **due** soon, I probably won't socialize, if it's not so soon I should go out with friends and socialize.

16. How often do you meet with people in and outside university?

I basically see my friends once or twice a week, all at weekends, but I see basically all of my friends with the same profession.

17. Are you part of any societies?

Not now, but before that I was in the UCL board game club.

18. What is the main composition of your friends in university?

My friends are basically my classmates and people who live in the same flat as me, because we see each other a lot and are in the same age group, so we have more in common.

19. Do you have friends from home?

Yes, most of my friends I met in high school because I went to an international school in high school and a lot of my classmates went to university in London, so we got to know them better because we had known each other for longer.

20. Where did you meet them?

We usually meet at shopping malls, restaurants or where we live. Because my friends and I love to shop and eat, we usually meet there. Some of my friends also live in the same flat as me, so we see each other a lot too.

21. Do you feel the need to make friends at university?

Yes. For example, making friends with people in the same major may help me later in my job related to my major. Including if I know some seniors who can also help me in my studies.

22. Would you say UCL encourages you and provides opportunities to socialize?

Yes. Our school has many societies and our major often organizes events when we go to and make friends. Some of our group activities also increase socialization.

23. Do you think your university could do more to promote socializing?

I think the school could organize events for various festivals, for example. But I think the school already offers a lot of social activities.

24. Are there any factors that may hold you back from socialising? (work, covid, family)

Well, I still think **language** is one of the biggest reasons because as an international student, I speak English when I socialise with foreigners. I usually avoid socialising with them because I'm embarrassed.

Okay. This is the end of our interview. You still have the right to withdraw.

No.

Okay, thanks a lot.

Interview (by Ruike Tang):**5 Transcript 1: (9:32)**

I: Okay, firstly, thanks for participating our interview. The whole interview may take you few minutes to accomplish. During the whole interview, you have the right not to answer the question or withdraw at any time. I'll ask you some questions and record of your responses but your information will be kept confidential. Do you have any questions and concern about the interview before we start?

C: I'm cool with all.

I: How old are you?

C: 19

I: What gender do you identify with?

C: Female

I: Where are you from?

C: China

I: Where did you grow up?

C: Also in China.

I. What languages do you speak?

C: Chinese and a bit of English.

I: What about the friends around you, their gender, age, ethnicity and language?

C: Most of them come from the same country and have the same ethnicity like me. They are all around maybe 19-21. They speak both English and Chinese, maybe also their local dialect.

I: Are you willing to take the initiative in socializing?

C: Actually, it depends. If I am in a completely new place and I need friends necessarily, I may push myself to initially talk to them and make friends with them. But if is not necessary, I seldom initially make friends.

I: Do you feel the need to spend a lot of money on socializing?

C: No, I don't think friendship may link with any material thing. A real friend will not let you spend much money on them.

I: How are you finding your curriculum or syllabus?

C: Very very hard! There are lots of essays to write and readings to read. And I found it hard to manage my times with these **assignments** as there are so many. I need to spend plenty times to do them, I felt mountains of pressure.

I: Would you say it's affected other areas of your life?

C: Yes of course, because there are only 24 hours a day, but to be honest, **most of my time is for study**, so I seldom have time to do other things until in vacations.

I: Has it affected your communication with friends, etc.?

C: Definitely! Because we are all busy with assignments, we seldom meet face to face, most frequent way for us to keep in touch is through **WeChat or Whatsapp**. But chatting online would be completely different comparing to face to face. I think chatting online would alienate us and weaken our relationships.

I: How often do you meet with people from university?

C: Almost everyday, I go for classes and meet the professors and classmates.

I: Are you part of any societies?

C: No, because i feel that joining any clubs would be exhausted, as there are so many previews and reviews to do, I have no energy and time to socialize. Every day when i go back home i just want to stay alone.

I: What is the main composition of your friends in university?

C: Well, most of my friends are my classmates in the same major, and some are my high school friends.

I: Questions following this answer: Where did you meet them?

C: I meet them usually in IOE, because we have many same modules and are luckily to be assigned to the same seminar group. For meeting friends not in UCL, I often take trains to meet them as they are studying in Manchester.

I: Do you feel the need to make friends at university?

C: Well, I think people are group-lived animals, i absolutely need friends but i do not need to make many friends, you know? It doesn't relate to quantity, as my energy is limited, so just a little socializing is enough for me.

I: Would you say UCL encourages you and provides opportunities to socialize?

C: Good question. Yeah~, UCL do provide opportunities for socializing such as the welcome week. Moreover, you know, as there are many Chinese international students in UCL, Chinese student here established an organization called 'Chinese Student Union in UCL', which is to provide social events and activities for Chinese international students like me, to bond us, make us feel like at home. But not all people would join these great events as the **heavy academic pressure** again.

I: Are there any factors that may hold you back from socializing?

C: I would like to say **Personality**. I am an **introverted person**, and I am afraid to talk with foreigners and strangers, especially to open the conversation. So i may miss many chances to make new friends. Also, the covid by the way. In year 1, most of time i just stay alone and not to hang out with others because i am afraid to get covid.

6Transcript 2 (9:42):

I: Okay, firstly, thanks for participating our interview. The whole interview may take you few minutes to accomplish. During the whole interview, you have the right not to answer the question or withdraw at any time. I'll ask you some questions and record of your responses but your information will be kept confidential. Do you have any questions and concern about the interview before we start?

C: No.

I: How old are you?

C: 19, nearly 20

I: What gender do you identify with?

C: Female

I: Where are you from?

C: China

I: Where did you grow up?

C: China.

I: What languages do you speak?

C: Chinese, Cantonese and English.

I: What about the friends around you, their gender, age, ethnicity and language?

C: Most of my friends are from China, but some of them may don't have the same ethnicity like me, you know there are like 56 ethnicities in China. They are around my age and speak Chinese and English. I also have few friends from other countries.

I: Are you willing to take the initiative in socializing?

C: Sure.

I: Do you feel the need to spend a lot of money on socializing?

C: If it is necessary, that is fine. But usually, I don't think I spend much money on that, or maybe just in my own case.

I: How are you finding your curriculum or syllabus?

C: I think I have a **tight schedule**, and I quite feel stressful about the assessments. Teachers usually send the guidance for the...like essays, but sometimes they just assume that we all know how to accomplish all the things. But actually, there are many things they didn't mention so I need to figure out by myself and it usually need much times especially for students like me who did not speak English as my first language. So it takes much more time than those native speakers to understand the instructions and then finish the work.

I: Would you say it's affected other areas of your life?

C: I think like, so far...yes. Because I think I am still adapting the life in university now, and I need to find a balance between my social life and my academic study. So sometimes when **assessments** are setting, I do have a full schedule. I tend spend more time on that. Once I didn't finish the task, the other things I planned to do will be postponed. So my plan would be affect by assignments.

I: Has it affected your communication with friends, etc.?

C: Well, I think if you communicate with your friends about assessments or coursework that is not a big problem. You can all complain about that and after that you can find a way out. However, if you guys are in different programs, and you know the stress and the level would be different right? So you do not want to be a person who always complaining things to your friends, so most of the time you just hide those negative feelings.

I: How often do you meet with people from university?

C: Emmm... You mean just schoolmates or..., well I think is everyday, no matter you have class or not, I just prefer... you know going to the school library because I really like the environment there.

I: Are you part of any societies?

C: Yeah, so I joined the UCL Hiking Club. We went to Brighton last week. I feel like when you are in that group, you just put everything about academics away. You just like emerge yourself in that environment with sea and cliffs. And also I joined the live music society and psychological with education society.

I: What is the main composition of your friends in university?

C: Talking about friends, you know sometimes if I consider them as my friends, maybe they don't. So I think I make friends with definitely...emmm... the students we study in the same program and some of my friends are from high school but they are now in year 3 as I gapped a year because of the COVID. And also I make friends with the club members. And you know, sometimes it is really hard for me to make friends in other programs, you know what I mean? Because we do not have much connections.

I: Do you feel the need to make friends at university?

C: Yeah, definitely. But sometimes you are not gonna push yourself or like force yourself to make friends, but it is really important. Because sometimes you need to talk with others or like discuss, for example, if you are doing your homework or project, you guys can discuss and find a way out together. Otherwise, it takes much time to explore on your own. So I think friends in university do play an important role. Also having friends can maintain your mental health.

I: Would you say UCL encourages you and provides opportunities to socialize?

C: Well, based on what I said, I think they have done enough. But it just depends on whether you want to, you know, join those activities or not. But for me, I have my own way to making friends.

I: Are there any factors besides academic pressure that may hold you back from socializing?

C: Well I think just my **personal preference**. It is just about my own living style. I making friends in my own pace. Sometimes, if I drag someone to do some stuff, it may make that person uncomfortable. And socializing, sometimes, I feel it is easy to have different options toward something, but when I talking to others, especially with people who comes from different cultural backgrounds or something, it might be very hard for me express freely.

7Transcript 3: (7:01)

I: Okay, firstly, thanks for participating our interview. The whole interview may take you few minutes to accomplish. During the whole interview, you have the right not to answer the question or withdraw at any time. I'll ask you some questions and record of your responses but your information will be kept confidential. Do you have any questions and concern about the interview before we start?

C: No, that is fine .

I: Do you have any concerns or worries about the interview before we start?

C: No.

I: How old are you?

C: 19

I: What gender do you identify with?

C: Female

I: Where are you from?

C: China

I: Where did you grow up?

C: China.

I: What languages do you speak?

C: Chinese

I: What about the friends around you, their gender, age, ethnicity and language?

C: They all speak the **same language**, come from the same county, and are female in my age.

I: Are you willing to take the initiative in socializing?

C: No.

I: Do you feel the need to spend a lot of money on socializing?

C: I don't think so, it may be wasteful to spend much time and money on relationships.

I: How are you finding your curriculum or syllabus?

C: My reading ability is not that good and it takes much time for me to read, so I cannot finish all the **readings** for every week. Other than that, everything is fine.

I: Would you say it's affected other areas of your life?

C: Yes, it may bring stress to my life, I may not sleep well at night.

I: Has it affected your communication with friends, etc.?

C: No actually because I don't go for a social a lot. For most of the time, I just stay alone.

I: How often do you meet with people from university?

C: Emmm, you mean exclude the school time or...?

I: Yes, both ok.

C: Well, that's probably be class time, and besides class time maybe not frequent. To be honest, I normally do not meet people on purpose, but if I want to go for an activity such as hiking, I may meet in that occasion.

I: Are you part of any societies?

C: You mean clubs and societies?

I: Yes.

C: Yes, I joined the hiking society, yoga society, art society and film society. But I didn't attend it much so far.

I: Why didn't go for that much (Question following the answer:)?

C: Because I usually do not have so much time to attend these activities because **readings and pre-course recording** have already occupied most of my time.

I: What is the main composition of your friends in university?

C: Well, as I just said, I do not meet people if it is not necessary and most of my spare time is to stay alone except when I need to go for class and school clubs.

I: Do you feel the need to make friends at university?

C: Emmm... not necessarily need friends in my own case. Although they definitely would bring happiness to me sometimes, for most of time, I prefer stay alone.

I: Would you say UCL encourages you and provides opportunities to socialize?

C: Emmm... I think the opportunities to make friends is given by myself not by university. They do provide opportunities, but for me, they are not important for me to socialize. I like to communicate with people in the process of doing what I like, but not actively socialize with others.

I: Are there any factors besides academic pressure that may hold you back from socializing?

C: Probably it depends on the **personality of the person**. I am definitely **introverted**; I think communicating with people sometimes it's just an exhausting thing for me. And when I stay alone, I would be more energetic I think,

and when I socialize with people, even though that process might be generally happy, but after that, I would feel exhausted.

Participant 4: (10:22)

I: Okay, firstly, thanks for participating our interview. The whole interview may take you few minutes to accomplish. During the whole interview, you have the right not to answer the question or withdraw at any time. I'll ask you some questions and record of your responses but your information will be kept confidential. Do you have any questions and concern about the interview before we start?

C: No.

I: How old are you?

C: 19

I: What gender do you identify with?

C: Male

I: Where are you from?

C: China

I: Where did you grow up?

C: China, Hong Kong.

I: What languages do you speak?

C: Chinese, cantonese and English

I: What about the friends around you, their gender, age, ethnicity and language?

C: They all speak the **same language**, come from the **same county**, both male and female around my age.

I: Are you willing to take the initiative in socializing?

C: Not really.

I: Do you feel the need to spend a lot of money on socializing?

C: It is fine, making friends of course needs money. But I'm not gonna spend a lot on that.

I: How are you finding your curriculum or syllabus?

C: I find my assignments in Moodle and through emails...

I: Sorry, I mean what do you think of your assignment in university? How are you doing with them, it is easy, hard or...?

C: Oh! Ok, I used to think it is stressful, especially when I was in year 1. But in year 2, I actually feel quite excited about doing these tasks.

I: Why do you think it is excited to do the assignments and do they affect your life? (Questions following the answer)

C: It provide me with opportunities to have a different perspective around my surroundings. **But the assignments do not actually affect my daily life. If I have to say, it may affect my interaction with my friends.**

I: How does it affect your interaction with your friends? Could you please tell me a bit more? (Questions following the answer)

C: **Sure. It affect my relationship. To be more specific, I become more extroverted and I am willing to listen and think about their opinions.**

I: How often do you meet with people from university?

C: Once or twice a week outside the campus, five times a week in campus because I have classes from Monday to Friday.

I: Are you part of any societies?

C: You mean clubs? Yes! I joint the KPOP clubs in UCL.

I: why do you join this group? (Questions following the answer)

C: Actually I joined this group because some of my friends encourage me to join the club and make more friends and enjoy the KPOP culture.

I: What is the main composition of your friends in university?

C: Sorry what is composition?

I: It is like what kind of people are you looking for in order to make friends within university?

C: Ok, well, Just a few of my friends are from the same major. And Most of my friends in university is post graduate from UCL and KCL. I first met my best friend in university is from 'Xiaohongshu' which is a **social media** in China. I quite like making friends older than me because they are more experienced than me and they often take me and help me to socialize, recommending good places and restaurants for me to go.

I: Do you feel the need to make friends at university?

C: Not really, although there are peers of the same major, I am just not eager to make friends with them and I prefer going to the lecture and seminars by myself. However, I felt quite interesting to share view and discuss with them in class. From my perspective, making friends is not a compulsory mission, I do not refuse to socialize, but just let it be.

I: Would you say UCL encourages you and provides opportunities to socialize?

C: It do provide opportunities. There are quite a lot of clubs and activists held by UCL. But I would say how to make friends and who are you going to find with depend on yourself.

I: Are there any other reason that may hold you back from socializing?

C: Back from...?

I: I mean are there any other reason that may be an obstacle for you to make friends?

C: For me, there are three main reasons: distance, **social media** and interests.

9Participant 5: (8:31)

I: Okay, firstly, thanks for participating our interview. The whole interview may take you few minutes to accomplish. During the whole interview, you have the right not to answer the question or withdraw at any time. I'll ask you some questions and record of your responses but your information will be kept confidential. Do you have any questions and concern about the interview before we start?

C: No.

I: How old are you?

C: 19

I: What gender do you identify with?

C: Female

I: Where are you from?

C: China

I: Where did you grow up?

C: China.

I: What languages do you speak?

C: Chinese and English

I: What about the friends around you, their gender, age, ethnicity and language?

C: They speak mandarin, they are all about 19 or 20, they are mostly Chinese and in Han ethnicity.

I: Are you willing to take the initiative in socializing?

C: Na~.

I: Do you feel the need to spend a lot of money on socializing?

C: It is okay to spend money on a relationship, but do not overspending.

I: How are you finding your curriculum or syllabus?

C: I find it is quite difficult to deal with my **essays** cause I do not have much practices in my high school.

I: Would you say it's affected other areas of your life?

C: Yes, sometimes when I see the scores and results do not match my expectations, I would feel very upset and frustrated. And when writing my essays, I feel it really mess up my daily routine because I will use much time to focus on my essays and forget to cooking and doing my laundry, sometimes I suffer from insomnia when things are gathering together.

I: Has it affected your communication with friends, etc.?

C: Well, **I think some group works can help me to make new friends because we have more time to communicate and get along with each other.** I think it is more positive for my relationship with my friends.

I: Do you feel the need to spend a lot of money on socializing?

C: It is fine, making friends of course needs money. But I'm not gonna spend a lot on that.

I: How often do you meet with people from university?

C: I am gonna say I am a very **indoorsy person**. I only meet new friends in classroom and sometimes in student dormitory.

I: Are you part of any societies?

C: No.

I: What is the main composition of your friends in university?

C: What is that?

I: It is like what kind of people are you looking for in order to make friends within university?

C: I think they are all females. Cause I normally hang out with female friends and they are from my own **ethnicity background which is Chinese**. I would be more comfortable to interacting with them.

I: Do you feel the need to make friends at university

C: Yeah. I like living in the collective society. Now I just live alone in my studio and I feel quite lonely. And I feel happy when I am with my friends. But I am also a very **shy person**, and it might be difficult for me to actively making friends or starting a conversation. I feel quite hard to make friends actually.

I: Would you say UCL encourages you and provides opportunities to socialize?

C: Yes, it does. I can see many news and events that held by UCL, and I often receive the email of their advocations. But I do not really want to go.

I: If academic pressure is not the factor, then what are the factors that may hold you back from socializing?
(Questions following the answer)

C: My **personality** definitely be one factor. I am afraid to staying in an unfamiliar environment. For me, making friends needs great courage. Another one is the social stability. You know recently there are many crimes happened which are really horrible, so I would go out often, especially at night. The other factor I would like to say is there might be some **culture differences** among people in UCL, there are people from everywhere. I find it quite difficult to communicate with them as we may have completely opposed and distinct social etiquette and habits. For example, when some foreign people asked me 'how are you?' I may feel very embarrassed and do not know what to say although I know this is just a kind greeting, because in Chinese culture, we seldom greeting like this, we would say 'have you eat yet?', and I know this would also be quite wired for them. Moreover, some topic they usually chat is very different from us, so I sometimes cannot get their point and better to be silent.

10 Participant 6: (5:13)

I: Okay, firstly, thanks for participating our interview. The whole interview may take you few minutes to accomplish. During the whole interview, you have the right not to answer the question or withdraw at any time. I'll ask you some questions and record of your responses but your information will be kept confidential. Do you have any questions and concern about the interview before we start?

C: It is cool.

I: How old are you?

C: 20

I: What gender do you identify with?

C: Male

I: Where are you from?

C: Korea

I: Where did you grow up?

C: Korea

I: What languages do you speak?

C: Korea and English

I: What about the friends around you, their gender, age, ethnicity and language?

C: Both male and female, the age ranges from 16~22, maybe, the language...em, Korean, Chinese Japanese and English.

I: Are you willing to take the initiative in socializing?

C: Yep.

I: Do you feel the need to spend a lot of money on socializing?

C: Yeah.

I: How are you finding your curriculum or syllabus?

C: I find it is a bit hard. Because I think I am quite struggling with writing essays.

I: Would you say it's affected other areas of your life?

C: Sometimes I think it affect my mood. I do not feel really happy.

I: Has it affected your communication with friends, etc.?

C: No I think, I still communicating with my friends. I think assignments will not affect this.

I: How often do you meet with people from university?

C: Almost everyday because I have classes everyday.

I: Are you part of any societies?

C: Yeah, I am part of Mahjong society.

I: What is the main composition of your friends in university?

C: Is it the position my friends are in my mind?

I: No, It is like what kind of people are you looking for in order to make friends with in university?

C: I think it is mainly from my classmates in psy with edu and sometimes people from education studies as we may have crossover classes. I think sometimes I also make friends in my dorm.

I: Do you feel the need to make friends at university?

C: Yeah, of course. I think friends means a lot to me. Friends are really important.

I: Would you say UCL encourages you and provides opportunities to socialize?

C: Yeah. I think there are many societies and clubs in UCL. And some activities for festivals as well. For example, Halloween, they have some events.

I: If academic pressure is not the factor, then what are the factors that may hold you back from socializing?

(Questions following the answer)

C: Last year, because of *covid*, I would be afraid to join activities in public. If there are many people, then I will not go, so this might affect my socializing. But this year, I find covid is not that serious as I think so I do not think this may hold me back from socializing this year.

Background information: Age, gender, ethnicity, nationality

Participant 1: Age: 19 Gender: Female Ethnicity: Chinese Nationality: China

11 Transcripts (Tingru Wei)

Participant 1

Background information: Age, gender, ethnicity, nationality

Age: 19 Gender: female Ethnicity: Chinese Nationality: Chinese

1. Do you think your gender or ethnicity affects how you interact with people, or how you make friends?

Well, I think there is no distinct connection between genders and making friends. But for me, I personally prefer to make friends with females. I think we have more common topics to talk about on, but I also have some male friends, I think I also can get along well them well.

I think also similar to my answer from the first question, there is no gap between every race. But I think it's easier to communicate with people from the same cultural background and **I am willing to make more friends from different countries, which can improve my speaking skills or a broaden my horizons.**

2. What languages do you speak? What about the friends around you?

Yes, of course. All most all of my friends speak Chinese.

-(Do you think language is one of the factors that affect your socializing?)

Yes I think so, I mean with the **language barrier**, it is always harder to understand each other exactly.

3. Are you willing to take the initiative in socializing?

Well, I think it depends on the other person's reaction. Maybe I'll try it first. But if he or she refused to continue communicate with me, maybe I will just stay passively, but if I think the other one is how to say, anxious to make friends with me, then I will become **active**, and try to respond actively.

4. Do you feel the need to spend a lot of money on socialising?

I would say definitely not. I think friendship can't be measured by the money. Sometimes you need to spend money maybe like to buy some New Year gifts or Christmas gifts for friends is also a way to keep the relationship, but I don't think money is the measurement of your relationship.

I think you may not understand this question clearly. I mean sometimes when we hanging out, having food, or watching movie with our friends, commonly it will cost our money. Do you think this will affect your socializing? (Further explain the question)

Ohh, yes, then I would agree that if will actually limit the number of times a month I go out and spend money.

5. How are you finding your assignments or curriculum?

So this year, I can feel that the schoolwork is tougher than last year. But I think I still have enough spare time to socialize and to join the societies, and I'm trying to find the balance between my work and my social life.

a) Would you say it's affected other areas of your life?

Yes, I mean with some tight deadlines, I will spend most of my day on assignments, and have less time on entertainments.

b) If so, has it affected your communication with friends, etc.?

Well, it depends on like for the friends from the same major, I will say it is not, instead, it to kind of improve my communication and we can discuss questions together to get more close.

But for the friends maybe from the other majors or from other universities I think this may affect since I will spend less time with them.

6. How often do you meet with people in and outside university?

Well regarding people from the same course with me, the time we meet is basically depends on when we have classes, so about 3-4 times per week I think. And people from outside of my university i usually meet up during weekends, so I think about 1-time pre week.

7. Are you part of any societies?

Yes, the Chinese calligraphy society.

-(Do you think it helps you to socialize?)

Yes, absolutely. Though most of the participants are Chinese, but there are some foreigners so it's very proud for me to introduce Chinese culture and teach them how to write. I think during this process is very easy to make friends.

8. What is the main composition of your friends in university?

(Where did you meet them - societies, course friends, home, etc.)

Most of them are from the same course with me in the university, and friends from my high school.

9. Do you feel the need to make friends at university? (i.e., do you have friends from home and therefore not "need" to make them at university)

Yes, defiantly it is needed. And I always want to meet new people, especially for people of my own course, we can discuss learning content, and promote each other.

10. Would you say UCL encourages you and provides opportunities to socialise? If so, how?

Yes. The one I want to highlight this are societies. I think UCL has so many societies that cover all kinds of area and you are very free to join anyone. But I think for the learning part, we have so many breakout rooms of small seminars with such a small group of people. That means sometimes I feel so limited that I even do not know most of my classmates from the same major after a year study. So, I think maybe school can conduct some lectures that involved more students. But that was due to *Covid 19*, and for this year, you

see, most people wouldn't wear masks anymore, and there is no gap between people or we just kind of go back to normal life.

11. Do you think your university could do more to promote socialising?

I actually think what UCL has offered is fair enough, the point is just whether the students would like to take that opportunity.

12. Are there any other factors that hold you back from socializing?

My mood, sometimes I just feel exhausted to socialize with anyone so I may just stay in my room alone to recover. Besides, last year when the covid pandemic situation was severe I think it affected my social life, but this year I will not take covid into consideration very much.

12 Participant 2

Background information: Age, gender, ethnicity, nationality

Age: 19 Gender: female Ethnicity: Chinese Nationality: Chinese

1. Do you think your gender or ethnicity affects how you interact with people, or how you make friends?

Well yeah, I think it does have certain effects, since I am Chinese and I tend to make friends with Chinese people because it is more easier to communicate in Chinese and you also will have the **same cultural background**, and also as a female, I tend to make friends with girls, not with boys, because I think I feel more comfortable with girls than I was with boys. And also, for the environment. I mean, like the major I'm doing there were not a lot of boys. So yeah, I usually just make friend with, you know, Chinese girls.

2. What languages do you speak? What about the friends around you?

I speak Chinese as my first language, and also English. So do my friends.

(-Do you consider language is also one of the factors of your socializing?)

Yeah, just like I've said before, about the ethnicity is something about cultural background, and sure. When you're using the same language, you don't have that kind of **language barrier** when you're communicating. So I think yeah, for example, I speak Chinese and English. I would say there is little possibility for me to become quite close friends with other European, like French or Italian because you know there is certain language barrier.

3. Are you willing to take the initiative in socializing?

Well, I feel like I will behave just neutral. I feel like if there is an opportunity for me to meet people, I will be open to do that. But I will definitely not grab everyone on a street and just ask some question, but I will say that it depends on my mood, and also the environment of that day. Yeah. So if I feel comfortable enough, I will be I will talk to people that I don't know before. But if isn't, I will just not.

4. Do you feel the need to spend a lot of money on socialising?

I don't think there's a need for that. Because I feel like socializing is something that should be natural, and it should be you know, you don't have to make a lot of efforts to do that. So if you like saying, like, paying a lot of money to do this big dinner, and I made a lot of people from maybe upper class, but eventually I may not become friends with them because we are where, you know, we don't have much to communicate, and we don't have much in common. So I feel like it's just yeah, just let it let it be. I can make friends with my classmates or the friends I know around. So, I don't think there's a need to, you know, spend a lot of money.

5. How are you finding your curriculum or syllabus?

Well I find my curriculum is fine. It's just there are a lot of writings to do a lot of reading. So it can be some time consuming time if I'm putting my effort in, but usually I won't. So it would just be a little bit stressful when it comes to some deadlines.

a) Would you say it's affected other areas of your life?

I would say only around **deadlines or exams**.

b) If so, has it affected your communication with friends, etc.?

I think not that much and somehow maybe kind of facilitate my communication with my friends because when I'm feeling super stressful, I would like to chat with my friends and talk to them. Yeah, you know, release that kind of academic stress.

6. How often do you meet with people in and outside university?

Okay, so I basically meet people in the same university every day. And the friends who are not going to the same university, well for them, I think it may be kind of not frequently, like, maybe half a month.

7. Are you part of any societies?

No

(-Do you think it may help if you take one?)

Yeah, I think it will help. Because, well, I think it will help because we have like something in common, same habits, or same hobby or something like that, but it will also be kind of time consuming for me. So, I would rather not to take.

8. What is the main composition of your friends in university?

(Where did you meet them - societies, course friends, home, etc.)

Well, I'll say the majority of them are coursemate and some of them are just people who I knew from high school. Maybe a little bit of them is just who I live with.

9. Do you feel the need to make friends at university? (i.e., do you have friends from home and therefore not "need" to make them at university)

I think there's definitely the need to make new friends because it cannot, let's say you cannot spend a whole life with your high school classmates. Yeah. Is that so realistic? And I feel like when it comes to university, you should push yourself to meet new people, and to make new friends to see what others like and, you know, to, I don't know, just make more connection.

10. Would you say UCL encourages you and provides opportunities to socialise?

If so, how?

Well, I'll say it definitely does, because there are lots of communities going around in campus and also, during the courses we were told to do group work, something like that. So yeah, I would say UCL does encourage.

11. Do you think your university could do more to promote socialising?

Well, I would say yes, they can do more. Well, for example, something like compulsory activities, something like that. But I would say that it's just my own opinion. Someone else would definitely not like to do that. But I will say that because those activities are not compulsory. So sometimes I would be very reluctant to do it. Because I will *feel shy*, or sometimes I will feel it is just unnecessary, and then not to do that.

12. Are there any other factors that hold you back from socializing?

Well, I think two main factors will affect my socialising. One is the overall social environment. If it is a big occasion with a lot of people, such as a party, I may be more willing to talk to people I know; the second is the social object, if the other one is also willing to socialize with me or have a lot of common topics with me, I may be more willing to continue chatting, otherwise, it may be terminated.

13 Transcript (Lu Meng)**Interview1**

(09.14)

1.All right, then my first question is what is your age?

I'm 20 years old.

2. What gender do you identify with?

Female

3. What is your ethnicity?

Chinese

4. Do you think your gender or ethnicity affects how you interact with people, or how you make friends?

Yes, I prefer to make female friends, maybe it's a natural selection for me. And ethnicity also affects, cause the communication between people have same ethnicity is easier. And cause we have similar backgrounds so that there a lot of topics that we all interested in chatting with.

5. What languages do you speak? What about the friends around you?

I usually speak chinese, but at college sometimes english. For my friends, 90 percent speak chinese, and 10 percent english.

6. Are you willing to take the initiative in socializing?

Uhm... For me, uhm... Ok, I think 70% like more passive and 30% I will be like more active. Yes

7. Do you feel the need to spend a lot of money on socializing?

Yes, because I think like, for example we need go to a restaurant together or hang out to the cinema or anything else, we need to uhm...pay money for it. Yeah.

8. How are you finding your curriculum or syllabus? Would you say it's affected other areas of your life?

Yes, I think it is. Because like psychology is quite common sense in our daily life, and sometimes, you cannot apply that academically in our life, but you can understand some behavior or uhm yeah, or being more nice to be a good listener.

a) If so, has it affected your communication with friends, etc.?

Yes, **examinations** can make me feel stressed during the exam period.

9. How often do you meet with people in and outside university?

How often? Uhm... like twice a week in university. Uhm...nearly, like six days a week meeting people outside the university.

10. Are you part of any societies?

No

Could you talk more about why you didn't take part in any societies?

Because the very serious covid-19, and it really affects my choice and decision, because I tried to reduce the communication or the face-to-face chances, so I didn't go to societies, but I'm looking forward to having one now.

11. What is the main composition of your friends in university? (Where did you meet them - societies, course friends, home, etc.)

I would say during lessons, especially when **we have group discussion, and it's a good chance for us to get to know each other, and exchange our opinions.**

12. Do you feel the need to make friends at university? (i.e., do you have friends from home and therefore not "need" to make them at university)

Yes, for me, it's yes, firstly like you can uhm... you can like discuss the stuff in class or discuss your homework and ask for some help, and also like it's a good chance to have friends from different cities or countries.

13. Would you say UCL encourages you and provides opportunities to socialise?

Yes, like the last question that I have answered, uhm... when the teacher provides some discussion activities in our lecture or seminar, then this is a good chance. Also, UCL provides a lot of societies

14. Do you think your university could do more to promote socialising?

Yes, maybe set up some **Wechat groups or Whatsapp** groups for the society on their website page which can be easier for us to find, because now I need to go to the website and find the particular section, and then find the email or something to find how to get in touch with the society.

14 Intervire2

(07.05)

1. All right, then my first question is what is your age?

My age is 20.

2. What gender do you identify with?

I'm female.

3. What is your ethnicity?

Chinese

4. Do you think your gender or ethnicity affects how you interact with people, or how you make friends?

Yeah, I think both gender and ethnicity will affect how I interact with people, I'll feel more comfortable when interacting with girls, so I am more open and talkative when I talk to them. And I can be the one to find the topics to open the discussion or conversation, but when I talk with boys I feel like reserved. And I think ethnicity also affects, because each ethnicity will have some special points that need to be avoided during the conversation, yeah, then I will be more careful if I talk to the person with different ethnicity from me.

5. What languages do you speak? What about the friends around you?

I speak Chinese and English. Most of my friends speak Chinese, some of them speak Chinese and Korean.

6. Are you willing to take the initiative in socializing?

Well, it depends, like if I saw the person at the first glance, and I saw she is really like easy to discuss or is the person that easy to chat, then I will take the initiative to social. But most of the time, I'm not the initiative one.

7. Do you feel the need to spend a lot of money on socializing?

I think it doesn't need a lot of money, but if I spend like 20 pounds or 30 pounds to attend a party or socialising, I feel there is a need. But 'a lot', I think it's not.

8. How are you finding your curriculum or syllabus? Would you say it's affected other areas of your life?

In my opinion, I don't think so, because like the study life maybe the first position of me, and socializing will be the second or third one.

b) If so, has it affected your communication with friends, etc.?

I don't think so, I think like the most of the tests and **assignments set in the curriculum can motivate the communication with friends, like we can talk about ideas such as assignments, and we talk about how to write the essay together something like that.**

9. How often do you meet with people in and outside university?

Mostly everyday, because everyday I have classes and most of my friends are in my classes, and we meet everyday. Outside university, maybe twice a month, we will like hang out and go to restaurants.

10. Are you part of any societies?

No, cuz I am a **lazy person** and a little bit social fear, so it always takes me a long time to decide to attend a society.

11. What is the main composition of your friends in university? (Where did you meet them - societies, course friends, home, etc.)

Most of my university friends is in our degree, like in the classes when I attending the lectures I get in touch with them. And for other friends, some of them are my high school friends, and some are like I attend other activities like sports activities or to like listen to the concert.

12. Do you feel the need to make friends at university? (i.e., do you have friends from home and therefore not "need" to make them at university)

Yes, it's really important. Most of the time, we have to like do the group activities or assignments, and these friends can be the group members of you, and most of time university students have trouble in managing emotion or their stress and friends are the way to release themselves.

13. Would you say UCL encourages you and provides opportunities to socialise?

Yeah, I think UCL encourages us, like I have received a lot of emails about the social party or the party that hold in the holidays.

14. Do you think your university could do more to promote socialising?

I think UCL is enough, there are so many socialising situations or like the career fairs and volunteering fairs.

Key

Bold: interviewer

Regular: interviewee

>: reworded/restructuring

>>: follow-up questions/not part of interview schedule

15 Interview 1

We want to investigate how university may have affected your social life. Before we start the interview, I want to inform you that:

- **Your answers are being recorded.**
- **You don't have to take part.**
- **You can ask me any questions you may have before or throughout the duration of this interview,**
- **You may also withdraw at any stage without a reason.**

With that in mind, are you willing to take part in this interview?

Yes.

And do you consent to being recorded?

Yes.

Okay, so to start, I want to ask some background questions.

So, how old are you?

20.

And what gender do you identify with?

Female.

And where are you from?

I'm from Burma, or another name for it is Myanmar.

Okay, and did you grow up there or elsewhere?

I mainly grew up in the UK. Um, I moved to the UK when I was four years old so, generally I'd say yeah, I grew up in the UK.

>> So, most of your education was spent here?

Yeah.

What languages do you speak?

Uhm, English. Um, I wouldn't really count being bilingual because I have trouble speaking my native language – it's more of a receptive bilingual.

>> Okay, just to clarify so you can understand it [native language] more than you can speak it?

Yeah.

What languages do most of your friends speak?

English, French, Portuguese, Mandarin, and Cantonese.

Okay, so now I'm going to ask you some questions relating to the research topic. If you don't want to answer any of them, that is okay, just let me know.

Okay.

When socialising, are you willing to take the initiative?

Yes, I often **initiate socialising with people**, like starting conversations. It would be nice if people did the same for me.

How are you finding your assignments at university?

At the moment?

Yes.

I'd say that, uhm, in second year it's more interesting than it is pressuring in the sense of, in first year, while you're learning, you're trying to also get used to the whole new way of learning at a university level. So, now that I'm used to that, I'd say I'm finding learning, yeah, really enjoyable. But when it comes to adding the **assessments, deadlines**, on top of week-to-week content, it does make it a little bit less manageable. Or more challenging to manage, I'd say.

>> So, just to clarify: you said you find it a bit challenging with the workload more so than structuring your time, right?

Mmm [in agreement]

Would you say that's actually affected other areas of your life?

Um, yeah. I'd say the sheer workload is, yeah, it kinda interferes a little bit with trying to have a balance with the social aspect of uni like getting involved in societies, like just having social interactions with your course mates or uni people that isn't talking about work. So, in that way, yeah it does interfere and, actually, sometimes it interferes with, like, family things. Like, for example, I can't spend too much time with my little brother because there's just so many commitments to uni that I have to focus on or make a priority first before I can get to him.

I understand. Just picking up on some of the things you said, you said it makes social aspects of university difficult as well. So, are you part of any societies or anything like that?

Yeah. In my first year, I was part of K-Pop society and sign language society and Asian Network society. Now I'm only in K-Pop society and Asian Network society. That's not completely because of **increased workload** because sign language society teaches the same thing every year so if I was to go back, it'd be the same content so that's why I didn't return. But I definitely say that because I know, generally, second year is harder, I'm trying to be very mindful about what societies I'm part of. Because I know, I can't, I don't have that much time so I can't be part of too many.

>> I see. So, are any of the people you met in your societies part of any of your friend groups?

I'd say, in uni, I don't really have a solid friend group, but I have lots of friends who are all separate. They're all from different places. They don't really meet or mix with each other. Uh, but I don't find that a necessary bad thing about uni.

Okay, so if you don't mind me asking, could you expand on that – the composition of your friends in university?

[looks confused]

> Okay, so would you like me to explain what I mean by that?

Yes, please.

> Okay, so in terms of the friends you have, at the moment, where did you meet them? For example, did you meet a lot of them at university? And how you got to know them.

Okay so, I'd start with... friends I have within my course. The friends I have within my course, I made, from classes, things like seminars, and uhm, like online live lectures. But I'd say, yeah, the friends I have within my course are from seeing them in the course's classes and stuff. But friends that are outside of my course, I met mainly through societies. Yeah, I don't think I've made a friend where, it just, I happened to see them on campus, and we just started talking. I think it's from some sort of organisation like that – either I met them at a class or a society. I think the only person I met that wasn't from either was from a fresher event. During first year, we happened to meet, and we clicked it off, and then now we're friends. So, I think they're the only exception.

And, so with your uni friends, how often do you meet with them if you do?

I'd say I meet them quite often. With my course mates, of course I see them from coming to classes. And with the society ones, they're more tentative. Uhm, this year, I'm trying to prioritise going to at least one society event every week. It's a personal goal for myself to have a work-life balance. So, so far, I do see them quite often. Like, I'll see them once a week or twice a week. But yeah, I'd say, at the moment, I see all my friends quite often.

>> Do you only see them within a university context, or do you also see them outside of that?

Uhm, I think, at the moment, no. Everything is quite bound to uni. Mainly because we're in term-time as well, so naturally we'd be like that. But I think also when it comes to hanging out with people that's not related to university at all, when I do do that, I hang out with friends that I've made from, like, the past – like childhood friends. So, I don't really see people outside of a uni context, except once with a good friend of mine. We had lunch together for their birthday.

Just another question, did you feel any pressure to make friends at university?

Yes, I did, less due to the whole idea of having an established friend group or lots of friends. I knew realistically it'd take time and uni is different for everyone. For me, it was the pressure of feeling lonely at school as days

went by and coping with the confusing new way of socialising with ppl. In that it's not the same as secondary school being in close proximity for hours every day and I didn't live on campus.

>> Thank you. Earlier you mentioned that if you do hang out with people outside of university, it's generally with friends from childhood, right?

Mm

>> How often would you say you meet up with them?

With them, I definitely see them less often now because we go to different universities and one of my friends is study abroad in Singapore so, definitely we don't see him much. And another friend, they study in Bath so we don't see them much either. And then, for the in-London friends, I actually saw them yesterday. But I'd say before that we hadn't really seen each other for like maybe a month or two? So, it had been a while. Generally, with them, we have longer periods of times, like gap in time, before we see each other again. But we communicate regularly online in like group chats.

>> So how, often do you message them?

Um, I'd say every day or every other day, but the conversations vary. Sometimes it's just sending each other funny things, short discussions, short conversations. Other times, we'll rant to each other about life, and it'll be longer then. But it really does vary. But we do frequently communicate.

Do you feel the need to spend a lot of money on socialising?

Nope, me and my friends are mainly working class and never had a lot of money, so we never really relied on it when it came to socialising. The key thing about getting together was always about being with each other and having each other's company.

>> Would you say that attending university has actually had an impact on how much time you get to spend with your friends?

I'd say... yes, for good and bad reasons. I mean... because we go to different unis and, you know, there's time taken away from commuting and all that. Obviously, I wouldn't be able to see them as much. But at the same time, when we were doing online uni, so we didn't have to come in, that also meant we couldn't really go out and see anybody because of covid restrictions. So... yeah, in that sense, you could say that, oh, attending in-person uni does take time away from socialising but it does open opportunities because they could come visit here and we study together. Or I visit their campus and we study together. So, I think it really depends on the effort we're willing to put in and everyone's schedules.

>> That's nice. Okay, so we're going to bring it back to UCL if that's okay?

Yep!

So, would you say UCL encourages you and provides opportunities to socialise?

Uh, I'd say: definitely. There are so many different societies to get involved with. Like, just looking online, there's societies that I didn't think would ever be a thing, like candle-making society, but it's really cool to see how there's a thing for everybody. It covers almost every niche and, in that way, it's very encouraging and accessible and exciting. I'd say definitely the students' effort, uhm, really makes university such a social space and so welcoming. So, I'd say while the workload might hinder it, that naturally is a thing with any sort of work but the fact that UCL has so many facilities and things to get involved with, it definitely encourages, uhm, socialising.

So, are there any factors that may hold you back from socialising with your friends from before or even your university friends?

I'd say mainly would be the **workload**. Uhm, like, personally for me, knowing how to manage my time isn't really a problem now in second year, now that I'm used to it and kinda know what works for me. It's just workload – sometimes there's just so many things crammed into one term. Uhm, like things changing from how we did it last year. So that's something new to adapt to and, it just, yeah, there's just a lot of pressure in such a short time constraint so I would have to sacrifice other things that I might do to accommodate for that. So, I'd say yeah, definitely the workload, and maybe a by-product of that is, if there is such a big workload, it might affect my mental health and uh, sometimes I might feel like: oh, I really don't want to spend time with people, because for me I get energy from being alone. So, if I'm already drained, I'm likely not going to push myself to see other people because that would actually make me feel worse or drain me more. So, I'd say those two things.

Okay, thank you. That's all the questions I have for you. Do you have any questions for me?

Uhh, no, I don't think I have any.

Okay, thank you for taking part. If you have any further questions, you may contact me.

Key**Interviewer:**

Regular: interviewee

>: reworded/restructuring

>>: follow-up questions/not part of interview schedule

16 Interview 2

We want to investigate how university may have affected your social life.

Yeah.

Before we start the interview, I want to inform you that:

- Your answers are being recorded.
- You don't have to take part.
- You can ask me any questions you may have before or throughout the duration of this interview,
- You may also withdraw at any stage without a reason.

With that in mind, are you willing to take part in this interview?

Yes.

And do you consent to being recorded?

I consent.

Okay, so to start, I want to ask some background questions. Just answer them as you feel comfortable.

Okay!

So, how old are you?

I'm 20.

And what gender do you identify with?

Female.

And where are you from?

So, I am from Iran. Yeah.

Okay, and did you grow up there?

No, I was born and raised in England, London.

>> So, most of your education was spent here?

Yes, all my life I've been in London.

Okay, so, you said you're from Iran.

Yeah.

Do you speak other languages?

Yeah, So I speak Farsi and I speak English.

>> Okay, and what do you consider your first language to be?

English.

What languages do most of your friends speak?

Mainly English. Some speak other languages too, but I'd say mainly English.

Okay, so now I'm going to ask you some questions relating to the research topic. If you feel uncomfortable or simply don't want to answer any of them, that's okay, just let me know.

Okay.

When socialising, are you willing to take the initiative?

Yeah, I don't mind taking the **initiative**.

>> You're a studying Psychology with Education, correct?

Yes.

>> So, how are you finding that?

Uh, so far, it's pretty fun. I do enjoy it.

How are you finding your assignments and the workload in university?

You see, there is a lot of work to do. I... You see, I can get it done. But there is a lot to do.

>> Okay. And would you say that it's affected other areas of your life then?

Yeah, I can't really game as much, talk, hang out with people as much as I used to. I, you know, I can't really help out my family around the house as much as I used to. So, in that sense. Yeah, it does take up a lot of my time.

>> Okay so, you said you can't really hang out with your friends as much. Are you still able to contact them often?

Uh, I am able to like message them and come back to them like an hour later if they do message back or something, but like not like anything like, at the moment where I can just speak to them on the phone, or, you know, just like text them, like, as they're texting me - that type of thing, I don't really have the time for that.

> These friends you've mentioned, are these people that you met during university?

I would say half and half, some of them at Uni and some I've known before Uni.

Okay, so how often do you meet with friends from university?

Uh if it's outside of classes, maybe once a week, if I'm lucky then twice.

Okay, so the people you generally tend to meet with week from Uni, are they part of societies with you?

Uh, mainly yes, from societies, from the one society I mean. Yeah.

So which society is that if you don't mind me asking?

Uh, I am in the Pokémon Society.

>> Okay, and you said some of those people from the Pokémon society do make up your friend groups?

Yes, they do.

Okay, so in terms of the other people in your friend groups, what is the composition of your friends in Uni?

So mainly, in Uni, I do hang out with my course mates, but I do have that once a week meet up with the uh Pokémon society.

>> Yeah, and do you have friends outside of that?

I do. I have a few, yeah. If I can hang out with them, I will. But the chances of me hanging out with them are pretty low.

>> Okay, and why is that?

Oh, because, you know I like I usually hang out with my uni friends because I'm at Uni a lot. Like when you're there, you're just going to be with them.

>> So, would I be correct in saying you hang out with your Uni friends because it's more convenient and easier to do?

Yes, because I can work it around my Uni, I guess, timetable.

Okay, so, in terms of your friends outside of Uni-

Yeah.

>> Do you remember the last time you actually met up with them?

Actually today. But that was because we were both studying together. We both had a lot of work. We decided to study together.

>> Okay, so do you often study together with your friends?

If we can, then yes, we will. If not, I might just stay home and study.

>> How frequently would you say you study together?

Once or twice a month, I guess. Yeah.

>> Okay, outside of studying then, do you meet up with you non-Uni friends?

Very rarely, if even.

>> Very rarely? Okay and how frequently or infrequently would you say you do so?

I would say, probably once a month. But it's not as often as I would like it to be.

Okay so, do you feel the need to spend a lot of money when socialising?

Not really. I don't mind spending when I'm out with people, but I never feel like I have to.

> Okay and before you said you don't get to see your friends as often as you'd like to; what stops you from seeing them as often?

I have lots of university work to do.

> Is it just university then?

It's mainly university work but I do have to help out my family quite a bit as well.

Okay. So, would you say UCL encourages you and provides opportunities for you to socialise?

I would say it definitely does encourage you. Because, like it does encourage you like you'll have, like, personal tutors who, like, will tell you to go use this opportunity such as coffee mornings, go meet up with societies, there are like, I guess, fairs that go on, especially like during fresher's week. But they do like, I guess, signpost you to places where you can meet people. They will like organize events, I guess, but it is mainly within societies that they tell you to socialise and stuff like that.

>> And do you find that's helpful for you personally?

I mean, yeah, because I join the society because everyone around me is, I guess, similar. We have a similar interest.

Do you think there's any areas where UCL could improve in terms of promoting socialisation or making it easier for you to socialise?

Uh, I wouldn't say no. I think they actually do quite a lot. There are a lot of areas to go socialise. There's a lot of social spaces in UCL. Yeah.

And finally, we spoke about university workload earlier. Are there any other factors that may hold you back from socialising?

Besides university work and family obligations, no.

Okay, thank you. That's all the questions I have for you. Do you have any comments that you'd like to add?

Nope.

Do you have any questions for me?

No.

Okay then, thank you for taking part. If you have any further questions, you may contact me.

Key

Bold: interviewer

Regular: interviewee

>: restructuring/clarification

>>: follow-up questions/not part of interview schedule

17 Interview 3

We want to investigate how university may have affected your social life. Before we start the interview, I want to inform you that:

- **Your answers are being recorded.**
- **You don't have to take part.**
- **You can ask me any questions you may have before or throughout the duration of this interview,**
- **You may also withdraw at any stage without a reason.**

With that in mind, are you willing to take part in this interview?

Yes.

And do you consent to being recorded?

Yep.

Okay, to start, I want to ask some background questions.

So, how old are you?

I'm 19.

And what gender do you identify with?

Female.

And where are you from?

I'm from Hong Kong

Okay, and did you grow up there?

Yep.

>> So, you're an international student?

Yes.

So, what languages do you speak?

I speak in English and Cantonese. I know mandarin but not too well.

And do your friends speak the same languages?

Yup.

Okay, so now I'm going to ask you some questions relating to the research topic. If you don't want to answer any of them, or if you feel uncomfortable at any point, just let me know.

Okay!

Firstly, when socialising, are you willing to take the initiative to make friends?

I think it really depends on the day and the context of the situation. If there's a lot of people then I feel like it'd be harder for me to take initiative but if it's like one-on-one or less people, then I'd be more willing to take initiative.

>> So, group size really affects it?

Yeah.

>> Would you say that you get shy sometimes if there's loads of people, or no?

Yeah, for sure.

And when you're socialising with your friends or new people, do you feel the need to spend a lot of money?

Not really.

>> Okay, so money isn't too much of an issue?

Yeah, yeah.

How are you finding your assignments and the workload in university?

Um, I'm finding them... year 1 or year 2?

> Year two, please.

Okay, year two. I mean we haven't had assignments due yet but I'm finding them okay so far. They're interesting which makes me want to actually do them.

>> And workload, is that alright?

Yeah... if I have good time management. It's not a lot of work, I just need to time management better.

> I understand. So, would you say the workload and time management in that area has affected you socialisation and communication with your friends?

Um... yeah, definitely.

>> If you don't mind me asking, how so?

Because I think... if I know I have more **workload**, it kinda gets me more stressed with like socialising with friends because I'm like maybe I should be doing work instead. But I always end up socialising with my friends anyways. So, it affects how I think I should be, what I should be doing, but it actually doesn't affect me.

[Laughing] Like either way I'm just going to be with my friends.

>> Would you say procrastination is a big issue?

• [Laughing] Yeah, yeah.

Okay so, how often do you meet with people from university then?

From university?

Yeah.

Like, our course or?

Just in general, so course or otherwise.

I think maybe like three times a week.

Is that within your lectures or outside?

Oh, outside of my lectures.

Okay.

And then I see them during too.

> Okay, so did you meet any of them through societies?

Um, I um... I met most... well actually some of the friends that I have here is because I know them from Hong Kong and stuff.

In terms of societies, I'm part of Christian Union and Mental Health society. And I've met like, maybe a few friends in Christian Union and then for mental health society, not really yet because I just joined it this year.

>> Okay, so the friends you met in your Christian Union society, do you hang out with them a lot?

Yeah.

Do you meet with them often?

Yeah, like once or twice a week

>> Is that within your society or outside?

Outside.

>> And what kind of things do you like to do? You don't have to answer this.

It's all good. We like to, this year especially, like cook together because we're all self-catered. I- what else do we do? I think we just like to sit there and just like chill. It's nothing like too event based.

That's nice. So, in terms of your friends in and outside of university, who makes up those groups?

[Silence]

> For example, is it people you've met before? People from university as well?

I think its a combination. I feel like I do, I tend to like... For group hangouts, it tends to be like from church. And then, for one-on-one hangouts, it like, I think I tend to do that because I'm *more shy* with bigger group outings. I'm sorry, what was the question?

> No, it's okay. I was just asking, who makes up your friendship groups essentially?

Oh, who! So I think church is a big one and then with like individual friendships, it's like from the course, societies and just people I knew back from home.

Okay, so, because you obviously came from Hong Kong to here, did you feel any pressure to make friends at university?

Yeah, definitely.

Yeah?

Yeah.

>> Do you kind of miss your friends from home sometimes?

I think it's like... yeah. It's a weird vibe. It's hard because there's like friends from home and there's friends here and it's like, not that I'm a different person but it's like... it's just different

>> I understand. Like the way you interact with everyone?

Yeah, and the things we do. Like if I'm back at home, we know like what to do, where to go. While with here, it's still like kind of a new city.

>> Do you often get to go back home?

Um, this year is slightly better since I get to go back during Christmas but last year, I didn't go back. I went back during the summer for like 4 months.

>> Do you often call with your friends back home?

Yeah

>> How often would you say you do that?

Um, I try to... last year was almost every day or every other day but this year, kind of like twice? Or like three times a week, maybe.

Okay, now would you say UCL gives you a lot of opportunities to socialise and make friends?

I think they give many opportunities but... I don't necessarily take those opportunities. [Laughs]

How do you think they promote socialisation?

Um, I think UCL has a lot of events. Like, first off, there's a lot of societies that like- basically anything you're interested in, I feel like there's a society for that and that would help you make friends. But like, outside of that, they host a lot of different events that just like, makes it easier.

>> Have you been to any of the events?

I've been to the events.

>> Have you made friends there?

I don't think I've necessarily made any- like I've gone with friends to the events but I don't think I've made friends in the events.

That's okay; so, do you think there's anything more UCL could do to promote socialisation?

I think... I think UCL... I don't know if there's anything specific UCL could do more. I think it's just the natural, like how humans work where like we tend to stick to people who are similar to us. So I feel like I observe a lot of groups, cliques, or groups that are like... ethnically similar, I guess. So like, it's hard. I would like more diverse friendships.

Yeah.

Maybe like... UCL could help with that, but I don't really know how.

That's okay. So besides uni, and the fact that some of your friends are back home, are there any other factors that hold you back from socialising?

Um. I think, just the fact that like- hold me back? I think just the fact that I'm *shy* and like outside of comfort zone.

That's understandable.

Yeah.

Well, that's all the questions I have for you. Do you have any other comments you wish to add?

No

Do you have any questions that you'd like to ask me?

No.

Then, that concludes this interview. Thank you for your participation! If you have any questions later, you may contact me

18 Interview 1:

How old are you?

I am 20.

What gender do you identify with?

Female

Where are you from, did you grow up there?

I am from London and I have lived here for my whole life.

What languages do you speak?

I speak English

We are conducting research on whether academic pressure hinders the ability for 2nd year undergraduate students to socialise, so I am going to ask you some questions regarding those subjects.

Do you think your gender or ethnicity affects how you interact with people, or how you make friends?

Yes, I think I automatically gravitate towards females because we share similar interests and hobbies, so like I find it easier to make friends with them. And because we often talk about school and upbringing in my course I think I find it easier to discuss these things with people who had a similar upbringing to me and so I find myself talking to the English students more. Also, there are not a lot of boys taking Psychology with Education, so I don't meet as many boys at university.

What languages do you speak? What about the friends around you?

I speak English but lots of the people around me on my course are Chinese and sometimes it is more difficult to communicate with them as much as I would like to.

Are you willing to take the initiative in socialising?

Yes, but I am quite a **shy person** in social situations so it is unlikely that I will if I have to go out of my comfort zone and put myself out there to socialise.

Do you feel the need to spend a lot of money on socialising?

Not so much. It is not something that holds me back from socialising.

How are you finding your assignments and lectures in general?

I am definitely finding this year a bit of a jump from last year. The **workload** is bigger, and the content is more difficult.

Does anyone put academic pressure on you to make you work a lot?

My parents not so much but I get quite stressed out from the teachers at university to be working a lot of the time.

Does this work take up a lot of your time?

Yes, I find that the work is never ending as I always have more work to do due to the upcoming assignments which are due in a few weeks.

Would you say it's affected other areas of your life?

Yes. I find that most of the time I am working, and I don't really have much time to do the things that a normal 20-year-old should be doing. I'm really struggling to balance my social life, my family life, and my **workload**.

If so, has it affected your communication with friends, etc.?

It has definitely affected my communication with my friends. I am not able to see them as much as I used to and sometimes, I can go like a whole week without socialising which can feel really lonely and isolating. I think that maybe if I had more friends on my course I could spend time doing work and discussing things relating to the course so we are "working" and "socialising" at the same time.

How often do you meet with people in and outside university?

I only meet with the people on my course when we have class so about 4 times a week. I meet with people outside university in my own community on the weekend.

Are you part of any societies?

Yes, I am part of the Jewish society and there are a lot of people I already knew before university there so it is nice to see them but they are not really new friends.

What is the main composition of your friends in university?

(Where did you meet them - societies, course friends, home, etc.)

Most of my friends in university are people that I already knew before university who live in my area and are in my community who also go to UCL. I have a few friends from my course but the friends I have are not friends with each other so I don't really have like a social group or anything.

Do you feel the need to make friends at university? (i.e., do you have friends from home and therefore not "need" to make them at university)

Yes exactly, so I definitely feel less of a "need" to make friends at university because I live at home and lots of my best friends who I have grown up with live in the same area as me. So, because I don't spend so much time at university (I only come in for my classes) and I live quite close to the university, I don't have so many friends

there. But I know I should make some more effort to make friends here! It is important to be able to discuss the work and not feel lonely during the time I do spend here. Also there are such great people here from so many backgrounds and I feel that I am missing the opportunity to get some really interesting people!

Would you say UCL encourages you and provides opportunities to socialise?

If so, how?

I would say that UCL encourages and provides opportunities to socialise as they do put on some events and because of all the different societies.

Do you think UCL could do more to promote socialising?

I think that there should be more encouragement to socialise within your own course. I think that especially because lots of our learning was online and on Zoom last year, I am over a year into my degree, and I still don't know so many people on my course. So, I think that maybe even during class time we should be encouraged to socialise and get to know each other more. For *shy, less outgoing* people like me, maybe it is necessary to have some compulsory social events because I think many students, including me, unfortunately don't make the most of the great opportunities that UCL offers.

Are there any other factors that hold you back from socializing?

I think I have mentioned them all, my *more introverted personality* is definitely a big one.

19 Interview 2:

How old are you?

I am 19 years old.

What gender do you identify with?

Female

Where are you from, did you grow up there?

London, yes.

What languages do you speak?

English and Spanish.

We are conducting research on whether academic pressure hinders the ability for 2nd year undergraduate students to socialise, so I am going to ask you some questions regarding those subjects.

Do you think your gender or ethnicity affects how you interact with people, or how you make friends?

Not really, I prefer being friends with males as I relate to them more than females and share similar hobbies as them.

What languages do you speak? What about the friends around you?

I speak English and Spanish. Most of my friends speak English but lots of friends on my course speak Chinese so it sometimes is a little challenging to communicate but we both just have to be patient!

Are you willing to take the initiative in socialising?

Yes I love meeting new people and going out.

Do you feel the need to spend a lot of money on socialising?

Sometimes yes like if all my friends are going to a restaurant or club or something it can be quite expensive but I dont like to miss out on it

How are you finding your assignments and lectures in general this year?

Not bad. I find all the content really interesting. There is a lot of work to do.

Does this take up a lot of your time?

I spend a lot of time working but I don't let it stop me from going out and socialising.

Would you say it's affected other areas of your life?

I guess I would spend more time with friends if I had less work to do. I guess I also don't speak to my family as much as I probably should.

How often do you meet with people in and outside university?

In university I have like study sessions with my friends about twice a week. Sometimes I go out with people outside university in the night.

Are you part of any societies?

No.

Why haven't you joined any societies?

Last year I didn't join any because of *Covid* and I guess I haven't really gotten round to it this year. Also, I am part of many different groups where I live so I don't feel like I'm missing out on that aspect.

What is the main composition of your friends in university?

People doing the same course as me who I have got to know in lectures and seminars by having discussions and sharing work with and stuff.

Do you feel the need to make friends at university?

Yes I like having friends at university. It's fun to meet new people and have people to share work and ideas with that I do live at home and have my friends from school and from growing up so maybe it is less of a priority for me.

Would you say UCL encourages you and provides opportunities to socialise?

If so, how?

Yes definitely. I like that we can talk to our classmates during lectures and seminars because the teachers encourage lots of discussion-based learning. They also have like loads of societies.

Do you think UCL could do more to promote socialising?

I think that most of the social events at UCL are within societies and the university could make more course specific events. Like maybe organising more Psychology with Education events so we can get to know more people who we are actually in classes with. It's crazy that I still don't know so many people on my course!

Are there any other factors that hold you back from socialising?

Not really apart from sometimes the **workload** and the fact that I have friends at home so don't really spend much time making them at university.