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Ministry Focus Paper Approval Sheet

This ministry focus paper entitled

FLOATING ENTOURAGE:REFRAMING ADULT-ADOLESCENT COMPUTER
MEDIATED COMMUNICATION TOWARDS COMMUNAL ADOPTION

Written by

BRADLEY HOWELL

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

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upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:

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Chap Clark

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Kurt Fredrickson

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FLOATING ENTOURAGE: REFRAMING ADULT-ADOLESCENT COMPUTER
MEDIATED COMMUNICATION TOWARDS COMMUNAL ADOPTION

A DOCTORAL PROJECT PAPER
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

BRADLEY HOWELL
SEPTEMBER 2013

ABSTRACT

**Floating Entourage: Reframing Adult-adolescent Computer-mediated
Communication Towards Communal Adoption**
Bradley G. Howell
Doctor of Ministry
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2013

As social media becomes the normal life experience of contemporary adolescents, faith communities are increasingly exploring ministry implications of this form of social interaction. The intent of this doctoral project is to reframe adult-adolescent computer mediated communication (hereafter, CMC) from systemic abandonment towards communal adoption. It is argued that by adaptively utilizing the concept of floating entourage,[1] the foundational actions for the development of an adoptive multi-networked web of adult-adolescent relationships can be developed.

Through psychosocial, theological, and missional examination, research identifies communicative community as a core reality of God's desire for a cultural *telos* of communal adoption. The project consists of seminars offered between March and December of 2012 primarily targeting youth workers and secondarily parents represented from Fuller Theological Seminary's Sacramento student body. The sessions encompassed theological, psychosocial, and ecological social media issues grounded in practical theology, measuring effectiveness according to the following desired outcomes: 1) an understanding of how each stage of adolescence affects social media usage; 2) integration of a CMC culture of adoption among existing offline-relationships; 3) understanding of how to develop opportunities for spiritual growth that invite adolescents to trust Jesus with social media issues; 4) an ability to counsel parents and other youth workers in contextualized CMC usage that perpetuates an adoption culture. To measure this, pre- and post-seminar surveys were given and results triangulated with online participant feedback of adult-adolescent CMC experiences.

This study concludes that reframing adult perspectives increases psychosocial awareness of adolescent CMC usage. Concrete actions hospitable to communicative community became increasingly normative. The desire for corporate engagement with adolescents remained unchanged. Participants reported increased experiences of positive adult-adolescent social media interactions.

Theological Mentor: Kurt Fredrickson, PhD

Words: 272

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[1] Floating Entourage is a term developed to describe an adolescent's ability through smart phone technology to digitally stay connected with their network of friends despite time and space limitations. Any adolescent, no matter where they may be, if equipped with a smart phone has this digital network of friends 'hovering' around with them.

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INTRODUCTION

The Sacramento metropolitan area ranks second per capita only to San Francisco among socially networked cities in California.[1] Fuller Theological Seminary operates multiple ministry degree campuses across the United States, one of which exists to support the ministry preparation of those who serve the Church in the greater Sacramento region. Students from this campus represent a wide variety of churches serving adolescents in the area. Additionally, due to the regional presence of University of California's Davis campus, the University of California's Sacramento campus, many Fuller Sacramento students and alumni have significant and ongoing ministry to emerging adult students. Hundreds of these young adults served by Fuller Sacramento students are experiencing life away from the family for the first time. This provides unique challenges and responsibilities for local congregations seeking to invite young adults into participation with the adult congregational communities.

Ministry Need

Across the United States, the Internet is actively utilized by 95 percent of all teens and young adults,[2] three quarters of which participate on social networking sites

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[1] Wanda Lau, "Twitter Towns, USA," MensHealth.com, http://www.menshealth.com/best-life/social-networking-cities (accessed April 27, 2012).

[2] Mary Madden and Amanda Lenhart, "Teens and Technology 2013," PewInternet.org, http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/Teens-and-Tech.aspx, (accessed March 14, 2013).

(hereafter SNS).[3] As social media becomes the normal life experience of contemporary adolescents, faith communities are increasingly exploring ministry implications of this form of social interaction. The typical church participating in this project group has an Internet presence through its website, email contact addresses for its staff and ministers, as well as a smattering of ministry specific SNS. There are no printed or otherwise formalized strategies for utilizing computer-mediated communications (hereafter CMC). Participant youth workers in this project tend to express concern that social media was eroding a common understanding of truth to which their teaching appealed. Though parents were a secondary group for this study, parental concerns centered on child protection from predators or family disruption. For both groups, fear framed concerns, yet anxious adults should note "technology is neither good, nor bad; nor is it neutral."[4] Technology is a tool used for an individual or group's purposes and limited in scope by a person's abilities or accessibility. Understanding the motivation, abilities and limits of adolescent CMC usage will help to balance the tendency develop programmatic solutions without consideration of the underlying psychosocial, theological and ecological motivations of adolescent use of CMC.

Because social media has developed into a tool that supplements offline interpersonal communication,[5] its use is applied differently between various psychosocial

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[3] Amanda Lenhart et al., "Social Media & Mobile Internet Use among Teens and Young Adults," PewInternet.org, http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Social-Media-and-Young-Adults.aspx, 2.

[4] Melvin Kranzberg, "Technology and History: Kranzberg's Laws," *Technology and Culture* 27, no. 3 (1986): 548.

[5] Andrew M. Ledbetter et al., "Attitudes toward Online Social Connection and Self-Disclosure Predictors of Facebook Communication and Relational Closeness," *Communication Research* 38, no. 1 (2011).

developmental stages, creating unique spirituality issues for each stage of adolescence. The operative, yet formally unarticulated strategy utilized by these churches for CMC is driven by pragmatics over a theologically reflective response. However, given the Internet usage among adolescents and young adults it will serve these congregations to develop a theologically reflective understanding of social media usage and tools for which to equip parents as well as the congregation at large. At the heart of the issue is the concept of faith, an opportunity for spiritual communities and individuals to place their trust in Jesus or themselves to meet humanities deepest needs by putting spiritual roots either into the Holy Spirit or an individual's own sin nature.[6]

Importance of Understanding Social Media for Ministry

Writing from an economist's perspective, Sudhir Kale remarks "religion and spirituality . . . have always exerted a strong influence on the invention and diffusion of technology."[7] Peter Horsfield and Paul Teusner frame religion and media as "embedded symbiotically in the overall matrix of cultural life."[8] This symbiosis appears to be developing "a clearly visible trend towards spiritual values, principles, and practices getting increasingly individualized."[9] Stanley Grenz notes that Congregationalist churches reframed the congregations as individual Christians who gathered together, "in

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[6] Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 41 (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), 229.

[7] Sudhir Kale, "Spirituality, Religion, and Globalization," *Journal of Macromarketing* 24, no. 2 (2004): 97.

[8] Peter Horsfield and Paul Teusner, "A Mediated Religion: Historical Perspectives on Chrisitanity and the Internet," *Studies in World Christianity* 12, no. 3 (2007): 279.

[9] Kale, "Spirituality, Religion, and Globalization," 100-101.

the order of salvation the believer – and not the church – stands first in priority."[10] However, not only are churches moving towards the individual, but also spiritual authority is increasingly shifting from centralized leadership to the personal.[11] The result is a proliferation of spirituality on the Internet, leading to a deluge of spiritual material and consequently individual syncretism.[12] It is little wonder that spirituality, as David Augsburger notes, has become a rather hazy concept in contemporary culture.[13]

Another important consideration is the increase in globalism. Though the Church has always had a global aspect to it, "the New Testament places greatest emphasis on the local manifestation of the church."[14] Spiritual community is the resource for interpretation of God's story has revealed to us in Scripture.[15] Identifying with Christ, and placing our faith in believing what he believed is the path to wholeness and eventual righteousness as an eschatological reality. The opportunity is to invite students into a spiritual community who together, on a journey of increasing faith, engage in opportunities to practice spiritual disciplines that will develop faithful responses of meeting deeply human desires. This paper serves to provide the framework for the

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[10] Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 469.

[11] Bryan S. Turner, "Religious Authority and the New Media," *Theory, Culture & Society* 24, no. 2 (2007).

[12] Kale, "Spirituality, Religion, and Globalization," 101-104.

[13] David W. Augsburger, *Dissident Discipleship: A Spirituality of Self-Surrender, Love of God, and Love of Neighbor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 9.

[14] Grenz, Theology for the Community of God, 467.

[15] Gabriel Fackre, *The Doctrine of Revelation: A Narrative Interpretation*, Edinburgh Studies in Constructive Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 6.

change that needs to be accomplished if the community of Christ is to come alongside adolescents online and off: the reframing of adult-adolescent CMC in a hyper-networked society from systemic abandonment to a trajectory of communal adoption.

Personal Interest in the Topic of Social Media

As the parent of two midadolescents, the experience with and negation around social media usage in the home is an ongoing concern. For our high school age students, the Internet has served a social purpose that connects them with their friendship structures despite limitations of mobility and geophysical separation. Additionally SNS have encouraged cross-generational relationships with grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins, despite the fact that the majority of our family live approximately 1,200 miles north of Sacramento and face to face contact occurs at best semi-annually. It has also served as another form of connection with their youth ministry leaders, firming ties beyond the limitation of group meeting times.

This is not to imply that CMC has not taken an emotional toll on our teens. At times our youth have ventured into experiences beyond their psychosocial capacity to fully understand the implications of their actions or develop an appropriate interpretation of messages received. Well-intentioned adults have unconsciously subverted parental authority because of easy and direct access to our youth, resulting in awkward conversations that place undue stress on parent-teen relationships. Much discussion occurs in our household surrounding an appropriate balance of time, boundaries and accountability. However, taken as a whole, our household CMC experiences have been positive. What has helped is a household commitment to the utilization of Internet

enabled devices and phones only within public space, and all phones, regardless whether their owners are parents or youth, remain on a specified counter. Further, we are fortunate to have had an opportunity to intentionally choose a home with an open floor plan, enabling public space to be set-aside for our youth within easy earshot of parents. This has served the family very well, encouraging parental support of our youth while allowing enforcement of household commitments to CMC usage within public space.

Purpose of This Ministry Project

This ministry project researches the thesis that adult-adolescent computer-mediated communication in a hyper-networked society can be reconfigured from systemic abandonment towards communal adoption by adaptively reframing the concept of floating entourage[16] to include a multi-networked web of adult relationships. The ministry project consists of seminars offered between March and December of 2012, targeting primarily youth workers and secondarily parents from churches represented within Fuller Seminary's Sacramento student body. The seminars encompass theological, psychosocial and ecological social media issues grounded in practical theology. The effectiveness of the project will be measured by four desired outcomes. Outcome one seeks the development of an understanding as to how each stage of adolescence affects social media usage. Outcome two seeks the integration of a CMC culture of adoption among existing offline-relationships. Outcome three intends to foster an understanding of how to develop opportunities for spiritual growth that invite adolescents to trust Jesus

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[16] Floating Entourage is a term developed to describe an adolescent's ability through smart phone technology to digitally stay connected with their network of friends despite time and space limitations. Any adolescent, no matter where they may be, if equipped with a smart phone has this digital network of friends hovering around with them.

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with social media issues. The fourth outcome imparts an ability to counsel parents and other youth workers in contextualized CMC usage that perpetuates an adoption culture. To measure this, pre- and post-seminar surveys have been administered and the results triangulated with an online and live discussion of adult-adolescent CMC experiences.

Project Content

Part One of this paper will first define adolescence and the overarching role social media is playing regarding systemic abandonment before considering the specific social media choices made by each stage of adolescent development and identifying one or two potential or popularized risk factors associated with each stage. Part Two develops a theology of communicative community in light of computer-mediated interaction, offering the balance of *kerygma* and *koinonia* as faithful Christo praxis for local congregations. It then defines the purpose and intent of adolescent spirituality and the support roles that family, significant adults and youth workers can play before moving into the unique age and stage implications of social media for developing the spirituality of adolescence, relying heavily on the work of Henri Nouwen's *In The Name of Jesus.* Academic research among emerging adults who are not actively pursuing undergraduate education is missing from the field; therefore, no attempt is made in this paper to suggest spiritual development strategies for this particular emerging adult subgroup. Part Three explores a model of practice for adult-adolescent computer mediated communication among existing offline webs of relationship, proposing a reframing of the concept of floating entourage towards a cultural *telos* of communal adoption and discusses the

results of the ministry project by comparing and contrasting participant observation to the literature review of adolescent CMC studies and the final project thesis.

PART ONE

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER 1

ADOLESCENT COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION

A cultural battle of perceptions regarding social media's shaping of the adolescent

experience is raging across modern society, yet the story of social media research is not

one that starts with adolescents. Once access to the Internet moved beyond government

and academy to the general public, adolescents were among the first public Internet users

and appear very early in research studies. Consequently they are considered among the

research population, but social-economic factors, physical access or personal interest

delineators influenced adolescent Internet access.[1] The result is that the activity of a

minority of adolescents who had early Internet access was projected onto the broader

adolescent culture. Additionally, early researchers framed understanding of adolescent

Internet activity from adult patterns of behavior. In the ongoing battle between whether

social media is bad or good for young people, the forgotten reality is that contemporary

adolescents use social media very differently than the adults who were researching them

or even the adolescents who had gone before them. Consequently research results framed

perspectives that contributed to the stereotyping of the newer relationally motivated

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[1] Lisa Lee, "Young People and the Internet: From Theory to Practice," *Young* 13, no. 4 (2005): 360, 320.

social media users, further isolating adolescent social media users from their adult counterparts.

Contemporary perspectives of adolescent social media use ranges from fully embraceable at one end to inherently dangerous if not outright evil at the other. On the supportive side are researchers like Danah Boyd who view themselves as advocates of a misunderstood generation, perceiving young people to be naturally equipped to take full advantage of evolving technology,[2] or Clay Shirky who identify CMC as a powerful social tool to be utilized as a hyper-facilitator of group mobilization.[3] At the risky end, teenage social media use is accused of truncating adolescent ability for healthy intergenerational face-to-face interaction,[4] editorially implied as a contributor to child sex trafficking[5] and heralded as a tool used by children for the production of child pornography.[6] Researcher Sonia Livingstone disparages these popularly held beliefs, offering her observation: "It is commonly held that at best, social networking is time-wasting and socially isolating, and at worst it allows pedophiles to groom children in their bedroom or sees teenagers lured into suicide pacts while parents think they are

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[2] Danah Michele Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," (Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, 2008), 10.

[3] Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), 54.

[4] Jim Roope, "Texting Teens Learn to Talk Face to Face," CNN.com, http://schoolsofthought. blogs.cnn.com/2012/04/24/texting-teens-learn-to-talk-face-to-face/, (accessed April 24, 2012).

[5] Anne Hart, "How You Can Help Stop Children Trafficking Children in Sacramento," Examiner.com, http://www.examiner.com/article/how-you-can-help-stop-children-trafficking-children-sacramento, (accessed April 28, 2011).

[6] C Johnson, "Stockton Teen Arrested in Sexting Case," News 10 KXTV, http://www. news10.net/news/local/story.aspx?storyid=77392, (accessed April 27, 2012).

doing their homework."[7] Similarly, Katelyn McKenna and John Bargh provide evidence

that flawed research methods and assumptions fueled media reports claiming that the vast

majority of images on the Internet were pornographic in nature as well as reports

claiming Internet use increased social isolation and personal depression. McKenna and

Bargh implore the academic community to become familiar with the then current and

growing body of research demonstrating the positive social effects of the Internet.[8] These

positions reveal that the battle is about more than who is right; it is a struggle for the right

to frame society's perspective on the influence of social media in the lives of adolescents

and the wider culture.

Reflecting on the social effects of cyber-space interaction between user-generated

digital personalities, psychologist Sherry Turkle demonstrated in 1995 that the

mainstream perspective of the computer had shifted from the originally modernistic,

linearly processed computation tool bounded by discernable operational principles to the

embodiment of post-modern "decentered," "fluid," "non-linear" and "opaque" culture of

simulation, creating an exciting new frontier for human relationships.[9] McKenna and

Bargh's research heralded these anonymous online relationships for having reduced

"gating features," such as physical appearance, that typically prevent natural formation of

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[7] Sonia Livingstone, "Taking Risky Opportunities in Youthful Content Creation: Teenagers' Use of Social Networking Sites for Intimacy, Privacy and Self-Expression," *New Media & Society* 10, (2008): 395.

[8] K.Y.A. and J.A. Bargh McKenna, "Plan 9 from Cyberspace: The Implications of the Internet for Personality and Social Psychology," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 4, no. 1 (2000): 58-59.

[9] S Turkle, *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 8-20.

real life relationships.[10] These virtual representations allowed for role, identity and personality experimentation, which provided healthy introspection with little risk to the user.[11] The trajectory of Internet-mediated communications at the dawn of the new millennium appeared to be isolated anonymous individuals synergistically creating new virtual realities as cyber-space pioneers.

The 2002 arrival of a new social platform would radically alter that trajectory. First used by Friendster and then Myspace, this new format built mediated relationships that mirrored inter-connected webs of existing relationships.[12] This innovative reimagining of the Internet combined with increasingly easier-to-use computer technology and greater Internet access would prove to be a monumental shift. With Myspace, the primary make up of the Internet changed from a web of connected documents to a web of connected people, launching the Internet into a Web 2.0, or beta version of itself.[13] By 2004 the majority of adolescents were actively using the Internet and CMC was almost exclusively with people they already had relationships with.[14] Amanda Lenhart's research team reports that in 2004, 87 percent of teens twelve to

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[10] McKenna, "Plan 9 from Cyberspace: The Implications of the Internet for Personality and Social Psychology," 57.

[11] J.A. Bargh and K.Y.A. McKenna, "The Internet and Social Life," *Annual Review of Psychology* 55, no. 1 (2004), McKenna, "Plan 9 from Cyberspace: The Implications of the Internet for Personality and Social Psychology," Turkle, *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*.

[12] Paul Adams, "The Future Is Already Here," Keynote Address at *BrandConnect* (San Jose, CA: from LinkedIn, 2012).

[13] Paul Adams, "*Grouped: How Small Groups of Friends Are the Key to Influence the Social Web*," (Berkeley, CA: New Riders, 2012).

[14] E.F. Gross, "Adolescent Internet Use: What We Expect, What Teens Report," *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 25, no. 6 (2004).

seventeen years old utilized the Internet, with 55 percent of them active social media participants; by the end of 2011, teen Internet use would be almost universal, with 95 percent of all twelve to seventeen year olds utilizing the Internet and 80 percent being active social media users.[15] Those who ventured into the Internet prior to this shift experienced it primarily as a tool for exchanging information or entertainment and secondarily as a place to connect with other like-minded human beings, a subconscious perception that would remain with them.[16] These relationally driven Internet users were not the users the trajectory had framed them to be. Researchers were taking notice.

By 2005, Lisa Lee had expressed her concern that much of the current CMC research did not separate the various ways adolescents uniquely utilize the Internet, cautioning against an over simplification of a CMC generation or research that framed adolescents as a "monolithic social entity."[17] Unlike Lee, who was primarily concerned with social economic or intrinsic motivation delineations, Katie Davis suggested that researchers "consider first how normative developmental processes direct young people's behavior in online spaces."[18] Researchers needed to have a common understanding of what was being inferred when the term adolescence is implored and what insight does an

[15] Amanda Lenhart, "Teens, Kindness and Cruelty on Social Network Sites: How American Teens Navigate the New World of Digital Citizenship," Pew Internet and American Life Project, http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Teens-and-social-media.aspx, (accessed January 15, 2012): 15, 17.

[16] Bo Xie, "Using the Internet for Offline Relationship Formation," *Social Science Computer Review* 25, no. 3 (2007): 399.

[17] Lee, "Young People and the Internet: From Theory to Practice," 360, 320.

[18] Katie Davis, "Coming of Age Online: The Developmental Underpinngs of Girl's Blogs," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 25, no. 1 (2010): 165.

understanding of adolescent development provide into the motivation that enables participation in online social communities.

Task of Adolescence and Computer Mediated Communication

Adolescence is a term made prominent by G. Stanley Hall in the late nineteenth century that described a perceived new stage of development between childhood and adulthood artificially created in part by society's efforts to meet the demands of "the manifold knowledge and skills of our highly complex civilization."[19] Developed from a Latin word, *adolescere,* it conveys the idea of growing up, or growing into, but does not necessarily describe the nature of growth.[20] That nature is best described as having three distinct elements that jointly comprise the adolescent journey. The first is biological: with the onset of puberty, the second being psychological: as a journey towards achieving developmental tasks necessary for a healthy personal identity, while the final is sociological: a socially defined status movement primarily from dependence to self-sufficient contributing adults.[21]

Because puberty has become the most commonly accepted indicator that adolescence has commenced, it can be summarized that adolescence begins biologically, yet ends sociologically.[22] Though the sociological aspect is culturally subjective, young

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[19] G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence* (New York, NY: D. Appleton and company, 1904), xi.

[20] William J Bouwsma, "Christian Adulthood," in *Adulthood: Essays*, ed. Eric Erikson (New York: Norton, 1978), 81.

[21] Nany J. Cobb, *Adolescence: Continuity, Change, Diversity*, Second ed. (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1995), 19-26, 39.

[22] Chap Clark, "The Changing Face of Adolescence: A Theological View of Human Development," in *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically About Youth Ministry*, ed. Kenda Creasy Dean,

people across industrialized nations express a common understanding of adulthood

markers through the expression of cultural values of individualism, prioritized as

"accepting responsibility for oneself, making independent decisions, and becoming

financially independent."[23] Chap Clark clarifies this as individuation: a three-task process

that includes the development of identity, autonomy and belonging.[24]

Identity

Erik Erikson held that the adolescent task of identity development was the

resolution of conflicts created in the variety of relational roles. A holistic integration of

the various roles kept identity true to itself, while an inability to integrate leads to a crisis

of role conflict that led to identity confusion.[25] Margaret Mahler developed the concept of

"separation-individuation," the idea that infants separate from the role of a child in

relation to their parent, and become their own, individuated person.[26] Peter Blos built on

this concept by applying a second and unique experience for those entering adolescence.

Blos theorized that the process of becoming one's own person began by separating

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Chap Clark, and Dave Rahn (Grand Rapids, MI: Youth Specialties/Zondervan Publishing House, 2001), 45-47.

[23] Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood: A Cultural Approach*, Fourth ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2010), 11-12.

[24] Clark, "The Changing Face of Adolescence: A Theological View of Human Development," 47, 54-55.

[25] Erik Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility: Lectures on the Ethical Implications of Psychoanalytic Insight*, First ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1964), 92.

[26] Maragaret S. Mahler, Fred Pine, and Anni Berman, "Stages of the Infant's Separation from the Mother," in *The Psychosocial Interior of the Family*, ed. Gerald Handel and Gail G. Whitchurch (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1994).

oneself from the role of a child[27] to the role of an adolescent.[28] Blos saw the impinging

interactions of various environments on the individual[29] as an opportunity to differentiate

between one's self and one's environment.[30] Increased role conflict creates opportunities

for individual identity to develop as adolescents try on, reflect and differentiate between

the multiple roles that are developed in a various relational contexts.[31] Clark summarizes

this developmental task as the response to the internal question: "Who am I?"[32]

Answering this question has unique implications for the social media user; as to

exist online, teenagers must literally write themselves, their friends and the social

networks that make up their community into existence.[33] Turkle's initial research

suggested that the Internet provided a safe playground for a multitude of identity

experiments that nicely coincided with Erikson's theories of adolescent identity

development.[34] However, from 2002 on it became increasingly difficult to experiment

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[27] Blos defines a child as someone dependent on a nurturing parent.

[28] For Blos, an adolescent is a person in transition to becoming an adult. An adult would be seen as a person who is a socially responsible autonomous individual. Peter Blos, "The Second Individuation Process of Adolescence," in *The Adolescent Passage* (New York: International University Press, 1979), 142-148; 412-413.

[29] Environmental "impingements" may be externally or internally initiated.

[30] Blos, "The Second Individuation Process of Adolescence," 3-9.

[31] S Bresnick et al., "The Complexity Of The Self In Adolescence," in *Readings in Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood*, ed. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett (Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002), 112-119.

[32] Clark, "The Changing Face of Adolescence: A Theological View of Human Development," 55.

[33] Livingstone, "Taking Risky Opportunities in Youthful Content Creation: Teenagers' Use of Social Networking Sites for Intimacy, Privacy and Self-Expression," 408.

[34] Turkle, *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*.

anonymously online, and few adolescents could be characterized as doing so.[35] Turkle

laments the move from the chat room discussions of the earlier web to the social media

interactions of Web 2.0, remarking, "It is not easy to experiment when all rehearsals are

archived."[36] The sense is that a record of activity would provide a natural inhibitor to

identity experimentation. However the Internet has become a place where teens interact

with a variety of social groups in their life, each with their own unspoken norms that

guide behavior in which teens are learning to differentiate themselves.[37] Much of the

current social media sites do not naturally delineate between various social interactions,

grouping them all into one mass where boundaries can unnaturally bleed into one

another.[38] Across this malaise of connections teens must struggle to find a coherent sense

of identity and voice that is acceptable to their divergent social relationships of friends,

family, church, school, sport, work or other community relationships.

Autonomy

Autonomy is that personal sense of responsibility, internal power and the

expressive voice utilized to communicate understanding of personal autonomy. Blos

writes, "Individuation implies that the growing person takes increasing responsibility for

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[35] S. Aslanidou and G. Menexes, "Youth and the Internet: Uses and Practices in the Home," *Computers and Education* 51, no. 1 (2008).

[36] Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 273.

[37] Lenhart, "Teens, Kindness and Cruelty on Social Network Sites: How American Teens Navigate the New World of Digital Citizenship," 12.

[38] Paul Adams, "The Real Live Social Network," Slideshare.net, http://www.slideshare.net/padday/the-real-life-social-network-v2 (accessed November 1, 2012), 53-60.

what he does and who he is, rather than depositing this responsibility on the shoulders of those under whose influence and tutelage has had grown up."[39] Clark frames this task of accepting personal responsibility as answering the question, "Do I matter?"[40] A vital aspect of which is the idea of locus of control, the ability to make decisions and accept consequences centered externally or internally as its source.[41] The motivation for posting personal content online follows this transitional pattern from an external to internal locus of control as adolescents move into emerging adulthood. Davis describes this developmental task among girls, noticing that social media use shifts across adolescence from being peer driven to intrinsically motivating is concurrent with developmental progress. Likewise posted content follows a developmental pattern from reliance upon the guidance of a peer network towards a more reflective engagement with the broader culture.[42] The development of personal autonomy becomes exercised in personal voice.

Humans have an innate desire to express themselves and call other's attention to what they are experiencing. Diana Tamir and Jason Mitchell tracked and developed brain-mapping experiments that identified two insightful aspects to self-disclosure: the first being that individuals place intrinsic value on introspective thought regardless if there is an implied or real audience, but awareness of an audience enhances an

[39] Blos, "The Second Individuation Process of Adolescence," 148.

[40] Clark, "The Changing Face of Adolescence: A Theological View of Human Development," 55.

[41] Chap Clark and Dee Clark, *Disconnected: Parenting Teens in a Myspace World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 57.

[42] Davis, "Coming of Age Online: The Developmental Underpinngs of Girl's Blogs," 161.

individual's desire to disclose introspective thoughts.[43] This desire becomes self-validating as feedback is given through relational connections. As adolescent voice develops through CMC it creates a greater sense of belonging, strengthening the bonds of a peer network.[44] This was especially true for shyer adolescence, where CMC provided more controlled pacing of inter-personal communication.[45] Further consideration needs to be given to belonging.

<div align="center">Belonging</div>

By the end of the first decade of the new millennium, research commonly demonstrated that CMC and SNS are primarily utilized to connect with existing webs of relationships,[46] while social media itself was deepening the quality of friendship among teenagers,[47] For adolescents, it seemed that CMC was complementing existing offline

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[43] Diana Tamir and Jason Mitchell, "Disclosing Information About the Self Is Intrinsically Rewarding," www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1202129109 (accessed April 21, 2012): 2-4.

[44] Davis, "Coming of Age Online: The Developmental Underpinngs of Girl's Blogs,"161.

[45] Levi Baker and Debra Oswald, "Shyness and Online Social Networking Services," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 27, no. 7 (2010): 884.

[46] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," Lee, "Young People and the Internet: From Theory to Practice," Livingstone, "Taking Risky Opportunities in Youthful Content Creation: Teenagers' Use of Social Networking Sites for Intimacy, Privacy and Self-Expression," Melissa Pujazon-Zazik and M. Jane Park, "To Tweet, or Not to Tweet: Gender Differences and Potential Positive and Negative Health Outcomes of Adolescents' Social Internet Use," *American Journal of Men's Health* 4, no. 1 (2010), Artemio Ramirez Jr. and Kathy Bronek, "Im Me: Instant Messaging as Relational Maintenance and Everyday Communication," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 26, no. 1 (2009).

[47] P.M. Valkenburg and J. Peter, "Social Consequences of the Internet for Adolescents: A Decade of Research," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 18, (2009).

relationships. Affirming that having a personal sense of belonging is a fundamental need of adolescents.[48]

Erik Erikson held that a healthy identity was dependent upon the support a young person senses collectively from his or her social class, cultural and national characteristics. The intrusion of historical events[49] or large-scale invasive technology can sever the connectedness from the broader cultural experience that creates a role conflict so threatening to identity resolution that complete societies of young people may embrace a substitute identity in its entirety.[50] Possessing a positive sense of inclusionary belonging in one's home, school and community is positively correlated with better physiological health.[51] Clark refers to this task as answering the question "How do I relate to others?"[52]

Given that the virtual world is an extension of relationships in the real world,[53] the development and preservation of a real live network of relationships,[54] becomes a

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[48] Fiona Begen and Julie Turner-Cobb, "The Need to Belong and Symptoms of Acute Physical Health in Early Adolescents," *Journal of Health Psychology* 17, no. 6 (2011), 914.

[49] Historical events that qualify to be considered intrusive in scope would be such things as war or famine. These are the type of events that would be a significant enough event to disrupt day-to-day life as it would have normally been experienced without the historical interruption.

[50] Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility: Lectures on the Ethical Implications of Psychoanalytic Insight,* 92-93.

[51] Begen and Turner-Cobb, "The Need to Belong and Symptoms of Acute Physical Health in Early Adolescents."

[52] Clark, "The Changing Face of Adolescence: A Theological View of Human Development," 55.

[53] Katrien Van Cleemput, "I'll See You in Im, Text, of Call You: A Social Network Approach of Adolescents' Use of Communication Media," *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society* 30, no. 2 (2010): 79.

[54] Bargh and McKenna, "The Internet and Social Life," Ramirez Jr. and Bronek, "Im Me: Instant Messaging as Relational Maintenance and Everyday Communication."

considered value when writing one's self into being. Adams writes, "People use social networks primarily to strengthen the bonds with their strong ties, and secondarily to build relationships with their weak ties."[55] The pathway to doing that is sharing oneself with others through the development of online content. This task is becoming a vital element of modern adolescence's efforts to manage belonging in the context of their social environment.[56] But has the flexibility of computer enabled smartphones created an over-dependence on constant human connections? Turkle believes so, reflecting on a teenage girl in her study who panics when her phone is not within her grasp because the people it connects her to represents her safety net. "Her cell phone embodies their presence."[57] Though Turkle is sharing the story of just one teen, it is meant to represent the trend of many, since 77 percent of all teens have a cell phone.[58] For Turkle, highly connected adolescents are becoming so intertwined with their digital networks that she suggests "having a feeling without being able to share it is considered so difficult that it constitutes an emergency."[59] The need to communicate personal experiences to digital friendship networks has become so great that Turkle concludes, "At the extreme, we are so

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[55] Adams, "The Future Is Already Here."

[56] Livingstone, "Taking Risky Opportunities in Youthful Content Creation: Teenagers' Use of Social Networking Sites for Intimacy, Privacy and Self-Expression," 394.

[57] Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other,* 246.

[58] Lenhart, "Teens, Kindness and Cruelty on Social Network Sites: How American Teens Navigate the New World of Digital Citizenship," 3.

[59] Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*, 245.

enmeshed in our connections that we neglect each other."[60] The far edges of belonging on CMC are not rewarded with greater sense of connection but greater experiences of abandonment.

The Decline of Social Capital and the Virtual World

More than a century ago, at the dawn of adolescent research, Hall writes, "we are progressively forgetting that for the complete apprenticeship to life, youth need repose, leisure, art, legends, romance, idealization, and in a word humanism, if it is to enter the kingdom of man well equipped for man's highest work in the world."[61] The complexity of the world requires increased skills for successful navigation. Though Hall is not making an explicit correlation between abandonment of young people and the existence of adolescence, he observed that adults were in effect abandoning youth to find their own path to adulthood. Hall notes that at the time adolescents require apprenticeship from the adult community the most, adults are too busy "conquering nature, achieving a magnificent material civilization, leading the world in the applications . . . of science . . . and complex business organizations," to be available.[62] Contributing to these activities as an interdependent member of society creates pressure of being and generates stress among contemporary adults.

David Elkind proposes, "People who are stressed, like those in ill health, are absorbed with themselves – the demands on them, their reactions and feelings, their

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[60] Ibid.

[61] Hall, *Adolescence* xvii.

[62] Ibid., xvi.

hydra-headed anxieties. They are, in a word, egocentric, though not necessarily conceited or prideful. They have little opportunity to consider the needs of others."[63] This current cultural stress dictated a protection of self and abandoned society's young to their own devices to negotiate the transition into adulthood. To relief the guilt of systematic abandonment,[64] modern research has perpetuated a notion of child competence. Elkind writes, "for parents, child competence spelled the reduction of guilt and anxiety. And for American business, child competence spelled money . . . In short; child competence has become part of our way of thinking because it serves many different functions in contemporary American society. None of them benefit children, and many of them unduly stress young people."[65] Child competence became a myth to ease parents of guilt, permitting adults to remain living a stressed-out lifestyle.

Culture is perpetuating the cycle of stress onto each emerging generation, one that, according to Piaget, already begins developmentally in an egocentric state, blinding young adolescents, not only to other perspectives but even the possibility of their existence.[66] The combination of stressed out adults and already egocentric adolescents mix to further isolate the individuating youth from potentially supportive adult influences.

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[63] David Elkind, *The Hurried Child: Growing up Too Fast Too Soon*, third edition. (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2001), 25.

[64] Dr. Chap Clark is credited with developing the concept of systematic abandonment, see Chap Clark, *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*, ed. Chap Clark, Youth, Family, and Culture Series (Baker Academic, 2011).

[65] Elkind, *The Hurried Child: Growing up Too Fast Too Soon*, xix.

[66] Barry J Wadsworth, *Piaget's Theory of Cognitive and Affective Development*, third edition. (New York: Longman, 1984), 68.

Building from these works and to help illustrate the individual nature of the

adolescent journey, Clark developed the image of a tightrope of adolescence, a mental

construct whose poles anchored at each end represent the starting point of the separation-

individuation from childhood and the ending point of full acceptance as an

interdependent adult in community. The strength of those poles represents the social

capital provided at each end.[67] For adolescents, there is a shortage of guides to provide

social capital for the poles at either end within the virtual world.

Adults are active participants of CMC but are less likely to be present on SNS,

because they view the Internet primarily as a tool to find or share information or with

which to engage entertainment.[68] Though almost all parents are now talking with their

teens about the dangers of the Internet, only a little more than a third of parents are part

of their adolescent's social media network of friends.[69] Boyd, who considers herself an

advocate of a marginalized adolescent culture, discovered that most adults who work

with youth are opposed to these sites.[70] Accordingly, adolescent and adult mutual

participation in CMC is lacking.

For adolescents, this lack of mutual participation means they are often left to their

own devices to determine socially acceptable practices,[71] discovering either in hindsight

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[67] Clark, "The Changing Face of Adolescence: A Theological View of Human Development," 50-51.

[68] Xie, "Using the Internet for Offline Relationship Formation," 399.

[69] Lenhart, "Teens, Kindness and Cruelty on Social Network Sites: How American Teens Navigate the New World of Digital Citizenship," 7.

[70] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 260-261.

[71] Gross, "Adolescent Internet Use: What We Expect, What Teens Report."

or unintentionally that they may have crossed socially approved norms.[72] Adults that do

engage adolescents online often expect the Internet to serve as an extension of their

authority in the class or youth room, but fail to consider that the Internet is an authority-

neutralizing environment, making information equally available to all, or that adolescent

use is tempered by their social context and developmental abilities.[73] In essence adults

engage adolescents online as if they were developmentally mature, with similar social

patterns as adults. This creates dissonance, leaving students with the impression that

adults do not understand the Internet. Specifically, youth express little faith that their

teachers could adequately develop curriculum that incorporated online learning,[74] and

this lack of faith potentially carries forward to other significant adults. A perpetual state

of disconnection exists between adults and youth regarding CMC.

This disconnect allows adults to operate in a certain level of denial regarding

adolescent CMC use. Most adults have little knowledge of youth CMC activities and tend

towards an idealization of their own adolescent's behavior.[75] Consequently, there is a

lack of any type of ongoing supervision on the Internet.[76] Approximately one in three

midadolescents report that parents set limits on Internet usage, and less than one in five

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[72] A. Hope, "Risk Taking, Boundary Performance and Intentional School Internet Misuse," *Discourse* 28, no. 1 (2007): 87-99.

[73] Sonia Livingstone, "The Challenge of Engaging Youth Online: Contrasting Producers' and Teenagers' Interpretations of Websites," *European Journal of Communication* 22, no. 2 (2007): 167.

[74] Paris Strom et al., "Adolescent Learning and the Internet: Implications for School Leadership and Student Engagement in Learning," *NASSP Bulletin* 93, no. 2 (2009): 118.

[75] Charles Sophy, "Do as I Say, Not as I Text!" http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/do-as-i-say-not-as-i-text-98497159.html, (accessed July 16, 2010).

[76] Justin W. Patchin and Sameer Hinduja, "Bullies Move Beyond the Schoolyard: A Preliminary Look at Cyberbullying," *Youth Violence and Juvenlie Justice* 4, no. 2 (2006): 8.

parents inquire of their own students what specifically they were up to on the Internet.[77]

However, one in five students wish their parents would teach them how to identify

keywords for Internet research, and one in four would like to discuss what they learn on

the Internet with the parents.[78] Overall however, in the world that is the Internet, students

express little confidence in adult competence and walk primarily absent of parent or adult

online presence.

Lack of presence in the real world, particularly paternal presence, additionally

impacts CMC. This is specifically observed among hyper texting students.[79] Arnett,

discussing the influence of increased access to SNS and CMC points out that smart

phones allow adolescents continuous daily, ongoing, and often immediate access to one

another.[80] Ongoing and immediate adolescent identification with friends online despite

geography, the strengthening of those connections as CMC develops, the absence of

adults in these digital networks, and Turkle's imagery of the cell phone as the

embodiment of one's safety net, combine together to create a virtual web of relationships

that follows students where they go. As adolescent development progresses, so does their

identification with and connection to this developing floating entourage.

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[77] Aslanidou and Menexes, "Youth and the Internet: Uses and Practices in the Home."

[78] Strom et al., "Adolescent Learning and the Internet: Implications for School Leadership and Student Engagement in Learning,"118.

[79] Scott Frank, "Hyper-Texting and Hyper-Networking Pose New Health Risks for Teens," in *American Public Health Association's 138th Annual Meeting & Exposition* (Denver, Colorado: American Public Health Association, 2010).

[80] Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood: A Cultural Approach*, 357.

Chapter Summary

CMC is changing the manner in which adolescents relate to one another by providing an ongoing and almost instantaneous connection to their webs of relationships, a phenomenon that could be described as a type of floating entourage. Early research has typically treated adolescences as a monolithic society, emphasizing the negative isolating factors of the Internet but touting its ability to reduce traditional gating features in choosing one's friends. However, as the majority of adolescents began to participate on the Internet and specifically on SNS, use morphed into a tool that augments relationships. The tightrope journey from dependence to independence and ultimately to interdependence has become increasingly difficult as important skills required to successfully be accepted as a peer in adult society grows and increasingly stressed adults abandon youth to their own resources for survival, both at home and on the Web 2.0. Consequently, unique issues are manifesting themselves across the various stages of adolescence. Today's adolescents are well connected to each other, but not necessarily in the same way across the developmental spectrum.

CHAPTER 2

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE ADOLESCENT JOURNEY

During the 1950s, at the time of Arnold Gesell's research in child development,

the journey of adolescence was understood to be a single transformational phase from

childhood to adulthood that started around thirteen or fourteen and ended at about

seventeen or eighteen, a time span of approximately four years.[1] This perception

coincided with the culmination of child labor reforms and mandatory school laws that

culturally reframed the American teenaged experience from household financial

contributor or one free to seek their own fortune, to a family dependent that is typically

expected to live at home until the completion of high school.[2] Today, it is recognized as

three stages, early, middle and late adolescence, and can start as early as eleven or twelve

years and may continue well into the mid-twenties before achieving cultural standing as

an adult. The use of "late adolescence" has been termed "emerging adulthood" by

Arnett.[3] Since research focusing on this age grouping typically uses this terminology, in

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[1] Arnold Gesell, *Youth: The Years from Ten to Sixteen* (New York: Harper, 1956), 20.

[2] Terry Linhart, "Adolescent Development: The Latest Research That Matters to Youth Workers," in *National Youth Worker's Convention* (San Diego, CA: from Real Resources, 2012), 31.

[3] Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood: A Cultural Approach*, 8.

this doctoral project the term emerging adult will be used for consistency.

Age and stage perspectives are important to SNS and CMC research as adolescent friendship networks are made almost exclusively of young people of the same age; an exclusiveness that extends to the online world.[4] Each stage has different types of friendships. Early adolescent friendship networks center around family or localized conveniences. Midadolescents choose to participate in friendship clusters, a single gender small group of students created for self-protection. Emerging adults start to become other centered.[5] Each of theses nuances is reflected in the make up of friends on SNS.

Each stage also approaches the tasks of adolescence in variety of ways depending on concrete or abstract cognitive perspectives. An adolescent's cognitive ability impacts their online community awareness. These development patterns also become evident in SNS and practices of CMC. For example, similar to teen's evolutionary use of bedroom space, youth update their online profiles in a manner that exhibits reflection of personal identity, and viewing SNS over time provides a map in their shifts of identity awareness.[6] Blos wrote that "it is reasonable to assume that the adolescent who surrounds himself in his room with posters of idolized persons not only repeats a childhood pattern that once gratified narcissistic needs but simultaneously takes part in a collective experience that makes him an empathic member of his peer group. Sharing the same idols is tantamount

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[4] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 10.

[5] This developmentally related insight is from Chap Clark and his explanation of adolescent friendship structures based on his research.

[6] Paul Hodkinson and Sian Lincoln, "Online Journals as Virtual Bedrooms? Young People, Identity and Personal Space," *Young: Nordic Journal of Youth Research* 16, no. 1 (2008): 35.

to being part of the same family."[7] For those who take a long-term approach of ministry to adolescences, observing how adolescents frame their identity on social media is a helpful tool for supporting youth on their journey towards adulthood.

Social Media Use and the Early Adolescent

Early adolescents are able to reflect on their own perspective and that of another, and are beginning to formulate actions according to socially appropriate norms and cultural conventions.[8] They are still closer on the tightrope to childhood than adulthood, so their identity is rooted more in the family of origin, but they are shifting from dependence on parents to more independent behavior, separating from the role of child and individuating as an adolescent.[9] Although younger adolescents appear to be making their own decision about which SNS they choose to interact with, the reality is that they are constrained by the activities of their peer group and the technology that is available to them.[10] Despite that some early adolescents appear to be consumed by online interactions, they do prefer to interact with friends face to face.[11] Mentally operating with a concrete here and now perspective,[12] they are moving from concrete operations to

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[7] Blos, "The Second Individuation Process of Adolescence," 168.

[8] Cobb, *Adolescence: Continuity, Change, Diversity*, 195.

[9] Pujazon-Zazik and Park, "To Tweet, or Not to Tweet: Gender Differences and Potential Positive and Negative Health Outcomes of Adolescents' Social Internet Use," 78.

[10] Livingstone, "Taking Risky Opportunities in Youthful Content Creation: Teenagers' Use of Social Networking Sites for Intimacy, Privacy and Self-Expression," 400.

[11] Gross, "Adolescent Internet Use: What We Expect, What Teens Report," 646.

[12] Steve Lee and Chap Clark, *Boys to Men: How Fathers Can Help Build Character in Their Sons* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 64.

formal operations.[13] Early adolescents are beginning and learning to apply rational thought to concrete problems.

This concrete dynamic means that early adolescents approach CMC from their own reality. When interacting with others online, if they are finished with the interactions, a parent calls them to dinner or another distraction occurs, an early adolescent may just leave the conversation. Without being prompted to do so, they may not intrinsically anticipate or appreciate the emotional disruption that their disappearance may cause another concrete minded peer on the other end of the communication.

Early adolescent females have the highest intuitive sense regarding whether others are being kind or unkind on social media. In the Pew Internet report on teenage kindness and cruelty online, every female early adolescent had some opinion regarding online relationships. Among girls, one in three believed their peers were primarily mean online, yet only one in five actual social media users reported that they experienced others their age being mostly unkind online.[14] In this age group, there is a significant gender difference between how early boys and girls relate with their friends, with girls having a more developed relational acuity than boys.[15] So, it is little surprise that the vast majority of boys rate the online world as a positive experience while being almost five times more likely than their female counterparts to mark a more generic response to the social media

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[13] Wadsworth, *Piaget's Theory of Cognitive and Affective Development*, third edition. 27.

[14] Lenhart, "Teens, Kindness and Cruelty on Social Network Sites: How American Teens Navigate the New World of Digital Citizenship."

[15] Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood: A Cultural Approach*, 217.

relational reality.[16] The status of relationships is of high importance to girls on social

media, while guys seem to be more along for the ride.

Early Adolescent Use of Computer Mediated Communication

Internet use among early adolescents is at 93 percent.[17] By 2010 more than half of

online early adolescents are active participants on SNS.[18] Social media use continues to

rise among this age group and by 2011 almost two thirds were active on SNS. Still, this

number may be lower than expected and could be skewed inaccurately by governmental

regulations. As Boyd identifies, social media companies set minimum participation age

limits to thirteen in order to keep in line with U.S. Congress' Children's Online

Protection Privacy Act of 1998.[19] Adolescents younger than thirteen who participate in

most forms of social media have to exaggerate their age when registering, so they may

not be prone to admit their online activity. Also, it is possible that some early adolescents

do not engage in social media because of the minimum thirteen-year-old age limit.

The number of early adolescents with mobile Internet access continues to increase

and now fully 71 percent of twelve and thirteen year olds can access the Internet via their

phone or a computer tablet.[20] Despite the mobility of their phones, early adolescents are

highly dependent on others for transportation, so are limited in access to friends and find

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[16] Lenhart, "Teens, Kindness and Cruelty on Social Network Sites: How American Teens Navigate the New World of Digital Citizenship," 28.

[17] Madden and Lenhart, "Teens and Technology 2013," 4.

[18] Lenhart et al., "Social Media & Mobile Internet Use among Teens and Young Adults," 17.

[19] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 151.

[20] Madden and Lenhart, "Teens and Technology 2013," 4.

it easier to gather with those not in a local geographic proximity online.[21] Social media then serves to reduce the barrier of physical distance.[22] Only 11 percent of early adolescents report participating in virtual world scenarios[23] such as online gaming activities or role-playing sites. Those that do on average spend eighty minutes longer online than their non-gaming peers.[24] This larger chunk of time skews both the Internet activity numbers as well as the amount of time spent on the Internet upwards.

Early adolescents, especially girls, are creating elaborate and highly decorated online presence.[25] Over half of early adolescents actively experimented with their identity online in some form. Girls tend most to portray themselves as someone beautiful and older than they really are, while boys tend to portray a more "macho persona." Both were for the purpose of exploring how others would react to a different identity.[26] At face value, this would appear to validate an assumption that younger adolescents were experimenting with Erikson's theory, but when adding qualitative research, it is quickly discovered that about two thirds did so in with their friends physically present, most as a prank or joke, with the next most likely reason being to work around SNS age

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[21] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 2.

[22] McKenna, "Plan 9 from Cyberspace: The Implications of the Internet for Personality and Social Psychology," 57.

[23] Lenhart et al., "Social Media & Mobile Internet Use among Teens and Young Adults," 22.

[24] Gross, "Adolescent Internet Use: What We Expect, What Teens Report."

[25] Livingstone, "Taking Risky Opportunities in Youthful Content Creation: Teenagers' Use of Social Networking Sites for Intimacy, Privacy and Self-Expression," 393.

[26] Patti M. Valkenburg, Alexander P. Schoulen, and Jochen Peter, "Adolescents' Identity Experiments on the Internet," *New Media and Society* 7, no. 3 (2005): 390, 392, 397.

restrictions.[27] SNS are not about building an identity itself, but provides an opportunity to frame an identity they wish to portray.[28] Consequently, classic identity experimentation online does not seem to be a practice of this age group.

Where personal disclosure for early adolescents is difficult in face-to-face settings, about one in three adolescents prefer to disclose themselves online rather than in person, this is especially true for boys.[29] As they continue to develop, they are aware of changes in themselves and may change the content of their SNS as a reflection of identification with a new peer network.[30] Another change often comes when adolescent reach the legal age to engage with social media sites that they had previously lied about to participate on.[31] The trouble becomes when early adolescents reach the permitted age, they find it not as easy to switch the age on their profile. This creates a problem if they desire to represent their true age: they need to dissolve their current profile and restart from scratch.[32] This causes a whole repeat of inserting oneself into existing networks, many of which are actively changing for others too.

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[27] Gross, "Adolescent Internet Use: What We Expect, What Teens Report," 643.

[28] Livingstone, "Taking Risky Opportunities in Youthful Content Creation: Teenagers' Use of Social Networking Sites for Intimacy, Privacy and Self-Expression," 403.

[29] Patti M. Valkenburg and Jochen Peter, "Social Consequences of the Internet for Adolescents: A Decade of Research," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 18, no. 1 (2009), 3. This statistic is similar across the adolescent development spectrum.

[30] Livingstone, "Taking Risky Opportunities in Youthful Content Creation: Teenagers' Use of Social Networking Sites for Intimacy, Privacy and Self-Expression," 402.

[31] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 151.

[32] Livingstone, "Taking Risky Opportunities in Youthful Content Creation: Teenagers' Use of Social Networking Sites for Intimacy, Privacy and Self-Expression," 407.

Social Media Use and the Midadolescent

Midadolescents are beginning to spend more time considering how their appearance is perceived by others, are developing more interest in members of the opposite gender and have feelings of omnipotence and immortality that can contribute to risk taking behavior.[33] By fifteen years of age, under normal developmental conditions, the adolescent should have fully reached the stage of formal operations, being able to logically consider solutions to any type of problem from concrete to abstract.[34] However, now they are stuck in a sort of holding pattern as the length of adolescence continues to be extended. The ability of abstract thinking is developed but societal expectations do not require the need for a more formalized identity or a healthy sense of autonomy that integrates their relational contexts.[35] These factors converge into "egocentric abstraction" as the primary characteristic of midadolescence, having the ability to know that their actions may affect others, but not the resources and perspectives to understand the intricacies of human relationships.[36] Consequently, the importance of friends to help navigate the complexities of adult relationships increases in value, and midadolescents develop an intriguing pattern for friendship networks.

An important aspect of midadolescent social networking is a friendship cluster. Clusters are a typically gender exclusive and extremely loyal small grouping of four to

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[33] Pujazon-Zazik and Park, "To Tweet, or Not to Tweet: Gender Differences and Potential Positive and Negative Health Outcomes of Adolescents' Social Internet Use," 78.

[34] Wadsworth, *Piaget's Theory of Cognitive and Affective Development*. third edition, 27.

[35] Clark, *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*, 18, 19.

[36] Clark and Clark, *Disconnected: Parenting Teens in a Myspace World*, 136-139.

ten students that exist to protect one another as long as each member stays within the

group's expected values and norms.[37] Clusters are different than cliques, which can be

represented as a group of friends linking arms, facing one another to keep the group

exclusive. Instead, clusters are better represented as a group of friends linking arms with

their backs to each other for mutual self-protection.[38] Given the intense nature of these

groups, the purpose they serve and the nature of the Internet as naturally providing small

social groups with ongoing and almost instantaneous communication,[39] it seems

reasonable to expect that the influence level of peer cluster groups would overtake

significant adults or even parents. Nevertheless, there is currently no research to validate

such an assumption. Still, there are some close exceptions to primary parental influence.

Adolescents join social media sites as a group of friends.[40] So, the choice of

which SNS or CMC tool an adolescent chooses to participate with is because of their

friendship cluster and not by their parent's guidance. A second factor that may be

considered as more influential then parents is access constraints. Some adolescents have

limited access to the Internet because of socio-economic reasons.[41] However parents,

through boundaries or financial limitations, could influence access restraints, so it is

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[37] Clark, *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*, 60-72.

[38] Chap Clark developed clique and cluster imagery. For a further discussion on the function, structure and role of clusters see: Chap Clark and Steve Rabey, *When Kids Hurt: Help for Adults Navigating the Adolescent Maze* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks, 2009), 65-78.

[39] Nathalie Louge, "Adolescents and the Internet", ACT for Youth Center of Excellence, http://www.actforyouth.net/resources/rf/rf_internet_1006.cfm, (accessed April 27, 2012), 1.

[40] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics."

[41] Madden and Lenhart, "Teens and Technology 2013," 8. Livingstone, "Taking Risky Opportunities in Youthful Content Creation: Teenagers' Use of Social Networking Sites for Intimacy, Privacy and Self-Expression," 400.

debatable whether either access or cluster guidance has greater influence than parents regarding social media participation.

The big difference is in how midadolescent friendship clusters use social media to support one another. Now that 75 percent of midadolescents have mobile options of connectivity,[42] a high school student will have ongoing and often real time access to their friendship cluster. They can bring their friends with them wherever they are. This could be portrayed as a sort of digital floating entourage of peers, ready to virtually cover their friend's back, armed with various emoticons, "lol's" and "omg's." Again, it does not necessarily mean that peers are more influential than parents. The mental imagery of a floating entourage serves to describe midadolescents as being highly connected to their friendship cluster at any given moment in time. Consequently, parents and concerned adults need to know how to navigate social media and be available to provide guidance for safe Internet use.[43] But adults are not there.

Traditionally, physical space for adolescents has been instrumental for developing friendship networks and carving out of individual and peer group identities.[44] In the "real world" space set aside for the use of adolescents is shrinking as developers request community designs that discourage skateboarding or congregating of adolescents in

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[42] Madden and Lenhart, "Teens and Technology 2013," 4.

[43] Pujazon-Zazik and Park, "To Tweet, or Not to Tweet: Gender Differences and Potential Positive and Negative Health Outcomes of Adolescents' Social Internet Use," 83.

[44] Hodkinson and Lincoln, "Online Journals as Virtual Bedrooms? Young People, Identity and Personal Space," 29.

public spaces.[45] Those that do design space for adolescents often exclude them from the planning process, spending valuable resources to develop spaces that adolescents find foreign and unusable.[46] There are consequences to such actions, as Boyd writes, "The exclusion of teens from adult publics limits opportunities for intergenerational dialogue, furthering age segregation and decreasing social solidarity."[47] The result is that the relational structures that govern interpersonal social interaction are increasingly being developed in isolation of each other.

Anthropologist Alan Fiske has developed a theory of human interactions that characterizes social relationships as those where "two or more people coordinate with each other so that their action, affect, evaluation, or thought are complementary."[48] These patterns of societal interaction develop within the framework of a common language that allows the group to become a collective powerhouse by sharing a common network of information.[49] People who learn to adapt to new and changing group dynamics are the most likely to benefit from them, while conversely, those who do not adapt receive less benefit, perhaps even becoming or remaining outsiders, naïve to the interactions of the

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[45] Patsy Eubanks Owens, "No Teens Allowed: The Exclusion of Adolescents from Public Spaces," *Landscape Journal* 21, no. 1 (2002).

[46] Daneil Levi Camille Passon, & Vicente del Rio, "Implications of Adolescents' Perceptions and Values for Planning and Design," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 28, (2008), http://jpe. sagepub.com/content/28/1/73, (accessed March 28, 2011).

[47] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 22.

[48] Alan Fiske, "Human Sociality: The Inherent Sociability of Homo Sapiens," (2009), (accessed November 27, 2012), 1.

[49] Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct: The New Science of Language and Mind* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), 16.

group.[50] The issue of isolation both online and off then becomes the development of socially accepted patterns of interaction within one's own age group in isolation from other generations. Perceivably patterns of self-disclosure are developed apart from intuitively understood societal norms that adolescents would otherwise learn from adults. The orbits of group interaction are increasingly become removed from each other, creating an ever-expanding digital divide between adults and adolescents.

CMC self-disclosure has been seen to enhance the sense of connectedness among peers and serves as the motivation for CMC activity.[51] This is consistent with research that demonstrates people enjoy revealing information about one's self because doing so is intrinsically rewarding.[52] Group interaction that allows for individual self-disclosure would be affirming to individual participation. Additionally, Western society has encouraged personal self-disclosure at levels that would seem quite inappropriate in other societies;[53] an observation that pre-dates the adoption of the Internet by adolescents.

Western culture is also unique in another way. In contemporary Western culture, children are expected to be the initiators of both the practice and engagement of adult process of interpersonal relationships.[54] There appears to be no set pattern as to how a child in the current culture is mentored by adults to understand the intricacies of adult

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[50] Alan Fiske, "Relational Models Theory 2.0," http://www.comm.umn.edu/~akoerner/ courses/4471-F12/Readings/Fiske%20(2004).pdf, (accessed November 29, 2012), 16.

[51] Valkenburg and Peter, "Social Consequences of the Internet for Adolescents: A Decade of Research," 4.

[52] Tamir and Mitchell, "Disclosing Information About the Self Is Intrinsically Rewarding," 2-4.

[53] Fiske, "Human Sociality: The Inherent Sociability of Homo Sapiens," 3-4.

[54] Fiske, "Relational Models Theory 2.0," 14.

interaction. This reality, combined with the ongoing isolation of youth from adults, the simultaneous access to public space, and the inherently intrinsic value of self-disclosure, the Internet has been discovered and adopted by midadolescents as a useful alternative for individual socialization.

Midadolescent Use of Computer-Mediated Communication

Given the lack of actual space set aside for relational development, the primary role of online virtual space becomes the facilitation of socialization and youth are actively using it for such purposes,[55] with 82 percent of online midadolescents utilizing SNS.[56] The experience of the youth involved serves as a sort of give and take. "It's like you are all sitting together. Because you can read each other's comments, see each other's point of view, comment on each other's point of view and it's as if you've got yourself a little forum."[57] This activity may well help to promote opportunities for all participants to engage in discussions they may have otherwise avoided.

Unlike early adolescents, only 28 percent of midadolescents actively experiment with their identity online.[58] Yet, similar to early adolescents, when adding qualitative research studies for this age group, most engaged in this behavior to impress someone older, and the number that could be characterized with identity experimentation

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[55] Hodkinson and Lincoln, "Online Journals as Virtual Bedrooms? Young People, Identity and Personal Space," 40.

[56] Lenhart et al., "Social Media & Mobile Internet Use among Teens and Young Adults," 17.

[57] Hodkinson and Lincoln, "Online Journals as Virtual Bedrooms? Young People, Identity and Personal Space," 37.

[58] Valkenburg, Schoulen, and Peter, "Adolescents' Identity Experiments on the Internet," 390.

consistent with Erikson's theory is almost non-existent at less than 2 percent.[59] Here again, social media presentations are a way of framing the presentation of identity.

Midadolescents were also far less likely than early adolescents to participate in virtual worlds.[60] At this stage, typical use of CMC was more for the purpose of communicating with their existing social network.[61] Online interactions mirror offline relations influenced by their peer group.[62] As abstract thought develops, they became increasingly aware that their network of friends consist of different types of audiences, consequently, a common frustration among midadolescents using SNS is an inability to distinguish between various levels of intimacies among friends (from close to detached) as well as the presence of authority structures.[63] The latter discovery perhaps learned through the repercussion of sharing too much information over a more publicly than intended audience. This structural limitation of most SNS has caused midadolescents to move to multiple avenues of CMC to designate various circles of relationships.[64] With various SNS and CMC tools in play, it would be an interesting assignment to map out the uniqueness of an individual's digital webs of relationships.

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[59] Gross, "Adolescent Internet Use: What We Expect, What Teens Report," 643.

[60] Lenhart et al., "Social Media & Mobile Internet Use among Teens and Young Adults," 22.

[61] Valkenburg, Schoulen, and Peter, "Adolescents' Identity Experiments on the Internet," 396.

[62] Davis, "Coming of Age Online: The Developmental Underpinngs of Girls' Blogs," 150.

[63] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics."

[64] Livingstone, "Taking Risky Opportunities in Youthful Content Creation: Teenagers' Use of Social Networking Sites for Intimacy, Privacy and Self-Expression," 408.

Like early adolescents, CMC and Instant Messaging in particular has become a safer method for one to one self-disclosure, especially for boys.[65] For girls, motivation to start CMC or actively use SNS was in response to growing momentum among friends.[66] For these girls, content and style rotated between survey's and personality quizzes, frequent picture posts and online rants of frustrating relationships, typically with those in authority or of offline arguments with friends. This activity, Davis asserts, demonstrates ability for abstract thought and identity exploration and the "storm and stress of adolescent culture."[67] Though, the nature of the SNS also contributes to drama that could easily be construed as "storm and stress," especially as youth balance learning how to navigate relationships while explicitly placing themselves in friendship circles.

The act of friending or unfriending someone can have unintended consequence, and "because there is often no socially appropriate way to order close friends, many teens blame this feature for the proliferation of social drama on MySpace. Choosing who to display (as best friends) is fraught and teens struggle to find ways to manage this without doing social damage."[68] Online name-calling is highly prevalent among sixteen and seventeen year old females.[69] This could potentially be fueled by friending limitations.

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[65] Valkenburg and Peter, "Social Consequences of the Internet for Adolescents: A Decade of Research," 3.

[66] Davis, "Coming of Age Online: The Developmental Underpinngs of Girl's Blogs," 155.

[67] Ibid., 156, 160.

[68] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 220-221.

[69] Ann Wade and Tanya Beran, "Cyberbullying: The New Era of Bullying," *Canadian Journal of School Psychology* 26, no. 1 (2011): 52.

CMC conversations among friendship clusters are characterized as being mutually beneficial. Midadolescents find it easier to approach difficult subjects online then in person and they glean deeper insights into the life and experiences of their friends.[70] Less important from early adolescence are the highly decorated web sites that frame current identity. These presentations are replaced in favor of highlighting various social connections, "thus expressing a notion of identity lived through authentic relationships."[71] Of growing awareness are relationships with the opposite gender, and for this, introverts find SNS helpful. "When a real need for cross-gender relations and self-presentation emerges, it is the introverts, who have difficulty with self-presentation and social interaction in real life, who begin to use the Internet to present themselves as older and more flirtatious."[72] Among boys, CMC allows time for considering messages and shy youth find the ability to control their words without pressures of physical presence helpful.[73] Locating difficult conversations online reduces pressure in a variety of potentially socially awkward situations.

Social Media Use and the Emerging Adult

Arnett outlines five characteristics unique to the stage of emerging adults. First is identity exploration: engaging in various possibilities in regards to discovering a partner,

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[70] Davis, "Coming of Age Online: The Developmental Underpinngs of Girl's Blogs," 157.

[71] Livingstone, "Taking Risky Opportunities in Youthful Content Creation: Teenagers' Use of Social Networking Sites for Intimacy, Privacy and Self-Expression," 393.

[72] Valkenburg, Schoulen, and Peter, "Adolescents' Identity Experiments on the Internet," 397.

[73] Valkenburg and Peter, "Social Consequences of the Internet for Adolescents: A Decade of Research," 4.

occupation and where their beliefs and values position them in the larger society. Second, it is an age of instability resulting from experimentation with a variety of potential identities. Third, it is self-focused, in that they are not directly responsible to their parents and yet not responsible for children, so their focus is on developing skills, experiences and knowledge, and self-awareness before committing to a lifetime relationship and work. The fourth characteristic is a feeling of in-between as they have a sense of being not quite adult, and yet not an adolescent. Finally, Arnett suggests it is the age of possibilities. Emerging adults truly believe they will have the opportunities to arrive at the hope and dreams they have for their lives.[74]

Emerging Adult Use of Computer-Mediated Communications

Gone are the geo-physical restraints of earlier stages, but college age students are using text messages to stay connected with lovers and best friends who are not physically present.[75] Similar to previous stages, the primary motivation at least among females is to stay connected with their friends.[76] However, as a whole, social media usage actually decreases in this age group, dropping to 89 percent.[77] Possibly college or work pressures limits the amount of available time for social media.

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[74] Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood: A Cultural Approach*, 8-9.

[75] Ramirez Jr. and Bronek, "Im Me: Instant Messaging as Relational Maintenance and Everyday Communication," 309. The authors note that this may be to a lack of IM usage among other, older adults in their lives.

[76] Davis, "Coming of Age Online: The Developmental Underpinngs of Girl's Blogs," 161.

[77] Madden and Lenhart, "Teens and Technology 2013," 3.

Emerging adult females typically felt more confident on their CMC then they did

as midadolescents. These young ladies are more likely to use their increased confidence

to develop a more personalized writing style, moving from complaining about

relationships or experiences towards contemplating futures and reflecting outside of one's

personal experience.[78] Though this may be true also for emerging adult males since CMC

"serve as socializing agents for emerging adults."[79] As young women write and receive

feedback on their entries, they "gain insights into themselves and their role in society."[80]

This activity helps females discover their place in this world. Similar to midadolescents,

CMC is found to be helpful for shyer individuals who are connected on SNS to provide

and experience a richer friendship with those they are digitally connected with.[81] This

richness occurs best with people emerging adults already have some type of connection.

The quality of online relationships continues to mirror offline relationships.

Contrary to earlier stages of developmental use of SNS for interactions with

current webs of relationships, emerging adults are using the Internet to develop new

relationships.[82] By starting a relationship online, the networking site serves as a sort of

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[78] Davis, "Coming of Age Online: The Developmental Underpinngs of Girl's Blogs," 158.

[79] Carolyn McNamara et al., "Religiosity and Spirituality During the Transition to Adulthood," *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 34, no. 4 (2010): 316.

[80] Davis, "Coming of Age Online: The Developmental Underpinngs of Girl's Blogs," 162.

[81] Baker and Oswald, "Shyness and Online Social Networking Services," 885.

[82] Danielle Couch and Pranee Liamputtong, "Online Dating and Mating: The Use of the Internet to Meet Sexual Partners," *Qualitative Health Research* 18, no. 2 (2008): 269.

hyper relational way to negotiate one's own sense of identity and filter through other's

identities, looking for potential fit or sexual encounters,[83] depending on desired outcome.

Research quickly reveals SNS and CMC are used to gratify sexual desires and

expand one's opportunities for potential sexual encounters.[84] Adolescents in this stage of

development are more likely than midadolescents to publicly post sexually explicit

comments.[85] This is consistent with Erikson's theory that older adolescents have a greater

concern for sexual identity than younger adolescents.[86] More than half of emerging adult

males utilizes pornography on a weekly basis, and a number of those binge in a manner

comparable in frequency and characteristics to binging on alcohol.[87]

The massive number of people on dating sites also allow for increased control of

the pace of interactions.[88] To this end, meeting new people was rated the highest and

most rewarding aspect of online dating, while having to wade through mounds of

misinformation, fake pictures and profiles are typically rated as the most negative aspects

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[83] Ibid., 269-277.

[84] L.M. Padilla-Walker, J.S. Nelson, and A.C. Carroll, "More Than Just a Game: Video Games, Internet Use and Health Outcomes in Emerging Adults," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 39, (2010), Laura M. Padilla-Walker Jason S. Carroll, Larry J. Neslon, Chad D. Olson, Carolyn McNamara Barry and Stephanie D. Madsen, "Generation Xxx: Pornography Acceptance and Use among Emerging Adults," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 23, no. 1 (2008).

[85] K. Subrahmanyam and P. Greenfield, "Connecting Developmental Constructions to the Internet: Identity Presentation and Sexual Exploration in Online Teen Chat Rooms," *Developmental Psychology* 42, (2008). This study reports that 40 percent of emerging adults are apt to post sexually explicit material versus 13 percent of midadolescents.

[86] Erik Erikson, *Childhood & Society* (New York: Norton, 1950).

[87] Jason S. Carroll, "Generation Xxx: Pornography Acceptance and Use among Emerging Adults," 16-24.

[88] McKenna, "Plan 9 from Cyberspace: The Implications of the Internet for Personality and Social Psychology," 57.

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of the experience.[89] Manipulating content is easy and increasingly common.[90] For example, women who were perceived by researchers to be less attractive did in fact typically post enhanced or specifically flattering pictures and indicated their social status was more significant than it actually was.[91] With exaggeration and deception as part of the norm of the online dating landscape, especially among young adults that feel a need to compensate for perceived social or physical personal limitations, it is increasingly difficult to develop authentic relationships built on foundations of mutual trust and self-respect. However, this is not the only unintended consequence.

Perhaps ironically, using the Internet specifically to meet new people is positively correlated with augmented feelings of loneliness and fragmentation from one's own friends and family.[92] There does not seem to be any other factor that contributes to loneliness and isolation since research started invalidating the loneliness factors discovered in pre-2002 studies. Consequently, just as emerging adults are about to take on marriage, one of society's indicators as acceptance as a peer in adulthood, the path that is growing in its social acceptance to finding a mate is itself keeping emerging adults on the individualized tightrope of adolescence. Emerging adults are receiving even less support from the family of origin or from the broader adult community.

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[89] Couch and Liamputtong, "Online Dating and Mating: The Use of the Internet to Meet Sexual Partners," 272.

[90] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 30.

[91] Catalina Toma and Jeffrey Hancock, "Looks and Lies: The Role of Physical Attractiveness in Online Dating," *Communication Research* 37, no. 3 (2010): 345.

[92] Cuihua Shen and Dimitri Williams, "Unpacking Time Online: Connecting Internet and Massively Multiplayer Online Game Use with Psychosocial Well-Being," *Communication Research* 38, no. 1 (2011): 140-141.

Chapter Summary

The trajectory of social media is towards almost universal adoption by adolescents of all stages. Identity presentations on the Internet qualify as being just that, an opportunity to use media as expression of identity. Social media and the Internet identity experimentation occur in a very limited percentage of students. Age and stage developmental considerations are important aspects of understanding adolescent Internet use, and research is demonstrating unique risk factors related to each stage.

Early adolescents are characterized as concrete thinkers, are most likely to use the Internet for online gaming and virtual world sites, and least likely to be using SNS. Girls especially use the Internet to seek validation and consequently are susceptible to bullying. The myth of multi tasking is a research topic worthy of fuller research and may be contributing unnecessarily to bullying online among concrete minded early adolescents.

Midadolescents have developed ability for abstract thought, but lack the societal pressure necessary to clarify identity and practice healthy autonomy. Clusters become a defense mechanism and though not replacing the influence of family or significant adults, they become intrinsically important for support and safety. Lack of public space with which peers can develop friendships is disappearing, forcing midadolescents to use virtual space as a substitute for self-expression. Additionally, lack of public space is reducing interaction between generations, creating patterns of socialization in isolation of each other that result in relational development apart from broader societal norms that become increasing foreign to each other.

Emerging adults are attempting to enter and delay adulthood responsibilities simultaneously and SNS sites become a proving ground for individuation and

socialization. Dehumanizing behavior and pornography is rampant and Internet dating is

fraught with fake profiles and exaggerated physical and social attributes. Using the

Internet for the purpose of meeting new people is positively correlated with increased

feelings of loneliness and family fractures, yet is rated as the best part of online dating.

While in each stage social media use has developed its own ground rules for

group interaction, the almost universal embracement of social media among all stages of

adolescence demonstrates its usefulness for interpersonal interaction among existing

groups of friends. Despite that psychosocial realities differentiate actual usage, Western

society appears to be predisposed to embrace a digital social platform.

The end result of adolescent social media use is the development of social

patterns that centers on the individual journeying the tightrope from childhood to

adulthood. As generations increasingly live their everyday geophysical and online lives in

separation from each other, peers turn to one another to practice patterns of socialization

while simultaneously delaying efforts at navigating adult societal interaction. The

growing issue of adolescent social media usage becomes the development of unique

patterns of group interaction that are increasingly naïve to how each other operates.

Adolescents' need shared geophysical, and now online space, with adults to complete the

journey towards individuation. However, without it they are developing patterns of

societal interaction in which adults are not only outsiders but also increasingly foreigners.

For all adolescents, considerations need to be made as to how the church may

strategically support those traversing this independent journey despite that the everyday

life of the adolescent is increasingly foreign to adult interaction.

PART 2

DEVELOPING SPIRITUALITY OF NETWORKED ADOLESCENTS

CHAPTER 3

A THEOLOGY OF COMMUNITY IN PUBLIC NETWORKS

In the 1956 film *The Ten Commandments*, Charlton Heston portrays Moses

experiencing God in the pillar of fire.[1] In regal sounding King James English, Moses

hears the voice of God call out each commandment while a blazing finger of fire etches

the same commandment into stone. The scene, punctuated in the film with an intensely

developing musical score and 1950s Hollywood special effects, demonstrates the

moviemaker's intent to establish that God, in communicating himself through the

medium of the stone, is doing something truly unique.

It would take several millennia before humanity would develop the technological

ability to attempt a visual recreation that could communicate this event to a mass

audience. Only five decades after that, any person sitting on their couch, tablet in hand

and finger poised, can communicate any given thought at any given moment to

potentially any given audience. In a manner of speaking, the ability to use medium to

communicate something of ones' self no longer seems unique, the process has moved

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[1] Charlton Heston, "The 10 Commandments Written With The Finger of God," in *The Ten Commandments*, the movie. Directed by Cecil B. DeMille. Los Angeles: Paramount Pictures, 1956.

from the dramatic to the mundane. The idea that a single mediated communication can unite a broader community around itself in a fragmented world of communicative communities seems equally antiquated. Catholic Priest and theologian Franz-Josef Eilers describes the situation facing the Church. He writes, "because we are rapidly growing into a total communication society where everybody can be reached everywhere at any time we must all the more reflect the essentials of Christian Communication Theology in our daily lives."[2] Moving forward, the praxis of Christ-centered communicative community needs to be centered on the person of God.

Biblical Exegesis

The journey towards the development of a practical theology of communicative community begins in the social nature of God as found in the Genesis creation narrative. "Then God said, "Let us make man in our image" (Genesis 1:26) reveals a plurality of being that suggests an awesome ability for corporate creativity. Though this Genesis account does not specifically indicate that God consists of three persons, further biblical study of the relational nature of God reveals the concept of the Trinity, demonstrating God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[3] Scripture not only reveals the story of the Trinity, but is also the very expression of the Trinity; an interconnected relational network

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[2] Franz-Josef Eilers, "Communication Theology: Some Considerations," Freinademetzcenter.org *http://www.freinademetzcenter.org/pdf/Communication_Theology.pdf*, (accessed May 13, 2012).

[3] Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 173.

expressing itself in a free and open communication among equals.[4] Because God is, was, and always will be community,[5] being created in the image of God, by definition, means that to be human there simply must be a relational aspect to it.[6] The social network of the Trinitarian God head then becomes the example for God-centered community.

This communicative image of God also tells us something of how our own self-identity forms. As Grenz and Franke write, "Perhaps the most significant postmodern insight into identity formation is the observation that whatever the self may be, it is a social reality."[7] We understand who we are in relation to who others are, just as we develop a conceptual understanding of the Trinity in relation to who each member of it is. It is a way of identity understanding within the context of human networks, the foundation of which for a God-centered communicative community is a relational God. There is no space for isolation among humanity, and certainly not among the community of faith. This insight provides an explanation as to why, when we leave youth to find their own pathway to adulthood, they in turn choose to rely on each other. Being connected in relationship is simply a part of who we are created to be.

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[4] Franz-Josef Eilers, "The Communication Formation of Church Leaders as a Holistic Concern," lecture, *The Third International Conference on "Media, Religion and Culture"* from The International Society of Media, Religion and Culture, (Edinburgh, Scotland: July, 1999).

[5] Gilbert G. Bilezikian, *Community 101: Reclaiming the Church as a Community of Oneness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House; Willow Creek Resources, 1997), 16.

[6] Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 96.

[7] Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context*, 200.

Israel Connected by a God Who Listens

Biblical examples of the use of medium to communicate are relatively abundant. Deuteronomy encourages the nation of Israel to use mediums to impress the commandments on their hearts, instructing them to tie them to their hands and foreheads, to write them the doorframes of their homes and on the fence posts (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). God communicates to Gideon through a wool fleece (Judges 6) and the writing on the wall for King Belshazzar (Daniel 5). Other examples are not hard to find. For the Jewish people, mediated communication was instrumental in their relationship with God; the use of a medium is really not an issue. That relationship with God however found its identifying roots in the context and condition of the community of God.

Communion with God could not be celebrated if it existed without attention given to the condition of the community, both interpersonally and between people and God.[8] An example of this was the development of the corporate ability to express pain. Walter Brueggemann, comparing the laments of the people of Israel in Exodus 2:23-25 and Numbers 11, suggests that the first lament comes from deep within a people refusing to live any longer under the agony and shame of slavery. The second lament alternatively is one of entitlement, a plea for a variety of food like they had experienced in Egypt. Both narratives reveal to us that the cry of the community is founded on the experiential conviction that God listens, and through hearing He begins the transformation towards a better reality.[9] Knowing how to lament corporately, they could find the conditions within

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[8] Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary*, Augsburg Old Testament Studies (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 169.

[9] Walter Brueggemann, "Lament as Antidote to Silence," *The Living Pulpit*, (2002), 25.

their own community to express pain and frustration on behalf of the individual, turning the hurt of its members toward a new corporate reality under the provision of God. They stood together, crying out before God. In time, God would step into the everyday life and experience of this community personally.

The Word Among Us

The self-communication of God reaches its pinnacle in the incarnation of the person of Jesus Christ.[10] John 1:14 reads: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." (TNIV). The presence of ἐγένετο, translated 'became' suggests that the original transitions into something new, something other than what it was before. In this case it is the λόγος, or 'the Word,'[11] becoming flesh. It is full participation in the limitations of humanity.[12] George Beasley-Murray translating ἐσκήνωσεν literally as "pitched his tent," believes there is an echo of the Hebrew Exodus experience of God both at Mt. Sinai and the 'Tent of Meeting' in Exodus 33:7-11.[13] R.E. Averbeck affirms this, but adds that where Moses met one on one with God in the meeting tent, John 1:14 brings the glory of God through Jesus to all people.[14] The presence of Christ is God's specific commitment to communicate himself with people, transcending more than mere

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[10] Eilers, "The Communication Formation of Church Leaders as a Holistic Concern," 2.

[11] In this case the use of 'λόγος,' refers of course to John 1:1-4, as having been, from the very beginning, with God, is God, through whom all things created had been made.

[12] George R. Beasley-Murray, *Word Biblical Commentary: John*, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 13-14.

[13] Ibid. The Greek root word for tent is identified by Beasley-Murray as having the same consonants as the Hebrew word used for tent (*shekinah*) in the Exodus passage. 14.

[14] *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, s.v. "Tabernacle." 810-811, 823-825.

message or information. During his time on earth, Jesus would reframe participation in God's Kingdom as participation with His redemptive reign over all of creation.[15] It is an invitation for people to respond with their whole person.[16] Though Christ's call was the participation of a person's whole being, it began within their contextual framework.

One of the challenges and at times originator of unwarranted drama on social media is the unnaturally overt manner in which a person has to write their friendship structures into being.[17] John 21:15-17 describes the occurrence of an overt discussion of the relational status between Jesus and Peter. John portrays Jesus interacting around a breakfast fire with Peter, the intention of which is the reinstatement of Peter to Christ's ministry through a line of thought that questions Peter's love for Jesus.[18] Leon Morris notes that Peter's previous actions had shown that his passion for a messiah did not include the cross and the subsequently resurrected Christ. Reflecting on Peter's relational dilemma, Morris writes: "Was he ready to love Jesus as he was, and not as Peter wished him to be? That was an important question. Peter must face it and answer it."[19] Jesus is intentionally reframing their relationship given Peter's denial and Christ's resurrection, providing Peter with an opportunity to overtly state the status of their relationship.

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[15] Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit*, 75.

[16] Eilers, "Communication Theology: Some Considerations," 1,7.

[17] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 220-221.

[18] Beasley-Murray, *Word Biblical Commentary: John*, 404.

[19] Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John: Revised Edition*, vol. 43 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 768.

In the first inquiry, John[20] tells us that Jesus uses ἀγαπᾷς[21] as his term for love. "Do you ἀγαπᾷς me more than these?" (TNIV, Greek added). Agape, though not universally, often reflects a higher sense of volitional love.[22] Peter, sidestepping the, 'more than these,' comparison claims his love for Jesus as 'φιλῶ.'[23] Philo can be seen as a more natural type of love[24] typically used among family members.[25] A second exchange occurs and again Jesus poses ἀγαπᾷς, while Peter remains with φιλῶ. On the third query, Jesus adopts Peter's expression of love, switching His own ἀγαπᾷς for Peter's φιλῶ. Though the particular verb used for the expression of love is not the point of the passage,[26] K.L. McKay believes that "the pattern of variations of forms of agape and philo in this passage are not pointless but constitute a contextual distinction which is not blatant, but gently significant."[27] By adopting Peter's verbiage, Jesus is subtly coming to Peter's side.

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[20] Andreas Kostenberger, *John: Baker Exegetical Commnentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 595-596. It is important to note that John is framing this translation, as the original exchange between Jesus and Peter was most likely in Aramaic.

[21] The Greek word ἀγαπᾷς is the indicative present active second person singular of the verb agape. Barbara Friberg and Timothy Friberg, eds., *Analytical Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), 360.

[22] Morris, *The Gospel According to John: Revised Edition*, 772.

[23] The Greek word φιλ is the indicative present active first person singular of the verb philo. Friberg and Friberg, eds., *Analytical Greek New Testament*, 360.

[24] Beasley-Murray, *Word Biblical Commentary: John*, 594.

[25] Morris, *The Gospel According to John: Revised Edition*, 769.

[26] D.A. Carson notes that when theologians "absolutizes" the ways the Bible speaks of God's love "not only are the others vitiated but theological nonsense is the result." *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, s.v. "Love." 649.

[27] K.L. McKay, "Style and Significance in the Language of John 21:15-17," *Novum Testamentum* 27, (1985), 333. Note: Kostenberger points to other passages where agape does not necessarily reflect a higher love and philo is used to describe God's love. Beasley-Murray contends that John regularly

Peter is grieved, but it is not Christ's choice of adopting φιλῶ that saddens him. The three times Jesus asks Peter about his effectually associates the experience to Peter's earlier three denials of Jesus.[28] As the biblical text indicates, Peter's grief is due to Jesus asking the third time.[29] While the point of the passage is Peter's reinstatement, how Jesus addresses Peter has significance for Christ-centered communicative community. Jesus is not allowing Peter's choice of verbs to affect Peter's trajectory towards or away from Christ, choosing instead to adopt Peter's verb as his own.

Communicative Community as Eschatological Hope

The activities of the church, as recorded in Acts 2:42-47, included all believers holding and sharing everything they had in common with each other that not only provided for material needs but also provided an atmosphere of personal well-being.[30] The early church developed deep connections and a sense of interpersonal trust and reciprocity in their social networks. This trust and reciprocity is comparative to what Robert Putnam, in his research on community building in America, defines as social capital.[31] In Acts 2:42, Luke uses the term *koinonia*, and in the list of four things the

alternates similar words and argues that the two words for love should be seen as synonymous. McKay concedes that while that John does regularly interchange synonymous words, there is no indication that this was John's intent here. However, despite the varying degrees of exegetical significance, all agree that John portrays Peter as remaining with φιλῶ throughout the questioning, while Jesus adopts Peter's use of φιλῶ in his third query.

[28] Kostenberger, *John: Baker Exegetical Commnentary on the New Testament*, 596.

[29] Beasley-Murray, *Word Biblical Commentary: John*, 405.

[30] Anthony B. Robinson and Robert W. Wall, *Called to Be Church: The Book of Acts for a New Day* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 83.

[31] Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 19.

community devoted themselves to, only one element is teaching, while the other three are all elements of *koinonia*.[32] The church centered its relational structure on the person and work of Jesus Christ, creating a human network that provided value for its members while standing in distinction from other human communities.

In Acts and Paul's letters we see the community of believers reframe the secular and political concept of ecclesia, as a new community of God, with eschatological expectations due to the saving work of Jesus Christ.[33] The Apostle Paul saw the very nature of our ability to enter into a relationship with each other as a dimension of our existence. The Apostle felt that within the context of the church, that relationship is expressed in a unified yet diverse community under a common experience of God's grace.[34] It is a call to convert from self-rule to God's Kingdom rule as an invitation to a new Christ-centered community that experiences life together in God's mission.[35] The choice is between submitting oneself to the reign of God or the reign of the world.[36] It exists for the purposes of God and the world Jesus acted in and for, not of its individual

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[32] Ben III Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 160.

[33] Hans Küng, *The Church* (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), 114-124, 341.

[34] James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 78, 564.

[35] David E. Fitch, *The End of Evangelicalism? Discerning a New Faithfulness for Mission Towards an Evangelical Political Theology*, Theopolitical Visions (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 151.

[36] Küng, *The Church*, 139-143.

members.[37] Consequently, unique from other human communities, the church is a community continually choosing participation in the Kingdom reign of God together.

This Kingdom reign of God on earth was the experience by the faith community under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Grenz and Franke contend, "The concept of community forms the content of the kingdom of God. The divine reign consists of God at work redeeming, reconciling and transforming creation into God's intended ideal, and thereby constituting the world as God's realm."[38] The result is an invitation to all humanity to enter into salvation through the ongoing work in Jesus Christ on behalf of the Kingdom of God, a community that lives under God's Kingdom authority that can be observed, experienced and engaged with.[39] The ultimate intent is the invitation of God's Kingdom reign over every area of the earth. This would include the Internet.

Sharing in the community of faith provides evidence that we have in fact experienced an encounter with God. This community experience has implications for personal identity development. Grenz suggests that we build on theorists who are exploring the role of personal narratives on identity formation. Holding that a person's narrative is embedded within the community of participation, Grenz writes: "God's program is directed to the establishing of a reconciled people from all nations to live within a renewed creation and enjoy the presence of their Redeemer God. This biblical vision of community is both the goal of history and the experience of each person who

[37] Michael W. Goheen, "As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You: J.E. Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology" PhD diss., University of Ultrecht, 2000, 358.

[38] Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context*, 235.

[39] Fitch, *The End of Evangelicalism? Discerning a New Faithfulness for Mission Towards an Evangelical Political Theology*, 173.

has come to know God."[40] It is a future Kingdom reality that reaches into current reality, resulting in the reframing of personal identity on God and His community.

Eilers reminds us "God's communication does not reach its fullness here on earth."[41] There is always a future hope exponent to it. We gain a proper perspective of what fuels communicative community by centering Kingdom work as the work of the Triune God, directed by the Father, begun through Jesus Christ, and continued together through the presence and power of the Spirit. Jürgen Moltmann helps with the balance, writing: "It is not faith that makes Jesus the Christ; it is Jesus as the Christ who creates faith. It is not hope that makes the future into God's future; it is the future that wakens hope. Faith in Christ and hope for the kingdom are due to the presence of God in the Spirit."[42] Participation in the community of faith is not powered by well-intentioned human effort, but by communities of people inviting God, through His Spirit, to align their lives according to a Kingdom reality. For the Christian communicative community this is an outflowing of participation in Scripture together.

Christianity and Mediated Communications

While God communicates His redemptive action in history through the Bible, the church understands her role through this same narrative.[43] Together, as we actively

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[40] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 51-52.

[41] Eilers, "Communication Theology: Some Considerations," 5.

[42] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Minneapolis, MN.: Fortress Press, 1993), 197.

[43] Goheen, "As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You: J.E. Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology," 358.

participate in Scripture as the one, true testament of God's activities in and for the whole world, we are actively formed into participation of God's mission.[44] It is through this relational context we can understand the meaning of the language used by the faith community when speaking intimately about the God we have come to know.[45] Scriptures are part of a relational dynamic of being known by and knowing God, serving as a story of the work of God in the world and being rendered infallible in and through Christ.[46] Only in the context of relationships, can we truly understand or reveal whom God is and what he uniquely desires to do through us within our current context.

As an example, the Pauline epistles are letters to various congregations and individuals whom he had mentored. They deal with the day-to-day concrete issues they were facing. In describing the conversational tone of Paul's letters, Calvin Roetzel writes: "we are dealing with real letters, highly personal in nature, intensely particular in their discussions of problems, and essentially conversational (a talking *with* not *at* others)."[47] They were truly communication tools designed to convey messages and formational teaching of a personal nature. As such they are guided by the recipient's context.

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[44] Fitch, *The End of Evangelicalism? Discerning a New Faithfulness for Mission Towards an Evangelical Political Theology*, 172.

[45] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 78.

[46] Fitch, *The End of Evangelicalism? Discerning a New Faithfulness for Mission Towards an Evangelical Political Theology*, 133,138,177.

[47] Calvin J. Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context*, Fifth edition (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 118.

Ecclesiology derives its frame of reference from the origination of the church in the New Testament time period.[48] The Ecclesia was initiated to carry on God's self-communication into contemporary context principally through community creation, proclamation and serving.[49] Context suggests that the gospel is being placed into a cultural framework, the future trajectory of which is shaped by current reality and its own past.[50] Christ-centered community participation through Scripture then is to join in with God's ongoing mission to reconcile the world back to His own self.[51] Communicative community balances proclamation with serving, holding in tension the historical gospel with ongoing cultural engagement. Therefore it shapes the participants into a missional community that reframes the trajectory of both the Christ-centered community and the cultural that embodies it. In some eras this is perhaps more obvious than in others.

Likeable Media Spurring Reformation

For Shirky, when people change the way they communicate, they change society.[52] In medieval European context the institutional church controlled the information that was communicated to the general public, even to the point of communicating when the day was to start and stop via church bells, calling people to

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[48] Küng, *The Church*, 22, 36.

[49] Eilers, "The Communication Formation of Church Leaders as a Holistic Concern," 2.

[50] Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1986), 2.

[51] Fitch, *The End of Evangelicalism? Discerning a New Faithfulness for Mission Towards an Evangelical Political Theology*, 136.

[52] Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*, 17.

morning or evening prayer and providing structure for communal life.[53] Shirky reminds

us that Martin Luther's redecoration of the Wittenberg door with his *95 Theses* would not

have been all that memorable had his friends not used the printing press to copy and

distribute the work in a common vernacular.[54] However, the concept of reformation was

not unique to Luther and his companions. It took the convergence of a variety of factors,

including spiritual, technological and cultural to allow change to happen.[55] Changing the

manner in which ideas were communicated, though pivotal for social change was only an

aspect of what was necessary to reframe how theological dialogue would occur.

Luther's ideas for reform took root where other's had not because of his openness

and ability to utilize contemporary technological advancements to address the social

realities of his time. The result was an alternate trajectory for Christianity.[56] Because

there was a high demand for literature in their vernacular, economics helped drive the

reformation,[57] despite that Luther felt commerce was contrary to human nature.[58]

Consequently, not only had an increased human desire to authentically engage in

theological reflection in their own language fueled the reformation, but also financial

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[53] Stig Hjarvard, "The Mediatization of Religion: A Theory of the Media as Agents of Religious Change," *Northern Lights* 6, no. 1 (2008), 19.

[54] Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*, 67-68.

[55] Kale, "Spirituality, Religion, and Globalization,"

[56] Horsfield and Teusner, "A Mediated Religion: Historical Perspectives on Chrisitanity and the Internet," 283-284.

[57] Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*, 67-68.

[58] Lewis W. Spitz, *The Renaissance and Reformation Movements*, vol. two (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 556.

interest worked against Catholics who attempted to curb the distribution of Luther's works.[59] The Reformation demonstrates that there needs to be a convergence of political, structural, economic and cultural readiness for technological innovation to happen; the effects of any innovation on culture then are themselves dependent on the broader culture's willingness to allow changes to occur.[60] Society changed because the cultural milieu allowed for the possibility of change.

Communication as Theological Amplification

Across the next six centuries the church would embrace technology to amplify proclamation. Appealing to Catholics, Eilers contends "the emergence of modern technology for communication from Gutenberg to Internet is a special gift to intensify, deepen but also extend this communication (of God)."[61] For evangelists, each mass media format, such as the inventions of radio, television and the Internet, were all quickly claimed as having the power for the mass evangelism of the whole world within some specific and relatively immediate future.[62] Early mediums tended to be paternalistic and focused on a one to many pattern.[63] The emphasis was on *kerygma*. The adoptive tendency was to frame technological developments as opportunities to proclaim God's

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[59] Horsfield and Teusner, "A Mediated Religion: Historical Perspectives on Chrisitanity and the Internet," 286.

[60] Ibid., 284-285.

[61] Eilers, "Communication Theology: Some Considerations," 8.

[62] Horsfield and Teusner, "A Mediated Religion: Historical Perspectives on Chrisitanity and the Internet," 278-279.

[63] Hjarvard, "The Mediatization of Religion: A Theory of the Media as Agents of Religious Change," 12-13.

Good News to a larger audience. An emphasis on kerygma finds the redemptive moral value of technology in its proclamation qualities. It is part of a cultural tendency to view media as something added onto that which we are, meaning where the content of mediated material is helpful it should be deemed good.[64] The goodness of communicative technology was its seemingly innate ability for mass evangelization.

However, new forms of media are mixed in with existing forms of media and filtered through cultural ways of interpretation that may communicate something far different then the intent of the original content.[65] The user reconfigures the content of a message in light of their contextual reality. At a global scale, the framework of the receiver for understanding mediated communicative assumptions is lacking.[66] In contemporary social media, the growing digital divide between adults and adolescents means that adults utilizing social media for *kerygma* will discover their message was not received as it was intended to be. Proclamation without a servant heart tension for the historical gospel with an ongoing cultural engagement becomes unbalanced. The result is a communication disconnect that contributes to further inter-personal alienation.

Changing The Way Communities Communicate

The communicative challenges that face Christ-centered communities are not trivial. Among those who consider themselves part of the community of faith, the overall

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[64] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Reprint ed. (Boston, MA: The MIT Press, 1994), 31.

[65] Horsfield and Teusner, "A Mediated Religion: Historical Perspectives on Chrisitanity and the Internet."

[66] McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 241.

trajectory of the Internet favors an individualized, consumer orientated, multi-directional approach.[67] This individual centered mindset stands in opposition to a mutually submissive missional community of faith. As Putman notes, "Privatized religion may be morally compelling and psychically fulfilling but it embodies less social capital."[68] It does not serve the sense of reciprocity among its members. Additionally, people are experiencing forms of religion online that they bring back to their offline communities.[69] It is not uncommon for these individuals to borrow bits and pieces of various faiths or spiritual experiences to create their own spirituality.[70] Unchecked, this new form of syncretism can potentially reshape communities away from its Christ-centeredness.

On the other hand, spiritual communities who try and limit the use of CMC among their members will find as the Catholics did at the start of the reformation, that the effort marginalized their ability to influence culture. Additionally, being that the Internet is inherently authority neutralizing,[71] it is unlikely prohibition would have any takers except among those who would not naturally embrace the Internet or CMC anyway. At best abstinence would prove the church to be culturally irrelevant. At worst, the leaders of such a church would appear tyrannical.

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[67] Hjarvard, "The Mediatization of Religion: A Theory of the Media as Agents of Religious Change," 12-13.

[68] Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, 74.

[69] Horsfield and Teusner, "A Mediated Religion: Historical Perspectives on Chrisitanity and the Internet," 291.

[70] Kale, "Spirituality, Religion, and Globalization."

[71] Strom et al., "Adolescent Learning and the Internet: Implications for School Leadership and Student Engagement in Learning," 118.

In reality, the forms of the church that reconfigured itself through print technology looked very different than they had before the Reformation.[72] Communication technology advancements changed the manner in which the pace and flow of information could be exchanged in society, reconfiguring authority and expertise within the Christian community.[73] In similar fashion, the forms of the contemporary church will change as the way culture communicates changes. While the temptation may be to apply the forms of CMC onto the communicative structure of the church, the model of the early church differed from that. Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk assert that in the early church "they did not first seek out some framework or resource in the broader culture and then justify it by arguing that it was consistent with revelation. They went much further. They centered their understanding, framing and practices of Christian formation (and therefore the nature of leadership) on the fact of the Incarnation as the place where God's intentions and purposes are made known."[74] If the presence of Christ is God's specific commitment to communicate himself with people, then centering community on Christ is instrumental for communicative communities that find their foundation on God.

A Kingdom Trajectory of Participation With Public Networks

Kingdom trajectory is a discussion about ecclesial praxis, a term that Ray Anderson describes as "the process of ongoing critical reflection on the acts of the church

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[72] Horsfield and Teusner, "A Mediated Religion: Historical Perspectives on Chrisitanity and the Internet," 287.

[73] Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*.

[74] Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 122.

in light of the gospel and in critical dialogue with the secular sources of knowledge with a view of the faithful transformation of the praxis of the church in the world."[75] Internal reflection with external dialogue that together leads to ministry transformation. Internally, the church experiences Christianity as a mediated faith. As Horsfield and Teusner describe it: "Every expression of Christianity, every experience of spirituality, every Christian idea, is a mediated phenomenon. It is mediated in its generation, construction and in its dissemination."[76] Mediated experiences are not foreign to the church.

Externally, the Internet, while it is individualized and consumer centric, is also exceptionally multi-directional among its participants.[77] The invention of a social platform for the Internet, nicknamed Web 2.0, reframed its nature as a web of interconnected documents to a web of interconnected people.[78] This historical shift towards relationships is significant for Christian communicative community. As Anderson writes: "The constant factor through social and cultural change in human self-perception is the structure of humanity as a social reality of love experience as a reciprocity of relations in which Jesus Christ is present as the objective reality of grace, freedom and responsibility."[79] Given that online community is synonymous with and a

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[75] Ray Sherman Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 59.

[76] Horsfield and Teusner, "A Mediated Religion: Historical Perspectives on Chrisitanity and the Internet," 279.

[77] Hjarvard, "The Mediatization of Religion: A Theory of the Media as Agents of Religious Change," 12-13.

[78] Adams, "The Real Live Social Network."

[79] Anderson, The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis 173.

reflection of offline community,[80] the demarcation between virtual and real life has become a false dichotomy.

Reflecting on this is an invitation to understand what God is up to in the world of social media and consequently a theologically reflective response for the Christ follower. As Clark directs, "faithful discipleship, as defined theologically, is where faith is so God-directed that it invites the Holy Spirit to consistently encroach into any assumptions, attitudes and/or habits held dearly that may in fact keep us – either as a community or an individual believer – from living out the call of the Gospel."[81] If the experience of CMC is isolated and fragmented communicative communities and online life is a synonymous reflection of offline life, then isolation is the present geo-physical reality. If the Holy Spirit is allowed to encroach on current ministry praxis it may be demonstrated that at this point Christ-centered communicative communities need reconfiguration. As the quality of interpersonal CMC becomes a reflection of offline interpersonal relationship, the adolescent communicative community is increasingly foreign to adult interaction. Within Christ-based communicative communities, this new reality simply should not exist. Our churches need to embrace a faithful transformation of its ministry praxis.

<center>Towards Authentic Engagement</center>

Through all of the change that occurred during and after the Reformation, there was never a dichotomy of Christianity, one that lived in books and another that existed in

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[80] Horsfield and Teusner, "A Mediated Religion: Historical Perspectives on Chrisitanity and the Internet," 293.

[81] Chap Clark, "Youth Ministry as Practical Theology," *The Journal of Youth Ministry* 7, no. 1 (2008), 16.

the real world. There were Christian communities who invited, through print, those outside of the conversation in, and Christian communities who kept their discussion isolated from common discourse.[82] Social media is the reverse of this trend. Instead of inviting the outside world in, Christian communities will need to reframe social media as an opportunity to deepen community interaction beyond the scope of current geo-physical limitations. It is more of an inside-out approach to communicative community.

Biblically, theologically and historically speaking, authentic community always had some element of geo-physical presence and community responsibility.[83] Any effort at redefining community absent of geo-physical attributes loses its theological significance. Any attempt at gathering an audience in cyberspace in order to make a community is contrary how adolescents are using social media. Additionally, there are elements of the live experience that at this point cannot be replicated online.[84] The overall adolescent trajectory of utilizing social media to remain connected to one's social structure is within rhythm along with the patterns of healthy Christ-centered communicative community.

To authentically engage in social media, the church community interacts from its nature as people "in covenant with God and one another, a sign of God's reign, and a reflection of the divine love."[85] It has the mark of God upon it that continues His self-

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[82] Horsfield and Teusner, "A Mediated Religion: Historical Perspectives on Chrisitanity and the Internet."

[83] Franz-Josef Eilers, "Social Communication and the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church," in *Colloquium on Laity in Public Life: Nurturing the Inner Being for a New Social Evangelization* (Bangkok, Thailand: St, Joseph Freinademetz Communication Center, 2008).

[84] Horsfield and Teusner, "A Mediated Religion: Historical Perspectives on Chrisitanity and the Internet," 291.

[85] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 486.

revelation into the current time.[86] Certainly for the church to function as a body, it includes elements of worship, prayer and teaching that together focus on God. But for the broader evangelical movement, we have lost the sense of a missional ecclesiology. As David Fitch eloquently frames it, "The way forward, then, for an evangelical missional politic is to ground our belief and practice in the incarnate reality of the triune God in Christ. In doing so, we recover Jesus as the ontological core of our corporate existence."[87] As the community centers the context of its interactions on Jesus, a holistic communication strategy flows from this basic corporate understanding of being. This has implications for an inherently individualistic Internet.

As believers, we enjoy not only a personal but also a shared identity.[88] Christ-centered community is one where people interact with their identity rooted in Christ. It is personal, not individualistic. Communication effectiveness increases the more personalized an all-inclusive communication strategy can be.[89] For example, as Jesus took on an adoptive stance with Peter, the church community takes on an adoptive stance in regards to accepting adolescents. This adoptive stance requires accepting adolescents where they are developmentally, socially, mentally and spiritually, being willing to step to their side in interactions with them. Web 2.0 offers additional opportunities to develop

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[86] Eilers, "The Communication Formation of Church Leaders as a Holistic Concern," 2.

[87] Fitch, *The End of Evangelicalism? Discerning a New Faithfulness for Mission Towards an Evangelical Political Theology*, 128.

[88] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 501.

[89] Eilers, "The Communication Formation of Church Leaders as a Holistic Concern," 7.

stronger webs of interconnected relationships among a relatively small group of people.[90]

Koininia. Authentic communicative community engagement develops *koininia* among its participants.

Authenticity also has an element of reconciliation. The intent of God's Kingdom reign is ultimate redemption of all of God's creation, and a passionate reconciliation with lost people.[91] To be reconciled to God is to join in with God in this reconciliatory action; the two cannot be arbitrarily separated.[92] This mission, though singular in its intent, reflects a change in contextualization in a given culture,[93] and is expressed as an incarnate reality living among with, and not apart from those who are hurting.[94] The result is that wherever restoration ministry happens, "God is glorified and creation is in part perfected."[95] This reconciliation does not stop at the edge of the cyberspace but instead develops healthy patterns of interconnectedness that bridge the digital divide.

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[90] Horsfield and Teusner, "A Mediated Religion: Historical Perspectives on Chrisitanity and the Internet," 292.

[91] Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit*, 33, 136.

[92] Fitch, *The End of Evangelicalism? Discerning a New Faithfulness for Mission Towards an Evangelical Political Theology*, 174.

[93] Küng, *The Church*, 46.

[94] Fitch, *The End of Evangelicalism? Discerning a New Faithfulness for Mission Towards an Evangelical Political Theology*, 171.

[95] Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, 60.

Towards a New Equilibrium

The Hebrew people, though always rooted in their identity in God, had to develop different forms of community dependent upon external factors beyond their control.[96] At some extent the Christian community has already accomplished this in digital space. As Horsfield and Teusner discovered, "almost every form of religious community in the offline world has had a counterpart from on the web, where people congregate to pray together, worship together, discuss social justice and theology, write songs and make art, make community care for one another."[97] While this activity is in a trajectory towards Christ-centered communicative community it lacks an intergenerational component that would truly reflect a holistic spiritual community.

As Brueggemann aptly notes, "the trick of community is to hold together real differences of interest in the midst of treasuring a passionate commitment to belong faithfully to one another."[98] The growing adolescent-adult digital divide amplifies these differences but they are not irreconcilable. We need to reframe our perspectives to imagine both faith experiences and communication as embedded in a larger cultural experience versus the fragmented vision of separate entities that merely engage with one another.[99] Like Jesus who took on an adoptive stance with Peter and Paul who wrote his

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[96] Walter Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes* (Lousiville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 35-37.

[97] Horsfield and Teusner, "A Mediated Religion: Historical Perspectives on Chrisitanity and the Internet," 291.

[98] Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes*, 37.

[99] Horsfield and Teusner, "A Mediated Religion: Historical Perspectives on Chrisitanity and the Internet," 279.

communicative letters as a talking with and not at others, engagement with adolescents will expresses an adoptive hermeneutic of mutual interconnection. Framed by a spirit of love and supported by the reconciling Spirit of God, adult-adolescent social media interaction can become a reflection of healthy Christian community in any publically networked space.

Chapter Summary

The communicative technology of humanity has come a long way since the 'finger of God' wrote the Ten Commandments. Social communication itself however is foundational to Christianity. The social network of the Trinity becomes an example of inter-connected, mutually submissive and creative community for Christ-centered communicative communities. Being in community is an aspect of who God created humans to be. The biblical intent of identity formation is within the context of a community centered on God through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

For the Israelites, who were familiar with mediated forms of communication as an aspect of their religious and corporate identity, communion with God existed within the framework of healthy interpersonal community and corporate expression toward a God who heard their cries. The incarnation of Jesus Christ is the pinnacle of God's self-communication to all people. Christ, who framed participation with God's Kingdom as participation with His redemptive reign with all of creation, developed an adoptive strategy that served in Peter's trajectory towards a right relationship with God.

Both the early Church and the Apostle Paul centered their relational structure on the person and work of Jesus, reframing human practices towards an eschatological

reality that transformed their contemporary context towards a Kingdom reality. The result was the development of a deep social network with a strong communal reciprocity. In history, spiritual, technological and cultural factors converged that allowed for innovation and a culture that embraced new technology. Those that embraced the technology reframed the church, inviting outsiders in to theological dialogue and spiritual community through print media and a common vernacular.

In contemporary culture the systemic abandonment of youth, combined with a God-given design for human relationships and adolescent access to relationally based technology converged to create an extension of their relationships beyond geo-physical restraints. For evangelicals, and more recently Catholics, the inventions of new mediated technology seemed best suited for proclamation. However, given that the trajectory of communicative communities is towards isolated group interaction, there is a growing digital divide between adults and adolescents, both online and off. Emphasizing the *kerygma* qualities of contemporary media without developing *koininia* has left communicative strategies unbalanced and impotent in achieving their intent.

Reflective Christ-centered community will center communication on the person of Jesus Christ, embracing a ministry praxis that is personal in its holistic communicative strategy. Putting on the adoptive practices of Christ, adults will need to develop a ministry praxis that pays attention to the whole body of Christ, adolescents in their various developmental patterns included. Taking an adoptive approach to adult-adolescent online and offline interactions, adults will need to embrace an interactive ministry praxis of social media that treats CMC as an everyday human reality mirroring geo-physical relationships. Embracing social media as an extension of adult-adolescent

relationships, the issue then turns to inviting adolescents to trust Jesus with their social

media interactions.

CHAPTER 4

DEFINING SPIRITUALITY AMONG THE HYPERCONNECTED

The Internet has become a part of everyday life,[1] and since its use and application

is defined by the individual user, there is not a simple, macro level main effect such as

isolation or depression among participants.[2] However, when the environment changes,

the perspective of those in the helping professions who are observing activity in a manner

foreign to a common understanding of cultural health, tend to find someone to blame. As

Urie Bronfenbrenner writes, "there must be something wrong with somebody, and

somebody usually turns out to be the person or group having the problem in the first

place."[3] In the case of social media, the target group is adolescents.

Historically, the church has embraced a comparatively similar strategy as the

helping professions. Though the good or bad is done by segmenting culture into spiritual

or non-spiritual, Godly or worldly or moral versus immoral. The tendency is to embrace

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[1] Bargh and McKenna, "The Internet and Social Life," 574.

[2] McKenna, "Plan 9 from Cyberspace: The Implications of the Internet for Personality and Social Psychology," 59, 72.

[3] Urie Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 290.

one side while rejecting the other. Hall expresses his frustration with this inclination of

the church to separate social sciences from the sacred:

> We have vastly simplified politics by separating Church and State by our
> voluntary system, but we have also permitted a chasm to yawn between our
> secular and religious life, between science and theology, till even seminaries for
> the training of clergymen neglect and even suspect the study of nature as if God
> were a hypocrite and did one thing in his works and said another in his Word,
> when in fact each supplements and is an imperfect thing without the other . . . All
> this is hard on youth.[4]

The Church community risks doing something similar with social media and the

Internet. CMC usage among adolescents can be frustrating to adults, especially those

looking to control youth and their interactions online. Power struggles over CMC may be

more about exerting personal will than observing Christ honoring practices.[5] These types

of battles are not serving adolescents. Any fears that social media will replace offline

connections can also be put to rest. SNS and CMC are not replacing face-to-face

connections. Even high-level social media users prefer, engage in and value more

traditional avenues of social interactions over online.[6] Ultimately, as Eilers writes,

"Social communication is not just media and technology but people."[7] It is about the

human connections that make social media so important for Christian communities.

This is not to pendulum swing, saying there are no social consequences of social

media. As William Barclay guides, "to align the church to the world, in the name of

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[4] Hall, *Adolescence*, xviii.

[5] Eilers, "The Communication Formation of Church Leaders as a Holistic Concern."

[6] Gross, "Adolescent Internet Use: What We Expect, What Teens Report."

[7] Eilers, "Social Communication and the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church," 5.

aligning it to reality, is the quickest way to suicide for the church."[8] It is important to keep a balanced yet reflectively critical approach to the role social media plays in spiritual community.

Paul, in his letter to the Christians living in Rome, urges those who follow Jesus, "Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking around life and place it before God as an offering" (Romans 12:2, The Message). God desires every area of a person's life. Isolating the tools and technology of culture as worldly, labeling social media use as addictive, or even choosing to ignore its use will not encourage those moving into adulthood to discover what it means trust Jesus with these mediated interactions. As Sharon Parks suggests, "Spiritual formation and religious faith development happen best in tandem with the whole flow of one's life."[9] Life giving answers will not be found on the Internet itself. Caring, Christ-centered adults will need to enter the virtual world in tandem with youth. However developing slick fan pages, or using SNS to communicate truth will not be the way most families and ministers will connect with their students. Without considering psychosocial developmental issues or the quality of interpersonal relationships, it may in fact be counter productive.

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[8] William Barclay, *Ethics in a Permissive Society*, 1st U.S. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 214.

[9] Sharon Daloz Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 199.

Developing the Spirituality of Adolescence

Spirituality as a concept has lost its significance, becoming whatever individuals in society decide it needs to be.[10] Consequently, a working definition of spirituality needs to be defined. Paul in Galatians 5:5, among a larger discussion about spiritual freedom and slavery to the law, writes: "But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope." "Faith" is considered to be Paul's theological proposition, it is an antithesis to "legal works"[11] while "eagerly await" is its supporting foundation.[12] As a combination, faith and patience that will culminate in righteousness, therefore, faith becomes a pivotal concept to comprehend.

Faith

The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament defines *pistis* as "faith, trust; faithfulness" and *pisteuo* as "to believe, have faith."[13] Given its reoccurrence and usage, Barth suggests it must be considered a central theological concept, one that represents the correct relationship to God and ultimately the essence of the Christian religion itself."[14] It is a concept that possesses our soul. Unlike secular identity development theory, it is not

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[10] Augsburger, *Dissident Discipleship: A Spirituality of Self-Surrender, Love of God, and Love of Neighbor*, 9.

[11] F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 231.

[12] Longenecker, *Galatians*, 229.

[13] *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "Pistis, Pisteuo." 91, 92.

[14] Ibid., 91, 92.

something we possess to authenticate our sense of self or communal respect.[15] Nor do we possess it in a manner that would say it is owned, achieved, or complete; it's an ongoing process, a response to God's goodness to us.[16]

Sharon Parks describes it as "the activity of seeking and discovering meaning in the most comprehensive dimensions of our experience."[17] This description provides a proactive perspective to faith, an action that exhibits trust. Paul encourages the Galatians to be in a perpetual state of living by faith in the Spirit.[18] Paul also views faith as an ongoing experience of hanging onto God's promises, disregarding a trust in one's own potential and accomplishments.[19] Stassen and Gushee emphasize, "Where Christian faith is functioning as it should, it serves as the governing paradigm for life. Life is governed by the narrative of God's coming reign in Christ and the way of life appropriate to it."[20] To fully trust one's self to God is to experience the fullness of life.[21] Its ongoing tension towards its fulfillment in the "righteousness for which we hope" (Galatians 5:5) demands

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[15] Augsburger, *Dissident Discipleship: A Spirituality of Self-Surrender, Love of God, and Love of Neighbor*, 193.

[16] Glen Harold Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 94.

[17] Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith*, 7.

[18] Longenecker, *Galatians*, 245.

[19] *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament,* Stassen and Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, 95.

[20] Stassen and Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, 82.

[21] Walter Brueggemann, *In Man We Trust: The Neglected Side of Biblical Faith* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1973), 43.

that it will only be fully realized as an eschatological outcome.[22] We wait for it, not work

for it.[23] It becomes the basis for right living between people, God and each other. "Faith

shapes the Christian's existence (Romans 14: 22 ff.; I Corinthians 13:13, 2 Corinthians

4:13; Galatians 2:10; 5:5). It is the basis of the Christian's new life. Faith thus manifests

itself in love (Galatians 5:6) and results in a certain demeanor (Romans 14:23, II

Corinthians 4:13)."[24] Therefore our role in the spiritual development of adolescents is the

invitation to increase faith, a process that culminates in love, but is developed with a

foundation in the Holy Spirit.

<div align="center">Roots in the Sinful Nature</div>

The list of vices provided by Paul (Galatians 5:19-21) was not about those living

outside of the faith community, but emphasize "sins against the common life in the

brotherhood."[25] They are about believers nourishing human needs by rooting themselves

into the sinful nature. "Libertinism, which focuses on "freedom as an opportunity for the

flesh" (verse 13), has dire, negative consequences."[26] It is the antithesis to the Spirit.[27]

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[22] Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 246.

[23] Frank Ely Gaebelein, J. D. Douglas, and Dick Polcyn, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: With the New International Version of the Holy Bible*, 12 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 489.

[24] *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament,* 95.

[25] Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 247.

[26] Longenecker, *Galatians*, 249.

[27] Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 243.

What is common among all 15 vices is an "egocentricity that underlies all of them."[28] They are self-focused, lacking an expressed trust in Christ.

Putting Roots into the Spirit

John R Tyson writes, "Jesus' life has often been the focus of Christian reflections and as such becomes a model for Christian life."[29] Trusting in Christ means trusting him both as son of man and Son of God. "His true manhood, as ours, consists in his ability to order his social and natural environment for the sake of healthy human community."[30] Living rooted by the Spirit is to be progressively conformed to Christ likeness,[31] and is a consistent theme in Paul's writing. "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness (Colossians 2:6-7)." "And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ" (Ephesians 3:17-19). In Galatians, putting our roots into the Spirit results in positive outcomes.[32] Living rooted into the Spirit provides the believer with insight and wisdom, enabling them to good acts for the benefit of others; it is the movement from an egocentrism to selflessness, an invitation to experience freedom from the painful consequences of self-

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[28] Longenecker, *Galatians*, 266.

[29] John R. Tyson, *Invitation to Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Anthology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 21.

[30] Brueggemann, *In Man We Trust: The Neglected Side of Biblical Faith*, 25.

[31] Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 245.

[32] Longenecker, *Galatians*.

centeredness,[33] the solution to the oppression of legalism and the entrapments of unrestrained freedom.[34] "Identification with Christ in his crucifixion means a new type of peace for the believer, for now "Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).[35] F.F. Bruce sums it up well: "Living by the Spirit is the root; walking by the Spirit is the fruit, and that fruit is nothing less than the practical reproductions of the character (and therefore the conduct) of Christ in the lives of his people."[36] Trusting Jesus becomes the litmus test for our actions as discovered in the fruit of our actions.

Providing Support For Those on the Tightrope

Augsburger reminds us that "Christian community is a web of stubbornly loyal relationships knotted together into a living network of persons . . . held firm by a central strand resolutely attached to Jesus Christ . . . and this stubborn attentiveness is spirituality."[37] Despite that Christians live in spiritual freedom (Galatians 5), and adolescence is by nature an independent journey, putting roots in the Spirit does not happen in isolation, independent of others.[38] CMC connects youth to each other and

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[33] Longenecker, *Galatians*, 247, 267.

[34] Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 240.

[35] Longenecker, *Galatians*, 264.

[36] Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 257.

[37] Augsburger, *Dissident Discipleship: A Spirituality of Self-Surrender, Love of God, and Love of Neighbor*, 61.

[38] Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 241.

deepens the quality of their friendship.[39] It can also be used to deepen the quality of

relationships between teenagers and adults. Boyd learned that youth "who have positive

relationships with trusted adults use social media to connect with them."[40] Online

interaction between youth and adults can be supportive, but they are an extension of off

line relationships, augmenting existing healthy relationships.

Social media risk taking behaviors can also find their root issues in interpersonal

relationships, or maybe because of the lack-thereof. One such example is hyper-texting,

which is defined as sending more than 120 texts per day and is positively correlated with

significantly higher risky behaviors as sexual promiscuity, drug use and fighting.[41] With

83 percent of midadolescents owning a cell-phone,[42] it may seem like the best course of

actions is to eliminate cell phones among midadolescents. However, hyper-texters, as

discovered by Dr. Frank, typically "had no father in the home."[43] One small phrase in an

entire report that places the blame on hyper-connectivity yet provides no additional

insight into the role of the father. However, all youth on the tight rope of adolescence

need the support of paternal attachment for successful journey towards individuation.[44]

[39]Valkenburg and Peter, "Social Consequences of the Internet for Adolescents: A Decade of Research."

[40] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 258.

[41] Frank, "Hyper-Texting and Hyper-Networking Pose New Health Risks for Teens."

[42] Madden and Lenhart, "Teens and Technology 2013," 9.

[43] Frank, "Hyper-Texting and Hyper-Networking Pose New Health Risks for Teens."

[44] Clark, "The Changing Face of Adolescence: A Theological View of Human Development," 58-60.

Characteristics of this type of supportive relationships will include trust, communication and closeness, quality rated from the adolescent's perspective.

Trust

Trust is developed over time and its significant ingredients include consistency and faithfulness. Trust is hard to gain and easy to lose. Part of it is being present, and part of it knows when to grant freedom. Responsible adults need to be aware that going places where adults are not expected to be can lose the trust of adolescence. These places include the online world.

The Internet is open to all and may seem to adults as public, but to youth, virtual space is considered personally owned.[45] This is an important perspective for adults to keep in mind as the intended audience is often treated mentally by midadolescents especially as a bounded set.[46] For example, in traditional journals or diaries, passionate mood fluctuations and all were written in the privacy of a bedroom. They may have been shared among friends but were kept safe from parents or little brothers in some fashion. Online journals serve as a site for the living-out of everyday life, similar to traditional journals, but with the added benefits of atmosphere manipulation through music or pictures, and contributions by trusted friends.[47] To parents, they seem to be positioned for public consumption, therefore available for them to read. To the concrete world of an

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[45] Hodkinson and Lincoln, "Online Journals as Virtual Bedrooms? Young People, Identity and Personal Space."

[46] Alice Marwick and Danah Michele Boyd, "I Tweet Honestly, I Tweet Passionately: Twitter Users, Context Collapse, and the Imagined Audience," *New Media & Society* 13, no. 1 (2010), 117.

[47] Hodkinson and Lincoln, "Online Journals as Virtual Bedrooms? Young People, Identity and Personal Space," 37.

early adolescent, the public potential is not comprehensible, as this was not their intent. The journal was concretely intended for themselves and those who they wanted to view and participate with it. The natural perspective of adolescent is that their parents will not be viewing their online activities. Any effort to do so will require prior negotiation.

This perspective is not all that different among midadolescents. In a school based survey among both early and midadolescents, only 16 percent of students felt that parents should be inspecting Web browser history logs as an act of supervision.[48] That is not very many. Most youth hold that doing so without prior negotiation would be perceived as a breach of trust.[49] Parents may well believe that checking up on their midadolescent is the parent's prerogative, and there is something to be said about fulfilling that responsibility. However, egocentric abstraction among middle adolescents means that teens typically are not going to make the necessary mental connections to determine the consequences of their actions across all of their relational contexts.[50] Publicly posting conversations that are intended to be private is an example of the mental disconnect of a still un-integrated personality.

However, lack of adult presence and guidance is a problem on the Internet, and vigilance is important if adults and adolescents are going to get the best from what the Internet and CMC has to offer.[51] Parents and teens need to work together to set

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[48] Strom et al., "Adolescent Learning and the Internet: Implications for School Leadership and Student Engagement in Learning," 119.

[49] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 284-286.

[50] Clark, *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*, 19-20.

[51] Elkind, *The Hurried Child: Growing up Too Fast Too Soon*, 115.

reasonable boundaries and monitor use. Not for the purpose of controlling the environment or assuage parental fears. Unilaterally setting boundaries to maintain control frustrates students and does not provide young people opportunities to develop resources needed for interpersonal connection in adult culture.[52] As the Apostle Paul encourages, "Fathers, do not embitter your children or they will become discouraged" (Colossians 3:21), to which Barclay adds, "This may be the most important rule of family life."[53] Mutually setting boundaries among maturing and increasingly independent adolescents will help them learn to take on this responsibility and provide the experience to do so.

Communication

Communication is the art of being understood, and is in large part about who will shoulder the responsibility for dialogue, moving from adult initiated to mutual consensus. Parks, identifies this as an important aspect of emerging adult faith development: "young adult faith is forged in an ongoing dialogue that occurs both within the self and among an available network of belonging in interaction with the wider world . . . Dialogue does not mean two people talking, but rather talking through."[54] The ability for interpersonal dialogue is developed through engagement with one another.

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[52] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 300.

[53] Barclay, *Ethics in a Permissive Society*, 201.

[54] Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith*, 155.

Among families and between friends, CMC positively increases a personal sense of social capital.[55] This could be because interactions are personal. They are mostly about what is going on in the individual's life over matters of community concern.[56] Boyd discovered that SNS strengthened healthy parent-teen relationships by introducing new interactions, creating increased opportunities for exchanging ideas and information.[57] While further research demonstrated that face-to-face interactions ensure the development of relationships, for some, relationships with weaker ties could in fact be strengthened by SNS usage.[58] For example, SNS or instant messaging can be a helpful tool to engage with shyer students,[59] or stimulates self-disclosure.[60] This is not to say that a geo-physical relationship is not important. Even weak ties have some form of connection. The point is that adults need to be intentional in their interactions adolescents, being aware of who they are communicating with and the resources and developmental understanding they have available to them to interpret social media interactions.

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[55] Shen and Williams, "Unpacking Time Online: Connecting Internet and Massively Multiplayer Online Game Use with Psychosocial Well-Being," 140.

[56] Hodkinson and Lincoln, "Online Journals as Virtual Bedrooms? Young People, Identity and Personal Space," 38-39.

[57] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 252.

[58] Xie, "Using the Internet for Offline Relationship Formation," 402.

[59] Baker and Oswald, "Shyness and Online Social Networking Services," 885.

[60] Valkenburg and Peter, "Social Consequences of the Internet for Adolescents: A Decade of Research," 2.

The Difficulty of Engaging Youth Online

Youth are very aware of differences in ages, and Internet sites that attempt to cover the broad span of adolescence are perceived to be too far-reaching, especially those that appear to have information targeting students younger than the current user. Adolescents intuitively wonder "in whose interest is such participation?" and are very tuned in to CMC that is not a dialogue, even if it claims to be.[61] Adult participation seems to naturally value communicating truth, and because of this, adult led discussion forums rarely get much traffic; adults are focusing on passing out information instead of the day-to-day events of people's everyday lives.[62] It is a matter of agenda.

It is also important to consider the effects that egocentric abstraction has on an adolescent's receptivity of a social media message. Ralph Winter, while commenting on the failure of much of Christian media, understands egocentric abstraction to mean that if an intended message is not related to adolescent self-protection or interest level, it is going to bounce off of them.[63] The message will not be heard. Eilers further suggests that the concept of mass media is not relevant in contemporary culture, so communicators need to be sensitive to a cultural need for personalization.[64] In order to engage with

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[61] Livingstone, "The Challenge of Engaging Youth Online: Contrasting Producers' and Teenagers' Interpretations of Websites," 170, 173, 179.

[62] Hodkinson and Lincoln, "Online Journals as Virtual Bedrooms? Young People, Identity and Personal Space," 39.

[63] Ralph Winter, "The Hero's Journey" (guest lecture presented at Doctor of Ministry Seminar, YF521 Strategic Issues in Youth and Family Ministry from Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, November 9-20, 2009).

[64] Eilers, "Social Communication and the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church," 3.

adolescents, it needs to be about them or interesting to them. It is a matter of personalization.

Agenda and personalization combined means that if adults are going to reach out to adolescents online, they need to know adolescents and what is important to them. Yet, adults are often not listening when it comes to adult and adolescent interactions online. Livingstone writes, "Young people do not believe that their emails, discussions or contributions to websites are being listened to."[65] So they engage in SNS that remains in their sphere of influence, namely their friends and away from adult engagement.

Early adolescents need as much personalization. Adults who engage early adolescents must be especially mindful that concreteness means a young person may not be aware that the conversation has ended. Adults need to be careful to provide closure to each conversation so as to not unintentionally leaving an early adolescent hanging onto a conversation that has ended in the mind of the adult.

Closeness

Closeness is about attachment and strengthening bonds of relationships. Among families, 90 percent of parents and 58 percent of teens reported that texting each other helped them feel closer.[66] This means that text messaging has significantly more social value for adults than youth. However, parents who feel closer to their youth will strengthen bonds of trust. Plus, text messaging with parents did help more than half of

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[65] Livingstone, "The Challenge of Engaging Youth Online: Contrasting Producers' and Teenagers' Interpretations of Websites," 180.

[66] Sophy, "Do as I Say, Not as I Text!"

teens feel closer to their parents. Boyd discovered that "the vast majority of adult-teen interactions online are productive and healthy, opening channels of communication so that teens can enhance connections with adults they know and respect to get advice and support."[67] So, SNS and CMC can be used to keep connections open when adults and youth are not physically present. Of course, this builds on positive relationships and technology is not substitute for a lack of closeness. Positive experiences provide a better sense of happiness and personal well being than possessions.[68] Therefore providing youth with the latest tech gadgets will not in itself provide feelings of closeness between youth and their parents. No gadget that provides greater CMC facilitation will replace the experiences of families or youth ministries spending time together.

Knowing When To Locate Communication Online Or Offline

It is likely that people develop a personally favored communication style, leaning towards an individual preference for an either a written or oral style.[69] Adolescents are developing their communication skills and need to use their resources and experiences outside of the text based communication to understand and interpret the message, so lack of social capital becomes an issue when communicating with youth online.[70] With limited

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[67] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 258.

[68] Ryan T Howell and Graham Hill, "The Mediators of Experiential Purchases: Determining the Impact of Pscychological Needs Satisfaction and Social Comparison" (Research Report, San Francisco State University, 2009).

[69] Ramirez Jr. and Bronek, "Im Me: Instant Messaging as Relational Maintenance and Everyday Communication," 309-310.

[70] Livingstone, "The Challenge of Engaging Youth Online: Contrasting Producers' and Teenagers' Interpretations of Websites," 175.

interpretive resources, the intended message is left to the imagination. Social media initiators or responders must ask themselves what else a student or group of students knows that will provide context for interpretation. When communication goes awry, it may be best to change venues, but do so cautiously.

At least among emerging adults, research suggests that there is a positive correlation between face-to-face meetings and other verbal/oral forms of mediated communication and a positive correlation between adults who email each other and send other written communication. However, if interactions primarily occurring in an oral style suddenly went to a written style then the overall experience was a perceived as negative. The same if a written style suddenly switched to an oral style. However, instant messaging was positively correlated with both verbal and written communicators.[71] So adults need to consider the nature of preferred interactions, either verbal or written, and capitalize on that. If there is a need to move from one to another, the bridge for families or youth workers is instant messaging.

Chapter Summary

Spirituality has become a nebulous concept in the current cultural reality. At the heart of the issue is the concept of faith. Developing faith is an opportunity to trust Jesus to meet human needs by increasing roots into the Holy Spirit or to trust one's self, developing the sin nature. Identifying with Christ and placing faith in believing what he believed is the path to wholeness and eventual righteousness as an eschatological reality.

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[71] Ramirez Jr. and Bronek, "Im Me: Instant Messaging as Relational Maintenance and Everyday Communication," 309-310.

Therefore the task of parents and youth workers among adolescents is to find developmentally appropriate opportunities to increase faith. As youth continue across the tightrope of adolescence through the various stages of development, the role of significant adults turns to the development of trust, communication and closeness, as perceived by the adolescent.

Trust relationships between adults and adolescents is developed over time. It is the hard work of developing social media boundaries as adults and adolescents working together. Communication is the art of being understood. The responsibility for communication rests with adults who communicate with the adolescent's context in mind, personalizing communication for the adolescent they are connecting with. Closeness is about the strengths of human bonds. Technology is no replacement for poor relationships, but can strengthen healthy ones. Adolescents have limited life experience to interpret communications, so adults need to factor this to their communication. As young people mature, allowance needs to be made for the development of personal communication styles. As these paternal tasks are held in balance, adults will have the opportunity to invite students on a journey of increasing faith and practice opportunities that will develop faithful responses that meet their deeply human desires.

CHAPTER 5

TRUSTING JESUS IN A DIGITALLY NETWORKED COMMUNITY

When Horace Bushnell (1802-76) became a minister in the Congregational

Church, the prevailing view regarding children, evangelism and discipleship was that

children were to be left alone spiritually until the age of accountability, at which time

they would be saved through a revival targeting adults. Bushnell envisioned the church's

role instead as coming alongside the family, continually nurturing children into the

Christian faith.[1] His view of Christian formation was one where children are raised as if

they knew no other experience than that of living in as a Christian.[2] Of course today, with

the ever-extending presence of the Internet, they will experience a vast array of

perspectives and competing worldviews. Conversely, leading youth to Christ, and then

leaving them alone until they have developed an external perspective on their personal

identity would not serve contemporary youth either. To develop faith among youth, it

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[1] Mark H. Senter III, *When God Shows Up: A History of Protestant Youth Ministry in America*, ed. Chap Clark, Youth + Family + Culture (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 39, 59.

[2] Tyson, Invitation to Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Anthology, 359-360. Senter III, *When God Shows Up: A History of Protestant Youth Ministry in America*, 48.

begins as adults walk alongside them. For this journey, Henri Nouwen's, *In the Name of Jesus* can be a significant guide.

Increasing Faith Among Early Adolescents in the Virtual World

One often-discussed adult concern of adolescent social media use is cyber bullying. Cyber bullying is an activity that peaks in occurrence during the seventh grade.[3] It is online harassment and it affects roughly one third of early adolescent females in some form.[4] A little less than one in five early adolescent males are involved in some form or other.[5] It has been suggested that cyber bullying is more relentless than real time bullying because the effect on the other is not observed; the bullies do not realize the full impact of their actions.[6] Psychosocial development would demonstrate that perhaps concrete minded early adolescence might not intuitively have the ability to imagine the other's response without being prompted to do so.

Bullies engage in the activity because they enjoy the perceived humor[7] or because they feel the recipient somehow deserves it.[8] Among early adolescents, 14 percent of

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[3] Wade and Beran, "Cyberbullying: The New Era of Bullying," 52.

[4] Wade and Beran identify cyber bully involvement among girls as: 15 percent victims, 10 percent who are both engaging in and recipient of bullying and 4 percent who are only bullies but are not victims.

[5] Wade and Beran place cyber bullying among boys as: 7 percent are victims; 4 percent are both perpetrator and victim while 5 percent are bullies but not victims.

[6] Pujazon-Zazik and Park, "To Tweet, or Not to Tweet: Gender Differences and Potential Positive and Negative Health Outcomes of Adolescents' Social Internet Use," 81.

[7] National Crime Prevention Council, *Teens and Cyberbulling: Executive Summary of a Report on Research*, 2007.

[8] Kim Thomas, "Teen Online & Wireless Safety Survey: Cyberbullying, Sexting, and Parental Controls," Cox Communications, http://ww2.cox.com/wcm/en/aboutus/datasheet/takecharge/2009-teen-survey.pdf?campcode=takecharge-research-link_2009-teen-survey_0511, (accessed January 15, 2011), 28.

girls and nine percent of boys are using the Internet to bully other teens.[9] Almost half of

cyber bullied individuals report that the bullying came in some manner of being

intentionally disrespected online. This disrespect includes a balance of spreading rumors,

teasing, and making threatening comments. These actions left students with feelings of

frustration, anger and sadness that a third carried over to school.[10] Though these

combined acts of disrespect do not outweigh the most common cyber bully experience.

The most common occurrence of the cyber bullied was the act of being ignored,

reported by almost two thirds of the victims, and suggested by Kim Thomas as a form of

passive-aggressiveness.[11] When "being ignored" is removed as an option to choose, and

the timeline of bullying is self-described as occurring within the last three months, the

combined number of adolescents experiencing and participating in cyber bullying

remains at approximately one third.[12] Clearly it is difficult to determine the motivation as

to why someone has been ignored, but psychosocial development and Internet practices

may contribute to create stress on relationships that may not in actuality be there.

Internet users typically engage in both social and non-social activities

concurrently,[13] and this multi-tasking behavior may be an unsuspecting contributing

factor. One may notice that cyber bullying is primarily among girls, the high receive

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[9] R.M. Kowalski and S.P. Limber, "Electronic Bullying among Middle School Students," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 41, no. 6 (2007).

[10] Thomas, "Teen Online & Wireless Safety Survey: Cyberbullying, Sexting, and Parental Controls," 28.

[11] Ibid., 14-15, 28.

[12] Wade and Beran, "Cyberbullying: The New Era of Bullying," 49.

[13] Gross, "Adolescent Internet Use: What We Expect, What Teens Report," 646.

mode in which early adolescent girls operate, the in the moment nature of early

adolescence and the multi-tasking that students engage in online. When this list

converges, it is possible that many, if not even the majority of ignored incidents are mis-

ascribed by concrete minded early adolescents as intentional. The drama that ensues

could make the situation appear worse than the parts that contributed to the bullying. This

in turn could unnecessarily elicit a more intentional and hurtful response since the

perpetrator somehow now deserves it. Patchin and Hinduja, among the first to conduct

research on cyber bullying deduced that there is no reason to be alarmed over this issue, it

does happen, and it is a part of adolescent development.[14] Still, cyber bullying is a painful

experience for some and continues to be popularized by the media.

Cyber bullying can be an emotionally wounding experience. If incidents classified

as ignoring another are removed, the remaining attacks are typically socially motivated,

done online by an individual with peers physically present.[15] Though the top reasons for

engaging in bullying is to get back at someone or because the intended victim deserved it,

the next highest level is about having fun and impressing friends.[16] For this exploration, it

is the impressing of friends and its community context that we will look at, leaving the

retribution as an excuse provided for anti-social behavior versus causation for action.

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[14] Patchin and Hinduja, "Bullies Move Beyond the Schoolyard: A Preliminary Look at Cyberbullying," 18.

[15] Kowalski and Limber, "Electronic Bullying among Middle School Students."

[16] Thomas, "Teen Online & Wireless Safety Survey: Cyberbullying, Sexting, and Parental Controls," 28.

Trusting the Self in the Virtual World

Humans have a need to know others and be known. People want to matter to somebody. Likewise, early adolescents intuitively ask, "Do I matter?"[17] It is a journey towards importance. One shortcut to importance is cutting humor, it is the act of tearing others down to make one's self appear better. Augsburger insightfully remarks that "humor has this intriguing paradoxical quality of putting things together that do not go together: it is called the principle of incongruity."[18] It is the surprise of the unexpected that makes something funny.

Early adolescents also have a newly discovered ability for sarcasm.[19] They are learning that it is possible to say something of which the intended meaning does not equal the sum of the words used. Combine this newly discovered power of sarcasm with the perceived power of cutting humor, and an early adolescent is armed with a potentially toxic mix that can be used at will to tear others apart. The resultant bullying is a painful experience that can burrow deep into the spirit of another. Augsburger's commentary on cutting humor reveals that it not only breaks relationships by ignoring the importance of a fellow human being, it also "blinds the self to the meaning of the person as a person."[20] The consequence to one's self is the loss of an ability to see the humanness of the other.

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[17] Clark, "The Changing Face of Adolescence: A Theological View of Human Development," 55.

[18] Augsburger, *Dissident Discipleship: A Spirituality of Self-Surrender, Love of God, and Love of Neighbor*, 104.

[19] Arnett, *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood: A Cultural Approach*, 224-225.

[20] Augsburger, *Dissident Discipleship: A Spirituality of Self-Surrender, Love of God, and Love of Neighbor*, 107.

Trusting Jesus in the Virtual World

When it comes to engaging in activities like bullying motivated by desiring to impress one's friends, Nouwen's observation on the temptation of Christ to leap from the temple correlates with this struggle, as he notes, it was the "temptation to do something spectacular," a temptation best countered by serving God through the power of knowing and being known by God (John 10:14-15).[21] Augsburger holds that a "love of God, love of neighbor, and becoming one's true self are three indivisible sides of the primary spiritual triangle."[22] It is the balance of these three that will develop a healthy sense of worth that is not rooted in other's opinions of our actions.

The primary tools of cyber bullying are instant messaging, at 55 percent of all reported cases, and SNS at only 28 percent of reported cases.[23] Some researchers suggest less computer usage will help.[24] While this would lead to less opportunity for destroying relationships, it would not change the heart of the early adolescent.

Nouwen suggests, "Confession and forgiveness are the concrete forms in which we sinful people love one another."[25] Early adolescents need concrete opportunities to learn the abstract ideas of faith. Being present will provide opportunities for parents,

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[21] Henri J. M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York: Crossroad, 1989) 38, 42. To illustrate, Nouwen uses the image of a failed tightrope walker.

[22] Augsburger, *Dissident Discipleship: A Spirituality of Self-Surrender, Love of God, and Love of Neighbor*, 23.

[23] M.L. Ybarra and K.J. Mitchell, "How Risky Are Social Networking Sites? A Comparison of Places Online Where Youth Sexual Solicitation and Harassment Occurs," *Pediatrics*, no. 121 (2007).

[24] Ozgur Erdur-Baker, "Cyberbullying and Its Correlation to Traditional Bullying, Gender and Frequent and Risky Usage of Internet-Mediated Communication Tools," *New Media & Society* 12, no. 1 (2010), 122.

[25] Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*, 46.

youth pastors and small group leaders to both model confession and forgiveness and walk

young teenagers through the process. Augsburger writes, "What is appropriate to true

humility is a genuine respect for another's right to feel deep pain or outrages at being

misused, just as you have the right to feel that way when similarly wronged."[26] Learning

how to confess, ask and give forgiveness will assist our young people in becoming

appropriately humble adults.

Increasing Faith Among Midadolescents in the Virtual World

Perhaps the most popularized risk factor associated with midadolescents and

CMC is sexting. Midadolescents who engage in sexting were more likely to have been

involved in cyber bullying as an early adolescent, with girls twice as likely as boys to be

the sender and boys being the primary receiver.[27] The primary motivations for sending

sexually explicit text messages and images were in response to pressure or request from a

boyfriend or for fun, and each chronological year the number of midadolescents involved

in the practice grows, from 13 percent at age fourteen, to a peak of twenty-four by age

seventeen,[28] a somewhat disturbing figure. It is suggested that sexting is the "gateway

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[26] Augsburger, *Dissident Discipleship: A Spirituality of Self-Surrender, Love of God, and Love of Neighbor*, 109.

[27] Gail Diliberto and Elizabeth Mattey, "Sexting: Just How Much of a Danger Is It and What Can School Nurses Do About It," *NASN School Nurse* 24, (2009), 263.

[28] Thomas, "Teen Online & Wireless Safety Survey: Cyberbullying, Sexting, and Parental Controls," 33, 37, 41.

drug" to further sexual activity.[29] However, research that specifically links physical activity with sexting is limited.

There is public concern that these images are actively being passed around. As Boyd explains, "Tracking down and deleting content once it is contributed to network public is often futile."[30] Certainly this is true, and can be an issue. About 30 percent of all midadolescents believes this has happened to someone they know, but only 2 percent of sexting participants report having forwarded the image on to others; the same percentage of sexters report accidently sending the image to the wrong recipient.[31] It is possible that any one who forwarded a sext may not want to admit it. Still, at face value, this makes it as likely that a sext would be inadvertently sent to the wrong person as it is to be forwarded to an unintended audience. However, when a photo moves beyond the intended receiver, the effects can be devastating. An example of sexting that turned into cyber bullying allegedly contributed to the suicide of Jesse Logan in Cincinnati, Ohio.[32] Whether true or hype, the unintended consequence of having a nude picture of oneself circulating among peers would be emotionally horrendous.

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[29] Diliberto and Mattey, "Sexting: Just How Much of a Danger Is It and What Can School Nurses Do About It," 263.

[30] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 30.

[31] Thomas, "Teen Online & Wireless Safety Survey: Cyberbullying, Sexting, and Parental Controls," 38.

[32] Diliberto and Mattey, "Sexting: Just How Much of a Danger Is It and What Can School Nurses Do About It," 265.

The Issue Of Hyper Connectivity

About one in five high school students, mostly girls, are characterized as hyper texters, which is defined as having sent more than 120 text messages on a typical school day.[33] Cell phone ownership among this age group is not quite universal, at 83 percent,[34] so the previous statistic has more weight than it initially seems. A little more than one in ten high school students, also mostly girls, would be characterized as being hyper networkers, which is defined as spending more than three hours during a school day on SNS.[35] SNS sites have the instant message activities that are present in texting, but include posting status updates and commenting on other's posts as top activities.[36] Both hyper connected groupings were positively correlated with significantly higher percentage rates of risky behaviors, such as substance abuse and permissive sexuality.[37]

Midadolescents from lower socioeconomic households are increasingly more likely than their higher income household counterparts to use a smart phone to access the Internet.[38] This substantiates an aspect of research that indicated hyper texters were "from

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[33] Frank, "Hyper-Texting and Hyper-Networking Pose New Health Risks for Teens."

[34] Madden and Lenhart, "Teens and Technology 2013," 9.

[35] Frank, "Hyper-Texting and Hyper-Networking Pose New Health Risks for Teens."

[36] Lenhart, "Teens, Kindness and Cruelty on Social Network Sites: How American Teens Navigate the New World of Digital Citizenship," 23.

[37] Frank, "Hyper-Texting and Hyper-Networking Pose New Health Risks for Teens."

[38] Madden and Lenhart, "Teens and Technology 2013," 8.

lower socioeconomic status, minority and had no father in the home."[39] Being from a lower socioeconomic class limits computer access to the Internet at home.[40]

Conversely, hyper networkers were "associated with higher odds ratios for stress, depression, suicide, substance use, fighting, poor sleep, poor academics, television watching and parental permissiveness."[41] While it is implied that hyper connected texting and social networking activities increased other risk factors, what the research demonstrates is that there simply is a correlation between hyper texting and higher levels of risky behavior. Further consideration needs to be given to the comments about absent fathers and parental permissiveness.

Adults are concerned that midadolescents are sexting, yet 28 percent of parents of teenagers admit they had also participated in sexting.[42] This makes sexting as prevalent among parents as an average seventeen year old. Yet, sexting among adolescents is unique in that it is essentially a form of child pornography created by the minor himself or herself.[43] It is twice as likely to be engaged in by pressured girls sending images to boys, and explained away as explorative fun.[44] It is important to note that the majority of

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[39] Frank, "Hyper-Texting and Hyper-Networking Pose New Health Risks for Teens."

[40] Madden and Lenhart, "Teens and Technology 2013," 8. Livingstone, "Taking Risky Opportunities in Youthful Content Creation: Teenagers' Use of Social Networking Sites for Intimacy, Privacy and Self-Expression," 400.

[41] Frank, "Hyper-Texting and Hyper-Networking Pose New Health Risks for Teens."

[42] Sophy, "Do as I Say, Not as I Text!"

[43] Diliberto and Mattey, "Sexting: Just How Much of a Danger Is It and What Can School Nurses Do About It," 265.

[44] Thomas, "Teen Online & Wireless Safety Survey: Cyberbullying, Sexting, and Parental Controls," 33, 37, 41.

sexters also had previous experience with cyber bullying.[45] For adults who are aware of any early adolescents involved in cyber bullying, this then serves as a red flag to prepare and help set boundaries around as adolescents mature.

Trusting The Self In The Virtual World

The human longing that makes students so aware and concerned of the perceptions of the opposite gender is that desire to discover joy and depth of relationship with a fellow human being. The shortcut to this intimacy is to use these new abilities of power to have an affect on others, both as the one pressuring and the one presenting. Trying to build intimate relationships through the use of power is a "substitute for the hard task of love."[46] While there may be some overlapping features and similarities between sexting and cyber bullying, egocentric abstracted youth have the cognitive understanding that their actions can influence others, they have almost exclusive freedom and permissiveness online, and they do not have the conceptual understanding of relational intricacies. Consequently, sexting is an expression of power used to either pressure another into gratifying lustful desires, or power used to manipulate another by sending nude images. This leads to broken relationships and bitterness.

Trusting Jesus In The Virtual World

Challenging youth to participate in a social media fast is growing in popularity among youth ministries. However, the challenge represents an adult agenda on

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[45] Diliberto and Mattey, "Sexting: Just How Much of a Danger Is It and What Can School Nurses Do About It," 263.

[46] Nouwen, In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership, 60.

midadolescent lives. A social media fast addresses a symptom of seemingly adolescent distraction. Yet the focus is on the content and the perceived amount of time midadolescent social media use. Focus on the content and not the reason behind the embracement of a specific medium is what Marshall McLuhan identifies as a common mistake when trying to understand the value of a mediated communication tool.[47]

Challenging midadolescents to a social media fast is not fair to students since it separates them from the friendship cluster that is their security. The difficult issue for adolescents is that if their cluster feels that a particular student does not have the group's back, the cluster may turn on that student.[48] While it could be argued that a Christian's security should be found in Christ, this identity is developed within the context of Christ-centered communicative communities. Midadolescents have been systematically excluded from casual intergenerational connections that would otherwise provide them with a sense of societal connectedness and community solidarity.[49] In turn, they have developed strong and intense connections within a close-knit group of peers because of society's systemic abandonment of adolescents.[50] A social media fast in itself does not address the underlying cultural realities that provide the foundation for seemingly addicted behavior. It could put the teen's social structure at risk.

Instead, to develop a faith in Jesus that will help students move from broken relationships to healthy, significant relationships that are characterized by a love with

[47] McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*.

[48] Clark, *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*, 60-72.

[49] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 22.

[50] Clark, *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*, 44-47.

integrity, Nouwen suggests theological reflection.[51] To provide insight regarding how relationships work, adolescents and adults alike can learn much from the book of Proverbs, which exists "for receiving instruction in prudent behavior . . . for giving prudence to those who are simple, knowledge and discretion to the young" (Proverbs 1:2, 4). The first nine chapters provide wisdom directed towards the young.[52] This book, neatly divided into thirty-one chapters, provides youth ministry small groups an opportunity to post a proverb a day, picking one from each chapter, posting it online and inviting students to engage with it and other leaders through out the day, with more than enough material to last a ministry year. Additionally, adults will receive a tremendous benefit by engaging in this practice alongside midadolescents.

Increasing Faith Among Emerging Adults in the Virtual World

Using the Internet for sexual gratification appears to be almost synonymous with emerging adulthood, especially for males but increasingly for females.[53] However it is possible that the data may be skewed. Since students typically volunteer for these studies, the studies themselves could be attracting young adults that are prone to participation with Internet pornography.[54] Additionally, any effort that points to the sheer financial spending on pornography is also suspect as a useful tool of understanding emerging

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[51] Nouwen, In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership, 65.

[52] Roland E. Murphy, *Word Biblical Commentary: Proverbs*, ed. John D. Watts, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 4.

[53] Jason S. Carroll, "Generation Xxx: Pornography Acceptance and Use among Emerging Adults," 23.

[54] Elizabeth M. Morgan, "Association between Young Adults' Use of Sexually Explicit Materials and Their Sexual Preferences, Behaviors, and Satisfaction," *Journal of Sex Research* 48, no. 6 (2011). 529.

adulthood pornographic use. As the claims of the economic size of the industry are from the industry itself, it is in their self-interest if the broader society treats pornography use as normative behavior.[55] Consequently, it is difficult to pinpoint where the online pornography usage rates among the broader population of emerging adults actually stands. This is not to say online pornography is having no effect on this population group.

Regardless of whether the population usage is skewed by the studies or the pornography industry, it should be noted that research positively correlates increased use of sexually explicit material with decreased relational and sexual satisfaction.[56] Additionally, there is a coming cultural marriage dilemma in that the majority of males are increasingly viewing Internet pornography as normative behavior while only a small number of women who do.[57] Using the Internet for sexual gratification is leading young adults towards less significant relationships, less enjoyment in their sexuality and future pain in marriage relationships. Yet that is not the only area that has an effect on future relationships.

There is a certain amount of irony in that meeting new people was considered the most rewarding element of online dating.[58] Yet using the Internet for this specific purpose is positively correlated with an increased sense of personal isolation and damaging to

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[55] Georgina Voss, "Treating It as a Normal Business: Researching the Pornography Industry," *Sexualities* 15, no. 3 (2012), 392.

[56] Morgan, "Association between Young Adults' Use of Sexually Explicit Materials and Their Sexual Preferences, Behaviors, and Satisfaction," 528.

[57] Jason S. Carroll, "Generation Xxx: Pornography Acceptance and Use among Emerging Adults," 26-27.

[58] Couch and Liamputtong, "Online Dating and Mating: The Use of the Internet to Meet Sexual Partners," 272.

existing familial relationships.[59] Perhaps the greater irony is that this newer practice contributes to keeping young people to remain on the tightrope of adolescence. Added to this isolation is the stark reality of being one virtual profile among countless others, which in turn creates a competitive atmosphere if one's profile is going to get a hit.

<div align="center">Trusting the Self In The Virtual World</div>

Erikson believed that "love in its truest sense presupposes both identity and fidelity."[60] People are created with a desire to connect on a personal level in significant community, and matter to someone else (Genesis 2). In a world where personal attributes are easily sorted and cast aside by an impersonal search engine, the shortcut and increasingly common solution is to create an inauthentic, exaggerated profile.[61] Consequently, some young adults are upselling their physical attributes and relational status.[62] It is an attempt to project what one perceives another would consider relevant about them, anticipating how a computer will sort out bits of data for the most compatible match.[63] This shortcut to human connectedness, similar to the shortcut of sexual satisfaction, leads to fear, pain and loneliness.

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[59] Shen and Williams, "Unpacking Time Online: Connecting Internet and Massively Multiplayer Online Game Use with Psychosocial Well-Being," 140-141.

[60] Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility: Lectures on the Ethical Implications of Psychoanalytic Insight*, 128.

[61] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 30.

[62] Toma and Hancock, "Looks and Lies: The Role of Physical Attractiveness in Online Dating,", 345.

[63] Bradley Howell, "Finding Love One Byte at a Time," youthworker.com, http://www. youthworker.com/youth-ministry-resources-ideas/youth-ministry/11667260/, (accessed July 15, 2012).

Desiring to be significant to someone else or to experience a quick release, young adults engage social media as if there were no consequences. Brueggemann writes, "We are responsible for our decisions . . . we, like Solomon, have thought that we were free in our decisions to do what we might like to do and somehow, somewhere, someone else would make it all work."[64] Parks writes: "The search for 'right images' is a powerful way of thinking about formation of young adult faith in a rapidly changing world. Today's young adults must swim in an unprecedented and vast sea of images (visual of course, but also aural, tactile, and kinesthetic) calculated to recruit their allegiance – and in many cases to numb their souls."[65] It is increasingly difficult to develop authentic relationships built on foundations of mutual trust and self-respect. However, this is not the only unintended consequence, the subtle lie is the claim to provide meaning, yet results in fractured relationships and threatened new ones.

Trusting Jesus in the Virtual World

The tightrope of adolescence can be likened to a journey. For university students leaving home, journey is a solid metaphor. Parks writes, "The word journey is rooted in the French *jour*, meaning simply a day's travel. A journey can be a profound and life-changing experience, or it can be endless and without purpose. The practice of pilgrimage is going forth and a return home that enlarge the meaning of both self and home."[66] Contemporary churches have the tremendous opportunity to reach out to these young

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[64] Brueggemann, In Man We Trust: The Neglected Side of Biblical Faith, 61.

[65] Parks, Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith, 124.

[66] Ibid., 50.

adults on a journey. Christ-centered communities need to provide opportunities to increase faith with an identity rooted in an abiding relationship with Jesus instead of one shaped by the projection of others onto themselves.

Nouwen's words speak to the heart of the issue. "I am deeply convinced that the Christian leader of the future is called to be completely irrelevant and to stand in this world with nothing to offer but his or her own vulnerable self."[67] Richard Foster shares:

> Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a primary spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a great number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people. The classical Disciplines of the spiritual life call us to move beyond surface living in the depths. They invite us to explore the inner caverns of the spiritual realm. They urge us to be the answer to a hollow world.[68]

In the quest for relevance, Nouwen counsels that "the question is not: How many people take you seriously? How much are you going to accomplish? Can you show me some results? But: Are you in love with Jesus?"[69] He continues on, suggesting that we can reframe the question to knowing the heart of God, the one who loves us, pure and without ulterior motives, and he contrasts that love with a second love, the one between humans, as a distorted likeness of that first love. Nouwen suggests the spiritual discipline to this path is contemplative prayer, embracing life from a deep communion with God.[70] For this, Christ-centered communicate communities can offer emerging adults their friendship and community. This is an invitation to be a part of and influenced by a people

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[67] Nouwen, In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership.

[68] Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 20th anniversary ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 1.

[69] Nouwen, In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership, 24.

[70] Ibid., 24-32.

transformed by roots deep in Jesus Christ.[71] Practicing spiritual disciplines will deepen

this rootedness, and for the first age group, a social media fast may in fact be liberating

without threatening the support structures that adolescence depend on.

Chapter Summary

In contemporary culture our youth have many avenues to experience, learn and

grow from a multitude of worldviews. Issues raised by adolescents putting roots in the

sinful nature online can be emotionally destructive. For early adolescents, the temptation

to matter among their peers can lead to bullying activities that tear down another. To

increase faith, adult believers will need to come alongside the youth of their

communities, both online and off, to model both acceptance and the asking for and

extending of forgiveness. Among midadolescents sexting is the exercise of power as a

shortcut to developing meaningful relationships but it results in embarrassment,

brokenness and pain. An opportunity to increase faith is theological reflection on the

nature of human relations. Proverbs, in the company of caring adults can be a useful

study tool.

Emerging adults are on a unique journey, living with one foot on the tightrope of

adolescence and one in the adult world. The desire to be in a deep connection with

someone that may lead to a lifetime relationship tempts young adults to exaggerate and

misrepresent themselves in a vain attempt to seem relevant to another's needs. The

superficiality that results from both misrepresenting ones self or using sexually explicit

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[71] Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith*, 93.

material for personal gratification increases loneliness and contributes to young adults remaining on the tightrope of adolescence. Emerging adults need significant adult community, modeling life deeply rooted and abiding in the love of the Father from which they can offer others an authentic self. Adolescents are on a journey from childhood to adulthood, and only together, rooted in Christ can adults introduce them into a healthy interdependent expression of interconnected adult community.

PART THREE

REFRAMING NETWORKS TOWARDS COMMUNAL ADOPTION

CHAPTER 6

STAKEHOLDERS IN HYPER-NETWORKED COMMUNITIES

Penny's father was absolutely fed up. Tommy Jordan, tired of his daughter's

online rants of her parents, decided it was time to put a permanent end to her Facebook

fiascos. Talking aim at Penny's laptop, Tommy fired seven exploding hollow point

bullets through its casing, he then fired two more bullets into the computer on behalf of

his wife. The newly destroyed, Swiss cheese looking laptop was effectively eliminated as

a further participant in midadolescent parental bashing.[1] For parents like the Jordans,

social media has become a household battleground. More parents probably wish they

could take aim and emotionally unload their frustrations. There is little in most adults'

life experience that provides a framework for understanding and guiding their households

through adolescent social media use.

Meanwhile, CMC has become a normal aspect of the adolescent relational

experience.[2] There is a temptation among some adults to treat the effects of CMC among

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[1] The full YouTube video of Tommy Jordan blasting his daughter's computer can be viewed at the following URL: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dw7GJXvmxC0. Viewer discretion is advised.

[2] Bargh and McKenna, "The Internet and Social Life," 574.

adolescents pejoratively.[3] This temptation comes in two extremes. One is to underemphasize the influence of CMC; the other over emphasizes its influence, typically leading adults to take a stand against adolescent participation with SNS.[4] Neither truly serves intergenerational interaction nor Christ-centered communicative community.

Social media in particular serve as a type of unfamiliar ground for most adults. When encountering something new, people rely on previously developed mental maps that, fueled by assumptions, frame contextual understanding.[5] These assumptions are based upon a lifetime of learning from challenging experiences that order a person's surroundings while keeping a personal sense of keeping collected and in control.[6] For those that embraced the Internet prior to 2002, the relationally based social media is foreign to an information based Internet.

Prior to 2002, the Internet was an interconnected collection of documents. After the launch of a social platform that turned the Internet into a sort of Web 2.0, the Internet became a web of inter-connected people.[7] Though some researchers like Turkle saw an early relational potential in the Internet,[8] for the most part, people who embraced the Internet prior to Web 2.0 experienced it primarily as an informational sharing tool. It

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[3] Lee, "Young People and the Internet: From Theory to Practice," 316.

[4] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 260-261.

[5] Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, third edition. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 12.

[6] Chris Argyris, "Good Communication That Blocks Learning," *Harvard Business Review* 72, no. 4 (1994), 5.

[7] Adams, "The Real Live Social Network."

[8] Turkle, *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet.*

made sending and sharing data with others easier. Differently, people who were introduced to the Internet post Web 2.0 experience it primarily as a relational tool. This creates a dissonance to how these two groups frame the purpose of CMC. The earlier group would appear to be more inclined towards sharing information, while the latter group would lean towards relational connectedness.

Human responses habitually run contrary to articulated values.[9] This gap between espoused values and the reality of reaction indicates the presence of an adaptive challenge: a situation where there is not a readily accessible technical solution.[10] Adaptive challenges, as described by Ronald Heifetz, "can only be addressed through changes in people's priorities, beliefs, habits and loyalties."[11] It is important to identify which groups of people are in fact experiencing an adaptive challenge and the contextual frame they are operating from.

In the context of spiritual communities, the people experiencing the new challenge, and who have a stake in the outcome of adolescent use of SNS, include parents, youth workers and the church congregation. Adolescents themselves are not included in this list because the embracement of social media represents an intuitive move towards the resolution of systemic abandonment.[12] Social media is a pragmatic

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[9] Argyris, "Good Communication That Blocks Learning," 5.

[10] Ronald Heiftetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Boston: The Belknap Press of Harvard Universty Press, 1994), 99.

[11] Ronald A Heifetz, Marty Linsky, and Alexander Grashow, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2009), 20.

[12] Clark, *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*, 162.

solution of the adolescent's need for human connection; it is a resolution to an adaptive

challenge. The result of these increasingly isolated social groups is the development of

interpersonal communication patterns that themselves are becoming increasingly foreign

to one another.

There is as growing digital divide between adults and adolescents. These

stakeholders will naturally resist the challenges this adaptive change brings because there

is a desire to stay within known areas of competency while avoiding potential pain and

loss.[13] However, each of these groups if left to there own resources will most naturally

interpret their experience based upon their well of personal history.[14] At times there

appears to be limited personal history to draw from when contextualizing social media

experiences.

Parents

Parents are typically described as having an authority role in the lives of

adolescents.[15] Heifetz expounds, "(as) a parent your functions in your authority role are

to provide: (1) direction, (2) protection, and (3) order."[16] Parents are vitally important to

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[13] Heifetz, Linsky, and Grashow, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*, 21.

[14] Scott Cormode, *Making Spiritual Sense: Christian Leaders as Spiritual Interpreters* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 49.

[15] Bolman and Deal, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, 12-19. Frames are used here as a background lens for interpreting a stakeholder's experience. The three from Bolman used include: Structural frame, focusing on organization and authority structures, Human Relations frame, focusing on relationships and people; Symbolic frame, focusing on interpretation of meaning behind corporate culture.

[16] Heifetz, Linsky, and Grashow, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*, 28.

the faith development of their adolescent. Part of that important influence is the social communities towards which parents intentionally guide their adolescent.[17] One research study among Jewish families discovered three primary influencers of religious socialization: the family, the faith community, and the adolescent's peers. Parents were identified as having the greatest impact on adolescence in no small part because they indirectly influence the direction of their children's faith development through the mediating influences of church and peers.[18] Parents literally channel their children towards faith maturity through communities that will reinforce the values of the home.

This theory was later tested in a Christian context which affirmed that both the mother and father had significant and direct influence related to faith maturity, even after controlling factors like denomination, family type and gender were considered. The church had an important influence and peers more so, but neither overshadowed that of the parents.[19] The study reveals the important role parents play in faith development, part of which entails the intentional directing of the family towards a church home where children will be encouraged to develop spiritually and where they will develop friendships that will further mediate parental influence. Consequently, such parents use their authority to indirectly provide spiritual direction for their children.

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[17] Todd Martin, James White, and Daniel Perlman, "Religious Socialization: A Test of the Channeling Hypothesis of Parental Influence on Adolescent Faith Maturity," Journal of Adolescent Research, no. Vol 18, No. 2 (2003).

[18] Harold Himmelfarb, "The Study of American Jewish Identification: How It Is Defined, Measured, Obtained, Sustained and Lost," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 15, no. 1 (1980).

[19] Martin, White, and Perlman, "Religious Socialization: A Test of the Channeling Hypothesis of Parental Influence on Adolescent Faith Maturity," 179-183.

The New Testament appears to reinforces a mental model of parental authority (Ephesians 6, Hebrews 12:9-11), though perhaps because of the immediacy of its eschatological hope, seems to include little direction on passing faith from adults to children.[20] The Old Testament, on the other hand, encourages the training of a child in the way he should go (Proverbs 22:6), lists the honoring of parents among the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 5:16) exhorts the ongoing instruction of generations in the Lord's Commandments (Deuteronomy 6:5-9) and compares the manner in which a man disciplines his son to God's discipline of the children of Israel (Deuteronomy 8:5). These passages, which emphasize moral instruction by parents and obedience and honor by children, combine to reinforce a perspective of parental authority and embed this value among Christian families.

The crisis for parents on SNS is that their authority does not translate well onto the Internet. Livingstone identifies two very specific reasons for this. The first is that because information on the Internet is equally available to all, it is inherently authority neutralizing.[21] Note the significant yet subtle implication in the Livingstone's position that reflects an intuitive understanding of the relational nature of Web 2.0. The concern is not that the presence of information has made authoritative guides an antiquated notion. It is the equal access to information that neutralizes those who would otherwise consider their role as a gatekeeper of information access. Authority that derives its power via

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[20] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000), 31.

[21] Livingstone, "The Challenge of Engaging Youth Online: Contrasting Producers' and Teenagers' Interpretations of Websites," 167.

information control becomes indistinguishable in a digital world.[22] The consequence is that the assertion of authority based in anything other than an inter-personal relationship finds itself quite impotent on the Internet.

The second common assumption is that adults tend to hold adolescents to adult standards of socialization, without consideration of their context and psychosocial abilities.[23] These factors result in a negative online experience for both the person in authority and the adolescents involved, causing youth to feel that adults do not understand the Internet and leaving those in authority feeling incompetent.[24] Adaptive changes will be required in parents' beliefs surrounding their role online as well as in the habits that constitute their CMC practices. This adaptive change will need to reflect a consideration of social context and psychosocial development.

<div align="center">Adaptive Changes for the Structural Perspective</div>

As adolescents continue to develop CMC skills, parents who relate in a structural perspective discover that the cost of CMC is a relational structure change where their authority does not translate to the virtual world. This prompts a seemingly existential question "Who am I online in relation to my kids?" One such parent is Peter McKay, a newspaper columnist and father who describes this relational change in his homemaking

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[22] Jennifer Bradbury, "Tuned in, Turned Off: The Youth Worker Journal Youth Culture and Technology Roundtable", Salem Publishing, http://www.youthworker.com/youth-ministry-resources-ideas/youth-ministry/11640986/, (accessed November 15, 2012), 3.

[23] Livingstone, "The Challenge of Engaging Youth Online: Contrasting Producers' and Teenagers' Interpretations of Websites," 167.

[24] Strom et al., "Adolescent Learning and the Internet: Implications for School Leadership and Student Engagement in Learning," 118.

column, "Parenting on Thin Ice".[25] He shares about going online to experience the virtual

world Club Penguin[26] along with his twelve-year-old son and other children.

Describing the site as a type of middle school social where everyone hangs out

with his or her penguin avatars but no one actually talks to each other, McKay figured

this form of CMC would serve as an excellent communication platform with his kids

while he was traveling. On his next business trip, McKay put this theory into practice.

Though clearly behind the learning curve of personified penguin avatar operation,

relationally things seemed to be going well. The experiment took a turn for the worse

however, when, working through his parenting list of chores and homework, one of his

adorable children picked up a virtual snowball and hurled it at papa penguin. This frozen

act of hostility inspired other penguins in the chat room to follow suit, leaving papa

penguin buried in a pile of virtual snowballs while his kids wandered off to the ice rink in

seemingly disregard for either their father's plight or their homework. Thwarted at his

computer mediated parenting efforts, McKay writes: "I won't go back any time soon. The

real world may not be as exciting as Penguin Island, but at least out here if one of those

little creeps lobs a snowball at me, I'm big enough to wash his face with a handful of

exceedingly non-virtual snow."[27] Rather humorously, he decries his powerlessness to

exert any authority online and reinforces that in the real world, size matters. McKay

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[25] Peter McKay, "Homemaking: Parenting on Thin Ice", Pittsburgy Post-Gazette, old.post-gazette.com/pg/06315/737373-30.stm, (accessed March 28, 2012),

[26] Club Penguin is a subsidiary of Disney. It is an online, virtual world targeting older children and early adolescents.

[27] McKay, "Homemaking: Parenting on Thin Ice," 2.

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experienced the authority neutralizing effects of the Internet, and the disorientation to the relationship was enough that he learned his lesson. Parents need to keep away.

Parents who want to engage with their adolescents through SNS as an extension of their authority quickly discover this competing commitment.[28] The assertion of authority alienates the adolescent, strains the family relationship and results in diminished communication, the exact opposite of the intended outcome. In order to avoid this dissonance, parents will need to change their perception of personal authority, borrowing from Putnam's encouragement to place social power positions at risk in order to build a social capital bridge with their youth.[29] This social capital bridge is built through the development of a greater sense of trust, open communication and increased feelings of closeness, as rated by the adolescent. Much of this begins before parents even begin to step into the online world, laying an initial foundation within the confines of the home, and for this we can learn from our ancestors in the faith, the people of Israel.

The Jewish household of Deuteronomy lacks any direct translation to the contemporary modern family. It instead consisted of paternal, multigenerational kinship groups, clustered in shelters and spending daily life living and working together.[30] In that world, the commandments were to be discussed and taught in every daily experience.[31] In

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[28] Competing commitments occur when there is an expectation to want/believe/value two things that cannot happen at the same time, causing pain or loss within an institution, or in this case, the family structure. Heifetz, Linsky, and Grashow, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*, 80.

[29] Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, 411.

[30] Ruether, *Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family*, 13, 16-18.

[31] Duane L. Christensen, *Word Biblical Commentary: Deuteronomy 1-11*, vol. 6a (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1991), 144.

the contemporary world, as the family home increasingly becomes a refuge for the nuclear family from the stress of day to day living, more space is cordoned off for the re-creation and entertainment of the adults.[32] This often leaves the bedroom space as the last space our youth have to control[33] which consequently further isolates them from adults and reduces family interactions. Additionally, it is becoming increasingly difficult to share space with youth as our own sense of self-identity has been wrapped with a territorial component.[34] Leaving little opportunity or space set aside for ongoing discussions about God to permeate all of daily life.

However time and space is a key reality to influence. Even though honoring of parents was commanded, the experience was felt in proximity of generations to each other. The thrust of Deuteronomy 6 is a concentric design that starts and ends with obedience to God and pinnacles with the explanation to the next generation of God's faithfulness in verses 20-25.[35] The context of living together provides opportunities to explain how to live in relationship with a covenant God and the fruit that relationship will produce.[36] In family homes, allowing adolescents space, outside of their rooms, and in a public area of the home, creates a place for adolescents and adults to congregate, to experience each other in community within an adult context of their own home.

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[32] David Elkind, *Ties That Stress: The New Family Imbalance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994) 198-201

[33] Hodkinson and Lincoln, "Online Journals as Virtual Bedrooms? Young People, Identity and Personal Space," 27.

[34] Elkind, *Ties That Stress: The New Family Imbalance*, 228.

[35] Christensen, *Word Biblical Commentary: Deuteronomy 1-11*, 138, 152.

[36] Ibid., 138, 152.

Parents and adolescents can work together to find ways to share adult space with the youth. In so doing, parents are moving adolescent online interactions from the confines of their bedrooms. In the new location, parents can be active in their authority roles of direction, protection, and order[37] by teaching boundaries and balance, monitoring activity and being available to step in when adolescent psycho-social limitations wreak havoc among online communities.

Boundaries are important issues for adolescents.[38] To a concrete minded early adolescent and an egocentric abstracted midadolescent the public nature of the Internet is a difficult concept to grasp. In homes, bedrooms are set aside as private space, and while appropriate for friends to hang out in, they are not appropriate for the general public to hang out in. Households need to develop the habit of keeping private space private.

The rub on this is that midadolescents and even adults feel the need to be available to their support structure. This is a pragmatic arena where adults can sacrifice their personal authority for the good of intergenerational connectedness. Every human being needs an opportunity to sleep. Every family needs an opportunity to connect with one another. By designating boundaries and creating space for access to the Internet, keeping all Internet enabled devices confined to a public area of the home will help to provide families with opportunities to gather together and individuals space to rest.

This space can also become a learning environment for parents to experience the online adolescent context with a lens of psychosocial development that will help will

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[37] Heifetz, Linsky, and Grashow, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*, 28.

[38] Clark, *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*, 200-201.

assist in the building of a bridge into family CMC. This practice will help build a

foundation for healthy mediated communications,[39] affirming an identity on Jesus Christ

and laying the foundation for positive CMC interactions both with parents and other

adults that walk along with these teens. One such group of adults would be relationally

focused youth ministry workers, the next group of stakeholders, who intentionally

organize adolescent peers into spiritual communities.

Youth Workers

Youth pastors, workers and volunteers who see their role as mentor or guide,

typically approach their ministry to youth from a relational perspective. For many youth

workers, it is their ability to connect relationally with adolescents that drew them into

youth ministry.[40] This complements Augsburger's exhortation to frame spirituality as an

intentionally loyal relational network resolutely centered on Jesus Christ.[41] Despite that

we live in spiritual freedom, (Galatians 5) and adolescence is by nature an independent

journey, putting our roots in the Spirit does not happen in isolation, independent of

others.[42] Still, the relationally orientated youth minister may fear losing the role of

facilitator as the cost they will pay if they are to utilize SNS as an aspect of their

interactions with youth.

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[39] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 252.

[40] Senter III, *When God Shows Up: A History of Protestant Youth Ministry in America*, 307.

[41] Augsburger, *Dissident Discipleship: A Spirituality of Self-Surrender, Love of God, and Love of Neighbor*, 61

[42] Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 241.

Because being relational is for many youth workers their primary qualification for entering youth ministry, most utilize the proliferation of programing resources to self-guide ministry skill development.[43] The trajectory of youth ministry experts though is to frame social media concerns as youth problem of not taking a long-term approach to the development of human relations while simultaneously losing the ability for healthy human functioning.[44] Youth workers tend to typify social media as a distraction that interferes with personal relationships and healthy spirituality.

Youth workers also tend to desire to protect students online. Local Sacramento Bee teen advice columnist Kelly Richards holds that a fundamental problem with social media is that people can say what they want without thinking through the relational fallout.[45] There is no disputing that adolescents can be rude to each other online.[46] However, Clark's ethnographic study of midadolescents identified this inability to fully integrate the effects of interpersonal actions across a variety of social relationships.[47] Because the ethnographic study was done prior to the public roll out of the social platform that would launch Web 2.0 and the subsequent adoption of social media by the

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[43] Senter III, *When God Shows Up: A History of Protestant Youth Ministry in America*, 294, 307-308.

[44] Bradbury, "Tuned in, Turned Off: The Youth Worker Journal Youth Culture and Technology Roundtable,"

[45] Kelly Richardson, "Teen Talk: Public Apology for Unfriendly Tween May Not Stop the Hurt", The Sacramento Bee, www.sacbee.com/2012/03/13/4331724/public-apology-for-unfriendly.html, (accessed March 17, 2012), Whether Richardson's column is faith based inspired is uncertain.

[46] Lenhart, "Teens, Kindness and Cruelty on Social Network Sites: How American Teens Navigate the New World of Digital Citizenship," 3. Lenhart reports that 15 percent of all teens say they have personally experienced meanness online.

[47] Clark, *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*, 19.

majority of adolescence, it may be appropriate to say that social media amplifies the fragmentation that what was already occurring in the changing adolescent landscape. Any attempt at protecting or removing students from the online world denies adolescents their context.

In Boyd's ethnographic social media research, she discovered that while many adults who work with youth are opposed to SNS, youth ministers tend to be the most adept at being relational online.[48] This has both positive and negative aspects to it. Senter notes that one of the critiques of modern youth ministry is that often "the lowest common denominator between teens and youth workers was fun."[49] Communications professor Peggy Kendall suggests that youth workers need to find a common level on social media. She writes, "Be intentional and strategic. Communicate in a language your students understand. If that means having inane conversations through text messaging or thinking up one more status to put on Facebook, that's what you do. Once you meet students there, then you can model and encourage them to use technology in ways that honor God and communicate His love to the important people in their lives."[50] Despite a somewhat condescending attitude towards social media, being strategic at finding common ground is important. However, just as the common ground of fun did not necessarily move the relationship towards an experience of God together,[51] moving into social media and

[48] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 260-261.

[49] Senter III, *When God Shows Up: A History of Protestant Youth Ministry in America*, 307.

[50] Bradbury, "Tuned in, Turned Off: The Youth Worker Journal Youth Culture and Technology Roundtable," 4.

[51] Senter III, *When God Shows Up: A History of Protestant Youth Ministry in America*, 307.

starting on common ground with the agenda of turning adolescents into a digital witness of God's love may prove to be equally ineffective.

The change that those who serve youth will need to make is to move past the conception that CMC is simply another way to pass along information, promote events or further the youth worker's agenda. Youth workers will need to begin to interpret adolescent online interaction psychosocially. They will also need to adopt a view of social media as a window to the relational world of adolescents.[52] In its place youth workers will need to adopt a view that social media can serve to augment their offline relationship as youth workers integrate themselves in an adoptive role as a part of the adolescent's floating entourage.

<div align="center">Adaptive Change For The Relational Perspective</div>

Relationally based youth workers tend to believe that CMC can be a solid communication tool yet interferes or serves as substitute for authentic relationships.[53] The adaptive change required among those who serve adolescents from a relational perspective is an acceptance of technology as a facilitator of real time relationships, but similar with parents, to do so in a contextually and psychosocially appropriate manner. It is ministry that focuses on the person being served, a ministry that is personal yet not necessarily individualistic.

Our adolescents are experiencing a tremendous amount of pain in their everyday

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[52] Clark, *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*, 161.

[53] Livingstone, "Taking Risky Opportunities in Youthful Content Creation: Teenagers' Use of Social Networking Sites for Intimacy, Privacy and Self-Expression," 395.

lives. Clark notes that by the time a freshman enters high school, and consequently the high school ministry in the church, they have at least ten years of experience navigating adult-driven and controlled programming.[54] He also suggests that we cannot merely be concerned with 'inward-focused' programs but must instead embrace the idea of an "outward-driven youth ministry (that) will ask the hard questions of how are we responding to what God is up to in the here and now."[55] The time has come to shift gears, and move the focus of our efforts from sustaining those programs that will build our own esteem and go after our youth. The change that relational youth workers will need to make is the reframing of CMC as a dissemination tool to dole out our wisdom and promote our events and agendas to one that can be utilized for the strengthening of a real time and live network of relationships.[56]

CMC connects youth to each other and deepens the quality of their friendship.[57] It can also be used to deepen the quality of relationships between teenagers and adults.[58] Social media is especially useful among shyer students with whom youth workers already have a relationship.[59] The idea that mediated communications can build relationships is not foreign to the Christian community, as even the Apostle Paul's letters can be viewed

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[54] Clark, *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*, 30.

[55] Clark, "Youth Ministry as Practical Theology," 16.

[56] Bargh and McKenna, "The Internet and Social Life."

[57]Valkenburg and Peter, "Social Consequences of the Internet for Adolescents: A Decade of Research,"

[58] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 258.

[59] Baker and Oswald, "Shyness and Online Social Networking Services," 885.

as a conversation with the people who was communicating with.[60] Online interaction

between youth and adults can be supportive, but they are an extension of offline

relationships, augmenting existing healthy relationships. These relationships also extend

beyond parents and youth workers and a theology of adoption requires the participation

of the broader church community.

The Church Community

An institution's core ideology is made up of its guiding core values and its core

purpose, its reason for existence.[61] Jesus inaugurated the concept of the church (Matthew

16:18), and later gave its commission to make disciples and teaching them to obey all that

He commanded (Matthew 28), which can be summed up as loving God and loving

neighbor (Matthew 24). Each church community has a way of knowing who is or is not

part of the community.[62] Among contemporary protestant churches, there is an emphasis

on the pure explanation of Scripture and proper practice of the sacraments,[63] as well as

salvation as a private individualized response relationship with Jesus.[64] Additionally,

there is an ongoing concept of ecclesiology derived from a manifestation of the church in

a given period of time, yet with a strong conviction that the ecclesia is not in the business

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[60] Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context*, 118.

[61] James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras, "Building Your Company's Vision," *Harvard Business Review*, no. September-October (1996), 66-69.

[62] Cormode, *Making Spiritual Sense: Christian Leaders as Spiritual Interpreters*, 70-72.

[63] Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, 341.

[64] Fitch, *The End of Evangelicalism? Discerning a New Faithfulness for Mission Towards an Evangelical Political Theology*, 148-149.

of creating the Kingdom reign on earth, it is an act of God,[65] in the Spirit, through the church.[66] Combined these provide the tenets of modern evangelical Christianity that emphasizes an individualized and intellectually orthodox relationship with Jesus as defined within a specific time, space and Christian community.

Social media's challenge to this interpretation of spiritual community is the diffusion of spiritual interpreters and the tearing down of the limitations found in time and space. Stig Hjarvard, a Danish social researcher, discovered that the Internet, either through the viewing of web pages or engagement with online discussion groups, is beginning to etch out the church as a preferred method of engaging in spiritual issues.[67] Although the study was among people in Denmark, it portrays a trend that cannot be ignored and is observable in western society. People are turning away from both the conceptual and literal structures that are provided by the church and engaging instead on their own journey of spiritual experiences.[68] As culture continues to drift away from the locus of the church and CMC blurs the importance of space and time in relational building, the cost of losing the church facility as center of religious instruction and spiritual experience creates grief over a loss of time and space perspective of relating. Many resources have been invested in the development of programs and buildings and

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[65] Küng, *The Church*, 22, 36, 136-138.

[66] Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit*, 33.

[67] Hjarvard, "The Mediatization of Religion: A Theory of the Media as Agents of Religious Change," 20.

[68] Kale, "Spirituality, Religion, and Globalization," 97.

CMC can easily be taken as a representation of the irrelevance of space, causing and interpretation that reduces the perceived values of the community's investment.

Adaptive Change For The Symbolic Perspective

The broader Church community has to learn to look beyond adolescence as a type of monolithic community,[69] get past the expectation that students will behave like adults online,[70] and learn that students will utilize SNS with those adults that they have a relationship.[71] In Acts and Paul's letters the community of believers claim and provide new meaning for the secular and political concept of ecclesia, as a new community of God, with eschatological expectations due to the saving work of Jesus Christ.[72] The change that needs to be made in Christian congregations is the reframing of the Christian community gathering in one facility yet segregated into pockets of age/stage ministry to that of being a part of the adolescent's "cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1) in a psychosocially and contextually appropriate manner. This happens even as adults continue to "run with perseverance the race marked out for us." Though this passage articulates that the gathered witnesses before whom we run consists of the heroes of the faith who have passed away before us, ultimately the focus is on Christ, the "author and

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[69] Lee, "Young People and the Internet: From Theory to Practice," 316.

[70] Davis, "Coming of Age Online: The Developmental Underpinngs of Girl's Blogs," 165.

[71] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," Lee, "Young People and the Internet: From Theory to Practice," Livingstone, "The Challenge of Engaging Youth Online: Contrasting Producers' and Teenagers' Interpretations of Websites," Pujazon-Zazik and Park, "To Tweet, or Not to Tweet: Gender Differences and Potential Positive and Negative Health Outcomes of Adolescents' Social Internet Use," Ramirez Jr. and Bronek, "Im Me: Instant Messaging as Relational Maintenance and Everyday Communication."

[72] Küng, *The Church*, 114-124, 341.

perfecter" of our faith. The appeal suggests that every Christian serves as part of the

cloud of witness as found in verses fourteen and fifteen, which indicate an

eschatologically informed pursuit of peace and ongoing shepherding care and concern for

all members of the spiritual community.[73] This is a mutual participation in a "a salvation

already in motion . . . under Christ's Lordship."[74] Becoming an active member of a

student's floating entourage is consistent with this imagery.

Secondly, churches need to reframe the role of orthodoxy from a litmus test of

truth towards an adoptive hermeneutic. Interpreting scripture from an adoptive

framework moves the role of Scripture in Christ-centered communicative communities

towards a relational dynamic of being known by and knowing God, serving as a story of

the work of God in the world and being rendered infallible in and through Christ.[75] It is

the ongoing work of bringing Scripture to bear within the contextual framework of every

member of the Christ-centered community, including adolescents.

Marie Mastronardi, in her research testing the work of social capital researcher

Putnam writes: "Young people need discursive resources that help them address,

understand and respond to their situations – their emotional needs, anxieties, conflicts,

and problems – with clarity, honesty, and comprehensiveness."[76] This means adolescents

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[73] William Lane, *Word Biblical Commentary: Hebrews 9-13*, ed. Glenn W. Barker David A. Hubbard, vol. 47b (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1991), 403-407, 451-454.

[74] Fitch, *The End of Evangelicalism? Discerning a New Faithfulness for Mission Towards an Evangelical Political Theology*, 144.

[75] Ibid., 133, 138, 177.

[76] Maria Mastronardi, "Adolescence and Media," *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* Vol. 22, no. No. 1 (2003), 89.

need adults to holistically support them in their journey as guides to everyday life. It is an invitation for adults to live among the adolescents in their world. This builds on Moltmann's conceptual marker of the church as an ongoing historical participation with God's liberating and uniting in fellowship all people under the cross of suffering in the joy of the Spirit.[77] This requires that the responsibility for adopting adolescents both online and off does not lies merely with those who are typified as being technologically or relationally inclined to do so.

The Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project, 2013 survey of teens and technology tracks the past decade of Internet use among both teens and adults. While Internet use among middle age adults remains high and has grown slightly over the past decade, new users among those who are 65 and older has doubled to more than half of that demographic.[78] This means that the ratio of people over 65 who use the Internet in some form is higher than one in two individuals. An aging population would account for some of this trend, but not all of it. For at least some, if not the majority of the additional 27 percent of senior citizens who adopted the Internet after Web 2.0, they encountered it primarily as a relational tool. They are not bringing the framework or assumptions of an information-based user, but would be naturally inclined towards a relationally based Internet.

This opens a possibility of intergenerational opportunities for a local congregation. Providing opportunities for intergenerational interaction while encouraging

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[77] Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, 65.

[78] Madden and Lenhart, "Teens and Technology 2013," 3.

the entire Christ-centered community to continue their connections online will develop a multi-faceted web of interpersonal relationships. In so doing the church can become an important community where young people will be invited into opportunities for spiritual growth and where they can develop friendships that will further mediate parental influence.[79] It is a ministry of presence that could potentially ripple through society, consistent with the church's deepest theological beliefs.

Being actively engaged within a church community is positively correlated to active community engagement.[80] Walter Brueggemann writes: "The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us."[81] This task is fostered by being in, with, and growing in the community of faith, and of course, it happens in both space and time. Granted, this is no easy task, as Putnam suggests: "To build bridging social capital requires that we transcend our social and political and professional identities to connect with people unlike ourselves."[82] It will take a level of humbleness for those that are willing to build geo-physically based Christ-centered communicative community across intergenerational lines. It will take another level of

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[79] Martin, White, and Perlman, "Religious Socialization: A Test of the Channeling Hypothesis of Parental Influence on Adolescent Faith Maturity," 179-183.

[80] Kristin Stromsnes, "The Importance of Church Attendance and Membership of Religious Voluntary Organizations for the Formation of Social Capital," *Social Compass* 55, no. 4 (2008), 489.

[81] Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, second edition. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 3.

[82] Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, 411.

humbleness to then dare to bridge that relationship across the digital divide. However, in the end the fruit of such a relationship should be worth the effort.

Chapter Summary

As CMC increasingly becomes the norm among all stages of adolescence, adults struggle to find the resources within to adequately interpret their observations of adolescent behavior, risking patterns of response that may run contrary to espoused values. Parents of adolescents quickly discover that their offline authority does not easily transfer to CMC, leaving youth with the impression that adults do not understand the Internet and parents with fears of incompetence. To turn this, parents will have to risk their competence to step into the online social community. Youth workers that typically operate from a relational approach may perceive SNS as a threat to community and barrier to spiritual growth that may fear losing their relational role of facilitator for the spiritual community. The change that youth workers will be required to make reconfigures CMC from a tool for information dispensation to one that will extend and deepen existing offline relationships. The broader church community is grappling with a culture that has moved the locus of society away from the church while decentralizing spiritual interpreters. It may also struggle with a tendency to place the blame of adolescent SNS activity upon the youth themselves, risking further isolation of the adolescent community. Moving ahead, churches will need to redefine community interaction beyond the scope of recognized spiritual facilities, repositioning themselves through a theology of adoption as champions of faith, and participants in Scripture among youth, serving as spiritual hosts for the journey to adulthood.

CHAPTER 7

EQUIPPING YOUTH WORKERS AS AGENT OF CHANGE

In the spring of 2013, the French toilet paper company, *Le Trèfle* released a commercial demonstrating that it might not be beneficial if everything in life became a digital representation of itself. In this short story it quickly becomes clear that Emma is not ready to fully embrace the new digital world. Every time her husband turns around he catches Emma doing something decidedly non-digital. Whether Emma is doodling with her daughter, using sticky notes on the fridge or reading a paperback book in bed, her husband, in a rather condescending manner, demonstrates a digital application that she could have been using. This situation persists until we see the husband trapped in a restroom without toilet paper. Calling out for help, the viewer his surprise by his wife's response. Emma graciously slid a digital roll of toilet paper under the bathroom door. Apparently, when it comes to toilet paper, there is an app for that.[1]

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[1] Xavier Beauregard, Jérôme Gonfond, "Emma. Le Trèfle," television commercial. Directed by Bart Timmer via Henry de Czar with executive producer Jean-Luc Bergeron. Paris: Leo Burnett France, 2013.

Though it may at times seem that the digital world has taken over everything, in actuality, there are aspects of community existence that social media is not technologically equipped to handle. One such area is the guiding of adaptive social change. Adaptive change best occurs by providing a structure and pace for change in a manner that regulates the stress the change will inevitably produce.[2] An aspect of that structure will be the development of a holding environment.

A holding environment allows enough discomfort to creep in for change to take place while balancing that discomfort with enough safety that members of a community can productively work together through the pain and experiences of change.[3] It is a place of safety yet un-comfortableness that brings contradictory commitments to the surface for all to discuss.[4] It can also be a place of opportunity for each of the stakeholders to reflect back on their actions, the reasoning for and the motivation of those actions.[5]

The holding environment for this doctoral project came primarily through a series of educational seminars made primarily available to students studying youth, family and culture at Fuller Theological Seminary in Sacramento. Through psychosocial, theological, and missional examination, research identifies communicative community as

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[2] Heiftetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers*, 99-100.

[3] Heifetz, Linsky, and Grashow, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*, 155.

[4] Chris Argyris, "Empowerment: The Emperor's New Clothes," *Harvard Business Review* 76 no. 3 (1998), 9.

[5] Argyris, "Good Communication That Blocks Learning," 3. A process Chris Argyris refers to as double loop learning.

a core reality of God's desire for a cultural *telos* of communal adoption. The thesis of this doctoral project is that adult-adolescent CMC can be reframed from systemic abandonment towards communal adoption. It is argued that by adaptively reframing the concept of floating entourage towards an image of communal adoption, the foundational actions for the development of an adoptive multi-networked web of adult-adolescent relationships can be developed.

The project consists of seminars offered between March and December of 2012. The sessions encompassed theological, psychosocial and ecological social media issues grounded in practical theology, measuring effectiveness according to the following desired outcomes; 1) an understanding of how each stage of adolescence affects social media usage; 2) integration of a CMC culture of adoption among existing offline-relationships; 3) understanding of how to develop opportunities for spiritual growth that invite adolescents to trust Jesus with social media issues; 4) an ability to counsel parents and other youth workers in contextualized CMC usage that perpetuates an adoption culture. To measure this, pre- and post-seminar surveys were given and results triangulated with online participant feedback of adult-adolescent CMC experiences. To facilitate online feedback a blog was created that participants were guided towards.[6]

Next Steps to Facilitating Change

Reframing adolescent-adult CMC from isolation to adoption is to frame the change across all stakeholders as an invitation to become a participant in each student's

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[6] Bradley Howell, "Brad Howell's Floating Entourage Project," http://floatingentourage. blogspot.com/, (accessed March 28, 2013).

digital floating entourage. In this manner, the floating entourage participants are formed into a web of relationships designed for the adoption of the adolescent into the adult community. To glean from organizational theorists, a "web of inclusion" design of an organic network is like a spider spinning a web where existing threads are strengthened and new ones are formed, cosmically connecting all aspects of an organization to its leader at the center.[7] In this organizational structure, all connections lead back to the leader. In a floating entourage, a web of relationships places the adolescent in the center, personalizing their experience within the Christ-centered community. As Boyd notes, online relationships that center on the youth and not the adult's agenda are overwhelming healthy.[8] Personalization is formed towards the one who is being adopted.

In this web of relationship, the youth worker plays an additional role of intentionally connecting the various webs across the Christian community. Filtered through a theology of adoption, the expanding webs of relationships become intrinsically attached to each other, ultimately creating a ripple effect throughout the community. Consequently, a stronger image for the role of the youth worker for Christ-centered communicative community purposes would be the one who is intentionally connecting together multiple webs of adoption into a broader network of Christian community.

Among each stakeholder, training will need to occur within the context of an appropriate holding environment that reinterprets adolescent CMC in light of its context and psychosocial realities, reframing values towards a theology of adoption. Anderson

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[7] Helgesen as per Deal, 2003, 81

[8] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 258.

suggests competence for the journey includes: discernment, integration and credibility. Discernment is recognition that there is congruence between the Christ in the Scriptures and the Christ in ministry. Integration is the application of discernment – God's Word is now not only proclaimed, but practiced in a ministry context and the result is Christ as truth both touches human need and is touched by it, the interaction of faith and life. Finally, credibility is expressed through the transparency of the method being employed and the "lucidity of thought" that makes the presence of Christ self evident and worthy of belief in every event of ministry.[9] The emphasis then begins to turn towards the practice of leaning into the floating entourage.

Paulo Freire, an educator from South America invited people to share in the experience of everyday lives and then brought these stories into conversation with Scripture. His pedagogy was based on the conviction that the Spirit of God is among the people of God.[10] People can learn together in community and so the concept becomes ongoing practice, reflection on experiences in light of a hermeneutic of adoption and then a step back into webs of adoption. Experience, reflection, experience that develops discernment, informs integration and ultimately produces credibility for the journey and the next phase of webs of adoption implementation. This strategy will treat a theology of adoption as a movement across the entire church body, beginning with the youth workers.

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[9] Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis*, 56-58.

[10] Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World*, 76.

Short Term

Bridging the digital divide that separates adults from youth begins by informing

youth workers about the realities of adolescence and their context of operation.[11] This

short-term goal is the specific target of the floating entourage doctoral project. This plan

begins with the education of youth workers on how adolescent psychosocial

developmental influences use of social media. It also includes explaining why adolescent

social interactions are becoming increasingly divergent from adult forms of interaction,

and invites youth workers to strategically develop a network of adults that will adopt

adolescents on the tightrope journey to adulthood, first in geo-physical space and then as

a member of the adolescent's floating entourage.

It is important to develop internal commitment if change is going to have a lasting

impact.[12] To this end, the actual process of which SNS are best utilized and the daily

disciplines required to become an aspect of an adolescent's floating entourage is best

defined by the context of the ministry group. A helpful tool in understanding that context

though is a literal mapping out webs of relationships, building towards an inter-connected

communal web of adoption. The map can be done physically with sticky notes and a

whiteboard, or for the more technologically savvy teams, computer based programs.

The presentation of adolescents on the Internet is an opportunity for ministry

leaders to get a peak into the background world of adolescence, enabling them to adapt

their relational connections appropriately. Walt Mueller offers as a missional image of

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[11] Walt Mueller, *Youth Culture 101* (Grand Rapids, MI: Youth Specialties/Zondervan, 2007), 221.

[12] Argyris, "Empowerment: The Emperor's New Clothes," 4.

cross-cultural missionaries that "lead teenagers to spiritual maturity."[13] This image

speaks to the heart of the youth worker. Social media provides for youth workers the

opportunity to do this directly, to see first hand what teens are experiencing and reading

their thoughts about the world they live in. It also invites those who have a relationship

with a particular student an opportunity to participate in the conversation. The words,

images and videos that students post online are a reflection of what matters to them, and

serve as cultural texts to youth workers. These postings are intentional actions on the part

of students to either communicate directly with others or portray themselves in a certain

fashion to specific groups of people and contexts. Cultural texts project worlds of

meaning and call out for interpretation.[14] Interpretation best happens from a posture of

humility.

Anderson suggests that ministers not only consider themselves the shepherd, but

also one of the sheep.[15] Fitch characterizes it as "our passion for those who hurt is as one

alongside and with – com-passion – as opposed to one at a distance, who gives resources

out of a position of safety and security – dis-passion."[16] Being actively involved in the

lives of adolescents will demonstrate a commitment to community, but it needs to also

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[13] Mueller, *Youth Culture 101*, 221.

[14] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Charles A. Anderson, and Michael J. Sleasman, *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 26-27.

[15] Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis*, 290.

[16] Fitch, *The End of Evangelicalism? Discerning a New Faithfulness for Mission Towards an Evangelical Political Theology*, 171.

demonstrate to the community that the leaders are also on this journey. Compassion is stepping into and alongside the contextual reality of adolescents.

There is little doubt that adolescents today live in a very different environment than any generation before them. Fuller Theological Seminary professors Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger write, "Ultimately, Christians who want to serve within Western culture must be trained as missionaries. They must understand both the incarnation demands of the gospel and the surrounding context."[17] Combining this with an understanding that youth will portray themselves differently to different social relationships, youth workers can gain new insights and interpretations on adolescent pressures and bridge the discussion towards a faithful spiritual response.

<div align="center">Mid Term</div>

It is important to make sure that someone is in place that will guide various stakeholders through the tumultuous world of change.[18] Both parents and the church look to the youth ministers as the experts on adolescence. As such, they serve as formational leaders to the spiritual community, and bear a responsibility to all groups of stakeholders to provide a new theological framework of interpretation.[19] The aspect of being an authority that is pertinent to CMC is that of providing order, which Heifetz outlines as three primary responsibilities: "orientating people to their places and roles, controlling

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[17] Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 26.

[18] Bolman and Deal, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, 381.

[19] Cormode, *Making Spiritual Sense: Christian Leaders as Spiritual Interpreters*, 53, 64.

internal conflict, and establishing and maintaining norms."[20] Consequently the mid term step is to help youth workers identify their role as authorities among parents and the church, moving them from being floating entourage participants to guides for the next two groups of stake holders, but also making them aware of the various frames of reference each of the next two stakeholders will be using. For this original group, the process continues by sharing what they have learned and educating and orientating the parents as a stakeholder group.

As youth workers orientate parents to their new role as a member of their child's floating entourage, they will also be teaching parents the skills necessary to do that. It will be important to educate the frames that parents will be using, the potential areas of pain and the reframing that a parent will require. Youth workers will also need to understand how to facilitate change among parents and provide opportunities to practice and perhaps reflect on experiences through an online blogging community. Parent-adolescent online communication among healthy relationships will quickly experience new and enjoyable opportunities for exchanging ideas and increased avenues of communication.[21] Once parents are more contextually and psychosocially aware, interaction should take on a positive life of its own. For parent-adolescent relationships that may be more strained, as an aspect of reorientation it is advisable to be available for council, mentoring and vision reinforcement of the new frame of reference, keeping to a

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[20] Heiftetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers*, 69.

[21] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 252.

pace that stakeholders can handle.[22] Strategies can then be developed appropriate to the relationship status.

Another aspect of the midterm plan is to continue the process of mapping the webs of adoption that are forming, labeling the various adults place in it, and begin reflecting this virtual network back to what now consists of two groups of stake holders. Balance needs to be kept, as a ministry trend that goes well beyond Bushnell's vision of home based Christian nurture can overtake the importance of the educational role of the church and the image of the Church as God's extended family.[23] As parents become a vital aspect of a deepening web of adoption, these engaged adults become the witness of and advocates for community wide, intergenerational webs of adoption, setting a foundation for the long-term stage of influencing the entire church.

Long Term

The final stage is the long-term influence of the broader spiritual community, and the introduction of a church wide ongoing, networked webs of adoption. Bolman and Deal suggest when working within the symbolic frame, "Team building . . . is a search for the spirit within and creation of a community of believers united by shared faith and a shared culture."[24] The task of the youth worker at this stage is an ongoing connection of the new floating entourage frame of reference to the historic definitions of who is included in spiritual community and what it means to shepherd that community. The core

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[22] Heiftetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers*, 77.

[23] Senter III, *When God Shows Up: A History of Protestant Youth Ministry in America*, 308.

[24] Bolman and Deal, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, 299.

ideology of each community as such needs to be uncovered as it may not be readily obvious.[25] This ideology will vary from congregation to congregation.

Ideally, the youth worker has been updating church leadership throughout the process, educating leadership on the theology that motivates a re-framing of CMC, steps being taken, first by youth workers and then parents, as well as the jargon utilized and symbols being employed. As the church community is gradually being influenced through those brought in during the short and midterm periods, stories of the experience are being shared with the church leadership and broader community. Being given opportunities to share before the entire church will help build a broader team beyond the initial youth workers group. Having the leader of the community do it themselves through sermon illustrations or by interviewing those who participate in webs of adoption demonstrates complete buy in on behalf of church leadership. To this end, a teaching series on the topic of social media in light of spiritual community is relevant, complete with opportunities for the congregation to commemorate passage from a historic frame of what is or is not the community to one of a broader description of community that extends beyond time and space, teaching what it means to be a neighbor nearby (Proverbs 27:10) in a digitally networked world.

It is at this stage where it becomes most appropriate to map out a church wide web of adoptive relationships, keeping a specific awareness of individuals who are detached or have weaker connections to the body of believers. It is important to be aware of people that may be within social proximity but not necessarily engaging

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[25] Collins and Porras, "Building Your Company's Vision," 71.

interpersonally.[26] They may feel like outsiders, naïve to how the community intuitively relates with one another. Outsiders will require that someone intentionally reach out to them. Additionally a theology of adoption needs to become an ongoing hermeneutical tool for both biblical text and contextual experiences. Finally, because story is a powerful tool to frame and interpret the experiences of religious communities,[27] ongoing testimony of inclusion and stories of success need to be shared allowing for new or reframed stories across the community to be told if webs of adoption is to become an instinctive reality.

Navigating Streams of Confusion

Leading the church community in a reframing of adult-adolescent CMC will come with various complications, sidetracks and perhaps outright hostility. Heifetz councils those who are leading through adaptive change to first be intentional about managing one's own responses through the various situations, and secondly assist the various stakeholders with their own uneasiness, living "into the disequilibrium".[28] With Donald Laurie, Heifetz uses the imagery of being able to imagine the field of play from a balcony perspective, then being able to move back into the context.[29] Using this balcony view approach will serve to guard against the development of a CMC/SNS plan or community policy developed in the boardroom yet intended to be overlaid onto the

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[26] Fiske, "Relational Models Theory 2.0," 12.

[27] Cormode, *Making Spiritual Sense: Christian Leaders as Spiritual Interpreters*, 84.

[28] Heifetz, Linsky, and Grashow, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*, 29.

[29] Ronald A. Heifetz and Donald L. Laurie, *The Work of Leadership* (Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing, 1997), 125.

community. Bolman and Deal remind us of an "ironclad law: change rationally conceived usually fails."[30] This bit of wisdom helps youth workers to understand the importance of working closely with the various stakeholders versus blindly implementing their own agenda, needlessly contributing to standard anticipated problems such as avoidance and flight to authority.

An example of CMC avoidance is the 'Enhancing Teen Communication' school based education program. Founded by Lori Kelman, this program's mission is to teach kids communication skills where an adolescent culture lacks it, a lack that Kelman believes "is a result of texting technology."[31] Part of an adoptive hermeneutic is educating adolescents for adult realities, and to that end Kelman's movement serves a significant purpose. The avoidance is in the lack of effort spent to understand the role that text messaging plays in the lives of adolescents, but instead places the blame of not mastering an adult skill on the adolescents themselves instead of the adult community. This serves as a scapegoat type of avoidance that skews the solution towards the adult's field of expertise and corresponding technical abilities.[32] That this story was picked up by a CNN blog and then passed along social networks via Twitter phrased as "Teaching teens how to talk face-to-face, again" represents a type of flight to authority.

Heifetz notes the two reasons that a flight to authority is risky: "first, because the work avoidance often occurs in response to our biggest problems and, second, because it

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[30] Bolman and Deal, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, 369.

[31] Roope, "Texting Teens Learn to Talk Face to Face," 1.

[32] Heifetz, Linsky, and Grashow, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*, 31.

disables some of our most important personal and collective resources for accomplishing adaptive work."[33] Both CMC and SNS can be used to promote pragmatic solutions to community challenges while simultaneously sidestepping the work of the spiritual community.[34] A holistic perspective needs to be the evaluative template for any program implementation. Adults need to be aware that adolescents are growing in sophistication, but are not quit there yet.[35] Mueller suggests that adults find ways to build accountability into the "digital universe" and that by doing so we help prepare our youth to gradually grow into healthy autonomy.[36] None of this will be simple, but it needs to be done within the context of our spiritual communities.

Youth workers will need to shift adaptive work to the stakeholders through a process of failing the stakeholders at a rate they can handle.[37] This is like a father teaching a child to ride a bike. At first he hold on to his child, but as the dad perceives the child is ready, he lets go of the bike. The freedom is exhilarating and scary all at the same moment. Dad has both released and is yet there, even if the child does not feel ready to balance this bicycle on their own.

As parents begin to grapple with their new role in CMC, the temptation will be to rely on the youth worker's expertise to provide technical answers. Instead, youth workers

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[33] Heiftetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers*, 73.

[34] Bradley Howell, "Steering Clear of Constellation Theology," *Youthworker Journal* 28, no. 2 (2011), 78.

[35] Elkind, *Ties That Stress: The New Family Imbalance*, 224.

[36] Mueller, *Youth Culture 101*, 127.

[37] Heiftetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers*, 85-88.

will need to reinforce CMC as an ongoing discernment of adolescent development informed by their context. Youth workers will need to continually find ways to communicate with other stakeholders that the effectiveness of bridging the digital divide will not be on any technological propensity or social media prowess, but dependent on the stakeholder's offline relationship with the adolescent.

Avoiding Assassination

Youth workers involved in adaptive leadership will experience moments where it seems that everyone is tracking with them and other ones where it feels that everyone is hunting them. Workers are ascribed various types of authority based upon their role, and as long as they fulfill expectations they are rewarded for staying within their scope of authority.[38] The church leadership expectation on many youth workers in the contemporary church is that they will attract larger numbers of adolescents to youth ministry events.[39] Adaptive leadership however pushes beyond the boundaries of authority, stressing relationships with the risks that are taken. If a leader travels too far outside of the boundaries without finding creative ways to release the building pressure, they are likely to experience assassination.[40] For adaptive leading youth workers, the primary risk for assassination will most likely come from either the church leadership

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[38] Heifetz, Linsky, and Grashow, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*, 23-26.

[39] Senter III, *When God Shows Up: A History of Protestant Youth Ministry in America*, 308.

[40] Heifetz, Linsky, and Grashow, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*, 23-26. The assassination term is defined in the glossary.

team, typically the Senior Pastor, from parents who feel that the youth ministry has crossed a boundary line into their areas of authority or a combination of the two. Youth workers that do not address in advance with senior leadership these outcome discrepancies could likely experience spontaneous job existence failure.

Senior pastors typically have been given ascribed authority over the ministry staff, and parents culturally have authority over their teens. It is advisable to keep the senior pastor updated through out the process. Youth workers must be intentional to connect and frame the vision of participation in floating entourages that connects the entire church community in adoptive webs of relationships as conducive with the overall direction of the church. For parents, who will be far more numerous than the senior pastor, information and communication, even through CMC is appreciated. It is important to build a team of support[41] and parents can make great allies.

Results

The material from this study was shared in five contexts. The first was a group of six youth workers who were students in the Youth, Family and Culture emphasis at Fuller seminary. The second was a multi-session one on one coaching for a Fuller seminary student that was intended to lead towards working with the broader youth leadership team. However that student took on a new ministry position before this study was complete. The third was an outgrowth from the first, a parent and youth worker session with Grace Evangelical Free Church in Elk Grove, California with approximately twenty

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[41] Heifetz, Linsky, and Grashow, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*, 41-42.

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in attendance. The fourth was the training of about twenty or more youth workers at First Baptist Church of Davis, California. That led to a participation in a multi-week seminar with over 125 parents at First Baptist.

Each presentation was customized in conjunction with the youth worker representing the Christian community being addressed. This additionally served as a mentoring opportunity for the youth worker and served to address how the research connects with a specific ministry context. In all, twenty-five adult youth workers took the pre-seminar survey and eighteen responded on the follow up post-seminar survey. Since a little less than three quarters of respondents did take the follow up survey, the results are a generalization. Some of the individuals who did participate in the follow up survey would have had additional discussions with the researcher or participated in other group sessions or parent seminars. Still, for at least several individuals the results reflect more than a few hours worth of presentation and may include the effects of ministry coaching. In this small of a sample size the results could easily have been skewed as a result of this.

Most surveys were completed in paper format and entered into a Google Docs drive for tabulation. Note that the surveys were not taken in a controlled environment and the results are not transferable to the broader culture. They reflect the opinions of the individual participants. The Floating Entourage Blog[42] had over 750 visits, but there was no engagement with the blog beyond the researcher. The result is that the blog itself produced no additional insight to the success of communicating adoptive practices for adult-adolescent social media concerns.

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[42] Howell, "Brad Howell's Floating Entourage Project."

In response to survey question number two, one third of the respondents said they primarily utilized the Internet as a work related tool, while one fifth stated their primary use was entertainment. Only 12 percent said their primary use of the Internet was to connect with friends or family. Pre-seminar, in response to question number three, almost half of youth workers perceived that the primary adolescent Internet activity was relationally based, with entertainment purposes at a close second. Post-seminar this had only a slight change as just over half of youth workers felt that the primary Internet activity of adolescents was relational.

Psychosocial Awareness of Social Media Acuity

During interviews, participants shared that they had never previously given thought to how development effects social media use. Follow up discussions suggest direct and concrete adoptive actions had been incorporated into daily use. Such actions reflect an understanding of early adolescent social media use and included both closing multiple social media browsers and make sure that conversations with early adolescents have a clear and concrete ending.

Questions number four and eight dealt with psychosocial issues. The first question addressed early adolescent concreteness and the second with midadolescent egocentric abstraction. Pre-seminar, 52 percent of youth workers said that they would keep a social media site open in the background while doing other activities on their computers. During presentations, much discussion revolved around the concrete mindedness and high attentiveness of early adolescents. Many people wanted to share their experiences of

interacting online with early adolescents. Not surprisingly, by the post-seminar survey only 28 percent of respondents indicated that they multi-task on social media.

The midadolescent aspect of the survey was intended to have two answers that could be perceived as inline with the research. Consequently, participants were allowed to choose multiple responses. One response was actually an early adolescent reality and responders seemed to catch that in the post-survey. The two midadolescent answers were flipped on the part of the respondents pre- and post-survey, in effect canceling out any indication of effectiveness. In retrospect, this question may have a design flaw.

Still, the overall response suggests a positive trajectory towards a *telos* of adoption, as respondents did seem to be more aware of how social media presence affects early adolescents. Reframing adult perspectives did increase psychosocial awareness of adolescent CMC usage, especially among those who serve early adolescents.

Integrating a Geophysical Culture of Adoption

Participant youth workers in this project tend to express concern that social media was eroding a common understanding of truth to which their teaching appealed. Though parents were a secondary group for this study, parental concerns centered on child protection from predators or family disruption. For both groups, fear framed concerns.

The desire to have an audience is quite strong among youth pastors. Meeting with youth pastors before group seminars, questions were "how do I get students to read my blog?" "Which SNS is best for me to make announcements and promote events?" "How can I get a voice in among my teens among all of the other Internet options?" These questions are motivated by *kerygma* and audience gathering and are not necessarily

directed by *koininia* considerations. Despite that, participants tended to choose a more relational option both pre- and post- survey. On the survey, question number five addressed this concern. In retrospect, the wording of question number five may have been leading. However, youth workers do tend to approach their actual social media use from a relational perspective. This is consistent with both Boyd's social media research[43] as well as Mark Senter's observation on the general state of the current youth worker.[44]

Inviting Adolescents to Trust Jesus with Their Social Media Choices

The challenge of a social media fast as a spiritual disciple was an important concern of this research. Question number seven on the survey address this concern. Pre-seminar, 80 percent of youth workers believed that a social media fast would definitely or at least most likely be helpful spiritual discipline among high school students. Post-seminar the numbers were split fifty-fifty between those who felt a social media fast was helpful and those who though it would not be helpful.

Question number six measured attitudes concerning emerging adults and online dating sites, just under half of the youth workers felt that the most important ministry need was to offer and model healthy relationships to young adults. Post-seminar, three quarters of respondents felt that relationships were key to caring for young adults. However, though the percentages changed, the actual number of respondents who chose relationships increased by only three people. More than half of the post-survey

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[43] Boyd, "Taken out of Context: American Teen Sociality in Networked Publics," 258.

[44] Senter III, *When God Shows Up: A History of Protestant Youth Ministry in America*, 357.

respondents are perceived by this research to be emerging adults themselves. The

message of relationship may have resonated quite positively with this group.

Developed Ability to Contextually Perpetuate Adoptive Practices

Every time the video was shown of Tommy Jordan shooting holes in his

daughter's computer, parents cheered. That social media has become a daily part of the

adolescent experience is becoming cliché, especially to parents. Parents know that social

media is always a present reality and for many this is an ongoing point of contention.

The ninth survey question addressed the strategy of the church for engaging

adolescents on social media. Pre-survey, half of the respondents indicated there was

none, and many were unsure. Meeting with the various groups, the youth workers tended

to emphasis that the church either was working on this or had one in place. Consequently,

there was positive momentum and in this area and post-survey only 39 percent of

participants indicated that the church had no strategy being developed or in place.

It is quite possible that the majority of the changes are represented in that those

who were willing to take the follow up survey were more prone to accepting the findings

of the research than those who did not respond. All in all, concrete actions hospitable to

communicative community became increasingly normative. One senior leader at First

Baptist Church, though not himself a survey participant, did move in his personal opinion

of social media from somewhat hostile to reservedly open. Of the survey participants

reported increased experiences of positive adult-adolescent social media interactions.

Chapter Summary

Reframing adult-adolescent CMC towards communal adoption will require stakeholder participation in an adolescent's floating entourage with an intentional effort on the part of some to connect these various entourage groups in a community wide web of adoptive relationships. Aligning stakeholders into a holding environment that combines ongoing education of psychosocial and contextual realities with opportunities for practice and reflection will serve to guide a strategy of moving stakeholders beyond incompetence to CMC interactions characterized by adult discernment, integration and ultimately, credibility. Short-term strategy begins with the youth workers, the group most likely to be perceived as experts by the remaining two groups of stakeholders. It then mobilizes youth workers to create a holding environment for parents, building a foundation of adults who can eventually invite the entire church community into CMC participation. As youth workers step into a leadership role, an aspect of that role is the navigation of streams of confusion that inevitably arise. Special attention needs to be given to avoidance or flight to authority behaviors that develop strategy apart from contextual social realities. Additional attention needs to be given to theological reflection nurtured within the spiritual community. Finally, youth workers will need to keep key stakeholders and people in authority well informed as to the strategy of adaptive change, working to turn potential assassins into strategic allies.

This section serves only as an aspect of reframing adult-adolescent CMC, focusing on the changes that need to be made as well as the costs that change will require. It also considers the process of fostering those changes, concerns and trouble spots that leaders facilitating CMC towards communal adoption need to consider. As such, these

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chapters are intend to be placed within deeper research of psychosocial and contextual

research filtered through theological and ecclesial history towards a practical theology of

communal adoption and its corresponding spiritual disciplines in light of adolescent use

of computer mediated communication.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This ministry project develops the thesis that adult-adolescent computer-mediated communication in a hyper-networked society such as Sacramento can be reconfigured from systemic abandonment towards communal adoption by adaptively reframing the concept of floating entourage to include a multi-networked web of adult relationships. Despite that early social media research treated adolescents as a monolithic entity, more recent research has begun to approach their study with the perspective of psychosocial development. The result has been the discovery that SNS and CMC are not shaping identity but is expression of identity that serves to frame it.

Early adolescent use of CMC is characterized by concrete psychosocial development, requiring adults to be intentional in there interactions with younger teens. Midadolescents have ability to think abstractly but lack social pressure requiring formal identity resulting in behavior that appears foreign to adult understanding. Social media quickly became a universal tool for the ongoing development and support of midadolescents in the context of their friendship cluster. This requires adults to table their agendas while personalizing CMC towards students. Emerging adults, struggling to find their voice in an adult world, use SNS for practices of individuation and relationship building, the first providing an opportunity for adult affirmation while the latter, if done deceptively is positively correlated with fractured relationships with the family.

There is no subtleness to the abandonment of youth online; adult and adolescent virtual presence has little overlap or interactions, despite that adolescents would appreciate wisdom in using Internet tools and living an aspect of life online. Adults who do engage youth online are finding opportunities for healthy exchange and relational

formation, and need to bring to the relationships developmentally appropriate levels of trust, communication and closeness, as perceived by the adolescent. However, the Internet is not a replacement for offline community and even high CMC users admit this.

Social communication is foundational to Christianity, both in its understanding and nature of the Trinity and in the biblical narrative. Humans are created to both participate in and develop their identity through Christ-centered communicative communities. For the Israelites, full fellowship with God could not happen apart from attention given to the community. The incarnation of Jesus is the pinnacle of God's communicative purposes with humanity. Jesus, who framed participation with God's Kingdom as participation with his redemptive reign with all of creation, developed an adoptive strategy that served in Peter's trajectory towards a right relationship with God.

The early Church reframed their contemporary context in light of God's Kingdom reality, balancing koininia and kerygma opportunities. The result was the development of a deep social network with a strong communal reciprocity. In ecclesial history, spiritual, technological and cultural factors converged that allowed for both the creation and embracement of new technology. The result was a new way of gathering spiritual community. More recent capitalization of communicative technology lent itself towards emphasizing its proclamation over community attributes, focusing on sharing the message of Jesus but not necessarily the community of Jesus.

Moving forward, reflective Christ-centered community will need to center communication on the person of Jesus Christ, while personalizing a holistic communication strategy. Modeling the adoptive practices of Christ, adults need to embrace the interactive ministry praxis of social media that views CMC as an extension

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and reflection of geo-physical relationships. This includes inviting adolescents to trust Jesus with their social media choices.

Specific spiritual disciplines can be utilized to train habits and strengthen rootedness in Christ, encouraging the development of healthier human relationships expressed through love. To this end, much gratitude is given to Henri Nouwen, whose insightful reflection on the temptations of Christ proved to be invaluable to setting a direction for adolescent spiritual development in matters related to the virtual community. Though the habits themselves did not necessarily utilize CMC to encourage greater faith online, caring adults who desire to experience life along with adolescents both on and offline certainly can augment them. Parents and youth workers are encouraged to do so.

Computer mediated communication is changing the manner in which adolescents communicate, massively increasing opportunities that youth have to interact with each other. In the process it neutralizes the importance of time and space in the deepening of existing relationships. Though offline interactions remain far from becoming irrelevant, adults have little resources to frame an understanding of adolescent social networking and risk responding in a manner that solidifies patterns of generational isolation. Primarily adults need a frame of reference to interpret adolescent social media use. Parents will find that entering the world of social media with their adolescents can be disorienting. They will need to put at risk an authority based relationship and develop boundaries along with their teens. Youth workers may fear that the decentralizing effects of social media may threaten their role in faith formation. They in turn will need to come alongside adolescents in developmentally appropriate manners. The broader church could possibly fear that the facilities and leadership structure that has become a central part of their

understanding of faith community will increasingly become irrelevant. The path forward is to embody a hermeneutic of adoption, in the telos of Christ-centered communicative community championing all generations to extend the Kingdom of God to all areas of everyday life.

Study Limitations and Next Steps

Social media research is an ongoing subject area and changing quickly. Further research needs to be given on emerging adults who have not chosen to attend college, and that group is not represented in this doctoral project. SNS and CMC are just one small aspect of the much larger picture of how adolescents develop their personal identity given the complexity and multi-layered experiences of modern young people. Therefore, it cannot stand on its own and must be considered in their broader context of adolescent social experience in light of systemic abandonment.

Many of the youth workers that participated in the survey were emerging adults themselves. They took particular exception to the online dating concerns of emerging adults and the lack of discussion on midadolescent use of Internet pornography. Unfortunately there is little longitudinal or qualitative research on midadolescent use of Internet pornography that could be drawn upon for such this particular research project. This could be an area in need of further study. The concerns about online dating revolve around the busy life of a university student. It is quite imaginable that a high achieving university student who is also a heavily involved youth ministry volunteer does not have the opportunity to pursue online dating.

The implication of social media for human sexuality is another area that needs further development. Both the issues of instant gratification and the divergence of pornography acceptance between males and females require further study for their future marriage implications. Christ-centered communicative communities will need to develop a way of supporting healthy conversation around this issue.

Increasing online gaming is being identified as having social media attributes. Potentially midadolescents are joining and playing these online games together. The world of online gaming and the role it plays in friendship development is another related area that is open for exploration.

Finally, in this study, the culmination of a *telos* of communal adoption was an effort to concretely map out the actual relational network of a church body. This practice appeared overwhelming to youth workers, especially to larger churches. Though this would be a solid next step. For larger churches, a youth ministry leadership team could strategically break this project into small chunks. The youth leader's role would be to take these smaller relational units and develop ties to the broader church body.

Implications for the Broader Christian Community

The intent of this ministry project was to speak into the larger church community in a hyper-networked city like Sacramento. As such the conclusions were broad and no specific church setting was in mind. Though much of social media occurs within the context of the home, mobile connectivity translates into ongoing and often instantaneous access to an adolescent's digital floating entourage. Though the temptation may be to treat the issue of technology as a technical problem, merely asking students to turn of

their phones will change the trajectory of the growing digital divide. If churches are to move towards a *telos* of communal adoption they will need to increasingly view the responsibility of coming alongside adolescents as a communal one. Without doing so, the church will continue as a loose gathering of fragmented and isolated social groups.

Increasingly seniors are adopting the Internet and, given that they adopted a relational Web 2.0, they may well be developing patterns of communication not unlike midadolescents. To conjecture, it is likely that senior citizen use of CMC is primarily concerned with friend and family connection. Though those friends may be within the church community, it is not beyond the imagination that senior citizens themselves are feeling pushed out from the core of the community.

If adult-adolescent computer-mediated communication is to be reconfigured from systemic abandonment towards communal adoption, Christ-centered communicative communities will need to adaptively reframe their mental concept of the spiritual community. Like social media researchers had to evaluate their findings in light of adolescent development, church communities will need to increasingly evaluate their ministry praxis in light of human development. As CMC technology advances to help digital connections to be personal connections, church communities will need to move beyond framing technology as a tool of proclamation to one of deepening relational connections. In current reality, the mental model of the successful church needs to be reframed as a human mass gathered under one roof in favor of a multi-networked, holistic and intergenerational web of interconnected human relationships, centered on Christ and continually aligning them to God's Kingdom reality.

Social Media Seminar Pre- and Post-Seminar Survey

1. Are you a:
   a) Concerned Adult
   b) Parent
   c) Youth Ministry Volunteer
   d) Youth worker/Pastor

2. How do you most often use the Internet?
   a) Entertainment
   b) General Research
   c) Shopping and/or consumer reviews
   d) To connect with friends or family
   e) To keep informed about friends or family
   f) Work related activities

3. From your perspective how do youth most often use the Internet?
   a) Entertainment
   b) General Research
   c) Shopping and/or consumer reviews
   d) To connect with friends or family
   e) To keep informed about friends or family
   f) Work related activities

4. Would you typically keep a social media site open on your computer while surfing the Internet or working on other projects?
   a) Most likely
   b) Once in a while
   c) Hardly ever
   d) Only if invisible

5. When you happen across a potentially harmful status post by one of your students, your natural inclination is to:
   a) Forward a link to the post to someone who may be able to help
   b) Post a reply that would help the student learn from their mistake
   c) Send a private reply that would explain why the post may be damaging and demonstrate a better way
   d) Think how the current relationship I have with the student might inform my response before following up
   e) Would have no idea what to do

6. The most important thing we can do for young adults using online dating sites is:
   a) Discourage this type of dating behavior
   b) Model and offer healthy adult relationships
   c) Provide alternative single's group activities
   d) Teach God's view of the family

7. Would you consider the challenge of a social media fast a helpful spiritual discipline for high school students?
   a) Definitely
   b) Most likely
   c) Probably not

8. How might you describe the motivation behind what appears to be a hurtful post by a 16-year-old girl about another 16-year-old girl? Please pick two.
   a) Bullying is a common part of being a teenager in contemporary culture
   b) Sixteen year olds intuitively watch out for themselves
   c) Sixteen year olds lack the life experience to understand the complexities of human relationships
   d) The shortcut to build yourself up is to tear someone else down

9. Does your church community have an expressed strategy for engaging youth online?
   a) No
   b) No, but we are working on it
   c) No, we want to, but do not know where to start
   d) Yes, it is in place to protect our youth/youth workers
   e) Yes, and it considers social and developmental issues
   f) Other:

10. Please share any fears you have about youth and social media.

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