

**SOCIAL NETWORKING: A PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL ANALYSIS OF ONLINE
ADOLESCENT FRIENDSHIPS**

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that **“SOCIAL NETWORKING: A PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL ANALYSIS OF ONLINE ADOLESCENT FRIENDSHIPS”** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE

C. DAVEL

DATE

SUMMARY

Online adolescent friendships and social networking among adolescents are current phenomena that have emerged, and exploded, as part of the digital age and the vast development of communication technologies. The primary aim of this study was to gain knowledge and understanding regarding the nature and quality of online friendships and social networking among adolescents. A sequential explanatory mixed method design, was put to use for the purpose of this study. The quantitative data was collected first in the form of a short survey, by utilising a self-developed questionnaire to obtain a general overview of the social network practices and the forming and maintaining of online friendships among adolescents. Twenty five participants took part in the survey. This study was followed by a qualitative study in the form of interviews, to clarify, elaborate and explain the quantitative findings. Five information rich participants were interviewed. The findings of the empirical investigation revealed that adolescents, being part of the Net Generation, base their concept of socialising with friends on digital and communication technology, especially cell phones. They are connected to their friends 24 hours a day. The sense of safety and support they experience through this constant connectedness strengthens their self-esteem, self-confidence and self-worth and contributes to their identity formation. It is therefore recommended that parents and educators should accept that adolescents live in a virtual world and their new way of socialising, needs to be acknowledged. Parents and educators should adjust accordingly, by getting educated in this field themselves. The Net Generation is a generation who focuses on relationships and collaboration through technology and this should be exploited by anybody who has contact or interacts with the adolescent of today.

KEY WORDS

Social networking sites (SNS), Social networking, Internet, Online friendships, Instant messaging (IM), Computer mediated communication (CMC), Digital age, Communication technology, The Net Generation, Cyberspace.

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



Research Ethics Clearance Certificate

This is to certify that the application for ethical clearance submitted by

C Davel [77001800]

for a M Ed study entitled

Social Networking: a psycho-educational analysis of online
adolescent friendships

has met the ethical requirements as specified by the University of South Africa
College of Education Research Ethics Committee. This certificate is valid for two
years from the date of issue.

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

“The Internet is so big, so powerful and pointless that for some people it is a complete substitute for life.”

-Andrew Brown



1.1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

With the birth of social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Mxit, MySpace and WhatsApp, the Internet has become a new social environment for many teenagers, in which various adolescent issues are played out. According to Symington (2010:1) social networking involves socialising with friends, as well as strangers, or new acquaintances on the Internet, or mobile websites. More than half of adolescents who use the Internet are interacting online and they use and create online social networking profiles (Williams & Merten 2008:254). On these networks they can interact and share information, photos, ideas and opinions. Their personal thoughts, feelings, beliefs and activities are posted in a public arena with unlimited access for anyone with an Internet connection (Chambers 2006:38).

Rosen (2007:2) calls the teenagers of today the Net Generation, because they have grown up in a technological world where everything is computerised, in which they don't only use technology, they live it. Goolsby (2009:2) and Prell (2012:80) claim that adolescents can use the latest technologies to perfection to socialise, because they are constantly online and connected to one another. These new technologies such as the Internet, e-mail and mobile phones are characterised by immediacy, speed and interconnectivity and are utilised in a personalised way, which has become part of the adolescent's everyday life (Chambers 2006:113). The availability of immediate and speedy interconnectivity via the Internet, enhances the forming of *virtual* communities, that tend to take over from *real* communities, resulting in people withdrawing from everyday life into a virtual world (Chambers 2006:118).

Rosen (2007:2), Ybarra, Alexander and Mitchell (2005:9), as well as Valkenburg and Peter (2007:267) state that many adolescent friends are nowadays scattered around the world through the use of social networks and that most of these global friends will never meet in person. Friendships are an important aspect of the adolescent's reality and provides a sense of belonging (Phetla 2003:7), but online friendships can easily get out of hand where quantities are concerned and can lead to connection fatigue, causing the adolescent to communicate with people with whom they only have a casual connection, instead of interacting with closer friends (Goolsby 2009:2).

Chambers (2006:118) is of the opinion that as Internet usage increases, offline social interaction decreases, leading to isolation and loneliness.

According to Chambers (2006:134) a popular way of communicating with online friends is through chat rooms, where friends meet by sharing electronic space, enabling people from all over the world to engage in cross-cultural chats, through "*typed conversation*". Another easy way of communicating with friends, is through wall-postings, a well-known Facebook feature (Walther, Carr, Choi, DeAndrea, Kim, Tong & Van der Heide 2011:33) where they would express interpersonal affection and comment on some event in the past, present or future. According to Walther et al. (2011:33) there are no rules that define friendship online, or distinguish between close and weak friendship constructions. On social network sites (SNS), participants can choose who they want to connect with and the listing of friends is motivated more frequently, on the basis of the implications of exclusion, than the benefit of including them. Walther et al. (2011:44) claims that some will make sure their friends are from the same social context, but for others mixing different social contexts, is as acceptable and sometimes even more desirable.

In their research article Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008:2) confirm that communicating through electronic media is very popular among adolescents and therefore frequently engage in instant messaging, e-mail and text messaging. They will make use of communication-oriented Internet sites such as blogs, social networking, photo and video sharing sites such as YouTube, interactive video games and virtual reality environments. Adolescents use these forms of communication to interact with friends, acquaintances and strangers. Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008:3) are concerned as to how such online communication affects adolescent's social development, especially their relationships with their peers, romantic partners and strangers, as well as their identity development. The authors are of the opinion that the wide use of electronic communication by adolescents may affect their relationships with their parents and that peer communication may be reinforced to the expense of communication with parents. Teens use instant messaging only to communicate with offline friends, but use SNS to keep contact with their peers from offline lives and to keep in touch with friends they see rarely (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield 2008:4).

Establishing interpersonal connections is one of the most important developmental tasks of adolescence, but one is concerned about the quality of those online and offline relationships (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield 2008:6). The authors, Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008:7), comment on a recent survey study of preadolescent and adolescents in the Netherlands and indicated that 80% of adolescents, who took part in the survey, reported using the Internet to maintain friendship networks. The ones communicating more frequently on the Internet, felt closer to existing friends than those who did not. These adolescents feel that online communication was more effective for self-disclosure and reported feeling closer to their offline friends (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield 2008:8; Raacke, & Bonds-Raacke 2008:169).

Jordan (1999:62), as well as Kang (2007:475) is of the opinion that many people begin their journey into cyberspace as individuals who regularly make use of identity fluidity, to construct online identities, which are fairly easy to change on the Internet. Zaczek (2004:5) proposes that it has become very popular to start and maintain interpersonal relationships in the “*virtual realm*” and the internet has become a place where people engage in social interaction. Forming online friendships pose the following challenges: the absence of physical appearance and frequent face to face interactions, limited sensory experience; identity flexibility and anonymity; equalisation of status; exceeding spatial boundaries; the access to numerous relationships and permanent records (Zaczek 2004:19).

It is clear, by studying the abovementioned literature, that the phenomenon of social networking and more specifically forming and maintaining online friendships, are complicated current issues, with numerous aspects, contributing to the phenomena. Seeing that social networking encompasses many divergent concepts, the influence and impact on the development of adolescents can be questioned. It seems inevitable that the nature of the adolescent’s life world might be directed by the digital age and modern communication technologies.

The following main themes could be identified from the abovementioned literature:

Table 1.1 Themes from the literature overview

THEME	DISCUSSION
Social networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Mxit, Myspace• Socialising with friends and acquaintances• Internet communication
New Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Net Generation• Constant connection• Speed, immediacy and interactivity• Forming of virtual communities
Global Friendships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quantities rather than quality• Connection fatigue• Isolation and loneliness
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chat rooms/blogs/wall-postings• Instant messaging/text messaging• Mobile communication
Online Identities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identity fluidity• No physical appearance and face to face interactions• Identity, flexibility and anonymity

Apart from the themes mentioned in Table 1.1, the following concerns were also expressed:

- The amount of time spent with online friends.
- Are online friendships close or weak?
- The impact of friend-networking sites on the behaviour of users.
- The difference in quality between online and offline friendships.
- How do online friendships affect the adolescent's social development and identity formation?
- Are online friendships a safe space for the self-disclosure of adolescents?
- The impact of online friendships on adolescents' relationships and communication with their parents.

1.2 FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM

In view of all of the above, the main research question is stated as follows:

What is the nature of adolescents' online friendships in social networking?

The following sub-questions can also be formulated and are aspects that need a further and a more in-depth investigation, regarding the problem statement:

- *How frequently do adolescents form new online friendships and how much time do they spend on the Internet talking to their friends?*
- *What are the qualities of these online friendships?*
- *To what level will the adolescent rate self-disclosure in these online friendships and reveal private matters?*
- *Do the electronic engagement, involvement and communication have an effect on the adolescent's identity formation?*
- *Can the successful forming of online friendships influence and enhance the adolescent's ego strength?*
- *What is the impact of online friendships on the self-concept of the adolescent and do they promote positive self-talk?*
- *Do online friendships contribute the adolescent's self-knowledge, self-actualisation and self-worth?*

1.3 MOTIVATION

This study will attempt to provide answers to the abovementioned issues, that will benefit the participants, parents and teachers. Knowledge will be provided regarding the nature of online friendships among adolescents which will extend to a better understanding of a broader phenomenon, namely social networking.

Because social networking and the forming of online friendships are related to a current issue, it might make people more aware of an aspect that had become part

of the life world of the adolescent. In view of the fact that online friendships can include numerous, diverse and complicated aspects like communication, self-disclosure, identity formation, ego strength, self-concept, self-talk, self-knowledge and self-actualisation, this study intends to make a contribution to a holistic and better understanding of the social engagement for online friendships, by today's teenager.

1.4 THE AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

An educational-psychological analysis will be the point of departure to achieve the following aims:

- a. To perform a literature research on the phenomena of social networking and online friendships among adolescents to establish the following aspects:
 - What does the Net Generation entail?
 - Social media that involves social networking.
 - How are online friendships formed among adolescents?
 - The nature and content of their communication with one another online.
 - The influence of online friendships on the adolescent's social development.
 - The level of self-disclosure within these friendships.
- b. To do an empirical research with the aim to determine the nature of online adolescent friendships in social networking and attempt to analyse the phenomenon from a psycho-educational point of view, based on the sub-questions mentioned in 1.2.
- c. To set some recommendations, make suggestions and provide information for the participants, parents and teachers concerning social networking and online adolescent friendships.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN

1.5.1 Research Design

According to Dyer (2006:132) human behaviour cannot be understood without the context and the self-positioning of the individual, therefore researching human nature and experience will be interpretive where the subjective world of the research participant will be the ultimate goal. Nestor and Schutt (2012:354) state that insight into human nature can result from ordinary activities such as listening, talking, participating and observing. Qualitative research is therefore used to study phenomena in their natural settings and to determine the meanings people attach to them. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:21) note that a quantitative study focuses on objectivity and the measuring and description of certain phenomena. The objectivity is maximised by the use of numbers, statistics, structure and control and a variable is measured by assigning a numerical value to each variable. This numerical value can reflect the amount of behaviour in a certain context (Evans & Rooney 2008:16).

For this study a mixed method design will be conducted. A mixed method design includes contributions of both quantitative and qualitative methods and will therefore include the strengths of each method (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:396). The shortcomings of one will be compensated by the strengths of the other. A mixed method design will ensure that the research question (and sub-questions) will be answered effectively and comprehensively.

1.5.2 Data gathering methods

A sequential explanatory mixed method design will be put to use for the purpose of this study: the quantitative data will be collected first and the qualitative data second to clarify, elaborate and explain the quantitative findings.

The quantitative data collection will entail a short survey in the form of a self-developed questionnaire to provide a general overview of social networking and adolescents' involvement in online friendships. The focus of the quantitative study will be to determine *what* aspects form part of social networking practices among

adolescents. The qualitative data collection will involve individual interviews with the participants chosen from the survey sample. The paradigm of this study will be phenomenological, seeing that it will describe and interpret the experiences of the participants regarding social networking, in order to understand the meanings the participants ascribed to it (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:346). The emphasis of the qualitative study will thus fall on the *how* and the *why*, of social network practices among adolescents.

1.5.3 Selection of the participants

For the survey, probability sampling will be put to use to select the participants. Probability sampling provides greater confidence that the sample efficiently represents the population, because some form of random selection of participants is utilised (Evans 2007:80). Stratified random sampling will be used, due to the fact that the population is divided into subgroups (Evans 2007:80). The subgroups are the different levels of education (Grades 8 to 12) in one secondary school. To draw the sample, five from each group, systematic sampling will be utilised to select the participants. A total sample of 25 adolescents will take part in the survey.

For the interviews, purposeful sampling will be employed for the gathering of data. Key informants, who could provide rich information, will be identified from the completed questionnaire. The five subjects who revealed the most involvement and experience in social networking and online friendships will be selected for the qualitative data collection.

1.5.4 Demarcation of study

The study will make use of adolescents from Grade 8 to 12, in one secondary school, regardless of gender and race. The study will be a case study, as only one school will be the focus. The school is multicultural and therefore represents most adolescents in a South African society.

1.5.5 Ethical measures

The following ethical measures will be considered (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:117-125) and will be discussed in full in Chapter 3:

- *Full disclosure:* the researcher will be open and honest with participants about all aspects of the study.
- *Voluntary participation:* the participants cannot be compelled or required to participate and no one shall be forced to participate.
- *Informed consent:* each participant will be informed what the research is about, the signing of an assent form will be used, in which they declare that they understand the research and are willing to participate.
- *No harm or risk to participants:* the research will not result in physical or mental discomfort, harm or injury to the participants.
- *Privacy:* will be protected at all times which will include anonymity, confidentiality and the appropriate storing of data.
- *Professional integrity:* the research will reflect scientific integrity and the methods of investigation will be sound.

1.6 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

For the purpose of this research, the following concepts need to be clarified:

Psycho-educational

Woolfolk (2010:10) reports that educational psychology is a discipline with its own theories, research problems and techniques concerning teaching and learning processes. Educational psychology also includes the study of child and adolescent development.

Social networking sites (SNS)

Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008:169) define social networking sites as a virtual place where people who have similar interests meet to communicate, share and discuss ideas. MySpace and Facebook are regarded as friend-networking sites.

Social networking

Social networking involves socialising with friends as well as strangers on the internet or mobile websites (Symington 2010:3).

Internet

The Internet is: *"a network of computers that allows for the transmission of data for multiple purposes through a common set of protocols according to a global address system"* (Wood & Smith 2001:42).

Online friendships

The Oxford Advanced learner's dictionary of current English (Hornby 2005:597) defines a friend as someone you know well and like and friendship as a relationship between friends. To be online is when a person is connected to the Internet. Online friendship would therefore refer to communication with a friend via the Internet.

Adolescence

Santrock (2001:17) describes adolescence as a period of transition from childhood to early adulthood. This transition involves biological, cognitive and socio-emotional changes. Adolescence begins approximately between 10 to 13 years of age and ends between the ages of 18 and 22 in most cultures.

Instant messaging (IM)

Zaczek (2004:4) explains that instant messaging is used when persons contact one another in real time on the internet. If the other person is online, the exchange of synchronous text-based messages takes place.

Computer mediated communication (CMC)

A new term in the field of communication that developed with the growth of Internet usage, refers to the exchange of information through machines like computers and cell phones (Wood & Smith 2001:1).

The Net Generation

This refers to an entire generation that grew up in a digital age and includes people who were born between 1977 and 1997 (Tapscott 2009:16).

1.7 CHAPTER DIVISION

Chapter 1: Orientation to the study

In this chapter an introduction to the study is discussed which includes the formulation of the research problem and sub-questions, the motivation for the study, the aims of the investigation and the research methods and design.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 2 will entail a literature study on the phenomenon of online friendships among adolescents with specific focus on the following aspects: social networking and social media, the Net Generation, online communication, social development, self-disclosure and identity fluidity.

Chapter 3: Research design

In Chapter 3 a complete description of the methodology of this empirical study will be discussed. This will include the following: the aim of the investigation, the research design and method, the sampling techniques, data collection techniques and the method of data analysis.

Chapter 4: Research findings and discussions

Chapter 4 will contain the findings, discussion and analysis of the empirical research. The findings and discussion of the quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative (interviews) studies will be dealt with separately in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Findings, conclusions and recommendations

This chapter will present the interpretation of the findings of both the literature and the empirical studies with regard to the sub-questions of the research. Recommendations will be provided specifically for parents and educators as well as for future research. Limitations of the study will also be listed.

1.8 SUMMARY

The aim of Chapter 1 is to introduce the reader to the study and the methodology behind the research. Background information regarding the phenomenon and the motivation for the study, as well as the aims of the research and problem statement were presented. Sub-questions were identified. The following chapter will explore the literature by focusing on specific aspects pertaining to the research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

“Technology is influencing the way kids think and behave, but it’s a two-way street – the way kids think and behave is influencing and shaping the Internet itself.”

-Don Tapscott



2.1 INTRODUCTION

An overview on the literature found on adolescent online friendships and social networking will be presented in this chapter. Even though this is a relatively new field for research, a great variety of literature could be examined regarding the topic of the study. Background information will be provided regarding the Net Generation, focusing on the features of this generation and how this generation is affected by the explosion in technology. A general overview of the Internet, social media and social networking sites will be explored, followed by a discussion of adolescents' involvement in the Internet and SNS. The focus will fall on adolescent social development, identity formation, self-disclosure and online communication within the two mentioned contexts. The chapter will furthermore provide information with regard to adolescents' online interpersonal relationships, with specific emphasis on online friendships. A summary of the different theories that can be applied to the research topic, as well as the different, diverse studies conducted by investigators will be offered in this chapter.

2.2. THE NET GENERATION

2.2.1 Definition and description

The Net Generation refers to young people born after 1983 (also called Millennials, Generation Y, Net Geners, MySpacers) and they differ significantly from any generation before them, due to the fact that they are exposed to digital technology in almost all aspects (and forms) of their day-to-day existence, since the day they were born (Jones & Cross 2009:10). Everything around them is computerised. The Net Generation uses laptops, instant messaging (IM) and cell phones to connect to friends, family, people in the community and even people around the globe (Beyers 2009:218). Nowadays the term *digital divide* has become a word commonly used, referring to the gap that exists between people who have access to digital media and the Internet and those who do not (Creeber & Martin 2009:123).

According to Rosen (2007:20), Giancola (2006:33) and Tapscott (2009:11-16) there are three generations in history, which can be identified: firstly, the Baby Boomers (born after World War II between 1946 and 1964), secondly, Generation X (born between 1965 and 1979) and thirdly, the Net Generation who was born after 1979 of whom many don't know a world without digital technology. Rosen (2007:21) believes that the Net Generation is in some ways similar to the previous two generations, but in many ways also unique. He experiences the Net Geners as much more social, more emotionally open, happier (especially when online) than Generation X. On the website www.dnaindia.com, Choudhury (2010) regards the Net Generation as the smartest generation ever. He is of the opinion that growing up digital has changed how the Net Generation's minds work in order to be able to cope with the demands of the digital age. They can easily multitask, handle information overload and very quickly make enquiries by using from Google to Wikipedia. The Net Geners have always been flooded with information, therefore they have learned to access, sort, categorise and remember information which can enhance their intelligence. Beyers (2009:41) supports this view by suggesting that children have to learn new skills and how to apply these skills, to be able to cope in the changing society.

2.2.2 Technology and the digital age

Beyers (2009:218) uses the word *bombarded* to describe how the Net Generation is exposed to visual messages from the media. This generation expects and wants to participate actively in and through their media, thus having a virtual world at their fingertips. The Internet and cell phones, also referred to as new information and communication technologies, have changed the way people live. Today's youngsters especially, appear to be naturally confident and comfortable using communication technologies (Holland & Harpin 2008:10; Lowerey 2004:87). The teenagers of today use these technologies to communicate with each other and the outside world. It is almost as if the Net Generation takes digital technology for granted, because they assume constant access to computers, the Internet and each other. Rosen (2007:34) refers to the Net Geners by stating that "*many of them are nearly always wired, multitasking, and leading rapid-paced lives in a pixelated world, that blurs the distinction between real and virtual*".

By the time a Net Gener will be 21 years old, he or she will have spent:

- 10,000 hours playing video games
- 200,000 hours on e-mail
- 20,000 hours watching TV
- 10,000 hours on cell phones and
- Under 5,000 reading books (Barnes, Marateo & Ferris 2007:1).

Unfortunately, technology provides old flaws in new forms: it is possible to steal music, see pornography easily, cheat or bully people in new ways. It is therefore imperative that young Net Gener should be guided on being responsible and to keep their boundaries when they are online, especially by becoming more aware of the extent to which they share parts of themselves, which one day, they might have preferred to rather have kept private (Tapscott 2009:7). A Study conducted by Beranuy, Oberst, Carbonell and Chamarro (2009:1182) indicated that psychological distress is related to the maladaptive use of both the Internet and the mobile phone.

2.2.3 Globalisation and multitasking

Digital technologies resulted in new kinds of sociability among people and new ways to relate to the self and others (Elliot & Urry 2010:45). One important aspect is that people can now connect with each other over time and across space, because there are no boundaries regarding time and space when digital technology is put to use. This leads to a complete adjustment of time and space between people and places, among organisations, nations and cultures and can be described by the word *globalisation* (Elliot & Urry 2010:87). Globalisation has sped up the movement of people, ideas and information across national and regional borders (Black 2009:37). The Net Generation has become the first real global generation: they have continuous, easy and effortless connection with others worldwide, thus making it attainable to make themselves heard across the globe immediately (Elliot & Urry 2010:90).

Another definite characteristic of the Net Gener is their ability to multitask: they can do basically anything while texting. Adolescents can text while they do their

homework, learn for a test, watch television or even while having a conversation. Nowadays adolescents experience the cell phone not only as a tool, but also as a place to meet friends. They have exchanged their safe spaces in the physical world to online SNS such as Facebook (Barnes et al. 2007:3; Bates 2009:18). Multitasking has thus become a significant feature of the Net Geners' lifestyle and their learning. The Net Generation claims that multitasking helps them to get everything done, because they feel that they are not wasting any time doing nothing (Barnes et al. 2007:3).

2.2.4 Education

A decade ago, the first wave of the Net Geners started entering college, forcing educational institutions to acknowledge the fact that they are now dealing with a new, different and unique group of learners. These institutions have to meet the needs of this generation's students, because they learn differently than their predecessors, but a very important fact is that they want to learn (Barnes et al. 2007:1). In view of the fact that the Net Generation is education oriented and accustomed to the use of technology, they have distinct ways of thinking, communicating and learning which have shaped their experiences and approaches in the classroom. They would prefer more active, engaging learning experiences, a need for more varied communication and would become easily bored with traditional learning methods (Barnes et al. 2007:2; Jones & Cross 2009:10). Another typical learning need of the Net Geners is their preference for immediacy: the Internet has always given them immediate information and has taught them to expect immediate answers. Therefore they would expect immediate answers, in the classroom as well as outside it.

Beyers (2009:219) argues that schools need a redesigned education system and teachers who have been trained and oriented in terms of the uses of technologies in the classroom. To respond to the needs of the Net Generation, there is a huge challenge that Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) and other technologies must be introduced into the classrooms (Beyers 2007:225). Teachers should adapt by upgrading their own skills to empower themselves as facilitators in the classrooms.

Educators have already begun to meet the learners halfway, through converting traditional teaching strategies to accommodate the Net Geners, by using more technology in order to engage this generation's learning experiences (Barnes et al. 2007:4).

The worldwide web is a rich and rewarding source of knowledge, a medium to empower creativity and imagination and can therefore offer learning opportunities for people of all ages. Unfortunately interacting with social network and media sharing sites presents risks to young people, such as online bullying, inappropriate material, the possibility to make contact with harmful strangers and opportunities to cause harm to others. The schools have a dilemma in that they must support children to engage in productive and creative social learning through web technologies, but at the same time protecting them from harm (Sharples, Graber, Harrison & Logan 2009:70). Beyers (2009:218), believes that change in society is inevitable and this change results in a demand for learners, with a new set of skills, to be reflected in the curriculum of the day.

2.3 THE INTERNET, SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

2.3.1 The Internet

Greenfield and Yan (2006:393) point out that the Internet is a gigantic, almost invisible universe that includes thousands of networks, millions of computers and billions of users across the world. Bell (2009:3) defines the Internet as an *"interconnected network of computers and other computational devices"*. It is impossible to imagine today's societies without the Internet. Zaczek (2004:1) describes the Internet as a *"worldwide broadcasting capacity, a mechanism for the exchange of information, a collaboration and interaction medium between individuals and their computers where geographic location doesn't play a role."* Through the use of telecommunication facilities, an enormous amount of people around the world can communicate with each other, in which time and space have obtained another dimension: the virtual experience.

The Internet is like an extra window from your home that overlooks the outside world and the more you climb through this window, the more it becomes a door that opens up the virtual society in the virtual space (Van Kokswijk 2007:35).

The Internet is an exciting and challenging research environment, due to its complex physical and social world in which children and adolescents participate and co-construct. National Surveys in Canada and the U.S. revealed that 70% of adolescents used the Internet. They use it mainly for school work, entertainment and to communicate with others (Blais, Craig, Pepler & Connolly 2008:522; Bell 2009:31). Developmental issues play out behind a small screen resulting in new views in the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of children and adolescents. Many existing theoretical models in development psychology are challenged by the interactions between youth and the Internet. While the totality of the Internet is expanding, our research efforts should also expand (Greenfield & Yan 2006:393). Ando, Tkahira and Sakamoto (2008:124) advocate that, with the Internet becoming an everyday medium for children, further research should be done with regard to the influence of the Internet on children's psychological well-being.

The term *cyberspace* is used generally since the influence of the Internet has become so severe. The term refers to a computer-generated space viewed by the participant and how this space responds to stimuli from the participant. Movements in cyberspace are not the same as movements in reality: in cyberspace the body can fly or go through walls, since the constraints of the body do not apply. From a psychological point of view, cyberspace may in fact be utilised as a kind of transitional space that can facilitate experimentation with new identities (Lemma 2010:692,693).

As mentioned earlier, usage of the Internet unfortunately comes with risks and pitfalls. Young people are exposed to pornography and other inappropriate material, cheating, bullying, sexual predators and harmful strangers. Adolescents should be taught and guided to use the Internet responsibly and to stay within their boundaries when they are online (Tapscott 2009:7).

2.3.2 Social Media

According to Jue, Marr and Kassotakis (2010:4), social media refers to *“the many relatively inexpensive and widely accessible electronic tools that enable anyone to publish and access information, collaborate on a common effort or build relationships.”* Social media involves the interactions between people, the potential to share more and learn more. It is about participation and often takes the form of communicating, collaborating and connecting with anyone, anywhere, anytime. The era of social media started about 20 years earlier when “Open Diary” (an early social networking site) was founded bringing together online diary writers into one community (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010:59). Social media and its tools use a technology called Web 2.0, which is the phase of the Internet enabling anyone to create information online (Jue et al. 2010:5). The “Big Three” in social media is blogs, wikis and social networking sites (SNS), because they seem to be the most common forms in use today (Jue et al. 2010:44). The figure below describes the features of each:

Figure 2.1 The “Big Three” in social media



Blog is short for web log and it is a personal journal that is a cross between an online newsletter, a daily journal and a diary that is maintained on the web (Fu, Liu, & Wang 2007:676; Rosen 2007:91).

According to Williams and Merten (2008:254) blogging involves individuals posting personal information about themselves – personal thoughts, feeling, beliefs and activities – in a public space where anyone with an Internet connection has unlimited access to the blog. Wikis are common web spaces where numerous people work or create a project together. Wikipedia is the most recognised wiki nowadays and is open to anyone to educate others on a topic (Jue et al. 2010:44). Social networking sites (SNS) are about framing bonds or ties that share and connect people who have common interests and objectives (Jue et al. 2010:50). Schlote and Linke (2009:99) believe that our everyday lives and encounters are more and more infiltrated and interwoven with digital media that involves very little physical presence. More recent research has moved away from general Internet use and focuses more on how the use of social media influences social relationships (Pollet, Roberts & Dunbar 2011:253). Today the World Wide Web (WWW) is undergoing a transformation to Web 2.0 to become a more social web. Blogs, Wiki and SNS lead to instant online communities, where people can quickly and conveniently communicate with each other. The WWW of a decade ago differs significantly from today, seeing that individuals' participation leads to a more diverse online world, irrespective of colour, beliefs and countries (Fu et al. 2007:675).

Brown and Bobkowski (2011:95) are convinced of the fact that adolescents live in a media saturated world. According to a survey in 2009 in America, 8 – 18 year olds used some form of media for more than 7.5 hours a day. Adolescent blogs are filled with information about their daily lives they choose to disclose, followed by written interaction by others posting comments on the blog. Blogs have become a standard form of teenage communication due to the following reasons:

- They are accessible at any time, from any location.
- They leave a trail of observable dialogue that can be printed and stored.
- They incorporate multimedia components (Williams & Merten 2008:254,255).

Using social media websites is one of the most common activities of today's children and adolescents. Any website that allows social interaction is considered a social media site: SNS (Facebook, Myspace and Twitter), gaming sites and virtual worlds (Club Penguin, Second Life, the Sims), video sites (YouTube) and blogs.

Social media allows teenagers to accomplish certain tasks online that could be important to them offline:

- Socialisation and communication – staying connected with friends and family.
- The enhancement of learning opportunities – connecting with each other about homework or group projects, some schools use blogs as teaching tools.
- Accessing health information – online information about their health that can be accessed easily and anonymously (O’Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson 2011:800,801).

The use of social media caused rapid changes on the social front, by creating a new kind of sociability. People can now relate to themselves and others in a different way by being able to connect with each other and to meet outside the boundaries of time and space (Elliot & Urry 2010:45).

2.3.3 Social Networking sites (SNS)

Social networking sites (SNS) are applications enabling users to connect by designing personal information profiles and inviting others to have access to those profiles. These profiles can include the following types of information: photos, videos, audio files and blogs. On these sites users can leave messages for friends and link their sites to friends’ sites (Fontes & O’Mahony 2008:1; Litt & Stock 2011:709; Kaplan & Haenlein 2010:63; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke 2008:169). The largest SNS are Facebook, that was founded by Mark Zuckerberg to stay in touch with his fellow students, and MySpace, with 1,500 employees and 250 million registered users (Guo 2008:620; Kaplan & Haenlein 2010:63). Among undergraduate college students, the three most visited SNS are Facebook, MySpace and Friendster (Fogel & Nehmad 2009:153). SNS are descendents of the Internet forums and chat rooms that existed in the 1980s and 1990s and they serve as venues where users can communicate, socialise, cooperate and engage in electronic commerce, but also cybercrime (Symington 2010: 32; Zinoviev & Duong 2008:1). Baker and White (2011:395) and Baym and Ledbetter (2009:3) feel that all online interaction is social networking, but SNS specifically allow individuals to:

- Construct public or semi-public profiles.
- Create a list of other users with whom they share a connection.
- View and examine this list (and those made by others) within the system.

After users have created a profile on a SNS, they can then link their profiles with one another creating a “friendship” between any two users allowing them to access the other’s profile. Facebook automatically creates communities by linking users if they are related in certain ways. In these communities users can communicate by posting messages directly on another user’s profile in their community. Users can also send private messages to each other from links on the profiles (Guo 2009:620).

SNS act as interactive address books which consist of direct (e-mails, in-built messaging, comments) and indirect (reading blogs, viewing pictures and videos) communication. SNS users can keep in touch with friends and acquaintances to various levels of intimacy and they can also connect with former friends and acquaintances, enabling them to maintain and sustain a wider network of friends and acquaintances, that would otherwise not be possible (Fontes & O’Mahony 2008:1,2; Jue et al. 2010:52).

The top five most visited SNS are Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Flixster and LinkedIn with Facebook having nearly 69 million visitors in January 2009 (Pujazon-Zazik & Park 2010:78). The table below depicts the three most popular SNS, each catering for a specific audience (Jue et al. 2010:53):

Table 2.1 The three most popular SNS

MySpace	Focus on teenagers Approximately 88% of its users are under 35
Facebook	Initially attracted younger users Currently 90% of users are under 35 Gaining older users
LindedIn	Geared towards a professional audience Seeking job resources and information to help work and career aspirations

Facebook is a social network site that allows users to enter “friend” relationships with one another, but these relationships are indistinguishable in terms of tie strength (Lewis, Kaufman, Gonzalez, Wimmer & Cristakis 2008:331). This indicates that a user can have numerous friends online, but most of them are not close relationships and can be regarded as acquaintances. This fact is supported by Ploderer, Howard and Thomas (2008:333) who propose that the interaction on SNS is often deeply intertwined with people’s offline experiences. Many SNS are used to keep contact with people with whom they already share an offline connection.

Other kinds of SNS are passion-centric SNS where users share passion (religion – MyChurch), pets (Catster, Dogster) or hobbies (Rivalry). The success of SNS is due to the fact that they exist to feed people’s need to socialise and people visit these sites mainly to satisfy their socio-emotional needs rather than informational needs (Rau, Gao & Ding 2008:2767; Symington 2010:33). Cranshaw, Toch, Hong, Kittur and Sadeh (2010:5) claim that contradictory conceptions exist about online social networks among investigators. Some researchers argue that online social networks contribute to the isolation of people in the physical world and others feel that online social networks have a positive impact on social relations in the physical world.

Several schools in the USA are currently utilising SNS as instructional tools. Some teachers create virtual classrooms providing supplementary information about topics which had been discussed in the classroom. Other teachers request English students to post their writings online so that other students can read and critique. Even photography and art students post their work on sites for visitors to review, evaluate and make suggestions (Patchin & Hinduja 2010:200).

Another new trend in the field of psychology is to use SNS to identify adolescents that are at risk with mental health issues. Since users on SNS post their status on their profiles daily and SNS are used for social dialogue among peers, health risk problems can be identified early and more easily (Moreno, Jelenchick, Egan, Cox, Young, Gannon & Becker 2011:448).

2.4 ADOLESCENTS, THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL NETWORKING

2.4.1 The Internet and social networking

One of the most striking facets of the socialisation environment, is that currently adolescents and emerging adults have a great variety of communication technologies at their disposal, enabling them to rapidly and efficiently manage large amounts of social connections (Manago, Taylor & Geenfield 2012:369). Adolescents and young adults are enthusiastic Internet users. Communication applications of the Internet, such as instant messaging (IM), blogs and SNS are especially popular and therefore their online activities and interactions have become the focus of intense research (Guan & Subrahmanyam 2009:351). A national survey in the USA indicated that 87% of adolescents between 12 and 17 years reported using the Internet; this usage increased through high school to 94% in the 11th and 12th grades. 51% of teens using the Internet, say they go online at least daily and 24% report going online several times a day. At the end of 2006, 55% of online teens had a SNS profile (Pujazon-Zazik & Park 2010:77).

According to Subrahmanyam and Lin (2007:660), adolescents use Internet applications, such as instant messaging, bulletin boards, chat rooms and blogs to connect to their peers and to explore adolescent issues such as sexuality, identity and partner selection. Adolescents are the biggest consumers of the Internet particularly for its communication applications. An interesting finding is that a growing number of SNS have surfaced and focus specifically on younger users, where children as young as two years old, may have personal profiles. A parental e-mail is required to have a profile posted on these child-friendly SNS, but parental approval is not required when registering on SNS popular with adolescents. On MySpace, a user must be 13 years old to have a profile. If an adolescent is less than 16 years old, the profile must be set to private (Pujazon-Zazik & Park 2010:78).

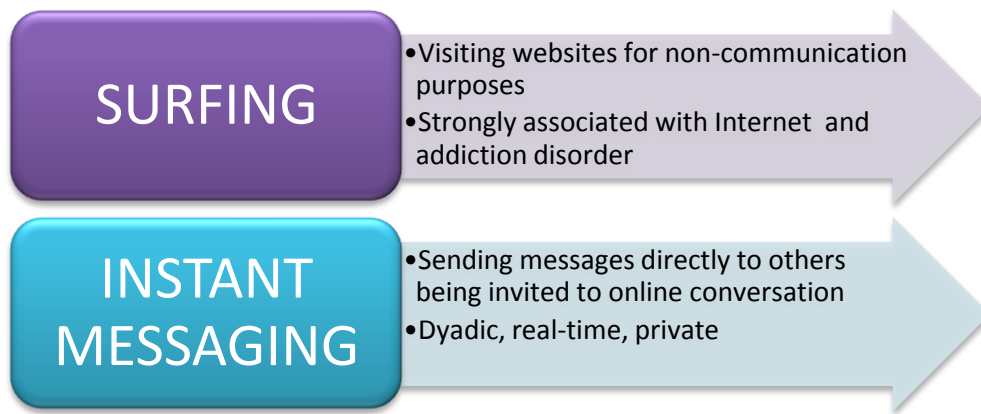
Adolescents do not only engage in Internet social networking, but also mobile social networks, such as Mxit, which involves interaction with the online community by means of a mobile phone.

Mxit can be accessed through a cell phone where people can upload their photos, indicate their status and communicate with people online instantly (Symington 2010:43). WhatsApp is another way of social networking also involving the cell phone. It is a free messaging service for mobiles that replaces text messaging. The user can use the application to send text messages as well as images (Norris 2013:1). Instant messaging (IM) can be regarded as good training for adolescents' social skills and IM is a relatively safe medium in which, especially adolescents, can practise and improve their social skills. IM also provides an excellent bridge across distance (Selfhout, Branje, Delsing, Ter Bogt & Meeus 2009:820). The use of the cell phone is described as the "small screen revolution", because for youngsters the cell phone has become the tool of choice to access the Web. They see their cell phones as an indispensable social tool and without their phones they get anxious. In the UK, "no-mo-phobia" is a term that emerged describing the teenagers' phobia with their cell phones: they never switch them off and they sleep with this prized possession on their pillows (Tapscott 2009:46, 47).

SNS provide younger users with opportunities to express themselves and interact with their peers helping them to develop their identities, refine their abilities and interact with each other in healthy ways (Hwang, Cheong & Feeley 2009:1105). Pujazon-Zazik and Park (2010:80) support this view by emphasising the potential positive effects of using the Internet for socialising, because online interaction provides a space to learn and refine the ability to exercise self control, to be tolerant and respectful towards others' viewpoints and to engage in critical thinking and decision making. Peer acceptance and interpersonal feedback are important features of SNS and are fundamental predictors of social self-esteem and well-being in adolescence. A number of studies have also provided the opposite point of view and suggest that adolescent Internet use can lead to alienation, de-individuation, addiction, conflicting social identities and strained psychological well-being (Hwang et al. 2009:1105). It is important to understand that there is a difference between social networking and Internet usage, where the former focuses on social interaction with friends and the latter is an individual activity.

Two different types of Internet activities were identified, which had an impact on teens' well-being (Selfhout et al. 2009:820):

Figure 2.2 Two different types of Internet activities:



Guan and Subrahmanyam (2009:351) had reviewed recent research regarding the negative and positive aspects of youth Internet use. I will depict these aspects in the table below:

Table 2.2 Positive and negative aspects of youth Internet usage

Positive aspects	Negative aspects
Positive tool for student learning Empowerment for the disadvantaged Reinforcing offline relationships Usage of online forums and blogs to gain mastery and competence Search for health information	Internet addiction Exposure to sexually explicit material Online victimisation: cyber bullying/harassment and sexual requests

Adolescents' online activity has positive and negative applications for their health and social development. Even though many researchers focus on the negative aspects mostly, several positive aspects of Internet usage can also be identified. Despite the many risks involved in Internet usage, as depicted in Table 2.2, the Internet can also be a tool to promote cognitive, social and physical development. Computer and Internet use improves test scores and motivation to learn. Disadvantaged youth have been empowered, especially the hearing impaired, who took advantage of the visual medium of the Internet to communicate effectively, having a positive effect on their well-being. Adolescents use the Internet to reinforce their offline relationships mainly through social networking, online forums and blogs,

making them more competent to use the Internet and communicate and participate in social network sites, thus re-enforcing their ability to multitask. It is estimated that one in four adolescents used the Internet to search for information about health and specifically about sex, especially when they feel that they cannot confide in others or when they feel embarrassed (Guan & Subrahmanyam 2009:354).

Guo (2008:625) and Davidson, as well as Martellozo (2008:277) state that the majority of teens use SNS to keep in touch with friends, but at the same time social networks have also become forums, where complete strangers meet. In most cases innocent friendships develop out of the online encounters, but the increased presence of online sexual predators and cyberbullies in these social forums, is an unfortunate by product of using SNS (Davidson & Martollozo 2008:277; Guo 2008:624; Pujazon-Zazik & Park 2010:81). A major concern is that young people's well-being is endangered by contact with unknown strangers, but little is known about the psychological consequences of online contact with unknown peers (Gross 2009:1787).

It is evident that the Internet can empower adolescents nowadays, because it opens up a world to them that is easy to access, whether they use it for information or socialising. It is very important, though, that adolescents should be made aware of the negative aspects of Internet use. Parents can play an important role in guiding and teaching adolescents on how to use the Internet safely.

2.4.2 Social development

Adolescence is the period between childhood and adulthood and usually ranges from 11 to 13 until 17 to 21 years of age. This specific stage is often a time of conflict or a time of storm and stress starting with rapid body growth, genital maturity and a psychological revolution within. Adolescents tend to make comparisons between themselves and their society, due to the fact, that one of an adolescent's needs, is to gain a place within their society. This process occurs at a similar time as their need to gain their own identity. The importance of belonging to a group is one of the most significant social contexts during adolescence. During this stage, individuals start to spend more time with peers, and through these interactions,

adolescents obtain certain social skills, attitudes and experiences which result in certain social and behavioural functioning (Mikami, Szewedo, Allen, Evans & Hare 2010:46). Therefore, peers play an important role in the process of the social development of the adolescent. Many adolescents want to belong to a group whose members share the same interests and attitudes, they will then conform to the ways of the peer group for example the music they listen to, the clothes they wear, places they go to, leisure activities and choosing romantic partners (Symington 2010:21-26).

Developmental theorists argue that adolescents face certain challenges or tasks during this stage of different changes and in their development (Symington 2010:21). The most important developmental tasks adolescents have are socialising, fitting into society, gaining interpersonal skills, developing an understanding of personal and cultural differences and developing self-confidence.

Three tasks that are specifically essential for social development during adolescence are:

- Creating caring and meaningful relationships.
- Finding acceptance and belonging in social groups.
- Establishing interpersonal intimacy (Symington 2010:26).

The question can now be asked whether social networking in the developmental phase of the adolescent, is an aid in developing social skills, or a hurdle influencing essential social development. According to Blais (2008:2) young people's Internet-based socialisation follows a similar developmental trend, when compared to their development of interpersonal relationships in face to face contexts. It is not surprising then that adolescents turn to the Internet to socialise with each other, seeing that on SNS they can fulfil important development tasks of peer group expansion through the important social influences of the peer group. Teenagers expand their social support network by visiting chat rooms, message boards or other social network applications, like blogs, and they often use e-mail and instant messaging to feel closer to their pre-existing friends (Blais 2008:71). When adolescents are marginalised by their peer group, they may want to expand their social support network online more so, than in face to face contexts (Blais 2008:72).

2.4.3 Identity formation

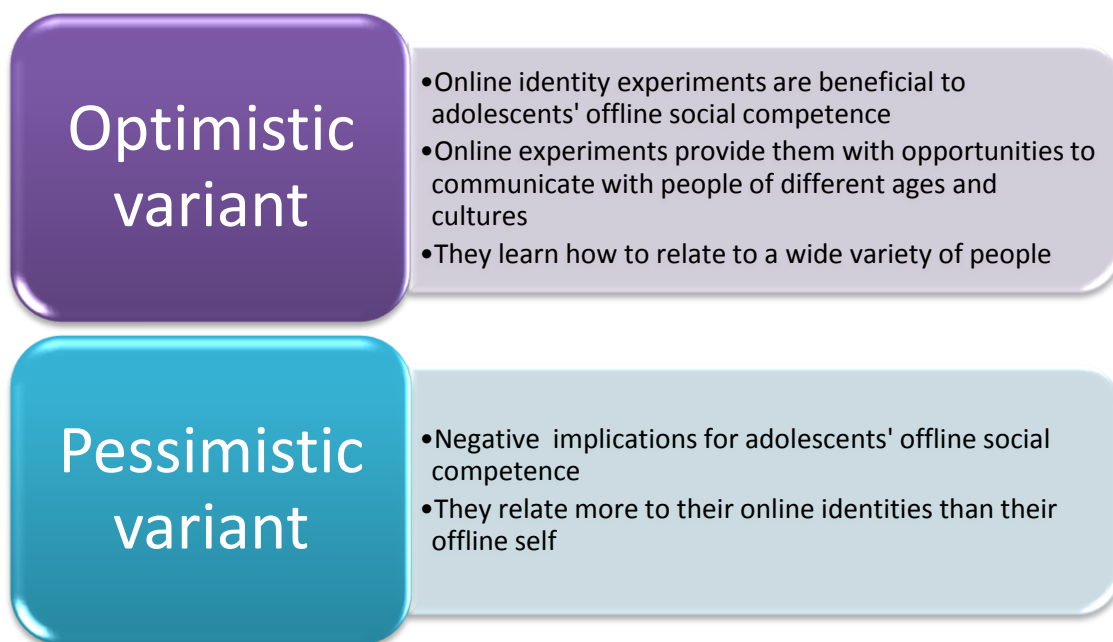
The term *identity* has mostly been associated with work done by psychologist Erik Erikson. According to Erikson this adolescent phase is part of the fifth psychosocial crisis in his development, namely *Identity versus Role confusion*. The adolescent has to learn how to identify his/her own identity (Santrock 2001:17; Sybrahmanyam & Greenfield 2008:80; Symington 2010:22,23). Identity formation is an important development task of adolescence, which can be defined as the process of integrating one's characteristics and experiences, to form a stable and unique sense of the self (Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert 2009:228). The Internet offers a safe place and many opportunities where adolescents can anonymously experiment with different identities (Blais et al. 2008:523; Pujazon-Zazik & Park 2010:78; Valkenburg & Peter 2008:208; Williams & Merten 2008:256). This view is supported by Brown and Bobkowski (2011:96), as well as Shouten (2007:22) who believe that newer media can provide opportunities for interaction driven by and supporting identity exploration.

Identities are constituted through interaction with others and at the heart of the online communication explosion is the desire to construct a valued representation of oneself, which affirms and is affirmed by one's peers (Livingstone & Brake 2010:76). In the connectedness between the physical and virtual worlds, there is a challenge in keeping the adolescent safe (psychologically and physically) and at the same time to allow explorations and interactions that are crucial for healthy psychosocial development (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield 2008:21). Van Kokswijk (2007:43) declares that a *virtual identity* is the representation of identity in a virtual environment. Identity fluidity is the process of how online identities are formed and in online forums the individual's real offline identity cannot be known with certainty (Van Kokswijk 2007:51). On the Internet everyone can acquire as many identities as he/she wants: in a virtual community your identity doesn't have to correspond with the person behind the computer. Online, one usually constructs one's identity via social interaction by writing to others in a virtual room. A person can create different identities in different rooms and can multiply and decentralise his own personality (Van Kokswijk 2007:54). An important fact is when presenting oneself online, one is recognised through one's textual behaviours and not by one's physical appearance.

Therefore the use of language is very important in cyberspace, because this is how people construct their identities online (Wood & Smith 2001:55).

Most researchers agree that the Internet can offer adolescents many opportunities to experiment with their identities. The following features of Internet communication can stimulate online identity experiments: reduced auditory and visual cues that can encourage adolescents to emphasise or conceal features of the self; Internet communication takes place in online social communities separate from real life and can encourage identity experiments (Valkenburg & Peter 2008:208). Online identity formation can be divided into optimistic and pessimistic variants as illustrated below (Valkenburg & Peter 2008:210):

Figure 2.3 Optimistic and pessimistic variant of online identity formation



Online environments can present individuals with unique opportunities to reveal private details, which they would not otherwise reveal, as in face to face situations. Rogers, the personality theorist's idea of the *true self*, is confirmed in these online spaces, because they offer a safer space to disclose the core aspects about the self (Whitty 2008:6). A study conducted by Shouten (2007:34) revealed that early adolescents experiment more often with their identities than older adolescents, seeing that younger adolescents more frequently use the Internet to communicate with strangers and play around with their identities.

2.4.4 Self-disclosure

There is some concern about the personal information young people may be sharing with others online, especially those they do not know in person. Tapscott (2009:7) is of the opinion that the Net Generation gives away personal information on social networks and elsewhere and this might undermine their future privacy. The users are of the opinion that self-disclosure is a way of sharing, but Tapscott feels that youngsters share information online that they might regret one day and with all this sharing, he is especially concerned that they are opening themselves up for the destruction of a basic right, to be left alone (Tapscott 2009:65).

Shouten (2007:10) proposes that two important processes play a role in explaining the relation between online communication and the outcomes on adolescents' social development: self-disclosure and self-presentation. Self-disclosure takes place when a person reveals intimate information about himself/herself and self-presentation refers to adolescents' control of how they are perceived by others. They do this by presenting aspects of themselves selectively. Self-disclosure and self-presentation are very closely related processes, but they are not interchangeable. Self-disclosure pertains primarily to relationship development especially in the forming and maintaining of relationships, where self-presentation is more widely applicable in the sense that it applies to strategies used in the presentation of oneself, and not necessarily in the context of relationships. Self-disclosure and self-presentation play key social roles in the adolescent's development, especially where relationships are concerned (Shouten 2007:10):

Table 2.3 The role of self-disclosure and self-presentation in the adolescent's development

1.	Forming and maintaining relationships	Enhances the quality and closeness of relationships
2.	Identity formation	Experiment with different identities Learning from others' responses
3.	Self-esteem and well-being	Use feedback to validate themselves

Adolescents experience unique opportunities to self-disclose and self-present in online communication. The reduced nonverbal cues, control over time and space of the interaction and sometimes anonymity can influence the self-disclosure process because there is no basis for prejudice (Rosen 2007:44; Shouten 2007:11). Experimental research regarding Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) has indicated that self-disclosure is higher in anonymous CMC interactions, than in similar face to face interactions. Even non-anonymous online interactions such as IM interactions may stimulate self-disclosure (Shouten 2007:11).

Valkenburg and Peter (2009:2) put forward two assumptions regarding self-disclosure. The first is that online communication stimulates online self-disclosure and this assumption is based on earlier CMC theories, especially Walther's *Hyperpersonal Communication Theory*. This theory suggests that CMC is characterised by reduced visual, auditory and contextual cues resulting in the fact that users become less concerned about how others perceive them and thus have fewer inhibitions in disclosing intimate information. Their communication becomes hyperpersonal – unusually intimate, distant and safe (Rosen 2007:44; Valkenburg & Peter 2009:2). This theory applies particularly to adolescents for whom shyness and self-consciousness are inherent to their developmental stage. A series of studies have revealed that CMC and online communication result in more intimate self-disclosures (Valkenburg & Peter 2009:2).

Secondly, is the assumption that online self-disclosure enhances the quality of adolescents' relationships. Mutual disclosure of intimate topics is a fundamental characteristic of high-quality friendships. A longitudinal study showed that within one year, adolescents' online self-disclosure lead to higher-quality friendships (Valkenburg & Peter 2009:3).

Two other theories that also play an important role in adolescents' online self-disclosure are the *Social Presence* and *Media Richness Theories*. The *Social Presence Theory* was the first to be applied to CMC and suggests that online social presence is low due to low nonverbal cues. The individual's self-presentation is reduced and de-individuation is encouraged. The *Media Richness Theory* is similar to the *Social Presence Theory*. This theory implies that CMC is far less rich than face

to face communication and lacks many important features of face to face communication, thus making it far less personal than face to face encounters. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:62) provide the following table depicting the differences between the *Social Presence* and *Media Richness Theories* and self-disclosure and self-presentation:

Table 2.4 Self-disclosure and self-presentation versus Social Presence and Media Richness Theories

		Social Presence/Media Richness Theories		
		Low	Medium	High
Self-Presentation/ Self-Disclosure	High	Blogs	SNS (Facebook)	Virtual Social Worlds (Second Life)
	Low	Collaborative Projects (Wikipedia)	Content Communities (YouTube)	Virtual Game Worlds (World of Warcraft)

In terms of the abovementioned two theories, blogs and collaborative projects are lowest, because they are often text-based and therefore only allow for a relatively simple exchange. The next level is SNS and content communities enabling the sharing of pictures, videos and other forms of media. On the highest level are virtual games and social worlds, where all dimensions of face to face interactions are replicated in a virtual environment. Regarding self-presentation and self-disclosure, blogs score higher than collaborative projects. SNS allow more self-disclosure than content communities and virtual social worlds require a higher level of self-disclosure than virtual game worlds, because the latter are ruled by strict guidelines that force the user to behave in a certain way.

2.4.5 Online communication

Due to the popularity of the communication functions of electronic media among adolescents, they are heavy users of new communication forms such as instant messaging (IM), e-mail and text messaging and communication oriented Internet

sites such as blogs, SNS, YouTube and virtual environments. The Internet has few temporal or spatial restrictions, which makes it a highly effective communication tool. For adolescents, it doesn't only provide emotional support, but also the opportunity to experiment with identities and social strategies in their relationships (Ando et al. 2008:124). Blais (2008:5) believes that the Internet is a likely venue where people can easily obtain social support and thus increase the probability to meeting likeable others. The table below presents the different online communication forms and their functions according to Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008:2):

Table 2.5 Different online communication forms and their functions

COMMUNICATION FORM	FUNCTIONS ENABLED
E-mail	Write, store, send and receive asynchronous messages electronically
IM (Instant messaging)	Synchronous exchange of private messages with another user
Text messaging	Short text messages sent using cell phones
Chat rooms	Synchronous conversations with more than one user
Bulletin boards	Online public spaces typically centred around a topic where people post and read messages
Blog	Websites where entries are displayed in reverse chronological order Entries can be public or private Only for users authorised by the blog owner/author
SNS	Online utilities allowing users to create profiles and form a network of friends Allow users to interact with their friends via public and private means Allow postings of videos and photos
Video sharing	Users can upload, view and share video clips
Photo sharing	Upload view and share photos
Massively multiplayer online computer games (MMOG)	Online games that can be played by large numbers of players simultaneously
Virtual worlds	Online simulated 3-D environments Inhabited by players who interact with each other via avatars

The growth in Internet usage had lead to a new term in the field of communication, namely *Computer Mediated Communication*, referring to how human behaviours are maintained or altered by the exchange of information through machines (Wood & Smith 2001:1). The study of CMC is necessary to enable us to understand how technology has become part of our everyday lives and to determine how technology is integrated in our physical environments, interpersonal relationships and sense of personal identification (Wood & Smith 2001:5). Within CMC, two types of communication are identified:

- *synchronous communication*: two or more participants interacts in real time,
- *asynchronous communication*: participants interact with time lapses between exchanges (Wood & Smith 2001:37).

Another view provided by Bonil-Yassim and Barak (2011:2) is that CMC had brought about flourishing writing opportunities with unique characteristics. Communication in cyberspace exists mainly through written texts that can promote adolescents confidence to express their thoughts and feelings, due to the sense of anonymity. They don't feel committed to the offline social codes like clothing, nonverbal gestures and eye contact, when they interact online with others. Therefore they pay more attention to the written content than to themselves.

Instant messaging (IM) is the most popular way of online communication among adolescents, possibly because of the removal of the physical aspects of interpersonal communication. IM consists of sending real-time messaging to another Internet user, making it a synchronous CMC between two or more people (Fontes & O'Mahony 2008:2; Jacobson 2008:223; Pujazon-Zazik & Park 2010:78). Users can create a list of guests, which are provided with a list of the online presence of other users, who logged on to the server and they receive an alert when a message is received. The main difference between IM and text messaging is that IM uses the Internet and text messaging used mobile phones over cellular networks (Pujazon-Zazik & Park 2010:78). Valkenburg and Peter (2007:275) found in a study which they conducted, that adolescents who used IM talked mainly with existing offline friends. Adolescents feel that they can be their "true" selves when they

communicate on the Internet, rather than to communicate in face-to-face situations (Blais et al. 2008:523).

Valkenburg and Peter (2007:275) found that respondents who communicate online, feel closer to their existing friends most of the time. The authors found that 30% of the adolescents experienced online communication as more effective than offline communication, where self-disclosure of intimate information is concerned. Underwood, Rosen, More, Ehrenreich and Gentsch (2012:295) conducted a study in which they have captured the content of adolescents' electronic communication on cell phones: text messaging, email and IM. The result showed that adolescents use these devices heavily and frequencies of profane and sexual language indicated that they communicate openly with each other, using cell phones as a communication tool.

There is an ongoing debate amongst psychologists and in the public media about the impact of online communication on the psychosocial well-being of adolescents. On the one hand, online communication can have positive consequences with regard to increased social support, enabling easier connections with friends and enhancing the formation of new relationships. On the other hand, concern is growing regarding excessive Internet use and its potential harmful effects on the psychosocial well-being of youngsters (Van den Eijnden, Meerkerk, Vermulst, Spijkerman & Engels 2008:655). The authors conducted a two year study that investigated the relationship between adolescents' online communication and their psychosocial well-being. The study revealed that teenagers that spent more time online experienced a decline in social and psychological well-being during the first year of access to the Internet. After a three year follow-up study, however, it was clear that the negative effects on well-being had dissipated over time (Van den Eijnden et al. 2008:666).

Today the mobile phone forms a core part of people's day to day social lives, making them constantly open to interaction. Mobile phones can therefore be viewed as a technology for the support of one's remote relationships. Young people regard the phone as central to the maintenance of their social networks (Yates & Lockley 2008:74) as illustrated in the following quote (Tapscott 2009:78):

“My phone is an extension of me. It’s an extension of who I am. It’s like a nice handbag. It’s a display of your personality.” –Niki Tapscott

2.5 ADOLESCENT ONLINE INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

According to Mesch and Talmud (2006:29) the Internet and CMC are used for the maintenance of social ties and the formation of new relationships among individuals, and not only for communication purposes. The use of the Internet for relationship formation among adolescents is of particular interest to researchers and investigators. As mentioned earlier, during adolescence, teenagers start to interact less frequently with their parents and start to turn more and more towards peer relationships. Peers become emotional confidants; they provide advice and guidance and serve as models of behaviour and attitudes (Mesch & Talmud 2006:30).

Baker and Whitty (2008:34) focus on the question: what constitutes online relationships? They found that an online relationship must consist of a certain bond, which can be strong or weak as well as cognitive and emotional. An online relationship can begin by exchanging cell phone numbers and the relationship can then develop further through text. Since the use of the Internet has spread, there are more ways to establish interpersonal relationships, for instance meeting people on the Internet even if they haven't met each other in person. When a relationship starts in cyberspace, the relationship can develop and deepen in different places and through the use of Internet tools, such as chat rooms or e-mail, where they can then interact either synchronously in real time or asynchronously by responding individually, when they have the time (Ando & Sakamoto 2007:994; Baker & Whitty 2008:35). Boase and Wellman (2006:713) have found that adolescents, who form relationships online, have the desire to meet Internet friends in person, implying that they want a broader range of interactions than just online communication.

2.5.1 Theories

In the literature studied, numerous theories regarding CMC and relationship formation had been discussed and researched by the different authors. These theories are summarised in the table below:

Table 2.6 Theories relating to the study

Theory	Description	Authors
Social Presence and Social Context Cues Theory	<p>First to be applied to CMC</p> <p>Online social presence is low due to low nonverbal cues</p> <p>Individual's self-presentation is reduced and de-individuation is encouraged</p>	<p>Anderson and Emmers-Sommers (2006:154)</p> <p>Buote, Wood and Pratt (2009:561)</p> <p>Chan and Cheng (2004:306)</p> <p>Kang (2007:475)</p> <p>Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:61)</p> <p>Whitty (2008:2)</p> <p>Wood and Smith (2001:72,73)</p> <p>Zaczek (2004:32,33)</p>
Media Richness Theory	<p>Similar to Social Presence theory</p> <p>CMC: far less rich than face to face communication, lacks many important features of face to face communication, far less personal than face to face encounters</p>	<p>Anderson and Emmers-Sommers (2006:154)</p> <p>Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:61)</p> <p>Whitty (2008:4)</p> <p>Zaczek (2004:33)</p>
Social Compensation Theory	<p>Introverts and socially anxious adolescents gain more from CMC usage</p> <p>CMC compensates for their weaker social skills</p>	<p>Gosling, Augustine, Vazire, Holtzman and Gaddis (2011:483)</p> <p>Mesch and Talmud (2006:31)</p> <p>Ong, Ang, Ho, Lim, Goh, Lee and Chua (2011:181)</p> <p>Rosen (2007:40)</p> <p>Valkenburg and Peter (2007:268)</p>
Rich Get Richer Hypothesis	<p>Contrast to Social Compensation Theory</p> <p>Extraverts gain more from CMC usage</p> <p>Sociability is transformed to a CMC platform</p>	<p>Boase and Wellman (2006:271)</p> <p>Gosling et al. (2011:483)</p> <p>Ong et al. (2011:181)</p> <p>Rosen (2007:40)</p> <p>Selfhout et al. (2009:821)</p>
Social Information Processing (SIP) and Social Identity and de-individuation model (SIDE)	<p>CMC: creates a favourable impression of partner</p> <p>Self-disclosure and personal questioning will proceed</p> <p>Relationships will become as deep as face to face ones</p>	<p>Anderson and Emmer-Sommers (2006:154)</p> <p>Ando and Sakamoto (2007:995)</p> <p>Baker and Whitty (2008:40)</p>
Disinhibition effect	<p>More anonymity in online settings</p> <p>Feel freer to be more emotionally open and honest</p>	<p>Whitty (2008:5)</p>

<p>Hyperpersonal Theory (Walther)</p>	<p>Absence of social cues and social presence online can be overcome</p> <p>Relationships develop more quickly online</p> <p>CMC is more intimate and moves more quickly than face to face communication</p> <p>Sender: control personal information and selective self-presentation</p> <p>Receiver: idealises other party</p> <p>Channel: edit contents of messages</p> <p>Feedback: idealise each other</p>	<p>Anderson and Emmer-Sommers (2006:154)</p> <p>Ando and Sakamoto (2007:995)</p> <p>Whitty (2008:56)</p> <p>Zaczek (2004:35)</p>
<p>Internet-enhanced self-disclosure hypothesis</p>	<p>Online communication stimulates online self-disclosure</p> <p>Higher online self-disclosure leads to high quality relationships</p> <p>Increased adolescent well-being</p>	<p>Valkenburg and Peter (2009:2)</p>
<p>Gestalt Theory</p>	<p>Interconnection between the adolescent and his environment (social networks).</p> <p>Organising their online worlds by organising their experiences into meaningful wholes</p>	<p>Symington (2010:43)</p>
<p>Attachment Theory</p>	<p>Human's internal control system for survival</p> <p>Attachment to caregiver, guides thoughts and behaviours</p> <p>Impressions of how relationships function</p> <p>Adolescence: shift in attachment figure away from family towards peers</p> <p>Online: the adolescent can become fearful and preoccupied resulting in a more negative experience than face to face friendship</p>	<p>Buote et al. (2009:560)</p>
<p>Reduction Theory</p>	<p>Spending time on Internet reduces quantity and sources of social support</p> <p>Reduces qualities of interpersonal relationships</p> <p>Time could be spent to develop face to face relationships</p>	<p>Anderson and Emmer-Sommers (2006:154)</p> <p>Blais (2008:69)</p> <p>Valkenburg and Peter (2007:268)</p>

Stimulation Theory	<p>Contrast to Reduction Theory</p> <p>Certain online activities contribute to positive outcomes in adolescence relationship formation</p> <p>Internet can enhance one's social presence</p>	Blais (2008:70)
Social Penetration Theory	<p>Progress in a relationship: moves from less intimate to more intimate over time</p>	Baker and Whitty (2008:35,36)
Social Exchange Theory	<p>Pursuing relationships with others only as long as it satisfies in terms of overall rewards and costs</p>	Baker and Whitty (2008:38)
Uncertainty Reduction Theory	<p>When uncertainty is lessened (receiving information online), people get along better online than when they meet offline</p>	Baker and Whitty (2008:39)
Social Needs Perspective	<p>Individual forms relationships to meet compelling needs for intimacy</p> <p>High in adolescents: social circle expands from family to peer group</p>	Mesch and Talmud (2006:30)
Uses Gratification Theory	<p>How individuals use the media</p> <p>Emphasises the importance of the individual</p>	Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008:170)

By studying the table above, it is evident that online friendships, social networking and the use of social media are part of an intricate current phenomenon, of which all the underlying concepts and aspects are intertwined. It is therefore impossible to study one concept without studying the other.

2.5.2 Online adolescent friendships

The concept of friendship can be traced back to the Greeks when Aristotle wrote about the importance and value of friendship. He identified three different types of friendships: a source of comfort, support and encouragement; the sharing of pleasure and fun; and sharing of happiness that affirms selfhood (Bury 2008:175). Chan and Cheng (2004:305) define friends as those seeking the company of others involving voluntary interaction, where participants respond to each other personally. The most important theorist to discuss the importance of adolescent friendships was Sullivan. According to him there is a dramatic increase in the psycho importance and intimacy of close friends during early adolescence.

Friends also play an important role in the shaping of children's well-being and development. Sullivan claims that all people have a number of basic social needs, including the need for tenderness (secure attachment), playful companionship, social acceptance, intimacy and sexual relations. If these needs are fulfilled our emotional well-being will be good. During adolescence teenagers become depended upon satisfying these needs and therefore the ups and downs of experiences with friends will shape their state of well-being. Sullivan believes the need for intimacy intensifies during early adolescence, resulting in teenagers to seek out close friends in this stage (Santrock 2001:196).

A new form of friendship, online friendship, has developed mainly through CMC in online social settings. Blais (2008:7) is of the opinion that one of the possible reasons why a significant number of adolescents make friends on the Internet, is the ease with which they can communicate with others. The question, what is a *friend* on Facebook, is often asked. According to Tong, Van der Heide, Langwell and Walther (2008:537) it can mean that individuals have some sort of acquaintances that are based on offline interactions. In SNS many relationships move between the virtual and the physical world quite frequently, defining them as mixed-mode relationships. A *friend* in a SNS does not mean the same as a friend offline, especially where the size of the friendship networks are concerned. In SNS *friending* large numbers of people is one of the main activities and therefore can become much larger than traditional offline networks, due to the fact that the technology facilitates greater connection (Tong et al. 2008:538). Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008:6) propose that media technologies are an important social variable for today's youth and are the reason why physical and virtual worlds are psychologically connected. SNS make communication with friends public and visible and through potentially infinite electronic lists of *friends* and *friends of friends* they bring the meaning of choosing one's social relationships to a new extreme (Livingstone & Brake 2010:77; Subrahmanyam & Greenfield 2008:6).

Friendships are among the most important relationships in an adolescent's life. Peers occupy a large portion of the adolescent's waking hours, especially when their reliance on parents decreases. Friends, in the broadest sense, are non-familial relations serving important functions in the lives of people (Foucault, Zhu, Huang,

Atrash & Contractor 2009:2). Rosen (2007:40) states that the characteristics of friendships, and how they can be exploited online, are the following:

Figure 2.4 Characteristics of online friendships



Important to this view is that friends will always share interests, values and beliefs. Friends are also emotional confidants where there is the minimum amount of judgement and lastly, friends are supporters in times of hardship or need. In addition to the abovementioned characteristics of friendships, Santrock (2001:195) claims that adolescent friendships serve the following six functions, as depicted below:

Table 2.7 The functions of adolescent friendships

Companionship	Provision of a familiar partner Someone spending time with them Join in collaborative activities
Stimulation	Provision of interesting information, excitement and amusement
Physical support	Provision of time, resources and assistance
Ego support	Provision of the expectation of support, encouragement and feedback Helps the adolescent to maintain an impression of themselves as competent, attractive and worthwhile adolescents
Social comparison	Provision of information about where adolescence stand in social context
Intimacy/affection	Provision of a warm, trusting relationship with another individual Involves self-disclosure

Although the characteristics in the table above are not based on online friendships, they can all be linked to the forming and maintaining thereof. Companionships do not apply to physical companionships, but instead refers to the constant connectivity

adolescents have with each other, via their cell phones and the SNS, where they collaborate with their online friends. In terms of ego support, the immediate feedback on SNS, provides immediate support and encouragement online. Most of the SNS revolve around online friendships where teens may have from zero to thousands of friends. Rosen (2007:38) states that the average MySpacer has 168 friends, listing an average of 37, as *close friends* and included a few they have never met in person. The power of online friendships had been studied by the Pew Internet & American Life Project regarding social ties formed in cyberspace. They have identified phenomena in friendships called "core ties" that refer to very close friendships and are characterised by frequent contact and strong emotional intimacy. "Significant ties" refer to important friendships, but with less frequent contact, that is not as strong as emotional connections (Rosen 2007:47).

When a measure of trust is established, more will be revealed about oneself. In contrast to this, online friendships often begins with a flurry of e-mail messages or IMs with early self-disclosure by both parties, thus developing in a close friendship, in a matter of days (Rosen 2007:43). According to Santrock (2001:196) friendship relationships are important sources of support. Adolescent friends support each other's sense of personal worth. Four types of friendship support are discussed by Rosen (2007:39), as reflected in the following table:

Figure 2.5 Friendship support

Social companionship	Informational support	Self-esteem support	Instrumental support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help with studies and homework • Help to understand things not otherwise understood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imparting sense of value and worth • Validating feelings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tangible items • Services

Because of the vast amount of time spent on the Internet and the limited time they have for face to face interactions, SNS serve three functions with regard to online adolescent friendships:

- Allowing teens to keep in touch with current friends.
- Providing opportunities to make friends among people they might never have met if not for the Internet.
- Provides a 24 hour network where friends are always available and ready to talk (Rosen 2007:57).

Although research indicates that many young people are utilising SNS, there is very little understanding of what adolescents do within them, with whom they interact and the impact of their social networking activities on their online and offline relationships. Even though teens report that they have large numbers of *friends* on SNS, they may actually interact only with a smaller portion of this large network (Reich, Subrahmanyam & Espinoza 2012:356,357). Online applications (IM and SNS) may provide additional ways for teens' interactions in their search for intimacy and emotional connection (Reich et al. 2012:357). Profiles that are created on SNS allow connectivity between these profiles, in which an individual can include another as a *friend*, in order to view the contents of their page, leave public comments or send private messages (Moreno, Fost & Christakis 2008:157; Patchin & Hinduja 2010:199). SNS allow a person to participate in a full-time, always-on, intimate community where they can feel emotionally close and connected to others, even when they are physically apart from them. Youth in the 21st century doesn't have a real-world venue where they can hang out like the previous generations, therefore they have turned to cyberspace to meet and interact with others in a relatively adult-free environment (Patchin & Hinduja 2010:200).

Foucault et al. (2009:2) feels that previous studies of adolescent online friendships, do not point out the patterns, which are characteristic of friendships in the real world. Some say that online friendships are more random (and as a result more risky) than offline friendships. The literature on CMC supports the fact that offline and online strategies for choosing friends may be comparable.

Some say that adolescents do not have enough information about potential friends online than in the real world, but others are of the opinion that the main difference between offline and online communication is not the richness of the information, but

the rate at which it is transmitted. If given sufficient time, adolescents' communication online will discover many of the same traits they could identify with, in face to face situations (Foucault et al. 2009:9).

It was mentioned earlier, that proximity is a key factor in the forming of friendships. Foucault et al (2009:10) states that *digital proximity* exists online, especially with adolescents who are more reachable online, or are online, more frequently. This digital proximity predicts friendship formation in much the same way than in the real world. *Geographical proximity* is also an important predictor in online friendships, like similarity in traits such as age and gender. Reich et al. (2012:375) believes that adolescents' online and offline worlds are psychologically connected. In the study conducted by the authors they found that there was an overlap between the participants' offline and online social networks, suggesting that most of their online friends were from their offline worlds. Mikami et al. (2010:47) found that youths rarely become as close to online friends as they do to in-person friends, but youths with strong face to face relationships may be those most frequently using Internet social communication as an additional venue in which to interact. Buote et al. (2009:564,566) states that today's youth use both online and offline outlets as a source of friendship, but more friendships are formed and maintained in offline contexts. They found that online and offline friendships were equally high in quality, intimacy and self-disclosure and online friendships present a positive and beneficial alternative to offline friendships. Contrary to these findings, Chen and Chang (2004:316) found that the quality of offline friendships is higher than that of online friendships.

2.5.3 Studies relating to online friendships

Numerous studies have been conducted by researchers during the last few years with regard to online friendships. These studies resulted in diverse and often contradictory findings. The table below provides a summary of the most relevant studies and their findings:

Table 2.8 Studies related to online friendships

AUTHOR(S)	STUDY	FINDINGS
Ando and Sakamoto (2007)	Causal relationship between the number of cyber friends of participants and their social anxiety and loneliness	Those who gave a low evaluation of physical attractiveness, having many cyber-friends, lowered social anxiety and reduced loneliness
Ando et al. (2008)	Effect of Internet use on students' loneliness in friendships	Internet use has a positive effect on students' loneliness in friendships and social support from their friends
Blais et al. (2008)	Using the Internet for different activities affects quality of close adolescent relationships	Internet activity choice influences later relationship quality in both best friendships and romantic relationships.
Chan and Cheng (2004)	Comparing online and offline qualities at different stages of relationship development	Offline friendships: more independence, breadth, depth, code exchange, understanding, commitment and network convergence than online friendships
Fontes and O'Mahony (2008)	Challenge the assumption that SNS are used to create online friendships. Determining the effects the technology had on users' existing offline relation	Inverse relationship between the degree of friendship between users and variety of ways in which they maintained contact with one another. SNS enabled users to collate and maintain a wider network of friends and acquaintances than would otherwise be possible
Greenfield and Subrahmanyam (2008)	Review on literature on Internet communication, exploring how online interaction shapes relationships with friends, significant others, strangers and family	Peers use SNS most often to stay in touch with offline peers. 48% of teens believe online social networking has improved their relationships
Mesch and Talmud (2006)	Differences between adolescents who created online friendships and those who did not	Motivation for online friendship formation proved to be related to adolescent's attempts to compensate for a lack of social support by using the Internet for communication.

Mitchell, Finelhor and Wolak (2003)	Adolescent online relationship closeness and how many and types of relationships are formed online by teens	55% used some form of Internet communication to interact with someone they haven't met in person. 25% casual friendships, 14% involved in close Internet friendships, 7% met someone they met online, 2% has a romantic relationship online. Friendships formed online are more often shallow, casual and short lived.
Pollet et al. (2011)	Relationships between the use of social media, network size and emotional closeness	Time spent using SNS leads to larger number of online social networking friends, but not associated with larger offline networks or feeling emotionally closer to offline network members
Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008)	Why people use friend-networking sites, what uses and gratifications are met by using these sites	Vast majority use friend-networking sites for a significant portion of their day for the following reasons: making new friends and locating old friends. Many uses and gratifications are met by users
Reich et al. (2012)	How and why adolescents use the Internet, their activities on SNS and how these impact their friendships. The extent of overlap between online and offline friends	Use of SNS to connect with others, especially those known from offline contexts. Moderate overlap between teens' closest online and offline friends. Patterns suggest that adolescents use online contexts to strengthen offline relationships
Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechter and Espinoza (2008)	Young peoples' activities on SNS and how their networks of friends relate to their online and offline networks	Participants make use of SNS to connect and reconnect with friends and family members. There is an overlap between online and offline networks
Valkenburg and Peter (2007)	How online communication is related to the closeness of existing friendships,	Online communication is positively related to the closeness of friendships

2.6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it must be mentioned that the phenomenon of online adolescent friendships, is a very complex, diverse and challenging topic. The fact that online technology and CMC are potentially infinite, and play such a crucial role in the lives of adolescents, contributes to the diversity and complexity of the topic. Even though much is written regarding online technologies, Internet tools and online social networking, not much could be found regarding the quality and nature of adolescents' online friendships. Very little research had been conducted of adolescent online relationships in the South African context. Therefore, research in this area, with specific focus on the psycho-educational features that the topic encompasses, will definitely contribute to the field, especially where South African adolescents, parents and teachers are concerned.

Chapter 3 will focus on the research design of the study.

CHAPTER 3

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

“People will often ask me, ‘Are kids today different than kids 20 years ago?’ Well, yes, they are. Because the world is different, their brains have wired up in a different way.”

-Martin Westwell



3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3 an outline of the research process will be provided and the focus will be on the specific research design, the methodology and the research instruments of the study. Data analysis and ethical principles concerning the research will also be put forward. The entire research design will focus on the research question, as provided in Chapter 1. Seeing that the research question is complicated, more specific problems related to the research question will also be investigated through the chosen research design. The aim of this study is therefore to provide comprehensive findings that will lead to significant conclusions.

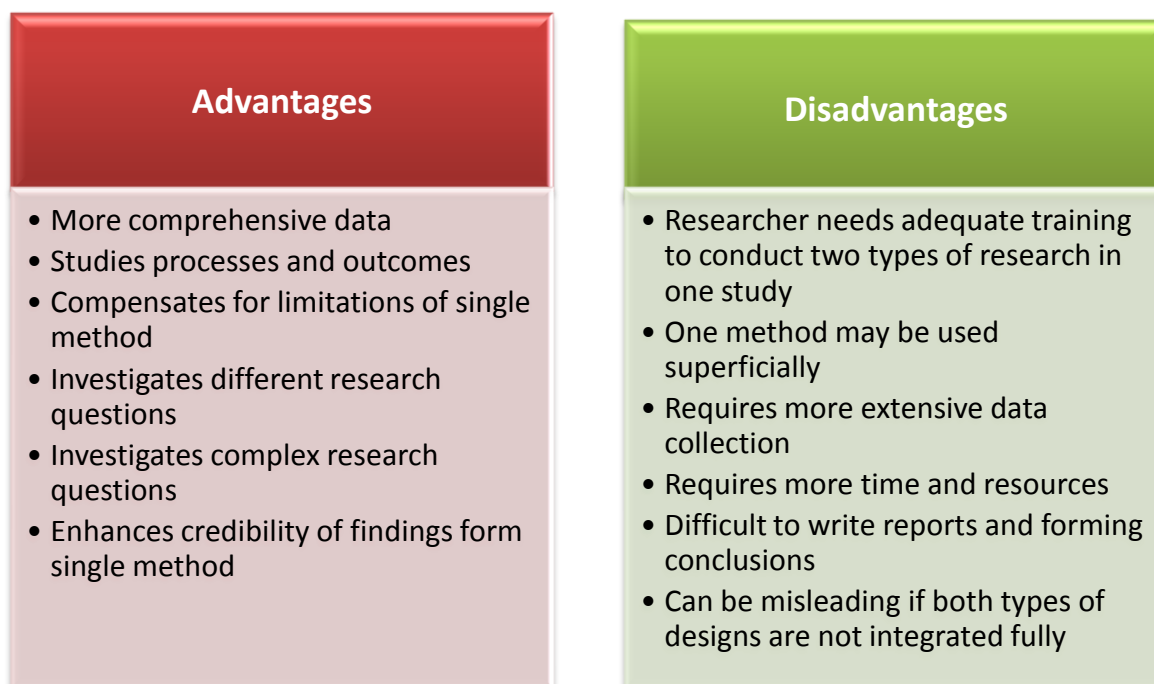
3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:67) state that a research study can be both quantitative and qualitative. Such a study starts with a general problem that provides context and background. For this particular study the general problem is: **"What is the nature of online friendships among adolescents in social networking?"** In my opinion more specific problems also need to be investigated regarding this problem namely:

- *How frequently do adolescents form new online friendships and how much time do they spend on the Internet talking to their friends?*
- *What are the qualities of these online friendships?*
- *To what level will the adolescent rate engagement in self-disclosure in these online friendships and reveal private matters?*
- *Do the electronic engagement, involvement and communication have an effect on the adolescent's identity formation?*
- *Can the successful forming of online friendships influence and enhance the adolescent's ego strength?*
- *What is the impact of online friendships on the self-concept of the adolescent and do they promote positive self talk?*
- *Do online friendships contribute the adolescent's self-knowledge, self-actualisation and self-worth?*

To ensure that all the above questions are answered effectively and comprehensively, a mixed method design will be followed for this study. A mixed method design includes contributions of both quantitative and qualitative methods, thus including the strengths of each method. The shortcomings of one approach will be compensated by the strengths of the other. In a mixed method design, the qualitative and quantitative paradigms are combined in meaningful ways and it integrates the two approaches' philosophy, viewpoints, traditions, methods and conclusions (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:396). A mixed method design has both advantages and disadvantages. These advantages and disadvantages are depicted in the figure below (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:396):

Figure 3.1 Advantages and disadvantages of a mixed method design



It was decided that a sequential explanatory mixed method design will be put to use for the purpose of this study. The quantitative data will be collected first and the qualitative data are gathered second to clarify, elaborate and explain the quantitative findings. To be able to fully understand how to apply a mixed method design, knowledge about the characteristics of qualitative and quantitative approaches should be obtained. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:12) provide the following table to summarise the abovementioned differences:

Table 3.1 Quantitative and qualitative research approaches

ORIENTATION	QUANTITATIVE	QUALITATIVE
Assumptions about the world	Single reality (measured by an instrument)	Multiple realities (measured by interviews about a social situation)
Research purpose	To establish relationships between variables	To understand a social situation from participants' perspective
Research methods and processes	Procedures established before study	Flexible, changing strategies
Prototypical study	Experimental design (reducing error and bias)	Ethnographical (using disciplined subjectivity)
Research role	Detached	Immersed in social situation
Importance of context	Universal context-free generalisations	Detailed context-bound summary statements

To elaborate on the information provided in the table above, the following summary, given by Coolican (2009:52), can be put forward:

Figure 3.2 Differences between qualitative and quantitative research

Qualitative Research		Quantitative Research
Rich	Information	Narrow
Subjective	Interpretation	Objective
Realistic/Naturalistic	Setting	Artificial
Non-structured	Design	Highly structured
High	Realism	Low
Low	Reliability	High
High	Reflexivity	Low/non-existent

It is also necessary for the researcher to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative studies in order to integrate these two approaches meaningfully when utilising a mixed method design. Coolican (2006:97) summarises the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative studies as follows:

Table 3.2 Strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative studies

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
QUANTITATIVE STUDY	
Statistical analysis	No picture of complete individual or their thoughts
Clear picture of scores and range	Treats variable as separate from person and context
Tests hypothesis	May provide false impression of indisputable scientific findings
Can generalise from sample to population	
QUALITATIVE STUDY	
Retain individual's original meanings	Difficult to generalise findings to other situations
Rich and authentic	Disagreements over appropriate way to gather and analyse data
Provides picture of individual's views and experiences on a specific topic	Analysis and interpretation can be influenced by researcher's perspective and biases

It is clear from the information in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 and Figure 3.1, that qualitative research is used to study phenomena in their natural settings and obtain the meanings people attach to them. To determine people's attitudes and opinions, it would involve listening to people talk and their behaviour is observed as it happens mainly, in a natural setting. The intention is to discover what people think, how they act and why in a certain setting, the data is in the form of words rather than numbers and the researcher must search and explore until a deep understanding is achieved. The study is mainly subjective and the researcher can become part of the research situation and scenario.

Quantitative research is essentially used to measure an identified variable by assigning a numerical value to each variable. The numerical value assigned to the variables can reflect the amount of behaviour, thus a quantitative study can also

measure the difference in the amount of behaviour (Evans & Rooney 2008:16). The emphasis is on objectivity (by using numbers and statistics) in the measuring of and the description of the phenomena).

The purpose of the quantitative study for this research will be to obtain a general overview of adolescents' social networking practices and the forming and maintaining of online friendships, within social network sites (SNS). A non-experimental descriptive design will be utilised, seeing that a summary of an existing phenomenon will be provided, by assigning numbers to characterise individuals or groups, in this case adolescents who are involved in social networking. A descriptive design will be applied to assess the nature of existing conditions and the most important aim is to characterise something as it is (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:22). A qualitative study will follow after the quantitative study to clarify, explain and elaborate the findings, issues and themes obtained from the quantitative study. A phenomenological paradigm will be applied in order to understand the perspectives of the participants, in their everyday lived experiences, with regard to the phenomenon being studied (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:24).

3.3 METHODOLOGY

As previously mentioned a quantitative study will be carried out prior to the qualitative study as part of the explanatory mixed method design. This will be executed in the form of a short survey to provide a general overview of social networking and adolescents' involvement in the forming and maintaining of online friendships. Within this study certain important aspects regarding the research question will be measured and rated by the participants. The focus will be to determine *what* aspects form part of social networking practices among adolescents.

A qualitative study will follow after the quantitative study to clarify, explain and elaborate on the findings, issues and themes obtained from the quantitative study. The qualitative study will constitute a more in-depth investigation by conducting in-depth interviews with the participants chosen from the survey sample. The emphasis will be on the *how* and the *why* of the social network practices among adolescents.

3.3.1 Research Instruments

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:187,342) suggest that the following data collection techniques can be used for quantitative and qualitative studies respectively:

Table 3.3 Collection techniques

QUANTITATIVE STUDY	QUALITATIVE STUDY
Paper-and-pencil tests	Observation
Questionnaires	In-depth interviews
Non-cognitive measures	Document and artefact collection
Interviews	Field observations and supplementary techniques
Observations	
Alternative assessment: performance-based, portfolios	

For this research, it is decided to use self-constructed questionnaires (as part of the survey) and interviews to collect data. Due to the fact that questionnaires and interviews both have specific strengths and weaknesses, the combination of the two instruments in a mixed method design can lead to a comprehensive, inclusive and encompassing gathering of data, where one's strengths will compensate for the other's weaknesses. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:212) list these strengths and weaknesses as depicted in the following table:

Table 3.4 Strengths and weaknesses of questionnaires and interviews

QUESTIONNAIRES	
<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economical • Can be anonymous • Standard questions • Uniform procedures • Easy to score • Subjects have time to think about responses 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to probe and clarify • Scoring of open-ended questions • Faking and social desirability • Restricted to literate subjects • Biased and ambiguous items • Response set
INTERVIEWS	
<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible • Adaptable • Ability to probe and clarify • Can include nonverbal behaviour • High response rate • Used with non-readers 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costly • Time-consuming • Interviewer bias • Not anonymous • Subject effects • Effect of interviewer characteristics • Requires training • Leading questions

3.3.1.1 Quantitative study: questionnaires

For the purpose of this study, a survey will be conducted, as part of the quantitative study, by using a short self-developed questionnaire. A descriptive approach will be followed where the purpose of the survey is to establish a general overview to determine the characteristics and obtain a description of social networking practices among adolescents. Surveys are mainly used to discover more about people's attitudes, beliefs, values, behaviour, opinions, habits, desires and ideas and to describe the incidence, frequency and distribution of the characteristics of an identified population (McMillan and Schumacher 2010:235,236).

It is important for the researcher to determine the following when constructing a questionnaire: what he will ask; how to word the questions; how to administer the surveys; who he will ask; how many and how the data will be analysed (Evans & Rooney 2008:232).

The researcher should be guided by the research question to determine the above. The following guidelines for writing survey questions are listed by Evans and Rooney (2008:245) and McMillan and Schumacher (2010:196):

- Keep questions short and simple – the participants must clearly understand the questions.
- Make items clear.
- Avoid using *and* in your questions (double-barrelled questions).
- Respondents must be competent to answer.
- Questions should be relevant.
- Do not use biased wording.
- Avoid using double negatives.
- Avoid loaded or leading questions.

According to Coolican (2009:165) there are three major areas of decision-making when doing survey work through the use of questionnaires: the sample, the mode of questioning and the questioning themselves. Questionnaires used in surveys are usually constructed for the specific research topic and test the current opinion or patterns of behaviour of participants (Coolican 2009:173). Dyer (2006:74) emphasises the importance to be able to show that the questionnaire that is constructed, is both accurate and consistent.

As previously mentioned, the purpose of the questionnaire for this study is to determine a general overview of the practices of social networking and online friendships. A short questionnaire will be developed consisting of 20 closed questions (checklists, rankings, graded response questions) which will be divided into different sections.

The table below provides an example of the self-constructed questionnaire that will be utilised as well as the rationale for the development of the questions:

Table 3.5 Rationale for choosing the questions for the questionnaire

SECTIONS/QUESTIONS	RATIONALE
<p>BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION: Name Date Date of birth Age Gender Home Language School Grade</p>	<p>To determine information regarding the participants like age, gender, home language, school and grade.</p> <p>To calculate the mean and the mode of the ages of the learners who were chosen for the sample.</p>
<p>SECTION A GENERAL QUESTIONS Questions 1 – 6</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you have access to the Internet? Yes/No 2. If yes, do you engage in social networking? Yes/No 3. Which media/tools do you use to engage in social networking? Cell phone/Computer 4. To which of the following social networks are you signed in? Facebook/Whatsapp/Mxit/Twitter/LinkedIn 5. Which of these social networks do you use most to communicate with others? Facebook/Whatsapp/Mxit/Twitter/LinkedIn 6. How many hours a day do you engage in social networking? Less than 1 hour 1 – 2 hours 3 – 5 hours 7 – 9 hours More than 10 hours 	<p>To establish a general overview of the sample's Internet usage with specific focus on their social network practices.</p> <p>This included a verification of the tools the participants use to connect to social networks and the amount of time spent on SNS.</p>
<p>SECTION B ONLINE FRIENDSHIPS Questions 7 – 10</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Do you currently have online friends? Yes/No 8. If yes, how many "friends" do you currently have on social network sites? 0 – 10 10 – 20 20 – 30 30 – 40 40 – 50 More than 50 9. Would you describe your online friendships as Close/ Weak? 10. How many of your "friends" on social network sites have you met in person? All/Most/About half/A few/None 	<p>To ascertain an overview of the participants' online friendships with regard to how many online friends they have, the bond existing between the friends and if there is a connection between online and offline friends.</p>

QUESTIONS 11 – 15 Close-ended, Lickert Scale: Always Often Seldom Never	The Lickert Scale was utilised for the participants to be able to rate their own experiences and attitudes regarding each specific question. Questions 11 – 15 focused on the sub-questions mentioned in 3.2.
11. I share personal information with my online friends.	To measure the amount of self-disclosure.
12. To chat with my "friends" makes me feel happy.	How does online socialising with friends influence identity formation and self-confidence, self-esteem, self-concept and self-worth.
13. I need my online friends' support when I am feeling down.	How does social networking strengthen the ego and self-worth.
14. It is easier to form and maintain friendships online than in real life.	Does social networking strengthens self-confidence and is there a link between online and offline friendships.
15. I have more self-confidence when I am online with friends than in face to face situations.	Self-confidence, self-concept, self-esteem and identity formation.
QUESTIONS 16 – 20 Close-ended, Lickert scale: Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree	The Lickert Scale was utilised for the participants to be able to rate their own experiences and attitudes regarding each specific question. Questions 16 – 20 focused on the sub-questions mentioned in 3.2.
16. It is important to share my problems with my "friends".	Self-disclosure and sharing of private matters.
17. It is easy to hide certain aspects about myself when I am online with my "friends".	Identity formation, identity fluidity, honesty.
18. I feel good about myself when I can socialise with my "friends" on social network sites.	Self-esteem, ego strength and self-confidence.
19. I trust my online friends.	Bond between friends, strength of online friendships.
20. I learn more about myself through social networks and frequent interaction with my "friends".	Self-knowledge, self-worth and self-confidence.

It is evident that the focus of the above questionnaire is on background information and a general overview of social networking and online friendships. The objective of questions 11 – 20 is to establish the influence of social networking and online friendships on the development of adolescents, especially where certain psycho-educational concepts like self-confidence, ego-strength, self-disclosure and self-concept are concerned. The questionnaire will also assist in identifying the adolescents for the semi-structured interviews.

3.3.1.2 Qualitative study: interviews

For the second part of this research, a phenomenological qualitative study will be employed in the form of in-depth, semi-structured interviews. According to Nestor and Schutt (2012:358), qualitative interviewing relies on open-ended questions in which the interviewer allows the content and order of questions to vary from one interviewee to another. Interviewees are expected to answer the questions in their own words. In an interview the researcher will listen to lengthy explanations, ask follow-up questions to preceding answers and seek to learn about personal approaches, attitudes and experiences. Research interviews aim to bring forth significant personal information and the interviewer must work according to strict ethical guidelines to help protect the respondent against exploitative or psychologically damaging experiences (Dyer 2006:31). The following types of interviews are identified by Dyer (2006:31-33):

Table 3.6 Types of interviews

TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Structured	The form and direction of questioning is decided in advance.
Unstructured	The interviewer doesn't pursue a predetermined set of questions. The content of the interviewee's answers directs the questioning.
Semi-structured	The general direction is decided on in advance, but as the interview proceeds, the questioning is guided by the content of the respondent's answers.
Exploratory	Used to conduct preliminary exploration of a topic before the main research begins.
Group	Conducting interviews with a number of people in the structured situation of a focus group

Dyer (2006:142) states that it is difficult to apply the standard concepts of reliability and validity to qualitative research, because it is assumed that the replication of good research is always possible.

Reliability is a question of trustworthiness of the interpretation, internal consistency, usefulness and fruitfulness – the research should stimulate further inquiry. Trustworthiness is useful to determine validity, reliability and generalisability in the qualitative context.

The interviews that will be utilised in this study, are semi-structured in-depth interviews. An attempt will be made to ensure that the same topics are covered in each interview, in order to compare information obtained from the different interviewees. The idea is to use an informal method so that digression is possible where the participant diverges from a topic. In this study, five adolescents will be interviewed and will be identified from the results of the questionnaire. The five adolescents with the most involvement and experience in social networking will be selected for the in-depth individual interviews. An interview schedule, developed in advance, will be put to use during these interviews (see Addendum D).

3.3.2 Data gathering methods

According to Santrock (2001:17) an adolescent is a person in transition from childhood to early adulthood. This transition involves biological, cognitive and socio-emotional changes. Adolescence begins approximately between 10 to 13 years of age and ends between the ages of 18 and 22 in most cultures. For the purpose of this study Grade 8 to 12 learners will participate in the research, irrespective of gender and race. They will be taken from one secondary school, which defines this research as a case study. The survey will be executed on 25 learners, 5 from each grade (approximately 2% of the school), which will be determined through random sampling, due to the fact that the subjects are accessible, available and suitable.

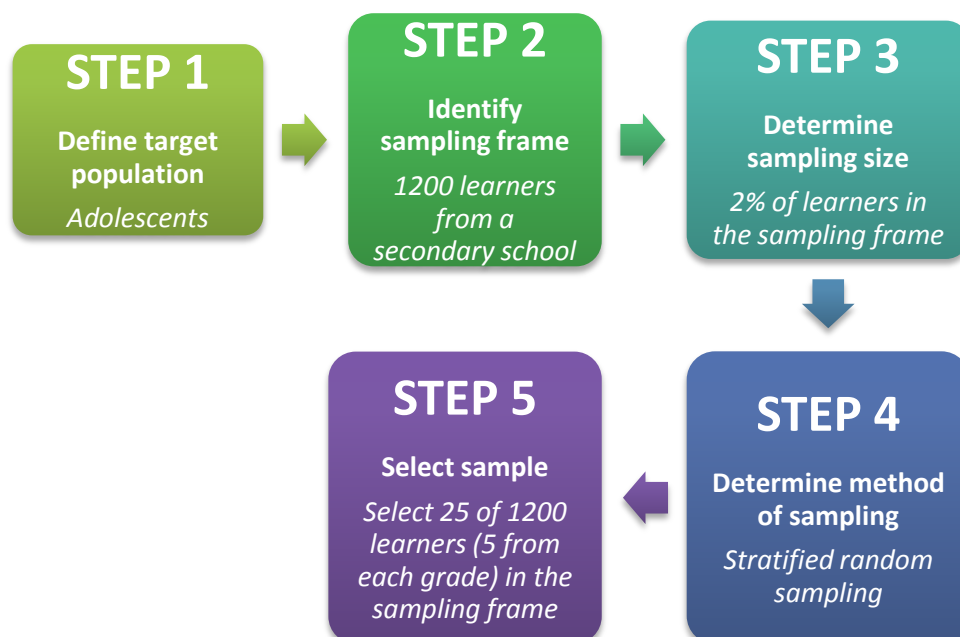
For the qualitative study, a small sample of five participants will be identified from the completed survey and will include the five subjects who revealed the most involvement and experience in the field of study. The sampling of the subjects will be purposeful; therefore the participants will be key informants, who can provide information rich information.

Five individual interviews will be conducted with these adolescents, to determine how various aspects, and which aspects as revealed by the survey, in their development as an individual, are influenced by their involvement in social networking and specifically their involvement in online friendships.

3.3.2.1 Sampling

Elmes, Kantowitz and Roediger (2012:191) state that in a research study the entire population is rarely used. A sample will be selected that will represent the population and the greater the number in the sample, the more the sample would reflect the characteristics of the population. The way the sample is determined can affect the validity of the sample, as the sample needs to accurately represent the characteristics of the population. Random sampling means that the researcher makes a statistical guess that the sample is representative of the population. For the survey of this study (the quantitative stage), probability sampling will be put to use to determine the subjects who will participate. Probability sampling is when each member of the population has an equal probability of being selected. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:131) propose specific steps on how to draw a probability sample. In the following figure these steps are combined with the sampling of this research:

Figure 3.3 Steps in probability sampling



The probability sampling that will be applied for this study, is stratified random sampling. Stratified random sampling is when the population is divided into subgroups and then samples are drawn randomly from each subgroup (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:134). To draw the sample from each group, systematic sampling will be utilised to determine the subjects who will take part in the survey. The subgroups of this study will be the separate grades (Grades 8 – 12) from which the sample will be drawn. The same number of subjects (5) will be randomly selected from each subgroup, thus non-proportional sampling will be used by applying systematic sampling. A total population of 25 adolescents will take part in the survey. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:133) describe systematic sampling as selecting every *n*th element from a list of all the elements, in this case of the subgroup. Class lists will be used to randomly choose 5 learners from each grade adding up to a total of 25 learners.

For the in-depth interviews (the qualitative stage) of this study, purposeful sampling will be utilised to determine which subjects will participate in the interviews. Purposeful sampling is when subjects are selected with certain characteristics. The subjects are chosen on the basis of who will provide the best information to address the purpose of the research (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:138). For this research 5 subjects will be identified who revealed the most involvement and experience in social networking and online friendships through the survey.

3.3.3. Data Analysis

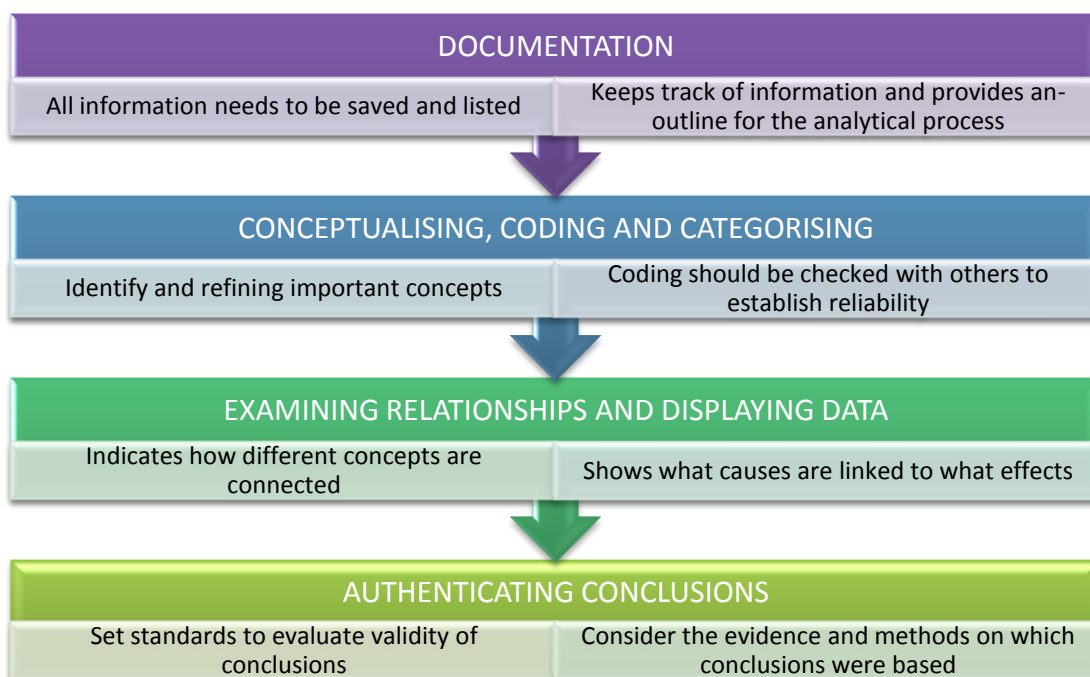
The data that will be collected for this study needs to be analysed and interpreted. Descriptive statistics will be utilised to describe the variables in the quantitative study. Nestor and Schutt (2012:322) emphasise the fact that the primary concern in a quantitative study is to display how the cases are distributed across the values of the variable. Descriptive statistics are statistics that summarise a set of data and involve mathematical calculations to assist in making precise statements about the features of collected data (McBurney & White 2010:392). Dyer (2006:153) suggests that the data should be represented in a way that gives a clearer picture with the aim to see an overall distribution of data. This includes tabular and graphical techniques.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:149) descriptive statistics are the most fundamental way to summarise data and are indispensable in the interpretation of the results of quantitative research. The following statistical techniques will be applied to summarise and interpret the quantitative data:

- Descriptive statistics
- Nominal and ordinal scales of measurement
- Univariate procedures
- Graphic portrayals of data
- Measures of central tendency

The qualitative data collection technique for the second stage of the study, is the semi-structured interviews and research data will be the transcripts of the interviews which had been conducted with 5 adolescents (see Addendum E). The data analysis will be mainly inductive, because important categories, patterns and relationships will be identified through a process of discovery (Nestor & Schutt 2012:372). The analysis will be reflexive and will begin as soon as data is being collected. The following analytical steps are suggested by Nestor and Schutt (2012:372-376) to organise and interpret qualitative data, and will be applied to the qualitative data being collected by the interviews:

Figure 3.4 Steps in analysing qualitative data



3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Because this research study deals with human beings, it is necessary to understand the ethical and legal responsibilities of conducting the research. The following ethical principles, as described by McMillan and Schumacher (2010:117-125), will be applied when doing this research:

Table 3.7 Ethical principles in conducting a research

RESEARCH ETHICS	
FULL DISCLOSURE	Openness and honesty with participants about all aspects of the study Full disclosure about purpose of study
VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION	Participants cannot be compelled or required to participate No one shall be forced to participate
INFORMED CONSENT	Explanation of the research Full disclosure of risks involved Termination of participation at any time without penalty Parents/legal guardians sign a consent form for minors Learners sign an assent form
NO HARM TO PARTICIPANTS	No physical or mental discomfort, harm or injury to participants Revealing of information that may result in embarrassment or danger to home, life, school performance and friendships
PRIVACY	Confidentiality - No access to participants' characteristics, responses and behaviour except the researcher: using a system to link names to data that can be destroyed Storing of data that provides maximum protection of the participants' identities: securing information with locks; destroying linking information
PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY	Research will reflect scientific integrity and the methods of investigation will be sound No plagiarism: credit to contributions of others

3.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter a detailed description of the empirical investigation was provided. This description included the research design, instruments and methodology. The research design, a mixed method design (sequential explanatory), was given. The sampling was put forward and the data collection techniques, namely a questionnaire (quantitative study) and an interview (qualitative study), were described. The chapter was ended off with the ethical principles that will be applied when conducting this research.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

“Facebook is a place where you could be yourself, a real person, and feel free to talk with your close friends or your wider circle of friends.”

-Don Tascott



4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3 the research design and methodology were presented. This chapter presents a discussion of the results of the study. The results and findings of the quantitative and qualitative studies are put forward and are discussed with references to the literature study. An attempt has thus been made to link the empirical findings to the findings from the literature research.

4.2 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH: QUESTIONNAIRES

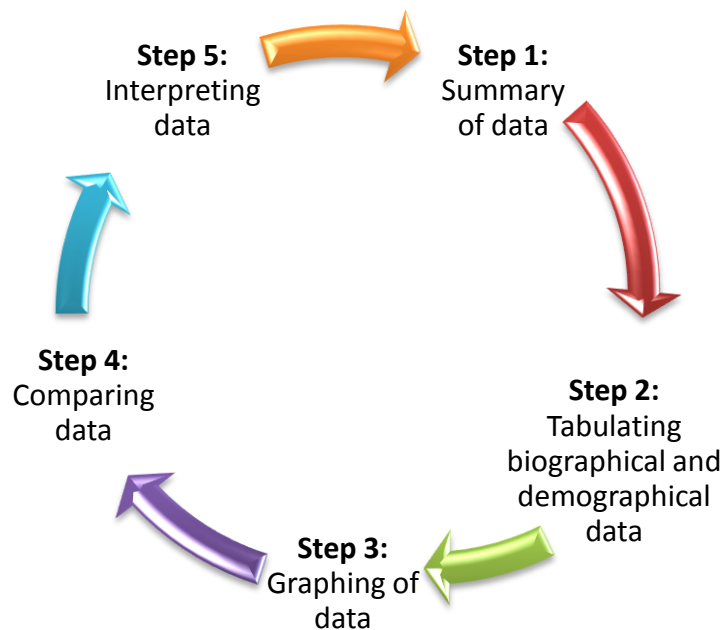
The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine a general overview of the practices of social networking and online friendships. The focus was on *what* aspects form part of social network practices and *what* are the participants' attitudes and opinions regarding social networking and online friendships. Another objective of the quantitative data collection was to answer and analyse the research question, based on the sample data.

The questionnaire was developed consisting of 20 closed-ended questions (checklists, rankings, graded response questions) which were divided into sections. The questionnaire assisted in identifying the adolescents who were chosen for the interviews. Grade 8 to 12 learners from a secondary school participated in the research irrespective of gender and race. Twenty five learners, 5 from each grade, completed the short survey by means of the abovementioned questionnaire.

4.2.1 Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were utilised to describe the variables in the quantitative study and involved the organising and analysing of the quantitative data. Descriptive statistics allow one to organise and summarise the data by allocating numbers to the variables and demonstrating those numbers in the form of graphs and charts (McBride 2013:144). Evans (2007:110) proposes that descriptive surveys provide summaries of opinions, attitudes and behaviour by answering questions such as *how many*. The following steps were followed to analyse and organise the quantitative data:

Figure 4.1 Steps for analysing and organising quantitative data



- **Step 1**
The data obtained from the questionnaires were summarised by reducing the data and converting all the raw scores to one form (see Addendum C).
- **Step 2**
The biographical and demographical data were summarised through tabulation.
- **Step 3**
The raw data was converted into graphs (histograms) and charts (pie charts) to indicate relationships between variables.
- **Step 4**
All the data represented in the tables, charts and graphs was compared to determine what the general overview, attitudes and experiences of the participants were.
- **Step 5**
The data reflected in the tables, charts and graphs were interpreted to establish how they can be tied to the research questions and the sub-questions of the research. A psycho-educational interpretation had been executed to conclude the results of the survey.

4.2.2 Results

Based on the abovementioned steps that were followed to analyse and interpret the data acquired from the questionnaires, the results are reflected in the rest of this section. A general summary of the results of the questionnaires were tabulated first (see Addendum C), before divided into the different sections as depicted below:

4.2.2.1 Biographical information

The following two tables reflect the biographical data of the respondents, as well as the measures of central tendency regarding their ages as used in the sample:

Table 4.1 Biographical detail of respondents

Gender	Male	10	40%
	Female	15	60%
Age	13 years	3	12%
	14 years	5	20%
	15 years	2	8%
	16 years	7	28%
	17 years	3	12%
	18 years	4	16%
	19 years	1	4%
Home language	Afrikaans	20	80%
	Sepedi	3	12%
	Siswati	2	8%

The female participants formed 60% and the male participants 40% of the sample. The highest percentage of subjects was 16 years of age (28%) and the majority of the participants' home language was Afrikaans (80%).

Measures of central tendency are values representing typical scores, in a distribution of scores, consisting of the mode that is the score that occurs most often in a set of scores, the median which is the value, in the set of which 50% of cases fall below and 50% above and lastly the mean that is the sum of individual scores divided by the number of scores (Martin & Bridgmon 2012:6,7). The table below indicates the mean, median and mode of the ages of the participants:

Table 4.2 Measures of central tendency of the ages of participants

Number of participants	Mean	Median	Mode
25	15.72	16	16

The central tendency of the ages of the participants comes down to 16 years. This study focused on adolescents as subjects and seeing that the age range of adolescence is mainly between 13 and 18 years, this sampling can be seen as representative of the population of adolescents in general.

4.2.2.2 Internet usage and social networking practices

The respondents' Internet usage and media/tools are reflected in the following table:

Table 4.3 Responses regarding Internet usage and tools

	Total
Access to the Internet	25
Social Networking involvement	25
Media/tools used for social networking and Internet access	
• Cell phone	25
• Computer	4
Hours per day engaged in social networking	
• Less than an hour	4
• 1 – 2 hours	6
• 3 – 5 hours	11
• 7 – 9 hours	2
• More than 10 hours	2

All the participants (100%) in the quantitative study have access to the Internet and are involved in Social Networks. The graphs and charts below demonstrate the distribution of the media/tools being used by the participants as well as the amount of hours spent on social networking:

Figure 4.2 Media/tools used for social networking

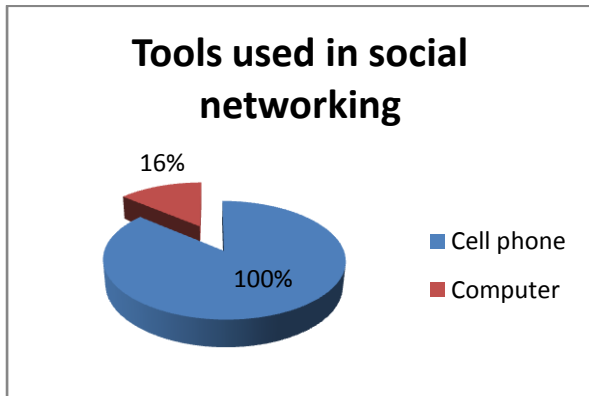


Figure 4.3 Time spent in social networking

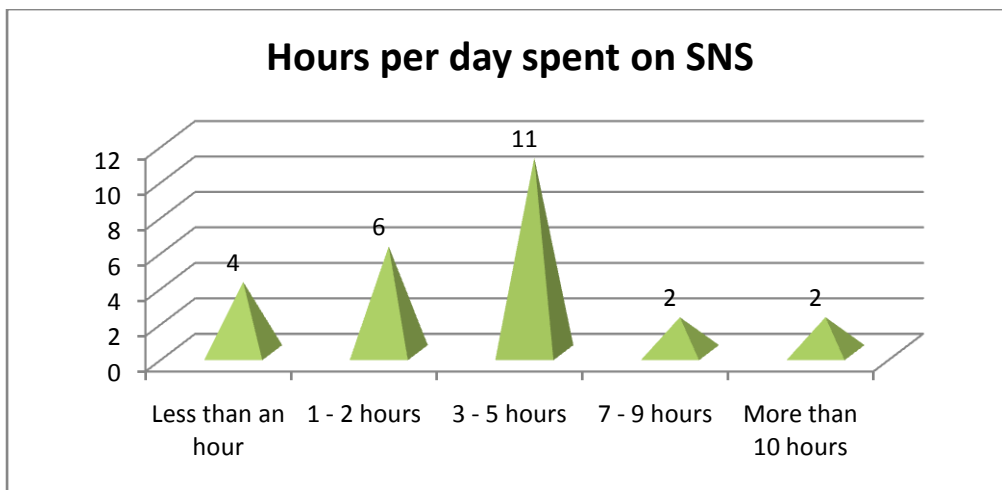
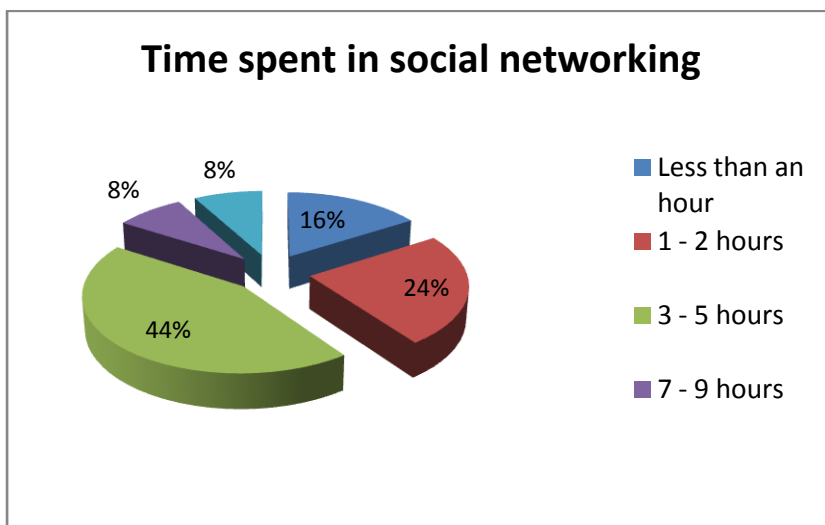
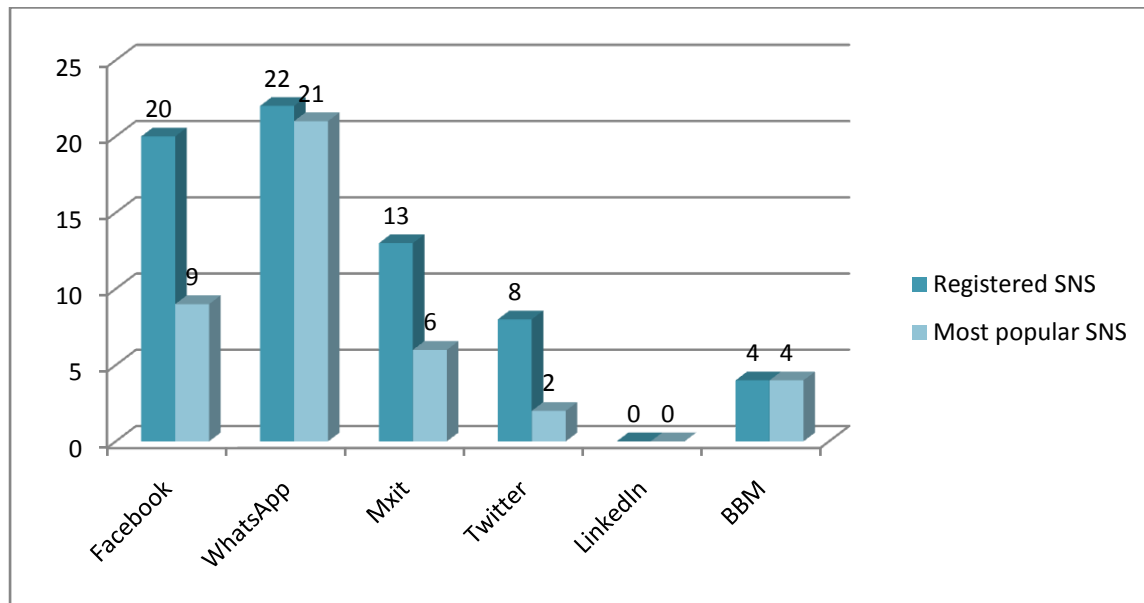


Figure 4.4 Percentages of time spent daily in social networking



The majority of participants engage in social networking between 3 – 5 hours daily. This amount of time comes down to 44% of the respondents in the sample spending between 3 – 5 hours per day on SNS. The figure below reflects the different Social Network Sites (SNS) on which the participants are registered as well as the most popular SNS:

Figure 4.5 Respondents' social networking practices

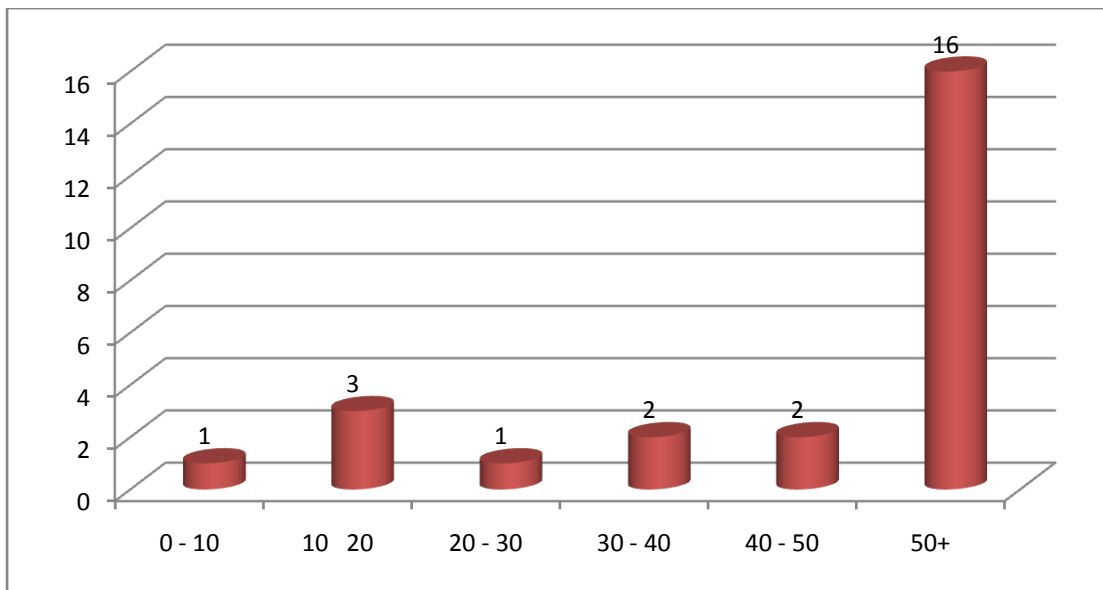


According to the graph WhatsApp is not only the most popular SNS (21,) but also the SNS on which most respondents are registered (22). Even though many respondents are registered on Facebook (20), it is far less popular than WhatsApp. I am of the opinion that BBM (Blackberry Messaging) would have earned a higher score. Unfortunately I haven't added BBM to the choices of social networks in the questionnaire and the score of four indicated in the graph is that of the respondents who added it themselves. I suspect that Blackberry cell phones are very popular among adolescents; therefore I feel that this score could have been higher if added to the questionnaire.

4.2.2.3 Online friendships

The following graph exhibits the responses of the participants with regard to their involvement in online friendships:

Figure 4.6 The amount of online friends



The greatest majority of participants (16) have more than 50 online friends. In the figure below, it is clear that the majority of respondents (20) experience their online friendships as strong. Only three felt that their friendships are strong and two felt that their friendships are both weak and strong.

Figure 4.7 Description of online friendships

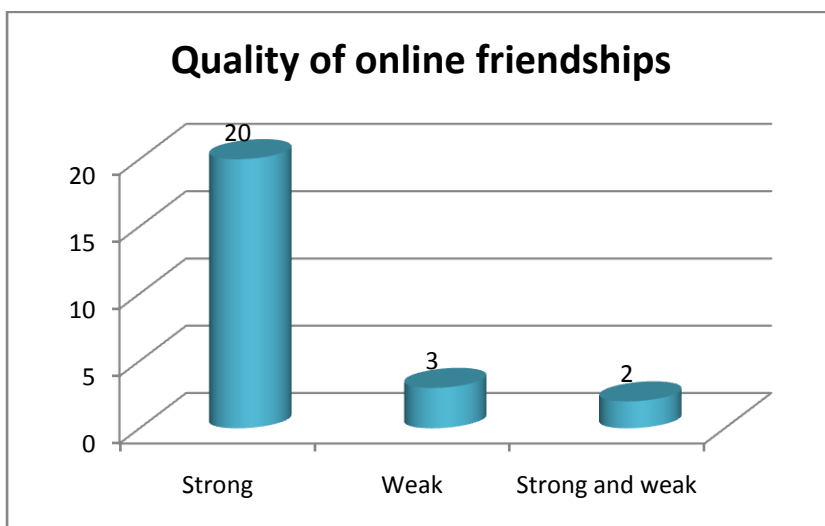
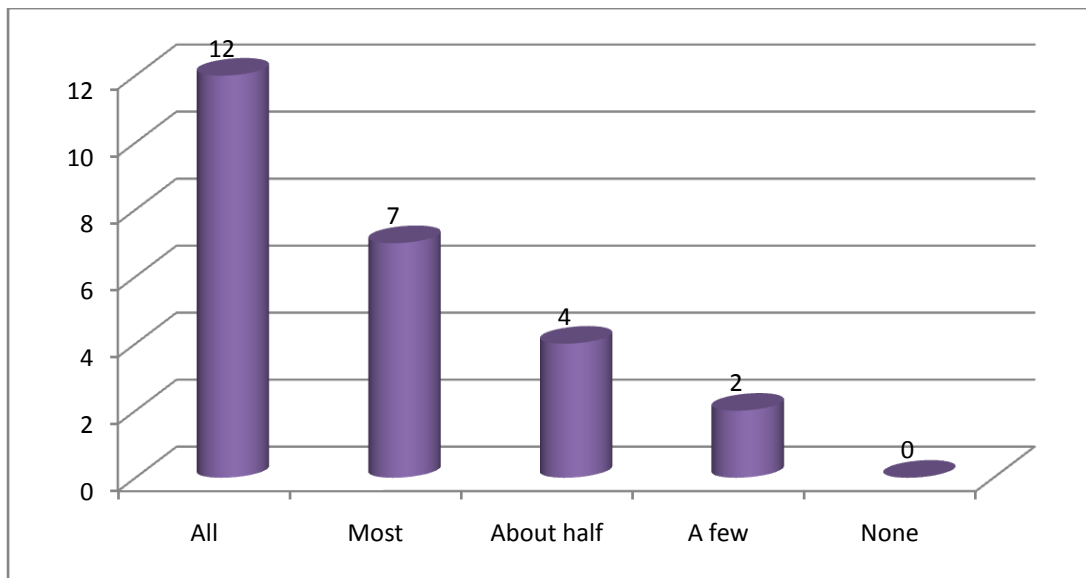


Figure 4.8 demonstrates that most participants have met their online friends in person. This suggests that most participants know all their online friends offline as well.

Figure 4.8 The number online friends met in person



4.2.2.4 Responses of respondents regarding close-ended questions

The following tables and graphs reflect the responses to the close-ended questions in the questionnaire:

Table 4.4 Responses of respondents to the close-ended questions

	Always(3)	Often(2)	Seldom(1)	Never(0)
11. I share personal information with my online friends.		15	7	3
12. To chat with my "friends" makes me feel happy.	15	10		
13. I need my online friends' support when I am feeling down.	12	11	1	1
14. It is easier to form and maintain friendships online than in real life.	5	10	8	2
15. I have more self-confidence when I am online with friends than in face to face situations.	4	10	4	7

Figure 4.9 Percentages of responses of participants regarding close-ended questions

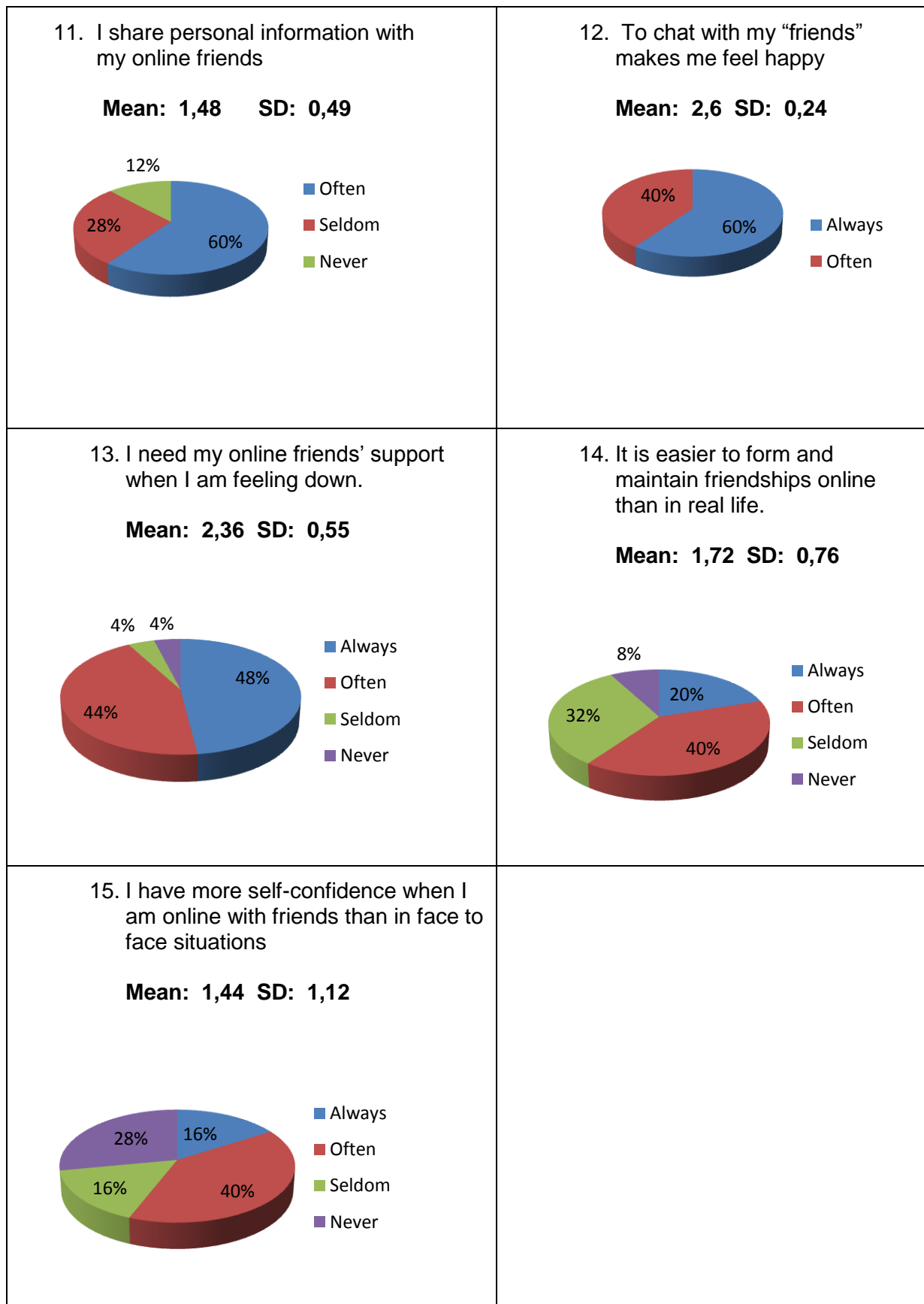
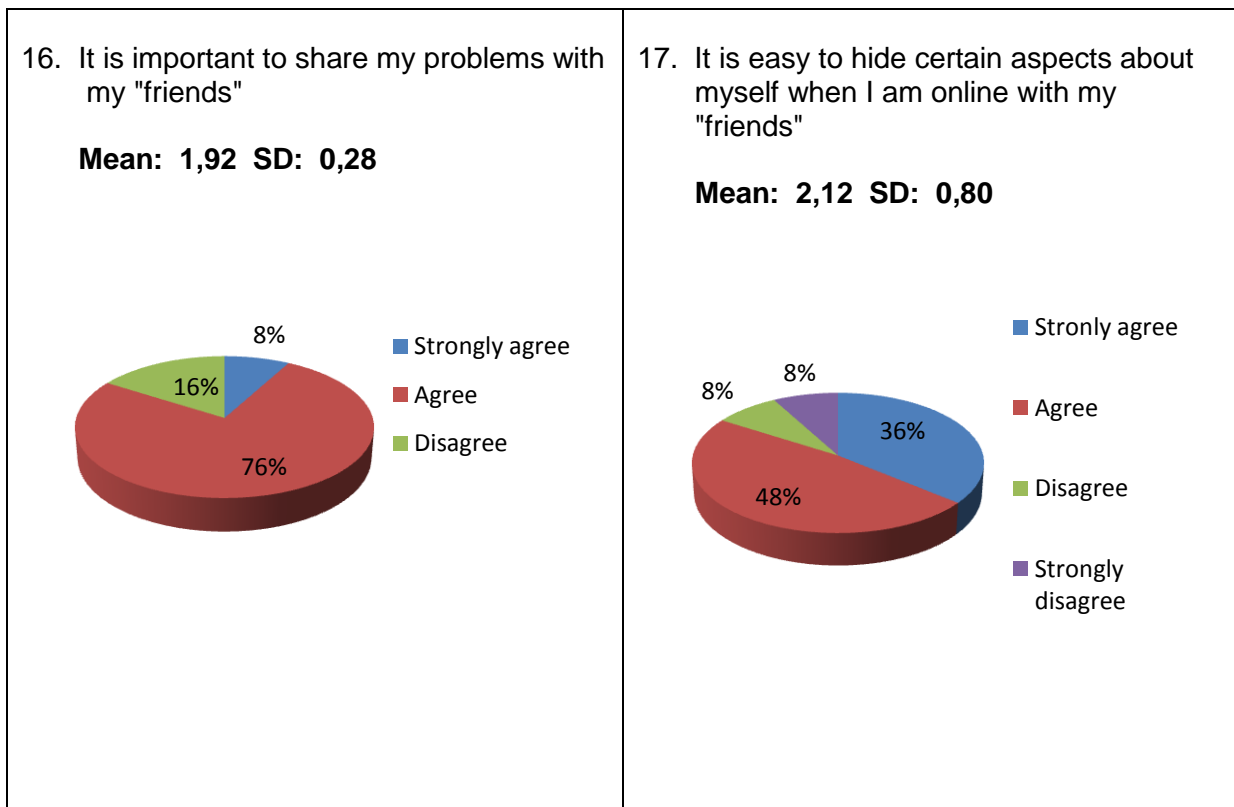


Table 4.5 Responses of respondents to the close-ended questions

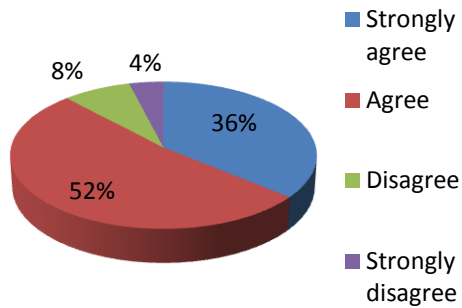
	Strongly Agree(3)	Agree(2)	Disagree(1)	Strongly disagree(0)
16. It is important to share my problems with my "friends".	2	19	4	
17. It is easy to hide certain aspects about myself when I am online with my "friends".	9	12	2	2
18. I feel good about myself when I can socialise with my "friends" on social network sites.	9	13	2	1
19. I trust my online friends.	5	14	6	
20. I learn more about myself through social networks and frequent interaction with my "friends".	6	10	7	2

Figure 4.10 Percentages of responses of participants regarding close-ended questions



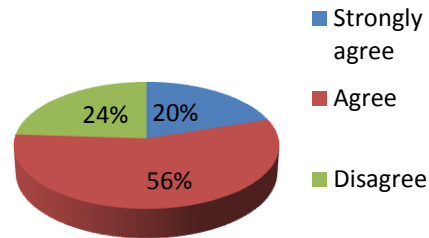
18. I feel good about myself when I can socialise with my "friends" on SNS

Mean: 2,2 SD: 0,45



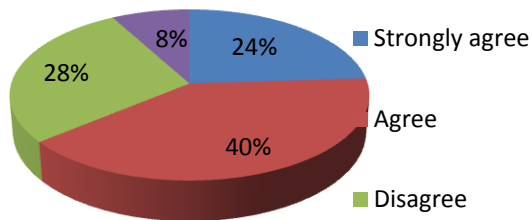
19. I trust my online friends

Mean: 1,96 SD: 0,44



20. I learn more about myself through social social networks and frequent interaction with my "friends"

Mean: 1,8 SD: 0,8



The mean of questions 11 - 20 and their standard deviations are indicated in the above charts. The mean scores refer to the average of all the scores per question (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:157) and the standard deviation reflects the distance of those scores from the mean (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:161). In order to fully understand the findings from questions 11 – 15 of the questionnaire, it is important to define what the difference is between *always* and *often*. It can be assumed that *always* in this context indicates that there is no exception; the response of the participant will always be the same. *Often* indicates that it happens regularly, but certain exceptions may apply. The same can be said about questions 16 – 20, where *strongly agree* can mean that the respondent is completely sure that he agrees with the statement, whereas *agree* suggests that he/she agrees most of the time with certain exceptions.

For interpretation purposes, these four responses (*always, often, strongly agree and agree*) were regarded as positive responses to the different variables.

4.2.3 Discussion

4.2.3.1 Biographical information

According to Santrock (2001:17) an adolescent is a person in transition from childhood to early adulthood. This transition involves biological, cognitive and socio-emotional changes. Adolescence begins approximately between 10 to 13 years of age and ends between the ages of 18 and 22 in most cultures. Rosen (2007:68) states that adolescence is a time of interaction with people and ideas. Passionate friendships are formed during this time and they experiment with various things that come their way. The adolescent's actions are not counted for in the same way as they will be later on in life, in other words their actions are not given as much weight. Based on this, Rosen (2007:69) believes that the forming of friendships, experimentation and not having the force of full judgement give many teens the courage to take actions online that they might feel awkward and embarrassing to do offline.

The age range of the participants in this study was 13 to 19 years, with the age mean being 16 years. The ages of the participants can therefore be regarded as representative of adolescents with a good distribution of the ages that fall within the age range of adolescents. The fact that the majority of learners in the school used as the case study, are Afrikaans speaking, explains why there are more Afrikaans speaking participants than other languages.

4.2.3.2 Internet usage and social networking practices

Internet connection and cell phones

All twenty five participants indicated that they have access to the Internet, mostly via their cell phones. This correlates with the fact that today's adolescents grew up in the digital age and possess many of the characteristics of the Net Generation as discussed in the literature study of this research.

Tapscott (2009:9) claims that the Net Generation uses their mobile phones to text incessantly, surf the Web, find directions, take pictures and make videos. They will be on Facebook every chance they get and Instant Messaging is always running in the background. The Net Gen assimilated technology because they grew up with it and therefore they view technology as part of their environment and using new technology is as natural for them as breathing (Tapscott 2009:18). This is in line with the results in the questionnaire, indicating that all 25 respondents use their cell phones as a tool for communication with their online friends.

Time spent on SNS

The majority of the respondents in the sample spend between 3 – 5 hours daily on SNS. If one bears in mind that the participants are at school for at least 8 hours a day, almost all of the rest of the day is spent on SNS, thus there will not be much time left interacting or spending time with parents and family members, homework, reading, extramural activities or just doing nothing. The result is that adolescents have taught themselves to multitask – they can almost do anything while they are texting. This correlates with the fact that the teenagers of today can multitask and that they believe that multitasking helps them to get everything done (Barnes et al. 2007:3).

Registered SNS and most popular SNS

According to the survey, the majority of participants (88%) are registered on WhatsApp and 84% makes use of WhatsApp for their online communication. O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson (2011:800) state that SNS allow social interaction online. Seeing that WhatsApp is a SNS that mostly makes use of instant messaging, it can be assumed that the respondents use WhatsApp mainly for social interaction. WhatsApp is a free messaging service for mobiles that effectively replaces text messaging (Norris 2013:1). A new kind of sociability had developed through the use of social media and SNS due to the fact that people can now connect with each other and can virtually meet outside the boundaries of time and space (Elliot & Urry 2010:45). Even though 80% of participants are registered on Facebook, only 36% views Facebook as a popular Website. A reason for this can be that on Facebook, a user has less privacy than on WhatsApp, because it is regarded as a more public forum for discussions and interactions.

In the literature study, it was mentioned that, according to studies, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter , Flixster and LinkedIn are the most frequently visited SNS, with Facebook having nearly 69 million visitors (Pujazon-Zazik & Park 2010:78). Contradictory to these findings, the result of this survey indicated that MySpace isn't used by the participants at all and that the participants most frequently visited and used WhatsApp.

4.2.3.3 Online friendships

Symington (2010:33) is of the opinion that people visit SNS because people's need to socialise is fed through them, therefore they satisfy people's socio-emotional needs. This opinion can be supported by the fact that 64% of the participants indicated that they have more than 50 online friends and 80% felt that their online friendships can be regarded as strong friendships. This proves the statement made by Symington that SNS are important to fulfil people's socio-emotional needs. Subrahmanyam and Lin (2007:660) have determined that adolescents are the biggest consumers of the Internet, particularly for its communication applications. Hwang et al. (2009:1105) believes that adolescents can use SNS to express themselves and interact with their peers. This can explain why a vast amount of hours are spent on SNS by the respondents in this study (3 – 5 hours per day).

All 25 participants indicated that they have met all, most, half or a few of their online friends in person. These results support the findings of Ploderer et al. (2008:333), stating that the interaction on SNS is often deeply entwined with people's offline experiences and that many SNS are used to keep contact with people with whom they already share an offline connection.

4.2.3.4 Psycho-educational analysis and interpretation of online friendships

The second part of the questionnaire (questions 11 – 20) consisted of close-ended questions which can be linked directly to the psycho-educational development and analysis of adolescents' online friendships. In addition to the general research question, I felt that a few more specific problems needed to be investigated in this study. Some of these problems included adolescents' connection with their online

friends: the amount of self-disclosure, their identity formation, strengthening of their ego-strength, the impact on their self-concept and self-esteem and the contribution to the adolescent's self-knowledge, self-actualisation and self-worth (see 3.2 in Chapter 3). These problems' findings will contribute to the psycho-educational analysis and interpretation of this study. The following figure reflects an analysis of the results of the close-ended questions (11 – 20) of the questionnaire:

Figure 4.11 Psycho-educational analysis and interpretation



Based on the abovementioned findings, it is clear that online friendships and social networking have a positive effect and strengthen the majority of respondents' psycho-educational development. To answer the research question regarding the quality of the online friendships in SNS, I came to the conclusion that the respondents experience their online friendships as strong: they trust their friends enough to disclose personal information and to seek their support in times of hardships. The majority of participant's experiences, with online friendships, strengthen and enhance their self-confidence, which in turn enhances their self-esteem and self-concept.

This analysis support Pujazon-Zazik and Park (2010:80) who believe that online interaction provides a space to learn (part of the development of an adolescent) and provides the opportunity to exercise self control. The abovementioned authors feel that peer acceptance and the immediate interpersonal feedback are important features of the SNS and predictors of social self-esteem and well-being in adolescence.

4.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: INTERVIEWS

For the second part of this research, a phenomenological qualitative study was executed in the form of semi-structured interviews and the research data was the information provided by the participants during these interviews. The five participants, who were interviewed, were identified by the information they provided in their questionnaires. The amount of hours spent online with friends, the amount of friends and the positive answers in the close-ended section were considered.

4.3.1 Data analysis

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:367) describe qualitative data analysis as primarily an inductive process through which data is organised into categories and patterns and relationships are identified among the categories. Qualitative data analysis encompasses a systematic process of coding, categorising and interpreting data that will provide explanations for a specific phenomenon. For the qualitative analysis of this research's data, content analysis was mainly used. I decided on most of the

categories for analysis in advance, due to the fact that the questionnaires were used as the point of departure for the semi-structured interviews and seeing that the study is an explanatory mixed method design. A process of crystallisation was then used. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:368) describe crystallisation as a process in which the analyst is open to maximum experiences within the analytic style. The researcher may conduct intensive reflexive analysis and often involves the reliving of each field experience and persistently questioning the data for nuances of meaning. The steps that were followed for the data analysis were based on Nester and Schutt's suggestions (2012:372-376) to organise and interpret the qualitative data as tabulated in Figure 3.5 and are explained below:

Step 1: Documentation

All information had been saved and listed. Transcriptions were made of each interview (see Addendum E) after which an outline for the analytical process was determined. The transcriptions were read through several times to determine an overall picture and to keep track of the information.

Step 2: Conceptualising, coding and categorising

After the transcriptions were read through a few times, they were studied once again with the goal to identify and refine important concepts. These concepts were coded into categories.

Step 3: Examining relationships and displaying data

The different codes and categories were studied and analysed in order to determine how the different concepts are connected.

Step 4: Authenticating conclusions

In this step the evidence and methods were considered closely to validate the conclusions that were made. Findings from the literature study had been used to link the empirical and the literature study.

4.3.2 Findings

After intensive and recurrent analysis of the data based on the abovementioned steps, the findings of the qualitative research are presented below, as well as the themes and categories discussed in the interviews. All interviews were transcribed verbatim (see Addendum E) and the quotes used as part of the findings were all taken from these transcriptions. The following codes were used:

R = Researcher P(A) etc. = Participant A etc.

PARTICIPANT A

Age: 13
Grade: 8
Gender: Female
Home language: Afrikaans

The table below reflects the results from the questionnaire that was completed by participant A:

Table 4.6 Results from the Questionnaire (Participant A)

Social networks	WhatsApp and BBM
Time spent on SNS per day	More than 10 hours
Online friends	30 – 40
Quality of online friendships	Strong
Online friends met in person:	About half
Positive responses to close-ended questions	9 out of 10
Division of positive responses	Always – 1 Often – 3 Strongly agree – 3 Agree - 2

Social network practices

Participant A chooses to communicate through BBM seeing that she has a Blackberry cell phone, as well as most of her friends. According to participant A, she chooses BBM because:

Want hy is nie so gekompliseerd nie en dis makliker om op hom te 'chat'. Want by BBM kan jy net soos ingaan....

She does not prefer to participate in *group chats*, because she feels that there can be people in the group who can be dangerous. In table 4.5 it is evident that this participant spends more than ten hours per day on SNS. She divides those hours as follows:

... ek sal opstaan en op BBM met almal bietjie 'chat' en so en dan deur skooltyd as ek 'n kansie kry dan 'chat' ek en na skooltyd dan is ek die heelyd op my foon, behalwe nou soos in die aande wanneer ek huiswerk doen.

A profile status often indicates how one is feeling that specific day and the profile picture links up with that. This will lead to a conversation between friends. If one doesn't like a person, one will delete or block that person.

Friends and friendships

She doesn't chat with all 30 to 40 online friends every day and has 11 to 12 close online friends with whom she talks every day. She indicates that the majority of her friends are male and all her friends are the same age as herself. She sees half of her online friends in person regularly, the other half consists of friends whom she has met on sport tours and they live in other towns. She wants to meet a person face to face first and will then decide whether to add him or her to her list of online friends. Participant A feels that her offline friendships will not be so strong without online communication:

Ek dink die kontak wat ons het van persoon tot persoon sal nog steeds dieselfde wees, maar jy gaan ook bietjie van jou.... dit gaan nie meer soos 'n sterk vriendskap wees nie..

She needs her online friends' support when she experiences problems and they will assist her in perceiving different points of views. One meets a lot of people via the social networks that one wouldn't have met otherwise. It is an advantage to be able to *delete* a person when you don't like him or her:

R: Dink jy dit is goed of sleg om iemand net te kan 'delete'?

P(A) Ek dink dit is tot voordeel, want jy kan dadelik van die persoon ontslae raak en as jy nou in persoon was, dan moet jy eers weglou en ek wil nog iets terug gesê het vir jou en dan raak jy kwaad en dan sê jy weer iets terug vir hom en dan gaan dit so aan en dit word net erger naderhand as wat dit is.

Certain people will send inappropriate pictures online, but she will delete them immediately. Participant A feels that it would be very hard without any contact with online friends:

R: Wat sal jy doen as jy nie meer toegang het tot jou vriende deur jou foon nie?

P(A) Ek dink dit kan nogal sleg wees, want almal is dan 'n stap voor jou en jy vind eers na die tyd uit en partykeer woon mense nie die goed by wat gereël is of so nie, want hulle weet nie wat aangaan nie.

Communication

Topics they talk about are mostly daily activities and discussing other people:

Ons gesels oor hoe ons dag was, of die meisies vertel my van hulle ouens of die ouens vertel my van hulle meisies... wie hulle like en dan praat ons ook net oor kuiers wat ons kan reël...

She prefers face to face communication first and will then maintain the friendship online, but indicates that in certain circumstances it can be easier to communicate online, especially when you don't really know that person and are too shy to start a conversation with him or her in person. She states that it is easier to say things to a friend online which you don't want to say face to face. She finds online communication easy, because she has more time to think about her responses. SNS have a negative effect on the communication in the family, because of spending less time with one's family, as one prefers to *chat* with one's online friends.

Self-disclosure

Participant A doesn't easily share personal information online. She is of the opinion that it can be shown to anyone afterwards. It is easy to lie about oneself online:

... kom ons sê iemand wat in Thabazimbi bly en die ander een wat hier bly. Daai persoon ken mos nie regtig daai persoon nie, hy ken hom net oor die foon, so daai persoon kan sê ons is ryk, ek is die mooiste, ek is die slimste in die skool of soos dit...ja. En as die persoon soos vra vir 'n foto, om te sien hoe hy lyk, kan hy maklik 'n 'n foto stuur van iemand wat regtig mooi is.

It is, however also easy to be caught out, because of the networking, the person would sometimes make a mistake by posting different pictures of himself to different girls without knowing that the other girls know him. Participant A wouldn't reveal any embarrassing moments online.

Parents' role

Her mother takes her cell phone to examine all the pictures she has saved on her phone. She doesn't read her *chats* though, because she feels that they are private, but she knows all her close online friends.

Self-confidence

Participant A's self-confidence is strengthened when she is too shy to talk to a boy in person, but she would have the confidence to flirt with him online. Online communication is easier if a person is too shy to uphold or start a conversation with a stranger. One experiences how others perceive you, because online, they will tell you directly. If you are a shy person, you would say things to others online that you would never say in person. The way others respond to what you say about yourself, helps to strengthen your self-esteem.

Identity formation

One regularly meets others online who want to change one:

Jy kan mense ontmoet wat jou partymaal sal wil verander. Soos jy ontmoet die persoon en dan ontmoet julle in die regte lewe en julle hou nou van mekaar, maar dit is eintlik die kinders wat rook en dit.... dan sien jy dit eers as jy hom ontmoet.

PARTICIPANT B

Age: 14 years
Grade: 9
Gender: Female
Home language: Afrikaans

The table below reflects the results from the questionnaire that was completed by participant B:

Table 4.7 Results from the Questionnaire (Participant B)

Social networks	WhatsApp, Mxit and BBM
Time spent on SNS per day	7 – 9 hours
Online friends	50 +
Quality of online friendships	Strong
Online friends met in person:	Most
Positive responses to close-ended questions	10 out of 10
Division of positive responses	Always – 2 Often – 3 Strongly agree – 3 Agree - 2

Social network practices

Participant B mostly uses BBM and WhatsApp. She has a Blackberry cell phone. She prefers WhatsApp, because it has more options. She forgets about the time when *chatting* with her online friends. When she is bored, she would go down her list of names and choose someone to talk to. She doesn't like chat rooms, because there are too many people she doesn't know and they talk too much:

...en dan is daar soos in baie kinders in die groepe wat ek nie eers ken nie, en dan sal my foon die hele dag beep soos wat almal in die groepe 'chat'... en hulle praat sommer almal deurmekaar, maar ook met mekaar...

Sometimes chatting interferes with school work: the phone *pings* the whole time and then one cannot concentrate on one's homework.

Friends and friendships

Participant B has more than 50 online friends, all between 16 and 19 years of age and the majority are male. Friendships are formed online by sending or asking someone for his or her BC pin:

Ja dis 'n kode op jou foon op BBM met jou naam en ouderdom by. Jy kan dan jou pin stuur na jou kontakte op jou lys en hulle ken weer 'n klomp ander persone wat nie op jou lys is nie en dan sal hulle soos in jou pin weer vir hulle gee en daai persone weer vir hulle kontakte. Dis soos 'n ketting..

You get *invited* and you must decide if you want to *accept*. She would first *chat* with that person before deciding to *accept* or not. The questions the other person asks are very important, because it's awkward if they become too personal. If one doesn't

like the specific person you can easily block or delete him or her. Her online friendships are all strong and are maintained easily online:

P(B): Tannie dit is baie maklike kommunikasie want 'n mens het altyd 'n goeie konneksie... jy kan soos in die hele tyd kommunikeer. Dit laat my veilig voel in die verhouding en kan my vriende met enige iets vertrou omdat ons so baie praat..

R: Mmm.

P(B): Dit is net makliker en vinniger om iemand so te leer ken.

R: So, sou jy sê die vriendskappe ontwikkel ook makliker aanlyn?

P(B) Ja, beslis tannie, want daar is soveel meer waaroor 'n mens gesels....

She feels safe with her online friendships, because she trusts her friends. Online friends are constantly there, any time you need them. Online friends support and motivate you in various aspects of your life. It is much easier to get to know somebody online.

Communication

Participant B feels that communicating online is easy communication with constant connections. You can communicate all the time. Statuses and profile pictures are shown and then everyone will react on them, thus starting up a conversation.

P(B): Ek sal miskien iets op my 'status' sit en ook my 'profile picture' maar ek sal nie sommer net iets sê nie.

R: Verander jy jou 'status' gereeld?

P(B): Ja, tannie so drie keer 'n dag. Maar daar is nog 'n 'status', 'n 'personal status'... dit is meer permanent.

R: Het almal 'n 'status'?

P(B): Ja, dit sê hoe jy voel op daai oomblik en dan sal die ander daaroor praat...

R: So, dit lok reaksie uit by almal...

P(B): Ja tannie. Almal sal soos in dan iets sê en so sal 'n 'chat' begin.

Participant B is very shy and finds it very difficult to talk to people face to face before she has talked to him or her online. She sees it as an ice breaker to first get to know someone before you physically meet, because the person already knows something about you:

.. dis vir my baie makliker, want dan kan 'n mens baie lekkerder gesels as jy mekaar eers leer ken het op die foon. Jy gaan nie soos in wonde wat om te doen of wat of te sê nie, want die persoon weet nou al iets van jou af.

It is easier to *chat* online, due to the fact, that one has the opportunity to first think through what one wants to say. Online friends talk about music, movies, bands, songs, clothes, sport and schoolwork. Online communication with friends, strengthens the friendships. One always knows what is happening:

... en dan ook alles wat gebeur. Op die foon weet jy van alles wat soos in gebeur al die nuus is oral op en almal praat oor goed. Jy sal afgesluit wees as jy nie meer weet wat aangaan nie...

Texting is like a record that stays on your phone. You can go back and read the *chats* any time you want.

Self-disclosure

The participant doesn't feel comfortable when things get too personal and doesn't reveal too much personal information online. She would use her status or profile picture to reveal how she feels, but she would not necessarily say something. She changes her status at least three times a day. Online friends make you feel more positive about yourself. They make you aware of your strong points. She doesn't involve her own emotions to become part of the conversations.

Parents' role

Participant B's mother takes her phone when she is writing tests and examinations and she feels her family doesn't understand that she needs her cell phone all the time.

Self-confidence

Online friendships enhance her self-confidence, because she is too shy to talk to people face to face:

.... ek het nou baie meer vriende as wat ek in die regte lewe sou hê. Ek kan nie net na 'n persoon toe loop en begin chat nie. Nou is ek baie 'talkative' want ek kon eers 'chat' met daai persoon op die foon. Dit gee my soos in selfvertroue vir die 'face to face'..

Online friends remind you of your strong points especially when you forget who you are. She feels that online friendships have made her more mature:

Ek dink dit het my meer volwasse gemaak. Omdat ek skaam is, het dit baie gehelp ek is nie nou meer so skaam nie en kan soos in makliker met ander persone gesels, maar ek hou nog steeds daarvan om eers te 'chat' oor die foon, dan is dit nie vir my so erg nie.

False identities

If someone has invited her, she wants to see the profile picture of that person. She will also find out if somebody else knows that person. Participant B will immediately block or delete a person when she finds out that he or she is pretending or lying about themselves.

Acceptance

Online friends accept you more easily on the phone:

.. partykeer vergeet jy goed van jouself en jou vriende help jou onthou wie jy is. Hulle motiveer jou so baie en hulle help jou selfbeeld want hulle motiveer jou die heelyd. Ek voel my vriende aanvaar my beter op die foon want ons 'chat' baie en dan is die kommunikasie nou so vir my baie makliker..

Physical proximity

It is easier to chat with someone if you are not with that person, especially when you have just met him or her. You don't feel so self-conscious.

PARTICIPANT C

Age: 15 years
Grade: 9
Gender: Female
Home language: Swati

The table below reflects the results from the questionnaire that was completed by participant C:

Table 4.8 Results from the Questionnaire (Participant C)

Social networks	WhatsApp and Mxit
Time spent on SNS per day	3 - 5 hours
Online friends	50 +
Quality of online friendships	Strong
Online friends met in person:	A few
Positive responses to close-ended questions	10 out of 10
Division of positive responses	Always – 2 Often – 3 Strongly agree – 2 Agree - 3

Social network practices

Participant C uses a Nokia phone and mainly uses WhatsApp to communicate with her online friends. She feels that Whatsapp makes it very easy to communicate because the responses are immediate and even if her friends are not online, they will receive her message as soon as they go online. She doesn't take part in group *chats*. She would *chat* with her online friends for approximately 4 hours a day, usually from 2 to 6 in the afternoons. When she studies and does her homework, she doesn't *chat* with them. When she encounters people who make her feel awkward, she would block that person immediately.

Friends and friendships

Participant C has many friends, but none of them are above 20 years of age. She has 10 to 11 close friends with whom she *chats* every day. She has met only a few of her online friends in person, many of them live far away.

Friendships are formed by starting with an *invite* from someone, then she would *accept* and first *chat* with that person to find out more about him/her:

... if this person knows how to find your number, he will invite... or she will invite you, then you will start chatting to that person, then maybe if he can....'cause some of my friends are not around this town...and he or she will say I have relatives who live in your town and I can come visit there. Maybe we can meet face to face. And so we meet face to face.

If she doesn't like the person she will block or *unfriend* him/her. When she visits some of her friends, she will meet other people face to face and become friends.

She *accepts* all invites from friends, even if she doesn't know that person. After that, she would ask them many questions like where they are from, what do they like, what kind of person they are, if they are in school or working. She will then decide if she likes that person, if she doesn't, she will block or delete him or her. Participant C is of the opinion that it is easier to maintain friendships online than in person. She likes the idea of having private conversations with her friends without having everyone knowing that you have *chatted* with someone:

....I have many friends that are boys, maybe I will sit with them and maybe discuss sometimes school things and then the girlfriend of this boy can come to me and say, ja... you were sitting with my boyfriend. It's okay on the phone rather in real, cause in real they will suspect me of things...

She needs her online friends in her life for support, communication and sharing things with them. It is much easier to maintain friendships online, because you can chat all the time. Her life would be very tough without her online friends or without access to the social networks – she would feel out of touch with everything and everyone, she will miss the conversations and the things they share. Her life would be empty and she would miss her friends and the conversations. She only trusts her online friends that she has met face to face.

Communication

Topics discussed with online friends are homework, other children and guys. She believes that if she did not have online friends, she would not know what is going on, because they share all kinds of information especially what is going on in the outside world. She is a very shy person and isn't always comfortable *chatting* with friends face to face, especially when she doesn't know them well. She communicates easier online than offline:

'Cause online...actually you have many things to say on the phone rather than face to face although that thing you didn't want to say to the person face to face, you will say it on the phone, because you don't see that person.

It doesn't bother her if she finds out that a person has lied to her, she won't confront him or her, but it's easy to find out if they are lying. She also uses profile pictures and her personal status to let her friends know how she feels.

Self-disclosure

She prefers not to reveal too much personal information online, but she shares her problems with her online friends; the responses help her to get through her problems and sometimes also to see them in a new light. She doesn't reveal everything online, when there is something she doesn't want to share, she will just keep quiet. She feels that it is important to be honest when you talk to friends online. She also uses profile pictures and her personal status to let her friends know how she feels.

Parents' role

During exam times her parents would sometimes take her phone. Her parents don't know her online friends or the things they *chat* about.

Self-confidence

Participant C feels that she can almost say anything online she doesn't have the courage to say in person. She feels more comfortable and has more self-confidence to chat with someone online than in person, because she is a very shy person. She indicates that in a face to face situation she will not talk because she doesn't always have something to say. The responses that she gets online make her feel more confident.

Identity formation

A profile picture is important, it tells you something about the other person and gives you an idea who and what he is, but she feels that you will not know a person before you have met. She would like to meet an online friend face to face after a while, as a confirmation of whom she has met online:

It's better to meet face to face, 'cause although that person has sent you his picture, you will never know him unless you meet face to face.

Physical proximity

It is easier to say things to a person when you don't see him face to face, but she is of the opinion that it is good to meet a person, otherwise you will never know him or her. She would like to meet all her online friends.

PARTICIPANT D

Age: 17 years
Grade: 11
Gender: Female
Home language: Swati and Sepedi

The table below reflects the results from the questionnaire that was completed by participant D:

Table 4.9 Results from the Questionnaire (Participant D)

Social networks	Facebook,WhatsApp, Mxit, Twitter and BBM
Time spent on SNS per day	3 - 5 hours
Online friends	50 +
Quality of online friendships	Strong
Online friends met in person:	Most
Positive responses to close-ended questions	10 out of 10
Division of positive responses	Always – 2 Often – 3 Strongly agree – 2 Agree - 3

Social network practices

This participant has a Blackberry phone and mainly uses BBM to chat with her friends. She uses Twitter and Facebook to follow people and events especially anything connected to the music industry. She likes to follow the whereabouts of famous artists, writers and celebrities outside South Africa. Participant uses Twitter to follow people and even institutions:

P(D): No, like you follow that person, like UJ has the page like one person controls the whole thing like it's a friend like they share like okay at the campus today things that happened.

R: Oh, I understand. So I can just type in UJ campus?

P(D): Ja, and then you will know what's going on.

Friends and friendships

Her friends consist of many family members who live far away. They share music, pictures on the social networking sites. She talks a lot to her cousins, for a minimum of three hours a day. When they get tired of typing they would use the voice note record function to record what they say and send it to one another. She has 106 friends on Twitter, 350 on Facebook and 105 on BBM. She has at least 50 friends online with whom she is close, but most of them are cousins and family. She doesn't accept a friend if she hasn't seen or met him/her in person:

Ummmm, most from my side I don't add you or if you add me and if we didn't meet, I don't accept you.. So, let me say all the people that I have on my BBM and Facebook, except for Twitter. On Twitter some of them I don't know I just accept. The others I do know them.

It is very easy to make friends online: you receive an invite from someone and you can decide to accept or decline.

P(D): ... okay let me say I had a cousin who know a person...like okay I know this person but I haven't met him or her or stuff like that. So you can add her on Facebook, she or he could accept you. You guys will talk like you will ask things via inbox so the others couldn't know. Like on Facebook you have an inbox. So, he or she will go to the inbox and says...okay thank you for accepting me and I will give my name and say where I come from. My brother is this one, my sister is this one and my friend is this one...

R: Mmm. Then you start talking...

P(D): Then you start talking...Some of the people will go like I don't know you, but it's good to meet you, we could be friends...

She used her online friends when she had a fight with her parents and they supported, encouraged and provided her with good advice. It calmed her down and helped her to put the situation into perspective.

She has at times missed her online friends a lot and feels that she cannot *chat* to anyone else. As a result, her life is very boring, without their input. She says that she would go mad without her phone, which enables her to *chat* to her friends. She feels that she can express herself better towards her friends, than towards her family:

So me and my mother and my father will fight about stuff, but then I cannot express to them, but I can express to people on social networks. They would tell me "okay calm down when this and this happens you know, parents are like this". They

encourage me instead of your parents if you tell them, they shout more at you. So those people would try and calm you down.

Participant C has entered chat rooms on Mxit. She likes to view other people's points of view and learns a lot from them.

Communication

It is much easier to communicate online, especially for the people who are shy. When you have talked online it is much easier to talk offline with that person. She has 50 close friends with whom she talks regularly. She and her friends use pictures a lot to start a *chat*. Her online friendships and the communication online sometimes interfere with her schoolwork:

Usually when we have homework and schoolwork like when my friends have a calendar where they can see okay I'm writing things ... so if like...let me make an example: last year September we were writing mini exams, so I was studying for business and something like... most of the topics are boring and then my phone is here and I have a BIS, I close the book and go on the phone for maybe a few hours and it affects my studying.

She would also rather *chat* than sleep – she feels that she has to keep in touch with her friends; otherwise she would lose touch with everything that is going on in their lives. Online communication serves as an ice breaker, because you first chat online and then in person. Online communication ensures that you keep contact with friends living far away and it broadens her general knowledge. She indicates that she wouldn't be able to live without her phone.

Self-disclosure

She easily shares personal information with her online friends, because she trusts them completely because she knows them all:

Ummm. Okay, maybe like if.... let me see.....uhmm okay most of the people I know like to share things with. Like I said the 50 I'm close to I'll share anywhere, like when my friends' parents went through a divorce I could share with them.

About very private matters, it is your choice whether you want to share or not.

Parents' role

When her phone is taken away during exams and tests, her life feels empty and it is very hard.

Self-confidence

Social networking enhances and strengthens her self-confidence, because she can speak more openly with her friends. She is not shy when she *chats* with her online friends:

.. the thing is I'm really shy like meeting a person like then I'm really shy, but through the social networks like I could talk for hours...

You can say more on the social networks than you would offline. On Facebook, when her friends "like" what she has said or done, it instantly gives a boost to her self-confidence and self-esteem. She likes the immediate feedback that she receives from her friends. Social networking has helped her to become more talkative and it has enriched her general knowledge. It helps her to know what is going on in the world.

Identity formation and false identities

She believes it is very easy for someone to lie about his/her identity, but sooner or later that person will be caught out, because of the amount of friends in the social networks who knows that person.

Physical proximity

She finds it easier to view her opinions without seeing the person, she doesn't care what she says, because she cannot see the others person's physical reaction:

'Cause most of the things I see, I can view my opinions without seeing that person. But most of the time, someone would do something wrong and I'll see that this person is hurt, but this thing I need to tell him or her, but online I don't see if she's happy or angry, I just tell her "okay, you just messed up this and that". I don't care if they are angry, they will come to me tomorrow and tell me "couldn't you tell me in a better way" and then it's when we will talk. So, but usually when I'm face to face I won't talk like that.

PARTICIPANT E

Age: 17 years
Grade: 12
Gender: Female
Home language: Afrikaans

The table below reflects the results from the questionnaire that was completed by participant E:

Table 4.10 Results from the Questionnaire (Participant E)

Social networks	WhatsApp
Time spent on SNS per day	3 - 5 hours
Online friends	50 +
Quality of online friendships	Strong
Online friends met in person:	Most
Positive responses to close-ended questions	9 out of 10
Division of positive responses	Always – 4 Strongly agree –2 Agree - 3

Social network practices

Participant E uses a Samsung Galaxy and mainly uses WhatsApp to talk to her online friends. WhatsApp is cheaper and more convenient:

..want dit is meer gerieflik en goedkoper om met mense te kommunikeer as wat jy op Facebook kommunikeer waar almal jou kan sien. Ja dit is eintlik net baie goedkoper en jy kan met almal gesels reg rondom – dis makliker en vinniger ook.

She prefers WhatsApp, because Facebook is less private and all one's friends can see and follow one's conversations. WhatsApp is so much more private, because one *chats* with only one friend at a time. She doesn't like group *chats*, because one can very easily get involved in conflicts, within the group. She communicates one on one. In the *chat rooms* on Mxit, you don't know everybody in the chat room, but you are still part of the conversation. It makes her uncomfortable to chat with people she doesn't know.

Friends and friendships

She has more than 50 friends on social networks, but has only about 15 close friends that include family members. They are between 17 and 24 years of age. You are invited by a friend and you will look at that person's status and would ask questions of a personal nature step by step before deciding if you want to be friends with him/her:

...ek sal stap vir stap vir hom vra wat is sy naam en wat is sy ouderdom en van waar af kom hy en wat doen hy en wat is sy belangstellings. Dan sal ons so begin gesels, maar as ek voel ek is nie gerus met die persoon nie, sal ek ook nie persoonlike inligting met hom deel soos waar ek bly of iets nie..

If someone gets too personal, too quickly, she would block that person instantaneously. The friends that are not that close to her, would only be chatted with on their birthdays or she would respond to their statuses. Thus she doesn't have the need to meet them in person. She has met most of her friends in person. It is much easier to form friendships (and quicker) online due to the constant, continuous conversations and communication. Her friends also support and help her with her schoolwork and homework. It provides a sense of security to know that her friends are only a button away and this strengthens the friendships all the time. The constant support and encouragement from her online friends are extremely important to her. Her life would feel very empty without her online friends. She would not be able to communicate with as many people and it would influence her self-worth. Her contact with the outside world would be minimal. She feels that online relationships can change one's life. She met her current boyfriend online in a chat room and they have been together for more than a year.

Communication

She would communicate with her friends mainly after school, but she makes sure that it doesn't interfere with her homework or schoolwork. They talk about school work and organise events. She changes her profile picture and status at least three times a day, but it is meant only for her close friends to see. They would then respond immediately:

P(E): Ja, ek sal soos my 'profile' of my foto en dan sal hulle natuurlik vra oor wat is dit? Dan sal ek vir hulle sê oor wat dit is, maar dan wil ek hê hulle moet dit stil hou, want dis nie vir almal se ore bedoel of iets nie.

R: So, jy maak jou 'status' en jou prentjie of jou foto oor hoe jy voel.

P(E): ... oor hoe ek voel, ja.

R: En jy maak dit dan ook net bekend aan die mense wat jy wil hê dit moet sien...

P(E): Ja, ons sal nie sommer gesels nie, maar as ons sien hierdie status is nou oor hoe sy voel of hoe die aand was, dan vra ons nou hoe was dit, nou hoekom voel jy so of so iets. Dan sal ons nou begin gesels oor hoekom sy so voel.

Facebook is more openly exposed than WhatsApp, because everybody sees the conversations and comments. She keeps her conversations brief on Facebook, with regard to the communication with her friends, as it is easier to firstly have time to respond and then to think about one's response. When you feel uncomfortable about something you want to say, you have time to think about it first before sending the message. You have more of a choice of what and how you want to say about something.

Self-disclosure

She has learned to more honest and as a result, others accept her easier, when she is honest with them. Friends are always there for you and you for them, so the support is constant. When one meets a new friend, one should be careful what one says to others about oneself, think twice before posting something and always ask for a picture. Don't say where you live too soon and don't provide too much personal information too soon, first find out more about the other person:

Self-confidence

Online friendships and social networks make her happy because it is so much easier to chat and to have a good meaningful conversation. When she meets someone in person, she always feels uncomfortable because they are sometimes only focused on her physical appearance and would sometimes not hear what she says. She feels it's easier to communicate on the phone than in person:

Dit is makliker om oor sake te praat waar jy nie 'face to face' met hulle praat nie, in verband met verhoudings oor hoe jy voel oor die persoon of wat ook al.

It is easier to follow and maintain a conversation via the text and it is easier to concentrate on what that person is saying to you. It is as if every one hears what you are saying and the conversations are definitely more meaningful. She is much shyer in face to face situations.

Identity formation and false identities

She finds it very easy to hide certain aspects about herself online. She has kept the truth about her own life from her friends. She has evaded them when they wanted to meet her or come and visit her, because she was ashamed about her home. She did this to protect her own identity. When her friendships became stronger and the conversations moved to a deeper level, it started to become very awkward for her and she realised that she has to draw the line somewhere. After a year she decided to tell the truth because she couldn't keep up with the lies and couldn't cope any more. She felt much better after she had revealed the truth about herself and felt that her friends, who accepted her, were indeed her real friends. She feels that she can be herself more on the phone.

Physical proximity

Social networking has strengthened her self-confidence because she feels there is no judgement online. Without the physical proximity and distractions her friends can actually follow and hear what she is saying:

Ja, van die fisiese aspek en ek voel net as ek met hulle fisies gesels, dan is daar net altyd 'n manier wat hulle ... hulle luister nie eintlik nie. Dit gaan oor hulleself ... en dit is hoe dit is. En as ek oor die selfoon gesels kan ek dadelik sê wie ek is waar ek met julle staan en ek is eerlik, waar ek hier te skaam is om my opinie te lug.

One can be more honest in online conversations than in a face to face situation:

... hulle kan so met jou mooi praat en als en dan as jy hulle fisies nou 'face' dan kan hulle allerhande stories vir jou "spin al ken hulle jou nie werklik nie... of wie jy is nie.

Acceptance

Participant C feels that in face to face conversations, there is less acceptance and a lot more judgement:

...want hulle kan so met jou gesels, maar dan so agter jou rug besluit wat om oor jou te *judge* soos jou hemp lyk nie reg nie, maar hulle sal jou ook nie sê nie.

4.3.3 Discussion of the findings

The five interviews are summarised and interpreted below. Certain aspects and findings of the literature study had been connected and linked to the findings that emerged from the five interviews.

Social networking practices and digital technology

Most respondents use either BBM or WhatsApp as the SNS of their choice, because they find it convenient, quick and easy. They spend a large amount of time on SNS and time seems to fly when they are social networking. Through SNS they know what is going on and they feel permanently connected to their friends. Using cell phones as part of our new technology, enables today's adolescents to communicate with each other and the outside world (Holland & Harpin 2008:10). This supports the opinion of Rosen (2007:34) and Tapscott (2007:2) that adolescents almost take digital technology for granted seeing that they assume constant access to the Internet and thus with each other through SNS. One important aspect that emerged from the interviews is that the participants can easily communicate with people who live far away. This supports Elliot and Ury's view (2010:87) that there are now boundaries, regarding time and space when digital technology is put to use. The constant involvement in SNS has enabled adolescents to multi-task while texting and it seems to be the way they socialise with their friends. It has become part of their lifestyle and their learning (Barnes et al. 2007:3).

Friendships

Most participants have a smaller group of close friends with whom they have contact every day and most participants' friends are of a similar age. They have all met most of their online friends in person. Blais (2008:2) states that young people's internet-based socialisation, follows a similar trend when compared to face to face interpersonal relationships. The participants' online friendships strengthen their offline friendships, because they have constant contact with each other.

Gue and Davidson (2008:625) feel that the majority of teens use social networks to keep in touch with friends. Boase and Wellman (2006:713) found that adolescents, who form relationships online, have the desire to meet Internet friends in person, a fact that is proven in this study. This is supported by the fact that all the participants agree that it is easier to form and maintain friendships online than face to face. You are *invited* by another person, you will *accept* and then get to know that person. If you don't like him or her, you immediately delete or block that person.

They depend on their friends' support and motivation. Online friends are permanently available and this provides a sense of safety and security within the friendship and therefore their lives would be empty without their online friends. Rosen (2007:39) emphasises the role of support in adolescents' friendships and this is supported by the participants' experiences of their online friends' continuous support.

Communication

The participants feel that it is easier to communicate online than face to face. Online communication is used as an ice breaker, mostly before spending time with a person offline. SNS provide constant and easy connections through the Internet and cell phones. One has time to think before responding to others. They find it easier to say things online than directly to a person. They talk mostly about every day activities, but also school and homework. Online communication strengthens the participants' offline friendships. This correlates with Valkenburg and Peter's findings (2007:275) of adolescents who use IM (instant messaging) mainly to talk with existing offline friends. Texting is like a record that stays on your phone and can promote adolescents' confidence, seeing that it is easier to express their thoughts and feelings (Bonil-Yassim & Barak 2011:2). It is therefore also easier to follow a conversation online, because there are no other distractions. Valkenburg and Peter (2007:275) found that most adolescents experienced online communication, as more effective than offline communication. The participants all make use of synchronous communication as described by Wood and Smith (2001:37).

Self-disclosure

Profile pictures and personal statuses are used to tell online friends how they feel. This will usually lead to a conversation between friends. All participants are cautious

not to reveal too much personal information online. Shouten (1007:10) believes that self-disclosure can be directly linked to relationship development, especially in the forming and maintaining of relationships and that might be the reason why all participants chose to reveal themselves in a safe way, through their statuses and profile pictures.

Self-confidence

Online friendships and social networking enhance and strengthen the participants' self-confidence. They all feel that it is easier to express yourself online than in a face to face situation. This can be linked to Blais et al.'s findings (2008:523) that adolescents feel that they can be their "true" selves when they communicate online rather than face to face. The majority are shy in a face to face situation, especially where boys are concerned and find that they are less shy when communicating online. The support and comments from their online friends boosts their self-confidence and self-esteem. The physical absence of the other person makes it easier to act with confidence online. One does not have to look that person in the eye when communicating with him or her.

Identity formation

The participants feel that it is easy to pretend to be someone else online, but sooner or later one will be caught out, due to the fact that SNS works like a giant network. People know each other and constantly share information with each other. The participants can be themselves online, because they have more confidence online, when they speak to their online friends. The fact that they feel that they are accepted, contributes to healthy identity formation, seeing that they feel that judgement of others is less than in real life. This finding supports Livingstone and Brake's opinion (2010:76) that identities are constituted through interaction with others and the representation of oneself needs to be affirmed by one's peers, in this case the participants' online friends. Even though studies have found that the Internet offers a safe place and many opportunities where adolescents can anonymously experiment with different identities (Williams & Merten 2008:256), all the participants agreed that SNS are not a safe place to experiment with different identities. They all indicated that they find it is easy to realise when another person is pretending or lying.

Judgement and acceptance

The reduced nonverbal cues, the control over time and pace of the interactions can influence the online friendships because there is no basis for prejudice. This is confirmed by participants B and E where they feel that they are accepted more easily online, because they feel that they are not judged.

Physical proximity

In online friendships physical proximity is substituted with digital proximity, because adolescents are more reachable online, as they are constantly online. The absence of physical proximity in online friendships makes it easier for the participants to communicate or maintain online friendships. It makes them feel less self-conscious.

The psychological well-being

A huge debate is currently ongoing to determine the impact of online communication and online friendships on the psychological well-being of adolescents. Hwang et al. (2009:1105) is of the opinion that SNS provides peer acceptance and interpersonal feedback, which are important predictors of social self-esteem and well-being in adolescents. On the other hand Van den Eijnden et al. (2008:655) found that teenagers experienced a decline in social and psychological well-being during the first year of access to the Internet, but after three years these negative effects have dissipated. The participants in this study all revealed that SNS and online friends' support, motivation and encouragement make them feel good and happy and therefore it can be assumed that online friendships and social networking promote their psychological well-being.

4.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the results of the empirical study were put forward. The quantitative research data was discussed and an analysis of the data which emerged from the qualitative research was presented. It was found that online friendships and social networking are an integral part of the life world of the adolescent growing up in the digital age. Social networking is a complicated phenomenon which consists of several aspects that cannot be

separated from each other, as reflected in the quantitative and qualitative findings of the empirical study.

Chapter 5 consists of a complete discussion of the abovementioned analysis. The focus will be on the final educational and psychological implications as well as the recommendations that could be derived from this study.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“Technology is influencing the way kids think and behave, but it’s a two-way street – the way kids think and behave is influencing and shaping the Internet itself.”

-Don Tapscott



5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter a final overview of the study is presented. The focus will be on the extent to which the data is able to answer the research question and the more specific research questions. Final conclusions were added to the abovementioned discussions. Recommendations are put forward for participants, parents and teachers as well as future studies. The limitations of this particular study will also be discussed in this chapter.

5.2 AIM OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aim of the study was to gain knowledge regarding the nature of online friendships among adolescents in social networking from a psycho-educational perspective. The intention was to make a contribution to a holistic and better understanding of the social engagement in online friendships by the teenager of today. An attempt to provide answers to issues concerning the phenomenon of social networking that will benefit the participants, parents and teachers formed part of the aim for this study.

More specific questions needed to be investigated with regard to online adolescent friendships, which resulted in a more specific purpose for the study. These specific research questions were:

- How frequently do adolescents form new online friendships and how much time do they spend on the Internet talking to their friends?
- What are the qualities of these online friendships?
- To what level will the adolescent rate engagement in self-disclosure in these online friendships and reveal private matters?
- Do the electronic engagement, involvement and communication have an effect on the adolescent's identity formation?
- Can the successful forming of online friendships influence and enhance the adolescent's ego strength?

- What is the impact of online friendships on the self-concept of the adolescent and do they promote positive self-talk?
- Do online friendships contribute to the adolescent's self-knowledge, self-actualisation and self-worth?

In order to achieve the primary research questions and to answer the more specific research problems, a literature study was firstly conducted and then secondly an empirical study. The empirical study entailed a quantitative study followed by a qualitative study. In the discussion below, integration of these three studies' findings, as well as the conclusions, are offered.

5.3 DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS IN TERMS OF THE SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The findings and results of the literature study and the empirical research are discussed below with regard to the specific research questions.

5.3.1 Specific research questions

How frequently do adolescents form new online friendships and how much time do they spend on the Internet talking to their friends?

All participants in the study have access to the Internet via their cell phones. They are all registered on a social networking site through which they communicate with their online friends every day. The time spent on SNS differs from person to person and it can be linked to personal choice and availability of time. The respondents will often engage in online social interaction and would then forget about the time. This interaction often interferes with their homework and studying. Most of the respondents find it easier to form new online friendships via SNS. The *invite* and *accept* concept, play an important role in the forming of new friendships and enables them to form new friendships constantly and immediately. Guo (2009:620) states in point 2.3.4 that a user creates a profile on SNS, like Facebook, and the profiles are then linked to each other on the specific SNS, thus, online communities are created via link users, who are already related in certain ways.

According to the data acquired, it is evident that forming online friendships and spending time on SNS have become a new way for adolescents to socialise. It is a matter of personal choice whether to *accept* an *invite* and get to know the person thereafter, or to not to *accept*, without knowing that person offline. The adolescents of today like to share information. They want to be connected with friends and family constantly and they use technology to achieve this – from cell phones to social networks. Tapscott (2009:40) claims that adolescents' cell phones are not only useful communication devices nowadays, but they are vital connections to their friendships. Now that the phones are permanently connected to the Internet, they can stay connected with friends online wherever they go.

What are the qualities of these online friendships?

The greatest majority of participants have more than 50 online friends. They revealed that most of those online friendships can be regarded as close friendships. Half of the participants have met all their online friends in person. Notley (2009:1214) explains that a connection via SNS is mainly to form relationships with others or to maintain existing relationships. Socialising is an important emotional need of the teenager and they start turning away from their family towards peer groups. Friends that connect on SNS share the same interests and the links between the different profiles make it fairly easy to identify others with the same interests (see 2.4.1). Blais (2008:2) believes that the adolescent's socialisation and development of interpersonal relationships on the Internet follow the same pattern as in face to face contexts. Therefore it is not surprising that adolescents turn to the Internet to socialise with each other, thus expanding their social support network and to feel closer to their pre-existing friends (see 2.4.2).

CMC (computerised mediated communication) plays an important role in the forming of online friendships. Blais (2008:7) believes that one of the possible reasons why so many adolescents make friends on the Internet is the ease with which they can communicate with others. The participants have indicated that the convenience and ease with which they can communicate with their friends, definitely strengthens their offline friendships. But a friend online doesn't necessarily mean a friend offline and in SNS, many relationships move between the virtual and the physical world quite frequently (Tong et al. 2008:537 - see 2.5.2).

Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008:6) believe that media technologies have become a social variable for today's youth and have resulted in the fact that their physical and virtual worlds are psychologically connected. This idea is supported by the participants who revealed that they cannot imagine their worlds without their cell phones, because it means that they don't have any communication or connection with their friends and the outside world.

The socio-emotional needs of the participants, in terms of online friendships, can be linked directly to the characteristics of friendship according to Rosen (2007:40) as displayed in Figure 2.5. The participants pointed out that they share interests with their online friends and this is easily determined by reading someone's profile or by asking questions to familiarise themselves better, with that person. The participants also need their online friends' emotional support and understanding. They can talk to their friends about their problems and they all feel that the support they receive from their online friends is a very valuable asset to the quality of their friendships. They feel that they are judged less online and more easily accepted. Their friends would frequently provide them with advice and guidance in times of need.

In point 2.5.2 Rosen (2007:57) states that SNS serve three functions with regard to online adolescent friendship. These three functions had been confirmed by the participants:

- SNS allow them to keep in touch with current friends
- SNS provide opportunities to make friends among people they might never have met.
- SNS provide a 24 hour network where friends are always available and ready to talk.

The fundamental purpose of SNS therefore, is that they allow adolescents to participate in a full-time, always-on intimate community, where they can feel emotionally close and connected to others even though they are physically apart from them.

An interesting fact that surfaced from the interviews was that the participants feel that they have a choice in deciding who they accept as their online friends.

The fast rate at which they can learn more about another person through CMC supports them in making that choice. The use of profile pictures and statuses contributes to this decision making process. The participants easily delete or block an online friend if they don't wish to be friends anymore. In terms of social communication and sociability, this is an easy way out of a difficult situation. Instead of talking problems through with friends and trying to compromise or find a solution, the delete button is pressed. You don't need the courage to look the other person in the eye; you can end a friendship within a second. They might never really learn to manage conflicts or awkward situations with regard to social interactions face to face.

To what level will the adolescent rate engagement in self-disclosure in these online friendships and reveal private matters?

Sixty percent of the respondents indicated in the questionnaire that they often share personal information with their friends and 84% responded positively to the question that it is important for them to share their problems with their online friends. The participants in the interviews pointed out that they are cautious not to reveal too much personal information to online friends, until they know them better. The friends they know well, they trust more and will self-disclose information easily. These findings correlate with Shouten (2007:10) who believes that there is a difference between self-disclosure and self-presentation. The participants make use of self-presentation by presenting aspects of themselves selectively to friends they are not close to. Self-disclosure takes place when the relationship has developed to such a level to which they can trust their online friends and feel safe in the friendship. The fact that the participants feel that there is not much basis for prejudice and judgement online, due to the reduced nonverbal cues and the control they have over time and space, helps them to self-disclose easily. The *Hyperpersonal Communication Theory* can be applied to the participants, because they regard CMC as distant and safe especially because they are all shy and self-conscious in a face to face situation. Mutual self-disclosure online enhances the quality of adolescents' relationships and forms a fundamental characteristic of high-quality relationships (Valkenburg & Peter 2009:2 – 2.4.4.). This can be the reason why the participants change their profile statuses and profile pictures regularly.

Social networks are a phenomenal way to spread information: when a person puts a photo on his profile page, he doesn't have to e-mail friends or call them to tell them about it. The news about that photo is instantly transmitted to the online friends' profile pages making the communication instant and automatic (Tapscott 2009:56).

Do the electronic engagement, involvement and communication have an effect on the adolescent's identity formation?

The participants in this study showed that they are more easily accepted online than in a real life situation. They have more courage to be themselves and people pay more attention to what they say online than in a face to face situation. Ando et al. (2008:124 – 2.4.5) pointed out that online communication doesn't only provide emotional support, but also the opportunity to experiment with identities and strategies in their relationships. The sharing of the self and the exposing of the self on SNS can be seen as part of the search for identity and the integration of the self (Symington 2008:21 – 2.4.3). This is supported by the fact that the participants are concerned about how their friends respond to them. They find comfort in having enough time to respond online through texting and they are able to correct and perfect their answers before sending them back to their friends. Thus it might be easier to form an identity online, seeing that there is constant interaction between friends in which they can construct a valued representation of themselves which is immediately affirmed by the online friends. Even though it is not difficult to construct various identities online on different SNS, the participants feel that they will soon be exposed and their true identity will be revealed, due to the close-knit and with huge social network connections online.

Can the successful forming of online friendships influence and enhance the adolescent's ego strength?

Adolescents have continuous connections and communication with their online friends. The participants indicated that they will be empty and lost without their cell phones and will miss the conversations they have with their friends. The findings of this study pointed out that adolescents' self-confidence are stronger online and that their online friends make them feel happy and they feel good when they can communicate with their online friends.

This can strengthen an adolescents' ego strength, when he feels accepted without judgement by his peers. They find it easier to ascertain themselves if they are not physically in the presence of the other person. The idea that they are dependent on their online friends' motivation, encouragement and point of view, can also be regarded as an ego strength enhancer. If an adolescent has his/her cell phone with him/her every 24 hours (as most adolescents do), means having the support and the understanding in the 24 hours a day. This supplies a feeling of safety and security for the ego of the adolescent. Unfortunately, the opposite is also true, especially where cyber bullying or the sharing of inappropriate material is concerned.

What is the impact of online friendships on the self-concept of the adolescent and do they promote positive self talk?

The participants indicated that they all have more self-confidence online and can express themselves more openly online. Their friends often make them aware of their strong points and therefore contribute to the forming of a healthy self-esteem and self-concept. All participants pointed out that it makes them feel happy to chat with their online friends and 88% said that they feel good about themselves when they can socialise with their friends. Peer acceptance and interpersonal feedback are fundamental predictors of social self-esteem and of the well-being in the adolescence, which form part of the fundamental features of SNS (Hwang et al. 2009:1105 – 2.4.1). The participants have shown that online friendships have taught them numerous things about themselves and some of them have grown more mature. Most of them feel that they have realised that it is important to always be honest with your friends and to return the encouragement and motivation they experience in their online friendships. According to the *Social Compensation Theory*, introverts and socially anxious adolescents gain more from CMC usage and that CMC compensates for their weaker social skills. This fact was proved by the views of the participants, seeing that they all found it easier to communicate online than face to face (see Table 2.7).

Do online friendships contribute to the adolescent's self-knowledge, self-actualisation and self-worth?

Pujazon-Zazik and Park (2010:80) believe that online interaction provides a space to learn and refine the ability to exercise self control, to be tolerant towards others' viewpoints and to engage in critical thinking and decision making (see 2.4.1). Blais et al. (2008:523) found in a study that adolescents feel they can be their "true" selves, when they communicate with their online friends (see 2.4.5). The participants felt that when you are communicating online, your friends really listen to you and acknowledge your point of view, whereas in person they would be distracted by many external factors and would always pay attention to what you are saying. Therefore online friendships and communication contribute and strengthen the adolescents' self-worth and can help them to achieve self-actualisation. They have all indicated that they have gained knowledge and insight into themselves through CMC and SNS. This can be linked to the *Gestalt Theory* as studied by Symington (2010:43) which states that there is a constant interconnection between the adolescent and his environment (social networks) and that they organise their online worlds, by organising their experiences into meaningful wholes (see Table 2.7).

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS AND EDUCATORS

From the findings provided by the literature study and empirical investigation, the following recommendations are suggested to parents, educators and people working in the field of psychology of education:

- Parents and educators should accept that adolescents live in a virtual world and they should adjust accordingly. Social networking and communicating with online friends are how they socialise with each other. Their cell phones have become more than a communication device, rather it has become a connection device, which permanently connects them to the Internet.

Parents

- It is important, however that children need to be safe in cyberspace, therefore parenting should be proactive and reactive with regard to social networking and Internet usage. Parents must teach their children how to be safe and if

they encounter something online that might be harmful, they need to confront the problem immediately and decisively.

- To be able to execute this kind of parenting, parents also need to be informed regarding the social networking practices of their children, SNS and online communication with their friends.
- Rosen (2007:211-214) presents a model for proactive parenting which he calls the TALK model - Trust, Access, Learn and “K”ommunicate:

Trust

Trusting in parenting especially in the age of the Internet, is critical. Parents should not use filters to limit the Web sites their teens may visit, but rather work together with them proactively to try and understand what they are doing online.

Assess

Many parents are unaware of or even underestimate their children’s online practices. Gaining knowledge is paramount to become aware of this online behaviour. Co-viewing is a healthy way to approach this issue and parents can thus also spend time with their adolescents. Parents should try to get a sense of how the adolescent presents himself online, by looking at their list of friends and the comments left on their page. Special attention should be given to personal information disclosure.

Learn

Parents should create a Facebook page or take part in WhatsApp, to gain knowledge about what exactly both SNS entail. They should ask their teens to assist them. This is a good way to find out what he/she is doing and to start a conversation about online limits. Parents should also learn more about the video games their teens are playing and other social media in which they engage.

“K”ommunicate

Communication is the most important part of proactive and reactive parenting in the digital age. Fostering regular time with an adolescent will open up communication channels. During this time all external distractions should be removed, the adolescent must be allowed to talk while parents listen. Parents can bring discussion topics into the conversation like meeting online

strangers, divulging personal information in cyberspace, Internet addiction, online pornography and so forth.

- Parents can monitor media behaviour by applying the following options: limit screen time, approve sites they visit, monitor screen content, position computer in a common area, monitor sleep patterns, monitor school grades and good modelling of own media use (Rosen 2007:218-220).

Educators

- Educators also need to be informed and constantly gain knowledge about SNS and other Internet practices adolescents are involved with.
- In the class rooms they need to adjust in terms of how they teach. For the Net Generation the teacher-centred approach will not prove to be successful. Technology has aided their learning processes and the way they develop. Tapscott (2009:29) emphasises the fact that the Net Generation's brains are wired differently from those of the previous generations, for example: the way in which they process information like fast-moving images.
- The teacher-learner relationship needs to change in the learning process: less lecturing and more interacting should be utilised. Educators should ask learners questions and listen to their answers. They should listen to the questions the learners ask and let them discover the answers themselves. Learners should be allowed to co-create a learning experience with the educator.
- Today's adolescents search for freedom and this should be accommodated and incorporated in education by letting them make use of technology if possible, seeing that they have access to much of the world's knowledge literally through their fingertips. They use digital technologies to find out what is really going on and to contribute to their awareness about the world around them.
- The Net-Generation is a relationship generation (Tapscott 2009:89). They collaborate online all the time and this culture of collaboration should be exploited in the classroom, because they learn more by collaborating both with their teacher and each other. They will respond well to a model of education that is more learner-focused.

- The focus should be to teach children *how to learn*, not *what to know* and try to focus on lifelong learning. Tapscott (2009:134) claims that schools should be a place to learn, not to teach. The Net Generation needs to learn how to look for information, also to be able to analyse, synthesise and critically evaluate the information.
- All educational programmes should be designed and developed according to the eight norms of the Net Generation: there should be choice, customisation, transparency, integrity, collaboration, fun, speed and innovation in their learning experiences (Tapscott 2009:148).

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The aim of this study was to achieve the proposed objectives, but it has also opened up a number of areas for further research. By studying this phenomenon, it is evident that any of the categories that were discussed in the literature review, could successfully be further explored in future research, because of the fact that this field of study is not static: it expands and develops by the second. Apart from the categories that were dealt with in Chapter 2, the following recommendations can be made for further studies to ensure an extensive understanding of adolescent social networking:

- More studies should be carried out specifically in the South African context due to the multicultural composition of the South African society. A strong possibility exists that this phenomenon is even more complex, especially when all the different cultural characteristics, habits and rituals currently existing in South Africa will be incorporated in a cross-cultural study.
- In addition to the abovementioned point, the following can also be investigated: the effective use of cyberspace, digital technology, communication technology and social media in the classroom.
- Seeing that the *digital divide* is a reality in South Africa and globally, the differences in the approach in education of the digitally advantaged and disadvantaged learners can be investigated.

- A study to determine the differences in social networking practices between any of the following groups might contribute to this field of study: rural and urban adolescents; male and female adolescents; different races/cultures and the different age groups.
- Another field that might be explored is the influence of social networking, as well as the use of the Internet and social media on the family system.
- The influence of social networking on the development of social and communication skills of children and adolescents.
- How does social networking and online communication compensate for the absence of nonverbal cues and nonverbal communication?
- The nature of online adolescent romantic relationships and online dating.
- The role of social networking and online friendships in the life of the disabled person for instance the physically disabled, people with Asperger's syndrome, the deaf or high functioning Autistics.
- The adolescent and his concept of privacy in SNS.

5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study presented several limitations, which are discussed below:

- The sample size utilised in this study was rather small and although sufficient data was acquired, more participants may have supplied more information and insight on the topic, especially where the interviews are concerned.
- Due to the small sample size there is a limited ability to generalise the research findings.
- The fact that this study was part of a dissertation of limited scope and the fact that it addressed an issue where there is almost no existing boundaries in its vastness, contributed to the intricacies of effectively constructing a meaningful report.
- Even though probability sampling and more specifically stratified random sampling had proven to be scientific in a research sample, it resulted in the following administration problems: not all learners chosen as part of the sample were motivated or enthusiastic to participate in the study. Those

learners didn't cooperate well where the signing of consent forms by the parents was concerned, it took quite a long time to receive all the forms back after they had been sent home.

- The demographics of the participants proved to be a slight problem, seeing that many of them don't live in the town where the study took place. It was difficult to meet all the participants firstly to complete the questionnaires and secondly for an hour long interview, because many of them had to make use of taxis and buses to get home directly after school hours. Since it is a secondary school I didn't want to use academic time for research purposes.

5.7 CONCLUSION

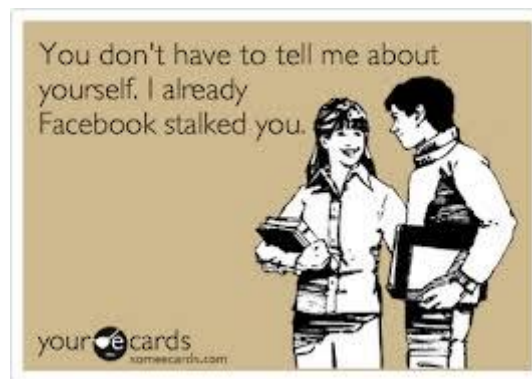
This research analysed social networking practices and online friendships among adolescents and proved to be a very interesting phenomenon to research. The study provided evidence that the phenomenon is also a very complicated and complex current manifestation, encompassing several features that can be linked to the adolescents' learning and development.

Being part of the Net Generation, the adolescents' online habits and behaviours will be difficult to comprehend without having appropriate knowledge of the digital age and everything it entails. Digital and communication technology, social media, SNS and the Internet cannot be separated from each other and they form such an intricate part of the adolescent's life world, that the development of the adolescent as a social entity and a holistic, psychologically healthy human being is directly influenced and impacted by them.

The research provided valuable information on how South African adolescents make use of SNS to communicate and socialise with their online friends, thus answering the primary research question of the study. This study also offered insight into all the specific research questions and provided guidelines and recommendations into the complex issue. Hopefully the contribution made by this study, will be valuable, beneficial and better to understand online adolescent friendships and social networking.

The following words of Tapscott (2009:89) have to be presented, as a final conclusion of the core findings of this research in terms of online friendships:

“They like to be in touch with their friends on their Blackberrys or cell phones wherever they are – on the street, in the store, or at work. It gives them a sense of virtual community all day long. It makes them feel like they have a friend in their pocket.”



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ADDENDUM A: Parent consent form

Coriena Davel
Cell: 0832320773
Intern Educational Psychologist

June 2013

Dear Parent/Guardian,

PERMISSION REQUESTED FOR YOUR CHILD'S PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Your permission is requested for your child to participate in a study regarding social networking and online friendships amongst adolescents. The aims of the research are to investigate and determine the nature of online friendships, specifically in social network sites, amongst adolescents and to propose recommendations and information to the participants, parents and teachers.

The participants have been selected by randomly choosing 5 learners from each grade in a secondary school (total: 25 learners) to complete a short survey in the form of a questionnaire. Five learners will be identified with the aid of the survey to participate in an interview to elaborate on the findings in the survey. The expected duration of the participation is estimated at three months, thus ending at the end of August 2013.

The identity, responses and information revealed by your child will be kept confidential at all times and will not be revealed under any circumstances. Participation is voluntary and your child has the right to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. Your child will be protected from any form of physical or psychological harm and will be given the opportunity to ask questions should anything not be clear to him/her. The research findings will be published and will be accessible to you if you should have the need to view the final report. A summary of the findings will also be provided to all the participants, their parents and teachers at the specific secondary school where the research was conducted.

Ethical approval is guided and given by the University of South Africa.

We/I _____

grant permission for my child _____

to participate in the research as described above. This will include the completion of a short questionnaire and might include an interview conducted by the researcher. The completion of the questionnaire and the conducting of the interview will be arranged and held at a time that is convenient for the participant.

Thank you for giving this matter your attention. Please feel free to contact me if you should have any questions or concerns.

Yours faithfully,

Parent/Guardian

Date

C. Davel
Intern Educational Psychologist

ADDENDUM B: Informed assent

Coriena Davel
Cell: 0832320773
Intern Educational Psychologist

March 2013

ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Your assent is requested to participate in a study regarding social networking and online friendships amongst adolescents. The aims of the research are to investigate and determine the nature of online friendships, specifically in social network sites, amongst adolescents and to propose recommendations and information to the participants, parents and teachers.

The participants have been selected by randomly choosing 5 learners from each grade in a secondary school (total: 25 learners) to complete a short survey in the form of a questionnaire. Five learners will then be identified with the aid of the survey to participate in an interview with the researcher to elaborate on the findings in the survey. The expected duration of the participation is estimated at three months, thus ending at the end of August 2013.

The identity, responses and information revealed by you will be kept confidential at all times and will not be revealed under any circumstances. Participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. You will be protected from any form of physical or psychological harm and will be given the opportunity to ask questions should anything not be clear to you. The research findings will be published and will be accessible to you if you should have the need to view the final report. A summary of the findings will also be provided to all the participants, their parents and teachers at the school where the study is conducted. You might benefit from the findings by obtaining new information and insight regarding online friendships.

You are advised to discuss your participation with your parents/guardians before signing this assent form. Your parents/guardians will be asked for permission on your behalf seeing that you are still a minor and they will also receive a copy of this signed assent form.

I have read this form and I understand the information about this study. I am willing to participate in this study.

Your name printed

Your signature

Date

C. Davel
Intern Educational Psychologist

ADDENDUM C: Summary of raw scores of questionnaires

QUESTIONNAIRE: SOCIAL NETWORKING AND ONLINE FRIENDSHIPS

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Name	
Date	
Date of birth	
Age	13:3;14:5; 15:2;16:7;17:3;18:4;19:1
Gender	Male10; Female 15
Home language	Afr – 10; Sepedi – 3; Siswati - 2
School	
Grade	

INSTRUCTIONS

Complete the questionnaire by answering the following questions as accurately and honestly as possible. There is no right or wrong answer, but your own opinion is important. The questionnaire consists of different sections and instructions will be provided at the beginning of each section.

A. GENERAL

Answer the following questions by encircling the appropriate answer:

1. Do you have access to the internet? Yes 25 No
2. If yes, do you engage in social networking? Yes 25 No
3. Which media/tools do you use to engage in social networking?
Cell phone 25 Computer 4
4. To which of the following social networks are you signed in?
Facebook 20 WhatsApp 22 Mxit 13 Twitter 8 LinkedIn 0 BBM 4
5. Which of these social networks do you use most to communicate with others?
Facebook 9 Whatsapp 21 Mxit 6 Twitter 2 LinkedIn 0 BBM 4
6. How many hours a day do you engage in social networking?
Les than 1 hour 4
1 – 2 hours 6
3 – 5 hours 11
7 – 9 hours 2
More than 10 hours 2

B. ONLINE FRIENDSHIPS

7. Do you currently have online friends? Yes 25 No
8. If yes, how many "friends" do you currently have on social network sites?
 0 – 10 1
 10 – 20 3
 20 – 30 1
 30 – 40 2
 40 – 50 2
 More than 50 16
9. Would you describe your online friendships as
 Close 20 Weak 3 Strong/weak 2?
10. How many of your "friends" on social network sites have you met in person?
 All 12
 Most 7
 About half 4
 A few 2
 None 0

For questions 11 – 15 a statement is provided with different responses for each statement. Choose your answer by encircling the number that corresponds with your response.

Example:

	<i>Always</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Seldom</i>	<i>Never</i>
<i>I use my cell phone to communicate with my online friends.</i>	3	2	1	0

	Always(3)	Often(2)	Seldom(1)	Never(0)
11. I share personal information with my online friends.		15	7	3
12. To chat with my "friends" makes me feel happy.	15	10		
13. I need my online friends' support when I am feeling down.	12	11	1	1
14. It is easier to form and maintain friendships online than in real life.	5	10	8	2
15. I have more self-confidence when I am online with friends than in face to face situations.	4	10	4	7

For questions 16 – 20 a statement is also provided but with different responses for each statement (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree). Choose your answer by encircling the number that corresponds with your response.

Example:

	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
<i>I like sharing thoughts with my "friends".</i>	3	2	1	0

	Strongly Agree (3)	Agree (2)	Disagree (1)	Strongly disagree (0)
16. It is important to share my problems with my "friends".	2	19	4	
17. It is easy to hide certain aspects about myself when I am online with my "friends".	9	12	2	2
18. I feel good about myself when I can socialise with my "friends" on social network sites.	19	13	2	1
19. I trust my online friends.	5	14	6	
20. I learn more about myself through social networks and frequent interaction with my "friends".	6	10	7	2

ADDEMDUM D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Individual semi-structured in-depth interviews

A. Topics

The topics of the interviews are planned in advance, but the sequence and wording will be decided on during the interview.

The following topics will be discussed with the participant:

1. Internet usage: social networking, social media and tools, time spent on social network sites.
2. Online friendships: quality, quantity, nature and trust.
3. Self-disclosure in online friendships and social network sites.
4. Communication and socialising.
5. Influence on identity formation.
6. Influence on: self-confidence, self-concept, self-knowledge and self-worth.
7. Enhancing ego-strength and positive self-talk.

B. Focus

The focus of the abovementioned topics is depicted in the table below:

Type	Description
Experience/behaviour	To determine what the participant does or has done. Descriptions of experiences, behaviours, actions, activities.
Opinions/values	What the participant thinks about his/her experience. The participant's intentions, goals and values.
Feelings	How the participant reacts emotionally to his/her experiences.
Knowledge	To determine the participant's factual knowledge.
Background/demographic	To elicit the participant's descriptions of himself/herself. To identify the participant's relation to other people.

C. Question sequence

The aim will be to group the questions by topic, but the researcher will be flexible and will also adhere to the interviewee's responses. The interview will start with general questions and move towards more specific questions. The sequence of the questions will vary, but an attempt will be made to broadly follow the sequence below:

1. Statements of the purpose and focus.
 - Protection of the participant's identity and overview of possible discussion topics.
 - The importance of the data.
2. Demographic questions
 - To establish rapport and focus attention.
3. Interview probes.
 - For further explanations, elaborations and clarifications of responses throughout the interview.
4. Complex, controversial and difficult questions.
 - Towards end of interview.

ADDENDUM E: TRANSCRIPTIONS (PARTICIPANT A)

- Researcher: Middag jong. Hoe gaan dit met jou?
- Participant A: Dit gaan goed dankie tannie.
- Researcher: Goed, ek wil net weer vir jou sê presies waaroor gaan die onderhoud. Ek is besig met my meestersgraad en ek moet navorsing doen en het toe besluit om sosiale netwerke te vat, veral onder tieners, want ek dink dit is 'n baie groot ding vandag. En daar is baie min navorsing gedoen daaroor sover. Ek het 25 kinders gekies, 5 uit elke graad, wat vir my die lys voltooi het, en uit die vraelyste het ek gaan kyk hoeveel ure is jy op die netwerke, hoeveel vriende het jy en ook hoeveel positiewe reaksies het jy gehad met die res van die vrae. So ek het toe 5 kinders gekies uit die 25 met wie ek net 'n bietjie meer wil gesels, want dit lyk vir my asof julle vyf weet wat aangaan. Dit gaan dus doodeenvoudig daaroor dat ek meer probeer leer oor die netwerke en ook oor jou vriendskappe aanlyn. So, ek gaan net basies vir jou vra oor goedjies wat jy vir my hier geantwoord het en as jy aan enige iets dink wat my dalk ook kan help, kan jy ook vir my sê.
- Participant A: Okay dis reg.
- Researcher: Goed, kom ons begin sommer by die eerste vragie: jy het toegang tot die Internet nê?
- Participant A: Ja.
- Researcher: Is dit meestal deur jou selfoon of gebruik jy 'n rekenaar ook?
- Participant A: Dis meestal deur my selfoon.
- Researcher: Okay, watse foon het jy?
- Participant A: 'n Blackberry.
- Researcher: So jy gebruik seker baie BBM.
- Participant A: Ja tannie.
- Researcher: Gebruik jy net BBM?
- Participant A: Nee ek gebruik WhatsApp en partymaal Mxit.
- Researcher: Ja, Mxit was 'n paar jaar terug groot gewees nê tot Whatsapp gekom het.
- Participant A: Ja tannie.
- Researcher: So daar is nou heelwat minder kinders wat Mxit gebruik vandag, is dit so?
- Participant A: Ja tannie bitter min.
- Researcher: Okay, so watter een gebruik jy die meeste?
- Participant A: BBM.
- Researcher: Okay, hoekom gebruik jy hom?
- Participant A: Want hy is nie so gekompliseerd nie en dis net makliker om op hom te *chat* as om soos op WhatsApp en Mxit te gaan *chat*.
- Researcher: Nou hoekom is dit makliker?

Participant A: Want by BBM kan jy net soos ingaan, by WhatsApp vat jou foon partymaal te lank om in te gaan en die boodskappe gaan nie altyd deur of so nie en by Mxit moet jy eers aanteken. Daar is ook nie baie mense wat WhatsApp en Mxit het nie, die meeste het BBM.

Researcher: Van jou vriende?

Participant A: Ja.

Researcher: WhatsApp werk mos deur die Internet, BBM ook eintlik, maar dit is vinniger omdat jy 'n Blackberry het?

Participant A: Ja en soos as jy nie 'n kontrakfoon het nie of nie 'n Blackberry waar die Internet *for free* is nie, dan moet jy betaal daarvoor, soos as jy nou 'n Galaxy of so het, dan moet jy betaal vir jou WhatsApp.

Researcher: So dis ekstra..

Participant A: Ja.

Researcher: Dink jy dit is dalk die rede waarom die meeste tieners vandag 'n Blackberry gebruik?

Participant A: Ja en ook omdat hulle vriende ook net met mekaar kommunikeer deur BBM.

Researcher: Mmm. Kan jy ook groepe vorm met BBM?

Participant A: Ja. Jy kan *groups* maak.

Researcher: Is dit? Behoort jy aan 'n *group*?

Participant A: Nee, ek *decline my groups*.

Researcher: Is dit? Hoekom hou jy nie van die *groups* nie?

Participant A: In 'n *group* ken ek byvoorbeeld net twee mense en daar kan mense wees wat gevaarlik is, as tannie weet wat ek bedoel...

Researcher: Mmm. So jy is versigtig vir die *groups*.

Participant A: Ja tannie.

Researcher: Een iemand sal jou miskien *invite* in 'n groep in, maar die meerderheid van die groep ken jy nie?

Participant A: Ja ek ken net 'n paar persone.

Researcher: So jy *decline* dit...?

Participant A: Ja tannie.

Researcher: En dieselfde met WhatsApp, jy het nie WhatsApp *groups* nie?

Participant A: Ek weet nie, ek was nog nooit op WhatsApp in 'n *group* nie.

Researcher: O, is dit? Goed, gebruik jy soms 'n rekenaar ook?

Participant A: Nee tannie, om net sosiaal te wees?

Researcher: Ja vir sosiale netwerke.

Participant A: Nee tannie.

Researcher: Okay. Jy het hier vir my gesê dat jy meer as 10 ure 'n dag kommunikeer met jou vriende....

Participant A: Ja tannie.

Researcher: Verduidelik bietjie vir my hoe versprei jy daardie ure in 'n dag. Wanneer gesels julle en so?

Participant A: Tannie ek sal opstaan en op BBM met almal bietjie *chat* en so en dan deur skooltyd as ek 'n kansie kry dan *chat* ek en na skooltyd dan is ek die heelyd op my foon, behalwe nou soos in die aande wanneer ek huiswerk doen.

Researcher: Nie as jy huiswerk doen nie?

Participant A: Nie as ek huiswerk doen nie...

Researcher: Is dit nie moeilik as jy besig is met huiswerk om ook nog te *chat* nie?

Participant A: Nee, nie eintlik nie, want terwyl ek besig is luister ek nog musiek en dit vat my dan bietjie lank om soos te *reply* want ek is ingedagte met dit wat ek doen.

Researcher: Ja, want jy is nou besig met iets anders..

Participant A: Ja...

Researcher: Maar jy sit nie jou foon af nie nê?

Participant A: Nee..

Researcher: Jy gaan nou net nie die hele tyd wat gaan daaraan en wat gebeur nie?

Participant A: Nee tannie.

Researcher: So, behalwe vir die aande wanneer jy huiswerk doen, deur die loop van die dag is jy heelyd besig?

Participant A: Ja tannie.

Researcher: Goed. Presies waarmee is jy dan besig? *Chat* jy met jou vriende?

Participant A: Ja altyd.

Researcher: Okay. En jy het gesê jy het tussen 30 en 40 vriende. Gesels jy met hulle almal?

Participant A: Ja tannie, dit hang af, nie met soos almal op dieselfde dag nie. Daar is 'n spesifieke groepie wat ek in 'n kategorie gesit het wat ek ... uhhh.. daai groepie praat die heeldag deur.

Researcher: Hoe groot is daai groepie?

Participant A: Ek dink dit is 11 of 12 kinders in daai groep.

Researcher: So jy sal hulle beskryf as jou *close* aanlyn vriende..

Participant A: Ja...

Researcher: En julle gesels elke dag?

Participant A: Ja tannie.

Researcher: En die ander? Is hulle meer sporadies?

Participant A: Ja dit is meer as ek *bored* is, as ek netja....iemand nodig het om mee te *chat*.

Researcher: Maar dan is jy nie regtig lus om vreeslik te praat nie...?

Participant A: Nee.

Researcher: Hierdie groepie van 12, waaroor gesels julle meestal?

Participant A: Ons gesels oor hoe ons dag was, of die meisies vertel my van hulle ouens of die ouens vertel my van hulle meisies... wie hulle *like* en dan praat ons ook net oor kuiers wat ons kan reël... ja.

Researcher: Hoe sal jy hulle verdeel? Is dit gelykop of meer meisies as seuns of meer seuns as meisies?

Participant A: Dit is meer seuns as meisies.

Researcher: Ouderdomme?

Participant A: Uhm... almal is my ouderdom.

Researcher: So jy het nie ouer vriende nie.

Participant A: Ek het, maar ek soos *chat* nie so baie met hulle nie.

Researcher: Sal julle enigsins gesels oor skoolwerk of huiswerk?

Participant A: Ja ons sal soos vra watse huiswerk het ons en dit, maar ons praat nie regtig oor huiswerk nie.

Researcher: So julle praat nie vreeslik oor skool nie...

Participant A: (Lag) Nee..

Researcher: Sou jy sê dit is makliker om so met jou vriende te gesels op jou foon as wat jy in die regte lewe met hulle sal gesels?

Participant A: Dit hang af van watse punt jy kyk, soos as jy nou 'n seun is en jy hou nou van die meisie, dan sal dit makliker wees om oor die foon met haar te praat, maar as julle net 'n lekker vriende groep is, dan is dit lekkerder om te praat soos persoon tot persoon.

Researcher: Wat verkies jy?

Participant A: Ek verkies persoon tot persoon..

Researcher: So jy wil eers persoon tot persoon gesels?

Participant A: Ja.

Researcher: En daarna sal jy aangaan met die vriendskap op die foon...?

Participant A: (Knik haar kop).

Researcher: Jy het ook hierso vir my gesê van jou vriende, dis nou al jou aanlyn vriende het jy al die helfte persoonlik ontmoet?

Participant A: Ja tannie.

Researcher: Wat van die ander helfte?

Participant A: Tannie die ander is soos wanneer ons netbaltoere doen of atletiek dan kry ek hulle, dan kry ek hulle op my foon, maar ons *chat* nie baie nie, net so aan enaf..

Researcher: O, okay, maar dit is nog steeds iemand wat jy fisies ontmoet het?

Participant A: Ja.

Researcher: Het jy iemand op jou foon wat jy nog nooit gesien het nie?

Participant A: Nee tannie.

Researcher: Is dit? Okay. So jy het almal een of ander tyd ontmoet.

Participant A: Ja... wel.. een outjie het ek nog nie persoonlik ontmoet nie...

Researcher: Net een outjie...

Participant A: Ja tannie.

Researcher: Dit klink vir my of jy dit mooi veilig speel...

Participant A: (Lag)...Ja...

Researcher: Want dit kan seker gevaarlik raak nê? 'n Mens hoor nogal baie stories...

Participant A: Ja tannie.

Researcher: So, hierdie 12 sal jy beskryf as jou *close* vriende, dit is jou sterk vriendskappe nê?

Participant A: Ja tannie.

Researcher: Goed. Hoe het julle bymekaar uitgekom as aanlyn vriende?

Participant A: Soos by die skool ontmoet of soos by toere of so.

Researcher: Jy verkies dus om die persoon eers te ontmoet voordat jy hom op jou foon sit as 'n vriend?

Participant A: Ja, dit is soos tannie sê, baie veiliger...want jy ken mos nou nie die persoon self nie... so ...ja...

Researcher: Okay. Hoe belangrik is iemand se *profile picture* en *status*? Watse rol speel dit in die hele ding?

Participant A: Sy *status* is partymaal hoe hy voel of en.... ja sy *profile pic* sluit maar net daarby aan soos...as hy nou soos kwaad is dan sal hy nou 'n *profile pic* opsit of wat...

Researcher: Mmm. Wat dit uitbeeld...

Participant A: Ja..

Researcher: En wat het dit dan tot gevolg?

Participant A: Party mense vra soos wat's fout of dan kry jy ook partymaal soos *chats* of so.... of dit is maar net 'n....

Researcher: Hoe belangrik is dit vir jou?

Participant A: Ek hou van *profile pics* want ek *save* dit want dit is hoe mens al jou foto's kry, maar nie soos lelike goeters nie, want my ma vat ook gedurig my foon en dan gaan sy deur my foto's en nie net dit nie, dit is half respek as 'n mens nie lelike goed *save* nie..

Researcher: So, daar is lelike goed wat soms op jou pad kom..?

Participant A: Ja..

Researcher: Dit is interessant dat jy sê jou ma vat jou foon. Gaan sy deur jou *chats* ook?

Participant A: Nee, sy los dit, want sy sê dis persoonlik, maar sy gaan deur my foto's en ja...

Researcher: Weet jou ma wie is jou vriende?

Participant A: Ja sy weet almal.

Researcher: Ken sy jou vriende?

Participant A: Ja, meeste het al by my kom kuier of ons het soos saam 'n braai gehou of so.

Researcher: Kan jy jou lewe voorstel sonder jou foon en daai tipe kontak met jou vriende?

Participant A: Ek dink die kontak wat ons het van persoon tot persoon sal nog steeds dieselfde wees, maar jy gaan ook bietjie van jou.... dit gaan nie meer soos 'n sterk vriendskap wees nie en dan.... jy sal byvoorbeeld vir haar goed sê wat jy nie persoonlik vir haar sal sê nie...

Researcher: So oor die foon is dit vir jou makliker om persoonlik te raak..

Participant A: Nee nie eintlik nie, maar as jy soos skaam is vir die persoon of so.

Researcher: Net as jy skaam is?

Participant A: Ja.

Researcher: ...dan is die foon makliker...

Participant A: Ja.

Researcher: Is dit nie baie gerieflik om te weet jy hoef net 'n knoppie te druk en dan is die persoon daar nie?

Participant A: Ja, maar dit is vir my baie beter om persoon tot persoon te gesels.

Researcher: So jy verkies nog steeds 'n persoonlike situasie?

Participant A: Ja tannie.

Researcher: Jy het hier aangedui dat jy nie sommer persoonlike inligting vir jou aanlyn vriende gee nie. Sal jy soms persoonlike goed deel as jy weet dat dit 'n goeie vriend van jou is?

Participant A: Nee tannie want party vriende wat soos in sê hy is jou vriend....dit kan partymaal skeefloop. Daai persoon kan ook soos 'n normale mens dit verloor en dit vir iemand wys.

Researcher: Hoekom is dit vir jou lekker, en hoekom maak dit jou gelukkig en hoekom laat dit jou goed voel om met jou aanlyn vriende te *chat* oor die foon?

Participant A: Ja partymaal, kom ons sê jou ma het met jou baklei byvoorbeeld, dan het jy iemand om jou partymaal op te *cheer* ... en.... ja...

Researcher: So jy sal hulle gebruik vir so iets?

Participant A: Ja.

Researcher: Wat sal jy dan byvoorbeeld sê?

Participant A: Soos Nellie is my *closeste* vriend so ek sal vir haar byvoorbeeld sê my ma het sopas met my baklei oor dit en dan sal sy vir my sê nou maar wat is jou punt en wat is haar punt... en...

Researcher: ...en dadelik voel jy beter... So jy maak staat op jou vriende se ondersteuning?

Participant A: Ja.

Researcher: Gesels jy ooit met meer as een op 'n slag of gesels jy net een tot een?

Participant A: Nee ek gesels met meer as een op 'n slag.

Researcher: ...maar nie in 'n groep nie..

Participant A: Nee. Dis soos pouses as jy by 'n groepie staan, dan praat die een dan daai een en jy luister en so...

Researcher: Maar op die foon nou spesifiek?

Participant A: Dan sal ek met meer as een persoon praat maar nie gelyktydig nie.

Researcher: Het jy al ooit gevoel jy is nou te lank op die foon?

Participant A: Nee... (lag)

Researcher: O, die tyd gaan net vinnig verby?

Participant A: Ja tannie.

Researcher: En het dit jou al uit die slaap uit gehou?

Participant A: Nee, nie soos altyd nie, maar partykeer ja ...

Researcher: Tot wat is die laatste wat jy nou al *gechat* het op jou foon?

Participant A: Tot drie uur die oggend (lag)...

Researcher: Hoe gebeur dit, vertel vir my.

Participant A: Tannie, ek en my vriend of vriendin ek kan nie onthou nie, ja dit was Nellie en haar ou. Ons het gekuier en toe gaan ons huis toe en toe praat ons nog oor die foon. Dit was hulle eerste *date* as ek dit so kan stel, dan vra sy vir my wat ek vir haar kan sê wat sy vir hom kan sê en hy wil weet wat hy vir haar kan sê. Ja en toe kuier ons tot drie uur. Ja en toe slaap ons maar.

Researcher: En in toetstyd en eksamentyd wanneer jy moet leer?

Participant A: Dan leer meeste van die mense ook self, dan is dit nie so erg nie, maar in die aande sal ons dan weer *chat*.

Researcher: Goed. Hoe dink jy help dit met jou selfvertroue om so aanlyn te *chat*?

Participant A: Ja ek dink dit kan help ja...

Researcher: Met ander woorde dit laat jou sterker voel en minder skaam voel?

Participant A: Nee ek dink as 'n mens *face to face* gesels sal dit jou minder skaam laat voel, want dan is dit oor en verby en alles.

Researcher: Okay, so dit is hoekom jy gesê het net soms?

Participant A: Ja tannie.

Researcher: So wanneer is daai "soms", wanneer sal jy voel sjoe nou het ek 'n *boost* gehad?

Participant A: Soos oor die foon?

Researcher: Ja oor die foon.

Participant A: Wanneer jy soos...hierdie outjie... kom ons gebruik 'n voorbeeld: jy hou nou van hierdie ou en ja julle *flirt* oor die foon en hy sê vir jou iets en jy sê vir hom iets en dis iets wat jy nooit vir hom sou sê in persoon nie, want jy's te skaam daarvoor. En dan die volgende dag dan voel jy ook maar hy het ook terug *geflirt* so dis okay.

Researcher: Hoe voel jy oor die kommunikasie oor die foon – is dit makliker?

Participant A: Ja, 'n mens het meer tyd om te dink wat jy gaan sê.

Researcher: So, jy het tyd om te reageer, jy hoef nie dadelik te dink in die situasie nie.

Participant A: Ja.

Researcher: Hoekom het jy gesê jy dink dit is makliker om sekere aspekte oor jouself weg te steek oor die foon?

Participant A: Want tannie waar... kom ons sê iemand wat in Thabazimbi bly en die ander een wat hier bly. Daai persoon ken mos nie regtig

daai persoon nie, hy ken hom net oor die foon, so daai persoon kan sê ons is ryk, ek is die mooiste, ek is die slimste in die skool of soos dit...ja. En as die persoon soos vra vir 'n foto, om te sien hoe hy lyk, kan hy maklik 'n foto stuur van iemand wat regtig mooi is.

Researcher: Het dit al met jou gebeur?

Participant A: Ja tannie.

Researcher: En hoe kom jy toe agter hierdie ou jok?

Participant A: Want my vriendin het hom ook op gehad en toe stuur hy vir haar 'n ander foto en my ander vriendin was nie daar op nie toe stuur hy vir haar die *actual* foto van hoe hy lyk.

Researcher: O, ek sien. Wat doen jy toe?

Participant A: Ek het nie geweet wie hy is nie, toe *delete* ons almal hom maar.

Researcher: Kom ons kom 'n bietjie weer terug na jousef toe. Is dit vir jou ook makliker om goed oor jousef te weerhou? Sê nou maar net jy gesels nou met iemand wat jy nie so goed ken nie, sal jy byvoorbeeld sekere goed oor jousef nie sê nie, sal jy miskien voorgee dat jy anders of iemand anders is?

Participant A: Ek het nog nooit nie, maar sê nou maar net die persoon is...dit is nou 'n regtig 'n *down* persoon, dan kan hy maklik 'n foto stuur waar hy meer gelukkig is met homself en dan kan die ander persoon dink hy is vreeslik mooi en dan's dit soos 'n aanlyn verhouding wat eintlik *fake* is.

Researcher: Het jy al ooit gevoel, maar ek moes nou vir my vriende meer vertel het, maar ek het verkies om dit nie te doen nie of het jy al goed oor jousef weggesteek?

Participant A: Ja.

Researcher: In watse tipe situasie?

Participant A: As jy soos 'n *embarrassing* situasie het en ja.. dan sê jy mos nie als wat presies gebeur het nie of as jy en die outjie nou baklei het, dan gaan jy mos nie presies sê wat sy woorde was nie, jy gaan dit sê soos jy dit verstaan het.

Researcher: Sorteert julle baie keer ook konflik so uit oor die foon?

Participant A: Nee, ek sorteert eerder persoon tot persoon uit, want oor die foon kan 'n mens nog sê dit en dit....ja... Maar meeste van die tyd met my vriende wil ek met hulle self praat.

Researcher: En jy BBM eerder as om te bel?

Participant A: Ja tannie.

Researcher: Goed, die volgende vragie was: ek voel goed oor myself wanneer ek sosialiseer met my vriende. Wanneer ons sê sosialiseer op die foon, wat beteken dit?

Participant A: Dit is wanneer ons gesels oor kuiers en sommer net enige ding.

Researcher: En dit is vir jou lekker?

Participant A: Ja tannie.

Researcher: Jy sê jy vertrou jou aanlyn vriende?

Participant A: Ja tannie, veral die wat ek in persoon ken.

Researcher: En die wat jy nie ken nie?

Participant A: Tannie daar is net een wat ek nie persoonlik ken nie en ons praat nie eintlik nie.

Researcher: So jy weet as jy iets vir jou aanlyn vriende sê sal dit tussen julle bly en die storie sal nie hardloop nie?

Participant A: Ja tannie, maar daarvoor is ek ook baie versigtig, want dit het al gebeur, dan sê ek dit eerder persoon tot persoon, maar as ek en die persoon mekaar nie regtig baie sien nie, dan sal ek dit vir hulle sê.

Researcher: Mmm. Wat het jy geleer van jouself?

Participant A: Ja jy moenie persoonlike inligting uitgee of goed skinder oor mense nie, want partymaal kom dit uit by daai persoon..

Researcher: Het jy iets al ooit van jouself geleer?

Participant A: Nee tannie... of ja ek het. Bedoel tannie nou as mense soos oor jou praat en...

Researcher: Ja, soos iemand sê iets vir jou oor jou en iemand anders sê ding, het jy al iets so oor jouself geleer?

Participant A: Ja tannie kom ons sê een van my vriende het *actually* gesê ek het te veel gepraat en toe gaan ek na die ander een toe en toe sê sy ook ja ek praat ook partymaal te veel... ja... toe leer ek dat ek te veel praat.

Researcher: En het jy toe begin minder praat?

Participant A: Ja tannie maar toe sê hulle ek praat te min...

Researcher: Ag shame (lag), so jy moes net die balans kry..

Participant A: Ja (lag).

Researcher: Kom ons kyk 'n bietjie na die positiewe en die negatiewe punte. Wat is vir jou positief oor aanlyn vriendskappe?

Participant A: As jy skaam is vir die persoon kan jy vir hom goed sê wat jy nooit sal sê nie. Jy kan persone ontmoet oor hierdie BBM goedjies en dit wat ek nie sou ontmoet het nie. Jy kan vir hulle goed sê wat nie noodwendig waar is nie, maar wat goed is vir jou, want dan dink jy daai persoondink dit van jou... verstaan... so dit bou jou selfbeeld eintlik half op.

Researcher: Hoe bou dit jou selfbeeld op?

Participant A: Deur goed te sê wat nie regtig waar is nie, soos jy sê jy kry 90%, maar jy kry bietjie hier in die vyftigs, dan gaan hulle dink jy is 'n baie slim persoon en dan gaan jy baie goed voel daaroor.

Researcher: Sien jy dit as 'n positiewe punt?

Participant A: Ek dink dit kan vir die persoon wat die leuen vertel het, positief wees want dis oor hoe ander daarop reageer.... dit bou sy selfbeeld.

Researcher: Nog iets?

Participant A: Nee dis maar al wat ek as positief sien.

Researcher: En negatiewe goed?

Participant A: Jy kan mense ontmoet wat jou partymaal sal wil verander. Soos jy ontmoet die persoon en dan ontmoet julle in die regte lewe en julle hou nou van mekaar, maar dit is eintlik die kinders wat rook en dit.... dan sien jy dit eers as jy hom ontmoet. Dit kan ook negatief wees vir persone wat op hulle fone soos goeters stuur soos iets wat nie waar is nie. Dan gaan die ander vra of dit so is want almal praat met mekaar in die skool en dan kan die persoon uitvind jy jok vir hom en dit.

Researcher: So dit is maklik om uit te vind as iemand jok?

Participant A: Ja. Jy kan dalk iets vir iemand sê wat jy nooit...soos... as jy kwaad is, kan jy dalk vir hierdie persoon iets sê en na die tyd is jy jammer...ja...

Researcher: Mmm. Het jy enigsins al te doen gehad met boelies oor die foon?

Participant A: Soos *verbal abuse*?

Researcher: Ja of *cyberbullying* waar iemand probeer kwaad stook het onder jou en jou vriende.

Participant A: Ek het al ...ja.. ek het al so iemand gehad, maar toe verander dit in 'n bakleiery waar ons mekaar uitgehaal het en toe *delete* ek haar, want ...en... ja.

Researcher: Dink jy dit is goed of sleg om iemand net te kan *delete*?

Participant A: Ek dink dit is tot voordeel, want jy kan dadelik van die persoon ontslae raak en as jy nou in persoon was, dan moet jy eers weglou en ek wil nog iets terug gesê het vir jou en dan raak jy kwaad en dan sê jy weer iets terug vir hom en dan gaan dit so aan en dit word net erger naderhand as wat dit is.

Researcher: So konflik is definitief makliker. Jy druk net daai *delete* knoppie?

Participant A: Ja.

Researcher: Is daar mense wat seksuele aantygings maak of regtig waar ernstig *flirt* waar jy al gevoel het nou's jy baie ongemaklik?

Participant A: Ja dit kom voor, soos party seuns sal dele stuur soos foto's wat nie regtig van pas is nie en die meisies ook. Daar het... toe ons in die laerskool was het dit baie gebeur dan stuur hoërskool seuns dit vir die meisies... so ja..

Researcher: Weet jy dan of daar meisies is wat daarop reageer?

Participant A: Ja, ek dink daar is... ek weet van een meisie wat dit al gedoen het, maar ek sal dit nie self doen nie. Ek sal die persoon dadelik *delete*.

Researcher: Hoe belangrik is dit vir jou om wanneer jy met 'n persoon gesels jy nie fisies in sy teenwoordigheid is nie? Met ander woorde jy sien nie sy gesigsuitdrukking of so iets nie?

Participant A: Dit is nogal moeilik want daai persoon kan terwyl hy tik soos gesigte trek of en ek gaan nie weet nie..

Researcher: Sou jy eerder wou gehad het dat jy kon sien wat daai persoon doen?

Participant A: Ja tannie, soos met persoon tot persoon.

Researcher: Dink jy jou foon versterk jou aflyn vriendskappe?

Participant A: Wel meeste van my aflyn vriendskappe is ook by my aanlyn vriendskappe, maar die wat nie op my foon is nie, dit versterk dit nie eintlik nie, want ons praat dan net in skooltyd partymaal of...ja...

Researcher: En jou vriende wat jy aan en aflyn het?

Participant A: Ek dink die foon help om daai vriendskappe sterker te maak, want dan praat ons ook baie meer.

Researcher: Jy kan meer praat want daar is heeltyd kommunikasie...

Participant A: Ja tannie.

Researcher: Sou jy sê jou foon en wanneer jy hom gebruik beïnvloed dit julle gesinsopset en gesinskommunikasie?

Participant A: Ja, want by my huis weet ek dat as ons by die huis kom dan's ek die heeltyd op my foon, al gaan bad ek is ek nog steeds heeltyd op my foon. Ek sit nie regtig TV en kyk saam my ouers nie, want ek's heeltyd op my foon so dit kan 'n negatiewe aspek wees. En ook partymaal wil jou ma hê jy moet soos iets doen en dan raak jy geïrriteerd of dit kan konflik veroorsaak selfs..

Researcher: Wat dink jy is die oplossing?

Participant A: Om die foon soos... ek weet nie almal gaan met my saamstem nie, maar as jy in die aand by die huis kom, vir 'n sekere tyd jou foon in te gee en net te gesels met jou huismense..

Researcher: Doen julle dit?

Participant A: Ja, maar behalwe die laaste tyd. Die laaste tyd is almal op hulle fone.

Researcher: So, dit het definitief 'n invloed op die interaksie in die gesin.

Participant A: Ja tannie.

Researcher: Groepsdruk. Dink jy dit is makliker om toe te gee aan groepsdruk wanneer julle aanlyn gesels?

Participant A: Ek dink dit is makliker om te val vir groepsdruk in die regte lewe, want dan kan die persoon jou nog heeltyd probeer oorreed en met die foon is dit makliker om nee te sê en die foon af te sit.

Researcher: Wat sal jy doen as jy nie meer toegang het tot jou vriende deur jou foon nie?

Participant A: Ek dink dit kan nogal sleg wees, want almal is dan 'n stap voor jou en jy vind eers na die tyd uit en partykeer woon mense nie die goed by wat gereël is of so nie, want hulle weet nie wat aangaan nie. Maar dan kan jy ook bietjie tyd met jou gesin spandeer of jy kan bietjie in die natuur wees of so...

Researcher: Sjoe baie baie dankie hoor. Dit was nou baie interessant
Participant A: Dis 'n plesier tannie.

TRANSCRIPTION (Participant B)

Researcher: Goeie middag, hoe gaan dit met jou?
Participant B: Dit gaan goed dankie tannie.
Researcher: Ek wil net gou weer vir jou sê hoekom ons hierdie onderhoud voer. Ek is besig met my graad en moet navorsing doen daarvoor. Ek het besluit op sosiale netwerke en aanlyn vriendskappe omdat byna al die tieners vandag daarby betrokke is. Ek het 25 kinders gekies in die skool om 'n vraelys te voltooi en uit daardie 25 het ek vyf gekies vir onderhoude. Ek het die vyf gekies met meeste aanlyn vriende, die meeste ure aanlyn per dag en die meeste positiewe antwoorde op die vrae van die vraelys. Goed...hoe het jy toegang tot die Internet?
Participant B: Meestal met my foon om met my vriende te kommunikeer. Ek gebruik ook soms 'n rekenaar, maar dit is vir skooltake.
Researcher: Watse foon het jy?
Participant B: Ek het 'n Blackberry tannie en 'n Blackberry kry mos die BIS verniet, so dis goedkoper met die foon en BBM..
Researcher: So jy gebruik meestal BBM?
Participant B: Ja en WhatsApp. Die meeste tieners in die skool gebruik deesdae BBM – dis 'n nuwe ding en dis makliker as die webwerf en dis verniet.
Researcher: Wanneer gebruik jy BBM en wanneer WhatsApp?
Participant B: Ek gebruik BBM met my vriende wat ook Blackberrys het en WhatsApp soos met my vriende wat nie Blackberrys het nie.
Researcher: Watter een verkies jy?
Participant B: Ek gebruik BBM meer, maar WhatsApp het meer opsies... meer gesiggies... ek dink ek hou meer van WhatsApp.
Researcher: Goed. Ek sien jy het hier gesê dat jy tussen sewe en nege ure per dag met jou aanlyn vriende kommunikeer.
Participant B: Ja tannie, ek praat met persone wat soos in lekker is om mee te gesels en die tyd vlieg as ons gesels..
Researcher: Hoe verdeel jy daardie ure in jou dag?
Participant B: Ek *chat* in af periodes en in die middag na huiswerk.
Researcher: Hoe besluit jy met wie jy wil gesels?
Participant B: Ek het 'n lys van name wat aanlyn is, dan gaan ek deur die lys en dan kies ek een om mee te *chat*.
Researcher: Ek weet 'n mens kry ook groepe op hierdie sosiale netwerke. Behoort jy aan 'n groep?

Participant B: Ek het aan groepe behoort, soos ons hoërskool groep, maar dit het net te veel geword vir my.

Researcher: Jy het gevoel die mense praat te veel?

Participant B: Ja, tannie en dan is daar soos in baie kinders in die groepe wat ek nie eers ken nie, en dan sal my foon die hele dag *beep* soos wat almal in die groepe *chat*... en hulle praat sommer almal deurmekaar, maar ook met mekaar...

Researcher: O, ek sien. Jy het ook gesê dat jy meer as 50 aanlyn vriende het. Vertel my meer van hulle.

Participant B: Ja tannie ek het eintlik baie meer as 50. Die meeste is manlik en so kwart is vroulik.

Researcher: Hoe oud is hulle min of meer?

Participant B: Tussen 16 en 19 jaar oud.

Researcher: O. Jy het nie juis ouer vriende nie.

Participant B: Nee, ek hou dit maar in daai ouderdom...

Researcher: Verduidelik vir my presies hoe maak 'n mens vriende in die sosiale netwerke?

Participant B: Wanneer jy 'n persoon ken, of hy ken jou vra julle vir mekaar se *BC pin*...

Researcher: *BC pin*?

Participant B: Ja dis 'n kode op jou foon op BBM met jou naam en ouderdom by. Jy kan dan jou *pin* stuur na jou kontakte op jou lys en hulle ken weer 'n klomp ander persone wat nie op jou lys is nie en dan sal hulle soos in jou *pin* weer vir hulle gee en daai persone weer vir hulle kontakte. Dis soos 'n ketting..

Researcher: Ja, dit kan seker groot raak.

Participant B: Baie, ja tannie... voor jy sien het jy sommer meer as 100 persone wat jou *invite*.

Researcher: Hoe word jy *ge-invite*... of hoe *invite* jy ander?

Participant B: Op die sosiale netwerke is daar soos in 'n opsie by die kontak se naam of jy hom wil *invite* of nie en hy kan jou ook *invite* as hy jou *pin* het.. Dan kan jy besluit of jy wil *accept* of nie.

Researcher: Sal jy almal *accept*?

Participant B: Tannie, ek sal eers met daai persoon *chat* en uitvind wie is hy en wat is hy en dan sal ek na 'n ruk besluit of hy gaan bly of nie.

Researcher: Hoeveel persone het jy al min of meer *ge-invite*?

Participant B: Sjoe.... ek dink seker meer as 50 deur die *BC pin*..

Researcher: En hoeveel het jou al *ge-invite*?

Participant B: Ek dink so tussen 40 en 60 persone.

Researcher: Jinne, hoe groot kan so 'n netwerk dan raak?

Participant B: Tannie daar is van my vriende wat meer as 500 meisies en meer as 700 seuns het as vriende op haar foon.

Researcher: Dit is verskriklik! Hoe besig hou dit hulle nie?

Participant B: Baie (lag).... dis bietjie te erg...

Researcher: Wanneer sal jy besluit dat jy nie 'n persoon gaan hou as 'n aanlyn vriend nie?

Participant B: Ek kyk na die ouderdom....19 is tops en die vrae wat hulle vir mens vra. Die vra kan soos in persoonlik raak...

Researcher: En dan *delete* jy hulle?

Participant B: Ja of ek blok hulle.

Researcher: Jy het gesê dat jou aanlyn vriendskappe sterk vriendskappe is. Kan jy vir my verduidelik hoekom sê jy so?

Participant B: Tannie dit is baie maklike kommunikasie want 'n mens het altyd 'n goeie konneksie... jy kan soos in die hele tyd kommunikeer. Dit laat my veilig voel in die verhouding en kan my vriende met enige iets vertrou omdat ons so baie praat..

Researcher: Mmm.

Participant B: Dit is net makliker en vinniger om iemand so te leer ken.

Researcher: So, sou jy sê die vriendskappe ontwikkel ook makliker aanlyn?

Participant B: Ja, beslis tannie, want daar is soveel meer waaroor 'n mens gesels....

Researcher: Jy sê hier dat jy die meeste van jou vriende al persoonlik ontmoet het.

Participant B: Ja.

Researcher: Wat van die ander?

Participant B: Dit is almal persone wat ver bly en dis soos in moeilik om bymekaar uit te kom.

Researcher: Hoeveel persoonlike inligting sal jy met jou aanlyn vriende deel?

Participant B: Tannie ek sal nie te persoonlik raak nie. Ek antwoord net die vrae en hou nie daarvan as dit soos in te persoonlik is nie.

Researcher: O...

Participant B: Ek sal miskien iets op my *status* sit en ook my *profile picture* maar ek sal nie sommer net iets sê nie.

Researcher: Verander jy jou *status* gereeld?

Participant B: Ja, tannie so drie keer 'n dag. Maar daar is nog 'n *status*, 'n *personal status*... dit is meer permanent.

Researcher: Het almal 'n *status*?

Participant B: Ja, dit sê hoe jy voel op daai oomblik en dan sal die ander daarvoor praat...

Researcher: So, dit lok reaksie uit by almal...

Participant B: Ja tannie. Almal sal soos in dan iets sê en so sal 'n *chat* begin.

Researcher: Ek sien.

Participant B: Dit is vir my ook makliker oor die foon omdat ek nie fisies kontak het met die persoon nie....

Researcher: Is daar 'n rede waarom jy nie persoonlik met die ander persoon wil praat nie?

Participant B: Tannie ek is skaam en dis vir my baie moeilik om eers *face to face* met iemand te praat voordat ek met hom of haar *ge-chat* het op die foon...

Researcher: So dis vir jou soos 'n ysbreker voor jy iemand ontmoet?

Participant B: Ja tannie, dis vir my baie makliker, want dan kan 'n mens baie lekkerder gesels as jy mekaar eers leer ken het op die foon. Jy gaan nie soos in wonde wat om te doen of wat of te sê nie, want die persoon weet nou al iets van jou af.

Researcher: So jy dit maak jou minder selfbewus?

Participant B: Ja.

Researcher: Hoe voel jy oor vals identiteite en mense wat voorgee aanlyn?

Participant B: Tannie as daai persoon nie 'n foto stuur nie, sal ek hom nie *accept* nie. Ek wil nie 'n vriendskap hê as ek nie mooi weet soos in hoe lyk daai persoon nie en iemand anders kan hom dalk ook ken en dan sal hulle sien as hy soos.... dalk vir hulle 'n ander foto gestuur het...

Researcher: Die foto is dus vir jou baie belangrik..

Participant B: Ja en die persoonlikheid, maar die persoonlikheid beïnvloed die *chat*.

Researcher: Hoe so?

Participant B: Die persoon sal dalk goed sê net om my te *impress* en dan sal ek hom baie uitvra en dan vang ek hom uit..

Researcher: Ek sien. Hoekom het jy gesê dat dit jou laat goed voel oor jouself wanneer jy met jou aanlyn vriende gesels?

Participant B: Tannie hulle is altyd daar, hulle is elke uur van die dag daar ... ook as jy hulle nodig het... daar is nie eintlik afstand nie.

Researcher: Jy voel jy kan staatmaak op hulle ondersteuning?

Participant B: Ja, tannie en hulle motiveer jou baie. Veral met toetse en hulle gee soos in bystand. Hulle sal soos in jou bystaan wanneer jy ongelukkig is en jy sal weet hulle ondersteuning is altyd daar...

Researcher: Waarom het jy gesê dat dit makliker is om aanlyn vriendskappe te behou as in die regte lewe?

Participant B: In die regte lewe moet 'n mens baie vinnig dink wanneer jy *chat*, tannie en op my foon het ek meer tyd om eers te dink wat ek wil sê.

Researcher: O goed. Ons het netnou so bietjie gesels oor selfvertroue – hoe beïnvloed jou aanlyn vriendskappe jou selfvertroue?

Participant B: Tannie ek het nou baie meer vriende as wat ek in die regte lewe sou hê. Ek kan nie net na 'n persoon toe loop en begin *chat* nie. Nou is ek baie *talkative* want ek kon eers *chat* met daai persoon op die foon. Dit gee my soos in selfvertroue vir die *face to face*..

Researcher: Hoe belangrik is dit vir jou om jou probleme met jou vriende te bespreek?

Participant B: Tannie ek gebruik my *status* daarvoor en ek sal my probleme net deel met die vriende wat ek vertrou. Ek gebruik ook soos in my *profile picture*...

Researcher: Hoe?

Participant B: Dit sal dalk soos in gaan oor iets waarmee ek nou sukkel of dalk iets sê van die probleme wat ek nou het.

Researcher: Wat sal dan gebeur?

Participant B: Almal sal begin uitvra oor my foto en dan sal almal daaroor gesels en ek sal ook soos in....uhmm.. dan meer sê oor die foto en hoe ek voel.

Researcher: Wat het jy geleer oor jouself deur aanlyn vriendskappe?

Participant B: Tannie partykeer vergeet jy goed van jouself en jou vriende help jou onthou wie jy is. Hulle motiveer jou so baie en hulle help jou selfbeeld want hulle motiveer jou die heelyd. Ek voel my vriende aanvaar my beter op die foon want ons *chat* baie en dan is die kommunikasie nou so vir my baie makliker..

Researcher: Mmm.

Participant B: Partykeer sal ons *chat* tot in die laat nagte, want as jy eers begin *chat*, dan vergeet jy van die tyd..

Researcher: Het jy al op *chat rooms* ingegaan?

Participant B: Die *chat rooms* is op Mxit – jy ontmoet ook mense daar, maar ek is nie so baie in *chat rooms* nie, daar is te veel mense..

Researcher: As jy en jou aanlyn vriende nou so *chat*, waarom gesels julle?

Participant B: Ons praat oor musiek, ek hou baie van musiek, maar ook *movies*, *bands*, liedjies, klere, dans en sport.

Researcher: So, julle gesels oor julle belangstellings...

Participant B: Ja tannie, maar partykeer ook oor ander mense.

Researcher: O, goed. Het jy al nare ondervindinge gehad met boelies?

Participant B: Ja ek is eenkeer geboelie oor die foon en dit was baie sleg vir my *self-confidence*..

Researcher: Wat het gebeur?

Participant B: Nee... die persoon het baie persoonlik geraak en lelike goed gesê en dit was maar net nie lekker nie.. Daar was eenkeer 'n ouer man, hy was so 24 jaar oud of so.... Hy het my *invite* maar het snaakse vrae ook gevra...

Researcher: Wat het jy gedoen?

Participant B: Ek het hom dadelik *geblock*, dit was my keuse ...dit is altyd 'n keuse, want dis makliker.

Researcher: Wat presies sal jy doen as jy nie meer jou foon het nie?

Participant B: Ek weet nie tannie, ek sal nie wil nie... ek het my foon baie nodig. Ek dink ek sal leeg voel en ek sal voel daar is nie kommunikasie of *support* nie. Ek sal nie met die ander persone net kan praat nie en dis ook moeilik met die wat ver bly, hoe gaan jy nou kommunikeer? Ek dink die vriendskappe gaan

daan nie meer lekker werk nie, want jy gaan baie minder met mekaar *chat*. En hoe gaan ek nou maak as ek daai *support* nodig het? Dan is daar ook die skoolwerk... ons vriende praat ook oor huiswerk en wat ons leer vir toetse en so, ek dink ek gaan sukkel want dit is lekker om te weet almal doen dieselfde goed.

Researcher:

Ja..

Participant B:

Tannie en dan ook alles wat gebeur. Op die foon weet jy van alles wat soos in gebeur al die nuus is oral op en almal praat oor goed. Jy sal afgesluit wees as jy nie meer weet wat aangaan nie....

Researcher:

So dit laat jou ook deel voel..

Participant B:

Ja, tannie ek is deel van baie vriende en ek weet hulle aanvaar my oor my *chats* want ek is nie meer skaam nie.

Researcher:

Dink jy die sosiale netwerke en aanlyn vriendskappe het jou verander?

Participant B:

Ek dink dit het my meer volwasse gemaak. Omdat ek skaam is, het dit baie gehelp ek is nie nou meer so skaam nie en kan soos in makliker met ander persone gesels, maar ek hou nog steeds daarvan om eers te *chat* oor die foon, dan is dit nie vir my so erg nie.

Researcher:

So jy dink en voel meer positief oor jousef?

Participant B:

Ja beslis tannie. Jou vriende maak jou baie meer positief oor jousef.

Researcher:

Hoe so?

Participant B:

Want hulle sal vir jou goed sê oor jousef wat jy al vergeet het of goed wat jy nie eintlik weet nie. Dan kom jou vriende en dan sê hulle vir jou jy is so en so en dan is dit goeie goed oor jousef. Dit laat jou baie goed voel en dit laat jou ook dink oor jousef. Ek dink dit help om dit wat die ander sê te sien op jou foon en dan kan jy weer en weer gaan kyk want dit is altyd daar en dis lekker om dit weer te lees. En dan sal daar dalk 'n dag kom wat jy nie so lekker voel nie, dan is al daai goed nog op jou foon om te gaan lees en dan sal jy weer beter voel.

Researcher:

Wat sou sê is die negatiewe sy van aanlyn vriendskappe?

Participant B:

Jy kan nie by almal uitkom nie, jy het te veel vriende en kontakte op jou foon. Dit is bietjie oorweldigend partykeer want jy wil graag met almal *chat*...Jy sal net gereelde *chat* vriende kies en dan maar meestal met hulle gesels. Wanneer jy vir 'n toets moet leer is dit ook moeilik. Jou gesin verstaan nie, hulle sal reëls gee wanneer ek moet toetse skryf, huiswerk doen of in eksamens. My ma-hulle sal my foon vat vir 'n week sodat ek dan moet leer.

Researcher:

Sou jy dus sê dit het 'n negatiewe invloed op jou skoolwerk?

Participant B: Ja tannie dis baie moeilik om te leer en jou foon *ping* die hele tyd, jy wil dan antwoord. Maar my gesin verstaan nie want hulle verstaan nie van die *chats* op die foon nie.... daai *support*...

Researcher: Werk dit altyd so dat julle aanlyn vriende mekaar sal wil ontmoet persoonlik?

Participant B: Tannie ek sal hulle wil ontmoet maar eers as ons meer weet van mekaar. 'n Mens moet mekaar eers 'n bietjie leer ken voordat jy persoonlik ontmoet want dan praat jy makliker en dis nie so *awkward* nie. As daai persoon eers jou persoonlikheid weet, dan gaan hy nie so vaskyk in hoe jy lyk nie, hy gaan dan luister wat jy sê.

Researcher: Wat sou jy sê is die doel van aanlyn vriendskappe?

Participant B: Tannie, 'n mens doen baie ondervinding op, want jy kyk en luister na wat ander mense sê wat nie soos jy dink en is nie. Jy kan ook baie meer mense so leer ken, jy kry baie meer vriende. Jy sal nie regtig so baie mense geken het nie...

Researcher: Okay, ja dit is so nê? Is daar nog iets wat jy dalk nog met my wil deel oor sosiale netwerke?

Participant B: Tannie, 'n mens moet nie met jou emosies ingaan nie. Daar is mense wat jou sal seermaak, hulle sal jou vermy of hulle sal agteraf wees met jou. Veral met die mense wat nie so *close* is nie. Moet nie te persoonlike raak nie.

Researcher: Baie dankie jong. Jy het my vandag somer baie geleer. Dankie vir jou tyd vandag.

Participant B: Dis 'n plesier tannie.

TRANSCRIPTION (PARTICIPANT C)

Researcher: Good afternoon, how are you today?

Participant C: I am good thank you mam.

Researcher: I just want to refresh you mind again on why I am doing this. I am busy with my degree in social networking and I chose the topic because I think that among adolescents it is quite the in thing now and everyone uses it nowadays. There is also not much research done on it. I chose 25 learners in the school who completed the questionnaire and then I chose 5 for an interview. I looked at the number of friends and time as well as the amount of positive answers to most of the questions in the questionnaire. So you are here today to tell me more about social networking especially your online friendships. Remember that this interview is confidential and your name will not appear anywhere in my report. In the questionnaire you confirmed that

you have Internet access. Do you have access via your phone or a computer as well.

Participant C: Only a phone.

Researcher: Is that how you talk to your friends mostly?

Participant C: Yes.

Researcher: What phone do you use?

Participant C: A Nokia.

Researcher: You have indicated here that you mostly use WhatsApp, Mxit and 2go. I don't know much about 2go. Can you tell me more?

Participant C: 2go actually it searches, it's a social network to share, but it is actually boring, 'cause it's having many guys, not for girls really.

Researcher: So it is more for boys?

Participant C: Yes, more for boys.

Researcher: Does it work the same as WhatsApp?

Participant C: No...

Researcher: How does it work?

Participant C: On 2go actually not many people are online, 'cause they go to groups. If you want to go to people, you go to groups, then you can have friends there.

Researcher: Almost like Mxit rather.

Participant C: Yeah.

Researcher: Oh, I see. Do you belong to such a group?

Participant C: In 2go?

Researcher: Yes or Mxit?

Participant C: No...

Researcher: So you don't enter groups?

Participant C: No...

Researcher: Okay. You said here that you use WhatsApp and Mxit. Which one of the two do you use most?

Participant C: WhatsApp.

Researcher: Can you tell me why?

Participant C: Cause.... Mxit actually... on Mxit I have many friends, but some times..ugh.. you chat with them, they won't answer you quickly, but WhatsApp actually anything that I want, I can find it.

Researcher: So in WhatsApp the response is much faster.

Participant C: Yeah, although that person is not online. If you send a message, he will get it.

Researcher: Okay. And Mxit is also for free?

Participant C: Yeah.

Researcher: But to use WhatsApp you have to have an Internet connection. Do you always have Internet connection? At your home, everywhere?

Participant C: No, not always.

Researcher: Okay, and does that bother you if you want to communicate with your friends?

Participant C: Yes.

Researcher: Okay.... You have also said here that you spend 3 to 5 hours a day talking to your online friends. How do you divide your hours?

Participant C: Actually I will maybe start chatting from 2 o'clock then maybe 6 o'clock I will put the phone away and study.

Researcher: Oh, and do your homework?

Participant C: Yeah.

Researcher: So for those 4 hours, you are busy talking to your friend

Participant C: Yeah.

Researcher: You indicated that you have more than 50 friends. How many friends do you have?

Participant C: Uhhh, I don't know. They are too many.

Researcher: Do you regard them all as close friends? Are they all close or is there a group of friends that is closer than the others?

Participant C: A group that's more close than the others.

Researcher: How many close friends do you think you have?

Participant C: Maybe 10 to 11.

Researcher: Do you speak to them every day?

Participant C: Not all of them.

Researcher: What do you talk about online?

Participant C: Sometimes it's work... about homework...maybe we are talking about other children or other guys... and I don't know...

Researcher: I asked here how many of your friends have you met personally and you said only a few. So this means that most of your online friends you haven't met face to face yet. Is that true?

Participant C: Yes..

Researcher: Tell me about that. How have you become friends online without ever meeting each another? How does it happen? How does a friendship work online?

Participant C: The... I don't know... if this person knows how to find your number, he will invite... or she will invite you, then you will start chatting to that person, then maybe if he can....'cause some of my friends are not around this town...and he or she will say I have relatives who live in your town and I can come visit there. Maybe we can meet face to face. And so we meet face to face.

Researcher: Those friends that you haven't met face to face, was it also through an invite?

Participant C: Yeah.

Researcher: You just get an invite out of the blue?

Participant C: Yeah....

Researcher: And do you accept always?

Participant C: Yes, I do accept.

Researcher: Even if you don't know that person?

Participant C: Yeah..

Researcher: Okay, and how do you get to know that person?

Participant C: I'll ask him many questions: where are you from, what do you like, what kind of a person are you, are you in school or are you working....or...

Researcher: Okay, and then you decide whether you like him or her...

Participant C: Yeah.

Researcher: And can you then block that person if you don't like him or her?

Participant C: Yeah, 'cause some of them, although you ask his or her name they will not answer, they will say you will know my name after a few days, then I will block that person 'cause that person doesn't want to talk to me and don't even want to tell me his or her name.

Researcher: Oh, okay.. So, you are going on the fact that he must give his name?

Participant C: Yeah.

Researcher: How do you know that a person isn't lying to you?

Participant C: Uhhh... I am not sure...

Researcher: You're not sure? So you'll never know if this person is lying to you or not?

Participant C: 'Cause sometimes a week passes and I will ask that person again, another information....

Researcher: Oh, and if he says something different, you will know he lied to you...

Participant C: Yeah.

Researcher: And then, what would you do then?

Participant C: I'll pretend like nothing happened... and that I never noticed that he or she was lying.

Researcher: Okay, so you won't confront that person?

Participant C: No...

Researcher: Do you find it easier to keep your friendships going via the phone and online than in real life?

Participant C: Yeah...it's easy on the phone...

Researcher: Tell me why?

Participant C: Actually...some of them....I have many friends that are boys, maybe I will sit with them and maybe discuss sometimes school things and then the girlfriend of this boy can come to me and say, ja... you were sitting with my boyfriend. It's okay on the phone rather in real, 'cause in real they will suspect me of things...

Researcher: So, it's better on the phone, then the other girls won't know..

Participant C: Yeah.

Researcher: And is it easier for you to chat online than in real life?
 Participant C: Yes it is.
 Researcher: Why?
 Participant C: Cause online...actually you have many things to say on the phone rather than face to face although that thing you didn't want to say to the person face to face, you will say it on the phone, because you don't see that person.
 Researcher: Is it easier to say anything to that person when you don't see that person. So then you can say anything?
 Participant C: Yeah...
 Researcher: So are you rather shy when it comes to face to face communication?
 Participant C: Yes..
 Researcher: And this is why it's easier for you?
 Participant C: Ja...
 Researcher: You don't have to look that person in the eye?
 Participant C: Yeah...
 Researcher: So you would prefer chatting online?
 Participant C: Yeah.
 Researcher: Is that with boys and girls?
 Participant C: Yeah.
 Researcher: Good. You said that many of your friends are boys...
 Participant C: Yeah.
 Researcher: And how old are they?
 Participant C: They are all below 20, 15....16.
 Researcher: Okay. Those friends that you have online that you have never met, have you ever felt that you want to meet them?
 Participant C: Yeah...
 Researcher: How will you do that?
 Participant C: It's better to meet face to face, 'cause although that person has sent you his picture, you will never know him unless you meet face to face.
 Researcher: It's just a confirmation of what that person said?
 Participant C: Mmm.
 Researcher: So, if you could, you would like to meet all your online friends..
 Participant C: Yeah.
 Researcher: Do you invite others?
 Participant C: No.
 Researcher: You haven't invited anybody, but have only accepted...
 Participant C: Yeah.
 Researcher: Did I ask you about your home language...it is Swati?
 Participant C: Yes.
 Researcher: In which language do you communicate online?
 Participant C: Zulu, Swati en and English and some Afrikaans.

Researcher: So you can speak Zulu as well?

Participant C: Yes.

Researcher: That is wonderful. I want to know how do you share personal information with your online friends? (Silence)

Researcher: Do you? What would you tell them and what wouldn't you tell them?

Participant C: What I wouldn't tell them is that when I am having periods I wouldn't tell them or when I am sick I wouldn't share, 'cause I don't feel like chatting. I don't want to be rude on that person, 'cause I don't want to chat but if that person asks what is wrong I will say that I have pains in my body.

Researcher: And when you are having problems with relationships, or parents or whoever? Would you share that with your online friends?

Participant C: Yes I would do that.

Researcher: How does that make you feel?

Participant C: A little better 'cause I did chat with someone.

Researcher: And how do they respond to that?

Participant C: Maybe some would say it will be alright...

Researcher: And does that help you to get through the problem?

Participant C: Well..... a little.

Researcher: Would you say that you need your online friends in your life?

Participant C: A few of them I do...

Researcher: The 10 or 11 that you spoke about earlier?

Participant C: Yeah. I will need them for support, communication and sharing stuff with them...

Researcher: Do you think your online friendships are stronger than your offline friendships?

Participant C: I'm not sure...

Researcher: Are they mostly the same?

Participant C: (Silence)

Researcher: Are the 10 or 11 friends you are close with your offline friends as well?

Participant C: Sometimes...

Researcher: Not all of them?

Participant C: Yeah.

Researcher: What do you think: is it easier to maintain a friendship online than offline?

Participant C: Easier online because then you can chat all the time.

Researcher: Is it good for your confidence to chat online? Did it strengthen your self-confidence in any way?

Participant C: (Silence)

Researcher: Previously you said that you are a bit shy...and that you don't always like face to face communication. How did the online

friendships and online communication help you or give you confidence?

Participant C: I'm not sure.

Researcher: Is it perhaps because you don't have to face that person?

Participant C: Yeah and on the phone I can talk anything I want...better than face to face. Face to face I won't talk 'cause I don't have anything to say.

Researcher: And when you say something and your friends respond to that, does it make you feel good?

Participant C: Yeah...

Researcher: So, it helped your confidence especially in making friends..?

Participant C: Yes.

Researcher: Okay, here you said that to you it is important to discuss your problems with your friends because you have someone to talk to.

Participant C: Yes.

Researcher: Is it easy to hide certain things about yourself online?

Participant C: For me it easy not to tell all of them, but half of them...I will tell them.....

Researcher: Are there certain things you would like to hide?

Participant C: No...

Researcher: Not really....? But if you had something that you didn't want to share with them, it is easier to just keep quiet, then nobody will know. Is that so?

Participant C: Yeah.

Researcher: Have you ever realised or felt that somebody hid something from you? Some of your friends?

Participant C: Yeah.

Researcher: Okay, tell me about it.

Participant C: Actually a person would sometimes, when you are chatting to that person although you're happy, he or she would want you to be happy when she's happy.

Researcher: Mmm?

Participant C: I don't like it that way.. When I'm happy we all can be happy every time. If you are sad I can just ask the problem and if I am sad they can just ask me the problem..rather than not to tell him what's wrong. It would be rude on that person...

Researcher: So, you feel that in your friendships, you should be open?

Participant C: Yeah.

Researcher: Do you trust your online friends?

Participant C: No.

Researcher: Why not?

Participant C: I do trust some of them, those that I have met face to face. The others that I haven't met, I do not trust them.

Researcher: Of those 10 to 11 friends that you said were close, how many of them are your offline friends as well?

Participant C: I actually have more offline friends than online friends.

Researcher: Have you learned anything about yourself through the social networking?

Participant C: Yes.

Researcher: Okay, what?

Participant C: That you should love one another, trust everybody....not everybody to trust but to tell everybody the truth and to be kind to everyone.

Researcher: How did you learn that specifically by being online?

Participant C: When you are chatting with this person....there is this person who is really close to you telling you everything. There are some of them that are showing you love and everything. They are kind to you...

Researcher: And when they are kind to you, you are kind to them..

Participant C: Yes.

Researcher: Have you ever encountered anything strange, like sexual predators, bullies or people sending inappropriate pictures to you?

Participant C: Yes.

Researcher: And how did you handle it?

Participant C: Actually when this person sent these things, I don't understand these things, I would block that person because I don't know what he will be sending me next.

Researcher: Mmm. And your parents, do they have access to your phone and do they know your friends?

Participant C: They know only a few of them and don't know what is going on on my phone.

Researcher: Mmm.

Participant C: They sometimes take my phone only when I'm writing exams 'cause I have to study.

Researcher: If I would take away your phone now, or you have to give it up, how would your life be?

Participant C: It will be hard for a few days. I use those four hours to chat, but I won't need to chat anymore, I would use those hours to study.

Researcher: Mmm.

Participant C: And I will miss some of my friends.

Researcher: Yes, then you would have to meet them physically to see them.

Participant C: Yeah.

Researcher: Can you imagine your world without your phone?

Participant C: That will be really hard, I would not be able to concentrate because I'm used to chat, I will miss the conversations and the nice conversations with this person and the things we're sharing.

Researcher: Do you use social networking to gain knowledge or do you just use it to chat with your friends?

Participant C: To find out about things.

Researcher: What social networks do you use for that?

Participant C: WhatsApp and Mxit.

Researcher: So you use those two to find out what's going on in the outside world as well?

Participant C: Yes.

Researcher: Can you think about anything else that would be important for me to know?

Participant C: (Silence)

Researcher: All right let me summarise quickly: you've got a few close online friends and then you have lots of online friends that are not so close with whom you also chat, but not on the same level as the others. Right, and you would definitely between 4 and 5 hours a day just chat with your friends. This strengthens your friendships and you find it much easier to chat online. So social networking is a big part of your life.

Participant C: Uh-uh, not that big, because you have to concentrate on your books and not the phone.

Researcher: You feel that it is better to concentrate on your schoolwork?

Participant C: Yeah.

Researcher: How often do you chat with the friends that are not so close to you?

Participant C: We won't talk that much, not as much as the ones that are close to you. I would just ask how are you, no I'm good, oh good good I have to be off now. See you around..

Researcher: Do you also use your status and profile picture to let your friends know how you feel?

Participant C: Yes.

Researcher: How often would you change your status?

Participant C: Actually when I'm happy I would write something happy on my status message and maybe take a picture of myself and put it on the profile picture.

Researcher: And when you are not happy?

Participant C: I would write a status message maybe about a sad song then I would not put a picture in.

Researcher: When you use the sad song, would your friends respond to that?

Participant C: Yes...

Researcher: So this is basically how you reveal your feelings online and your friends as well by putting a status on and then everyone would respond to that?

Participant C: Yeah.

Researcher: Thank you so much for your time. I found it very interesting talking to you.

Participant C: Thank you.

TRANSCRIPTION (PARTICIPANT D)

Researcher: Good day, how are you today?

Participant D: I am good thank you mam.

Researcher: Let me just quickly tell you once again why I am doing this interview: I am busy with my master's degree and I am doing research on social networking and online friendships among teenagers. I have chosen 25 learners to complete a questionnaire, five from each grade, and then I looked at the hours, the amount of friends and how many positive answers each one has given. Based on that, I chose 5 learners to interview to gain more information.

Participant D: Okay.

Researcher: Let me see – you said that you use most of the time BBM, Facebook and Twitter?

Participant D: Twitter, yes, I like to use it to follow celebrities.

Researcher: Celebrities outside South Africa?

Participant D: Even in South Africa. I've got a celebrity that I like called AKA, he sings hip hop, so I like hip hop music so I see that last week he was in this specific town so I see on Twitter that he is going to perform at a certain rugby stadium. You can see like what they go through and how they live, are they still having fun, what happened to them and so. Most of... I follow they are South African artists that are outside of the country.

Researcher: And BBM? Do you use that for friends mostly?

Participant D: Ja, I use it for friends and family, especially friends from Johannesburg and Pretoria, I've got family, but also got friends there, I use it for them. And we usually share music so on BBM you can see that someone is playing a song you like. We share music, we share pictures and I talk with them. I could talk with my cousin like for nearly three hours, but if we're tired typing, we use voice note record to talk.

Researcher: Voice note ...

Participant D: Ja, you talk, you record, you send it to her, she records also and she sends it back to me.

Researcher: Voice note record...

Participant D: Ja..

Researcher: When you are tired typing...

Participant D: Yes, then we send it.

Researcher: Okay. You said that in a day you are on social networks for 3 to 5 hours.

Participant D: Three to five hours, yeah.

Researcher: All right. Doesn't it interfere with your homework and schoolwork?

Participant D: Usually when we have homework and schoolwork like when my friends have a calendar where they can see okay I'm writing things ... so if like...let me make an example: last year September we were writing mini exams, so I was studying for business and something like... most of the topics are boring and then my phone is here and I have a BIS, I close the book and go on the phone for maybe a few hours and it affects my studying.

Researcher: Instead of learning...

Participant D: Ja... Instead of learning I'm on my phone and it really affects...

Researcher: Okay.

Participant D: Like night time or every time – let me make an example: by yesterday at practice, I was on my phone for the whole time before we started practising and after practice I got home and bathed. After that I wrote my homework. I told my mom and dad that I'm gonna sleep, but I didn't go to sleep, I was on my phone. Usually my parents will think, okay, she went to sleep 8 o'clock, but I will sleep maybe 12 or 1 o'clock, 'cause I'm on Twitter, I'm on Facebook, I'm on BBM or on Whatsapp. Like I wanna see what's happening like ...even when my peers they say let's stop chatting today and we'll chat tomorrow, I will then be on the phone for longer 'cause I wanna see what I missed yesterday. So, usually, maybe it's more than 5 hours a day, but I don't really count the hours...

Researcher: Mmm. So you can go on into the morning hours...

Participant D: Ja.. and like yesterday, me and my father were discussing my career so he asked me what I wanna become and I said I want to do health and safety. So we were busy Googling like how health and safety works, is it easy to find. Then like we've got a soccer match tomorrow at a school that I don't know and I was searching on Google today and I saw how to get there.

Researcher: Okay.

Participant D: Yes, so I use it most of the time. Even on Twitter I follow UJ (University of Johannesburg) I follow North West University.

Researcher: Oh, through Twitter?

Participant D: Ja.

Researcher: So, on Twitter you can just type in a search word?

Participant D: Ja like...

Researcher: ... and it gives you information?

Participant D: No... like you could....

Researcher: ...it gives you the comments of people?

Participant D: No, like you follow that person, like UJ has the page like one person controls the whole thing like it's a friend like they share like okay at the campus today things that happened.

Researcher: Oh, I understand. So I can just type in UJ campus?

Participant D: Ja, and then you will know what's going on.

Researcher: Let's quickly talk about your friends...and now I want to focus on your online friends.

Participant D: Online friends...

Researcher: ...of whom some will be your offline friends as well...

Participant D: Ja..

Researcher: Okay, so let's see. You said that you have more than 50 friends?

Participant D: Ja.

Researcher: Okay, approximately how many friends do you have?

Participant D: Okay on Twitter I have 106, on Facebook I have 350 and on BBM I have 105 at the moment.

Researcher: Okay, and how many of them have you met in person?

Participant D: Uhmhhh, most from my side I don't add you or if you add me and if we didn't meet, I don't accept you.. So, let me say all the people that I have on my BBM and Facebook, except for Twitter. On Twitter some of them I don't know I just accept. The others I do know them.

Researcher: You only accept friends if you know them.

Participant D: Ja, I know them.

Researcher: Okay, can you tell me about the process of making friends online? How does it work?

Participant D: Making friends online for instance.... I know that...okay...I know you, but you don't know me...

Researcher: Mmm.

Participant D: ... okay let me say I had a cousin who know a person...like okay I know this person but I haven't met him or her or stuff like that. So you can add her on Facebook, she or he could accept you. You guys will talk like you will ask things via inbox so the others couldn't know. Like on Facebook you have an inbox. So, he or she will go to the inbox and says...okay thank you for accepting me and I will give my name and say where I come from. My brother is this one, my sister is this one and my friend is this one...

Researcher: Mmm. Then you start talking...

Participant D: Then you start talking...Some of the people will go like I don't know you, but it's good to meet you, we could be friends...

Researcher: Mmm.

Participant D: ...but some of them...."Oh I know you! You talk a lot" and "Oh, that's you...okay, please give me your BBM pin" and stuff...

Researcher: So would you say it's easier to make friends online than offline.
 Participant D: Ja, it's easier 'cause some of the people are shy. I could talk to most of the people like I'll meet a person like "Oh, hi okay" but then I won't talk to him or her 'cause I'm shy, but once we chat on BBM the next time we meet, he will ...most of the people will go: "Oh you've changed" especially when you talk on the social networks..

Researcher: So, then you're not shy..
 Participant D: Yeah, then I'm not shy.
 Researcher: It's almost like an icebreaker?
 Participant D: Ja...
 Researcher: You first chat online and then it's easier to chat offline.
 Participant D: Ja. 'Cause he or she will say "Oh, last time we talked about this" and the new guys will maybe argue "No, said this, no, you said that..." and stuff like that.. yeah.

Researcher: You said that you have lots of friends, but how many of those friends are really close?
 Participant D: Let me say maybe 50 of them.
 Researcher: Okay, only 50?
 Participant D: Only 50 with whom I am close..
 Researcher: What makes them closer?
 Participant D: 'Cause they are people....like I've got my friends like...the whole Grade 11's that I know, they're my friends, I've got them on BBM and they are people I see every time I come to school. So, we talk about like "Oh, did you see this in school and stuff" or "Oh, did you hear that maybe one of the artists are coming" or stuff which will make ...we will start chatting and stuff like that and "Oh, did you see that phone?" We talk about stuff like that or when you put a picture they want to know "who's this?". Most girls will put a picture of a boy and they want to know who it is. "Oh, this is my friend or this is my cousin..." and then you start chatting. Like my friend she went to Pretoria the weekend and she told me all the time what she was doing. It's like we can communicate more, rather than calling, 'cause most of the time we don't have airtime.

Researcher: Oh, I see. So, you definitely communicate more that way?
 Participant D: Ja.
 Researcher: Let's focus on these 50 closer friends of you now. What personal information would you share with them? How much will you share with them?
 Participant D: Uhm... Okay, maybe like if.... let me see.....uhmm okay most of the people I know I like to share things with. Like I said the 50 I'm close to I'll share anywhere, like when my friend's parents went through a divorce I could share with her.

Researcher: So, you would share any personal information?

Participant D: Ja, 'cause I know them. I know I can trust this person like I know them. Most of them they are cousins and family, like people I know.

Researcher: Most of the 50 are cousins and family?

Participant D: Ja, 'cause in our culture we have a lot of family like from my father's side, especially me: at my mother's side they are 7, they are seven sisters. My father has 7 brothers and sisters.

Researcher: And you communicate with them all.

Participant D: Ja, we communicate a lot. Some of my cousins, like one or two of my cousins are in schools in Swaziland, so we talk about what we are doing at that moment like "what are you doing? I am going to soccer practice, I'll talk to you later.." Okay and for the holidays where can we go and what can we organise. Everything we organise. I would quickly do some research like in Durban we can go to the Shaka marine and then we put everything together. Our parents will be amazed at how much we know and how much we research these things. We go and Google these things.

Researcher: Do you talk to these 50 friends every day?

Participant D: No, not every day, but definitely 2, let me see, it's my cousin, a friend from school and another three cousins. It is 5 people I talk to every day. We'll talk on BBM, then we'll talk on Twitter like maybe I will mention him or her on Twitter like .."I just had a nice chat with my friend on BBM and stuff". So, we talk every day, usually every day.

Researcher: Okay. How does one chat on Twitter? How does one open a chat?

Participant D: Okay... like I don't want to lie, everyone knows when you open a Twitter account it will like take you a month to understand it, 'cause it's very complicated. Okay for instance, I know a friend of mine and I know his Twitter name so I'll go to search and I will put "at" in front of his name. You always use "at"(@) in front of the name. Then they'll throw a profile, then I can see whom she follows and she follows most of the people I know, so most of the people she follows, I also know, so I'll take those people and follow. If the people... if a person wants to follow you, you will also follow her back.

Researcher: I see, on a person's profile you can see if you can find somebody to follow.

Participant D: On Facebook, if you don't have that friend, you cannot see what he or she is posting. On Twitter, if I follow him or her then I can see ... if I follow back, okay she posted this, she posted that and she can see what I posted.

Researcher: Can one chat on Twitter like on Facebook and WhatsApp?

Participant D: Ja, you can.

Researcher: ...or do you just give statements and ...

Participant D: I do chat like ...

Researcher: So you can chat with another person?

Participant D: Ja, I do chat with another person like okay there's a show called Big Brother, I don't know if you know it. Like the person would.... like uhmm okay.. "this guy is supposed to leave now" or "no, you see this guy can't leave 'cause of this, this, this..." If I am referring my question to certain persons, I would put in all their addresses in my conversation.

Researcher: Do you have to put in the address each time?

Participant D: You have to yes. But there is a thing called sub-Tweeting. Like if I'm fighting with a boyfriend like I don't wanna mention him, I say "some people are fools like he has just called me now", but I don't mention him – it's called sub-Tweeting. You don't talk straight to that person, but you talk about him or her.

Researcher: Oh, I understand.

Participant D: I like all social media, I would always be on my phone trying to find out how does this work, how does that work... and my class mates always say go ask her she always knows what's going on.

Researcher: So it improves your general knowledge?

Participant D: Ja, you know more...

Researcher: And you keep contact with the outside world.

Participant D: Ja. You communicate with the people, it goes directly to them. There is a DM, it's a direct message going to people directly.

Researcher: Why does it make you feel happy and why do you feel good when you talk to your online friends?

Participant D: 'Cause, for instance, I could fight with my parents now, like me we are two at home, it's my little sister and me, my older brother is working, so he doesn't live at home. I have a friend whose family has just moved to Middelburg so sometimes it will be me and my mother and my little sister. So me and my mother and my father will fight about stuff, but then I cannot express to them, but I can express to people on social networks. They would tell me "okay calm down when this and this happens you know, parents are like this". They encourage me instead of your parents if you tell them, they shout more at you. So those people would try and calm you down.

Researcher: Is that why you make use of them then?

Participant D: Ja, when I'm angry I can go to Facebook or Twitter and see if I can laugh and forget that I am angry.

Researcher: ...to take your mind off things.

Participant D: Ja..

Researcher: So, your online friends definitely support you emotionally and they motivate you and encourage you....

Participant D: Ja.

Researcher: How does social networking and online friendships strengthen one's confidence?

Participant D: Self-confidence, out of 10 I could rate it 5. It doesn't really build your self-confidence. Like sometimes there are bullies that bully one another and that can break your self-confidence. Most of the teenagers that I know, friends and family, most of the guys who are dating, they usually break up because of social networks. They could fight now and one would go Tweet behind the other's back. It doesn't always build your self-esteem.

Researcher: You indicated here that you have more self-confidence when you are online with your friends. Can you tell me why?

Participant D: I could chat ...like.. I'm open to them. Let me say I'm more open to my friends rather than open to my family, my mom and my dad, 'cause like they are always busy. Some of the things I cannot discuss with them, 'cause I'm still a teenager, so I discuss with my friend, so that would give me more self-confidence.

Researcher: Let's look at the whole communication thing. How does the online communication differ from offline communication?

Participant D: Okay, let me make an example: I'm fighting with someone...

Researcher: Mmm...

Participant D: While I fight with someone it was a fight from my friends in this school. They were fighting last week.

Researcher: Face to face?

Participant D: No, they were fighting on the phone, so when they fight on the phone, then one of the girls could swear at this girl, but when they are face to face, she can't do anything 'cause she's scared. So, on the social network, you could say more, 'cause you're not scared. The person is not with you...

Researcher: So, online you can say more...

Participant D: Ja, you can say more, 'cause that person and most of the people online, they tell lies. Someone could say now: "you know I'm now with Barak Obama", you won't say "now you're lying", 'cause you don't know where that person is.

Researcher: It's easier to lie online?

Participant D: Ja, it's easier.

Researcher: Okay. It's then easy to pretend also.

Participant D: Ja, it's easy, but on WhatsApp, 'cause there's a last scene, you can't tell a person "why didn't you answer my message?" and he can't say "I didn't know you sent me a message." On WhatsApp

you can see that person was online 5 minutes ago and stuff. But on BBM if a person...you wanna ignore a person like you don't wanna talk to him or her. And if you ask him he would say "oh, my phone was on the floor" or "my phone was in the charger" or "my phone was off".

Researcher: And then you can believe them?

Participant D: Ja,

Researcher: Okay. Have you ever met somebody online, a friend or something that pretended to be something he's not?

Participant D: Ja.... I've once actually ... once I have a bunch of friends, those people I sit with them every time. We once were invited by a person who told us that he is a producer and stuff like this... like I dance, I sing, I do everything like I'm active like ... so this person said "I am a producer, I like what you guys did" and stuff like that. "I am 25 and I wanna meet you guys." So, "okay, okay, can we guys meet at the park?" Okay, that day we all went there ready to meet the producer now. Everything's gonna go well. When we met him, that person didn't come for the reason we came. That person wanted one of my friends and for that reason he nearly kidnapped us. So, this is when I decided not to accept friends I don't know.

Researcher: Wow, that's really bad.

Participant D: And sometimes when I see a person like maybe on Facebook, I could go to him and ask him who are you before accepting him. I can search a name and ask "who are you?" He will then tell me "I am this and this and this" and I will say "I know you, let me accept you".

Researcher: It's a very good thing.

Participant D: Yeah.

Researcher: Is it easy for you to hide certain things about yourself or do you share everything with your friends?

Participant D: No, it's easy to hide certain things. Like if...if..most..okay let me say Facebook will tell you okay this guy is gay or this girl is lesbian. So, most of the things, if you don't want to share, you stay with it. It's easy not to share and it's easy not to share. It is you that are typing, not someone else. You wanna share, you share, if you don't wanna share, you don't share.

Researcher: All right. How would your life be without your online friends?

Participant D: Like....during the exams: it's hard for me like, I would study like 3 hours and I need a break. And I watch TV and TV will be boring. I will start searching for my phone and realise I don't have a phone. So it's really hard for me. You could see something is missing like my mom usually says when you don't have a phone around you, you will go mad. 'Cause I won't chat

with those people I chat with every day and stuff. So, it's hard...most of the people can't live without their phones. Like I have a brother, a cousin, each and every hour they want to chat.

Researcher: And you?

Participant D: No, but during school hours my phone is off. I could perhaps for a day, but going for a day without it, the next day I will make sure that I borrow someone's phone or I'll take... at home, I'll take the tablet and see what's going on. I will realise something is wrong without my phone. Then my dad will say "okay we will lend you the tablet only for a minute" then you catch up.

Researcher: And would you miss your friends then?

Participant D: Ja, I'll miss my friends like...I miss like maybe how they are doing and what's happening and stuff like that. 'Cause usually when I am at home, I'm usually at the house. So, I don't see what's happening, so most of the things I learn through my friends online and social networks. Like that show Big Brother, my mom watches it and then I will come and tell her what's happened and she wants to know how do I know that. I will tell her that I follow it on Facebook and she will say that those things are actually clever. I know most of the things she doesn't know.

Researcher: Do you make use of social networking for general knowledge mostly?

Participant D: Ja, I want to know more, what's happening in the music industry, who and who got nominated for what.. so I don't only use it for friendships.

Researcher: In what way do you then maintain your friendships?

Participant D: BBM and Mxit.

Researcher: You still use it a lot. And you still use Mxit?

Participant D: Ja. But I could tell you, I've been offline for the past five days. I don't use it that much.

Researcher: Have you ever been part of chat rooms where you have entered them?

Participant D: Ja, I entered the chat room of Mpumalanga and the chat room of music like it's a lot of the stuff of music.

Researcher: Then you speak to people you don't know.

Participant D: Ja. There was a chat room for this town that people had entered. Some of the people you don't know you just view their points and you also learn a lot, so ja, I've joined chat rooms.

Researcher: Okay. Say that I will take your phone now..

Participant D: Okay...

Researcher: ..what effect do you think it will have on your online friendships? What do you think will happen?

Participant D: Okay, first of all, there is a person I need to talk to, so if you take it...

Researcher: ...you won't be able to talk to that person.

Participant D: ...I won't have a person to talk to. And second of all there's an event that I need to know about 'cause we post all the details. So if you take my phone by Saturday I need to know the details of the time the event starts and I need to report to someone. If you take what's this thing that will happen and I will not give that person the feedback. So, usually most of the things could have an effect.

Researcher: Like the communication definitely...

Participant D: Yeah, and my mom won't be able to tell me where I should meet her in town. It would be too difficult.

Researcher: Okay. Have you learned anything about yourself through your online friendships?

Participant D: Jaaa... I've learned that ...uhmm.. the thing is I'm really shy like meeting a person like then I'm really shy, but through the social networks like I could talk for hours, and my cousins know me. They usually they call me "The scared", 'cause I will meet a person and talk to him for five minutes and then I'll go 'cause I'm shy. But online we could talk and laugh about everything. Now my friends say that actually I am more talkative online than in person and I will say "yeah, I'm shy".

Researcher: Is that true?

Participant D: Ja...

Researcher: You are much more talkative on the phone?

Participant D: Ja, much more.

Researcher: Tell me why is it easier for you?

Participant D: 'Cause most of the things I see, I can view my opinions without seeing that person. But most of the time, someone would do something wrong and I'll see that this person is hurt, but this thing I need to tell him or her, but online I don't see if she's happy or angry, I just tell her "okay, you just messed up this and that". I don't care if they are angry, they will come to me tomorrow and tell me "couldn't you tell me in a better way" and then it's when we will talk. So, but usually when I'm face to face I won't talk like that.

Researcher: You won't have the confidence..

Participant D: Ja, the confidence to tell that this and this is wrong.

Researcher: How does it feel when you say something online and someone supports it and likes it?

Participant D: Ja, the immediate feedback is good for the confidence. Like yesterday I was ...I asked my friends about where they will study, especially university. And I asked them where I could get forms for health and safety and most of the people told me that they will bring the forms and the brochures and stuff like that.

So when you need something, like most of the people I see, anyone going to Johannesburg, there will be more than five people saying ja, I'm leaving" this time and I will give you a lift.

Researcher: They will react immediately.

Participant D: Ja, they will react.

Researcher: Okay. Is there anything else you want to tell me?

Participant D: Uhhh.... One should be careful and not accept somebody you don't know. Or even the terms and conditions before joining Twitter, Facebook or any of the social networks, they tell you do not share your personal information if you don't know that person.

Researcher: Mmm.

Participant D: Not to accept a person you don't know and do not like show or look at pictures which will harass you and there's a thingie if someone posted a picture you don't like you can report that person and that person could be suspended. On Facebook they suspend you for two weeks and on Twitter, they suspend you for two days and stuff ...for five days. And if you don't use your account like on Facebook you don't Tweet or like someone or upload a picture more than a month, they suspend your account. You have to open a new account all over. And usually if you don't want someone to use your account, you put your password, like mine. You don't usually go on Twitter, before you go, it needs a password. On Facebook before you go, you need a password accept for BBM, on Mxit before you go, it needs a password.

Researcher: Oh, I see. So there is some kind of protection?

Participant D: Ja, it is a protection 'cause I like my phone was stolen in May. To find who stole my phone even though I didn't confront that person, he was chatting through my BBM and my Facebook. So I asked my friend, my friend was like I told my friends that my phone is lost I cannot chat to you guys and then one of my friends told me that she chatting to someone on my BBM name and pin. That person is dumb, and he told her everything and then I know that this person stole my phone.

Researcher: And you knew the person?

Participant D: Ja, I knew the person, but I didn't go to the person and say to him that he stole my phone and stuff. And my parents told me that they will not buy me a new phone before a certain time. I asked my boyfriend, could you just talk to this person and they met in person, then they could see who stole my phone actually.

Researcher: To summarise: you cannot imagine your life without social networking.

Participant D: Ja..

Researcher: You use it mainly to gain knowledge, but also to maintain your friendships, because you've got somebody to talk to all the time, people you trust know will understand.

Participant D: Ja, I have a cousin who's not open like usually she won't talk to you in person, but on Twitter she will open up. She feels more confident in revealing herself on Twitter than in person.

Researcher: Thank you very much. You really taught me quite a lot and gave me lots of information.

Participant D: It's a pleasure mam.

TRANSCRIPTION (PARTICIPANT E)

Researcher: Hallo. Hoe gaan dit?

Participant E: Goed dankie tannie.

Researcher: Baie dankie dat jy vandag gekom het vir die onderhoud. Ek wil net weer verduidelik waarmee ek besig is. Ek doen navorsing vir my meestersgraad en my onderwerp is sosiale netwerke. Ek het 20 kinders gekies in die skool wat elkeen 'n vraelys voltooi het en daarna het ek 5 gekies om met my 'n onderhoud te hê, waarvan jy dan een was. Ek gaan vir jou 'n paar vrae vra meestal gebaseer op die vrae van die vraelys.

Participant E: Dis reg so tannie.

Researcher: Goed... jy sê jy het toegang tot die Internet?

Participant E: Ja tannie.

Researcher: Is dit meestal via jou foon?

Participant E: Ja, dit is net via my foon.... ja... somtyds sal ek op pappa se modem gaan vir skooltake en goed, maar ek is meestal op my foon.

Researcher: Maar wanneer jy gesels met jou vriende is jy meestal op jou foon?

Participant E: Ja meestal op my foon....

Researcher: Watter foon gebruik jy?

Participant E: 'n Samsung Galaxy Pocket...

Researcher: So.... jy het Internet toegang via jou foon...?

Participant E: Ja tannie.

Researcher: Goed, en jy gebruik dit hoofsaaklik?

Participant E: Ja tannie.

Researcher: En die rekenaar by die huis? Gebruik jy dit net vir skooltake?

Participant E: Ja, dis net vir take.

Researcher: Goed so. Jy het vir my gesê jy is geregistreer by Facebook, WhatsApp en Mxit...

Participant E: Ja tannie.

Researcher: Oraait... en van die drie gebruik jy die meeste WhatsApp.

Participant E: Ja..

Researcher: Okay, nou hoekom verkies jy WhatsApp?

Participant E: Tannie, want dit is meer gerieflik en goedkoper om met mense te kommunikeer as wat jy op Facebook kommunikeer waar almal jou kan sien. Ja dit is eintlik net baie goedkoper en jy kan met almal gesels reg rondom – dis makliker en vinniger ook.

Researcher: En jy hou daarvan dat dit meer privaat is as Facebook.

Participant E: Ja tannie.

Researcher: Goed, jy het vir my gesê jy is so tussen 3 tot 5 ure 'n dag betrokke...

Participant E: Ja.

Researcher: ...wat eintlik nie baie is nie. Jy sal verbaas wees hoeveel ure is die mense op Facebook..

Participant E: Ja...

Researcher: So dit is eintlik relatief min. Hoe spasieer jy daai ure in jou dag?

Participant E: Uhhh... tannie gewoonlik as ek by die huis kom, dan sal ek net vinnig gou inloer... of net soos kyk wat gaan aan en dan sal ek begin met my dingetjies soos kosmaak en huiswerk en nadat ek huiswerk gedoen het, sal ek ook net vir 'n uur gaan kyk wat gaan aan en met vriende gesels miskien twee ure. En dan begin ek om te gaan bad en dan gesels ek met my ouers oor hoe die dag was. En dan verder gesels ek weer met my ou oor hoe sy dag was tot en met 9 uur omtrent.

Researcher: O, so jy deel dit so tussenin in?

Participant E: Ja.

Researcher: Goed. Jy sê hierso vir my jy het definitief meer as 50 aanlyn vriende.

Participant E: Ja.

Researcher: Goed. Vertel my bietjie meer van hoe het jy by daai vriende uitgekom. As jy moet skat, hoeveel vriende het jy met wie jy gereeld gesels?

Participant E: Ek.... daai 50 omtrent of meer as daai 50 gesels ek gereeld net met 15 maksimum tannie waaronder familie en 'n paar vriendinne sal wees, maar... meestal soos op Facebook sal mens jou *invite* en dan sal mens dink dit is 'n oulike outjie of so en dan sal jy natuurlik mos nou *accept*, maar meeste van hulle het ek al mee gesels, maar hulle is maar net daar. Hulle is nie om mee te gesels nie... Hulle is net daar..

Researcher: Hulle is dus net kennisse.

Participant E: Vir statusja...

Researcher: O, vir status.... dis hoofsaaklik op Facebook..?

Participant E: Ja.

Researcher: So, jy sal sê *ja* sonder dat jy die persoon ken...

Participant E: Ja..

Researcher: En dan hoe leer jy hom ken?

Participant E: Nee, ek sal stap vir stap vir hom vra wat is sy naam en wat is sy ouderdom en van waar af kom hy en wat doen hy en wat is sy belangstellings. Dan sal ons so begin gesels, maar as ek voel ek is nie gerus met die persoon nie, sal ek ook nie persoonlike inligting met hom deel soos waar ek bly of iets nie..

Researcher: So jy gaan op jou manier hom leer ken deur hom vrae te vra...

Participant E: Ja..

Researcher: En dan sal jy hom dan *unfriend* of nie.. as jy nie van hom hou nie?

Participant E: As ek sien hy raak te persoonlik, soos rêrig te persoonlik of hy raak ongeskik of hy vrae onnodige vrae vra wat 'n normale mens nie sal vra nie, dan sal ek *unfriend* of blok tannie.

Researcher: Okay. So jy het altyd daai keuse as iemand jou ongemaklik maak om te blok of te *unfriend*?

Participant E: Ja.

Researcher: Okay. Wat jy eintlik sê is dat slegs 15 sal jy beskou as *close* vriende?

Participant E: Ja tannie...

Researcher: Okay. Die res is net kennisse..

Participant E: Ja tannie.

Researcher: Uhhmm, hoe gereeld sal jy met hierdie kennisse kommunikeer?

Participant E: Miskien soos 'n boodskappie los op hulle verjaarsdag of somtyds as ek net sien hulle voel af of ek lees hulle is af, sal ek net vra hoe gaan dit, is als oraaat..

Researcher: Goed, geen diep gesprekke nie.

Participant E: Nee.

Researcher: Goed, en jy het ook hierso vir my gesê dat meeste van jou vriende het jy al persoonlik ontmoet?

Participant E: Ja tannie.

Researcher: Wat van die wat jy nie persoonlik ontmoet het nie?

Participant E: Uhhmm tannie ek gesels met party van hulle, maar meestal sal ek nie wil ontmoet nie, want ek is nog te selfbewus ... ja.. ek kommunikeer nie sommer met hulle nie, so ek glo nie ek sal in die werklike lewe met hulle fisies kan gesels nie.

Researcher: Sê nou maar net jy kry 'n nuwe vriend, op Facebook of WhatsApp of waar ook al, sal jy verkies om eers deur die foon te gesels om mekaar te leer ken of sal jy dadelik iemand wil ontmoet en gesels?

Participant E: Tannie ek sal eers deur die foon wil want dan klassifiseer ek die persoon teenoor wat hy met my gesels het en hoe hy in persoon is dat ek kan weet of hy voorgee en dat hy dan korrek heelyd gaan voorgee of wie hy werklik is.

Researcher: So, die foon en die sosiale netwerke maak dit definitief makliker om iemand te leer ken.

Participant E: Ja tannie.

Researcher: So, mens kan makliker vriendskappe vorm deur middel van die sosiale netwerke as in die regte lewe?

Participant E: Ja tannie.

Researcher: Okay, omdat 'n ou dadelik uitvra?

Participant E: Ja want hulle is maklik om te *judge* ... hulle kan so met jou mooi praat en als en dan as jy hulle fisies nou *face* dan kan hulle allerhande stories vir jou spin al ken hulle jou nie werklik nie... of wie jy is nie.

Researcher: So, dit is makliker om agter te kom as iemand voorgee op die foon?

Participant E: Ja tannie.

Researcher: Hoe is dit makliker?

Participant E: Tannie, hulle sal vir jou sê ja nee hulle het by die plek gewerk of so iets en dan die volgende keer as jy hulle vra nou oor daai tipe werk oor hoe het hy ingegaan dan is dit net weer 'n ander tipe storie. Of hy sal byvoorbeeld vir jou 'n foto stuur en sê dat hy is hierdie blonde outjie of wat ook al en dan ewe skielik op sy *profile pick* sal jy sien nee maar hy's 'n donker kop of so iets.

Researcher: So, omdat jy rekord het van eintlik alles wat gesê is, is dit baie makliker om agter te kom...

Participant E: Ja tannie.

Researcher: ..terwyl in die regte lewe vergeet 'n ou makliker wat iemand vir jou mondelings sê.. is dit wat jy sê?

Participant E: Ja.

Researcher: Okay, so dit is eintlik... daar is 'n voordeel daaraan vir jou maar 'n nadeel daaraan vir die ou wat voorgee..

Participant E: Ja...

Researcher: Goed, dit is baie interessant.

Participant E: En veral tannie as jy hom ontmoet, dan sal hy mos nou iets sê en as jy hom nou vra oor dit dan sal hy mos nou die storie verander, dan gaan jy voel maar jy het nie reg geluister nie. So dit is beter op die foon, absoluut.

Researcher: Ja, want jy kan weer gaan kyk wat is daar nou eintlik gesê.

Participant E: Ja.

Researcher: Goed, kom ons kom net terug na jou 15 goeie vriende toe. Waaroor gesels julle meeste van die tyd?

Participant E: Gewoonlik oor huiswerk wat ons gekry het of take of toetse wat ons moet doen..

Researcher: So help die aanlyn vriendskappe met skoolwerk?

Participant E: Ja, want as jy siek was, kan jy maklik iemand vra watse werk is in die klas gedoen, so.. en ons sal gewoonlik gesels oor wat

doen hulle die naweek of wat is hulle planne vir die naweek of wil hulle nie by jou kom kuier nie, want kyk tannie ek is nie 'n sosiale persoon nie, maar as ek wil kuier dan kom kuier hulle by my huis. So, ek sal vra wil hulle nie 'n *movie* kom kyk by my nie of so iets.

Researcher: So, julle gebruik dit ook vir sosiale geleenthede. Is dit makliker so?

Participant E: Ja.

Researcher: Goed, persoonlike inligting. Jy het nou-nou so vinnig genoem dat jy gee dit nie sommer uit nie, maar ek kan sien jy is 'n private mens nê..

Participant E: Ja..

Researcher: ... maar hoeveel sal jy bekendmaak oor jousef en aan wie?

Participant E: Gewoonlik is dit my vriendinne wat ek rîrig rîrig vertrou, maar somtyds voel dit net hulle kan my maklik in die rug steek, so ek sal nie alles vir hulle sê nie. Maar as ek moet sê is dit meestal familie wat ek dit mee sal deel, maar glad nie sommer vriendinne nie, want ek is al in die rug gesteek en ek wil nie weer gesteek word nie, so...

Researcher: So jy sal basies net jou diepste persoonlike goed net vir familie sê en nie vir vriende nie, maar daai familie beskou jy tog ook as aanlyn vriende?

Participant E: Ja.

Researcher: So, jy het vriendskappe met hulle ook?

Participant E: Ja.

Researcher: En hoe sal jy daai persoonlike inligting weergee? Gebruik jy ook jou *profile* foto en jou *status*?

Participant E: Ja, ek sal soos my *profile* of my foto en dan sal hulle natuurlik vra oor wat is dit? Dan sal ek vir hulle sê oor wat dit is, maar dan wil ek hê hulle moet dit stil hou, want dis nie vir almal se ore bedoel of iets nie.

Researcher: So, jy maak jou *status* en jou prentjie of jou foto oor hoe jy voel.

Participant E: ... oor hoe ek voel, ja.

Researcher: En jy maak dit dan ook net bekend aan die mense wat jy wil hê dit moet sien...

Participant E: Ja.

Researcher: O. En doen jou vriende dit ook so? Sit hulle ook eers 'n *status* op en dan kom die reaksie? En dit het dan 'n gesprek tot gevolg?

Participant E: Ja tannie..

Researcher: Is dit maar hoe dit gedoen word?

Participant E: Ja, ons sal nie sommer gesels nie, maar as ons sien hierdie *status* is nou oor hoe sy voel of hoe die aand was, dan vra ons

nou hoe was dit, nou hoekom voel jy so of so iets. Dan sal ons nou begin gesels oor hoekom sy so voel.

Researcher: So dit is altyd die aanknopingspunt.

Participant E: Ja.

Researcher: Dit is ook interessant nê? Hoe gereeld sal julle julle *statusse* verander?

Participant E: Meer as drie keer per dag.

Researcher: Regtig?

Participant E: Ja....

Researcher: Maar jy persoonlik doen dit net met daai handjie vol mense wat jy wil hê baie van jou moet weet of sal jy soms weier gaan?

Participant E: Nee tannie ek sal soms....op Facebook sal ek nou sê ja nee..ek het 'n wonderlike daggie of ...

Researcher: ...maar jy hou dit vlak...

Participant E: Ja... as hulle my vra wat het gebeur, dan sal ek sê wat het gebeur maar ek gaan nie dieper in soos ..ja nee..ons het dit gekuier by daai huis nie. Ek sal net sê ons het gekuier.... of so iets.

Researcher: Okay. Jy het hier gesê dit maak jou gelukkig om met jou aanlyn vriende te gesels...

Participant E: Ja...

Researcher: ... en later ook: jy voel goed wanneer jy kan sosialiseer met jou aanlyn vriende. Is dit vir jou spesifiek lekker om te sosialiseer via jou foon en die sosiale netwerke en hoekom?

Participant E: Want tannie dit is makliker om met hulle te praat en as jy vir hulle soos 'n grappie vertel, dan verstaan hulle dit so vinning as jy dit vir hulle sê en jy gesels net rêrig so lekker. Jy hoef nie te *worry* dat hulle konsentreer op wat jy dra of wat nie, hulle konsentreer op wat jy sê.

Researcher: O, so die fisiese ding speel glad nie 'n rol nie.

Participant E: Nee...

Researcher: Die fisiese voorkoms...dit laat jou gemaklik voel.

Participant E: Ja.

Researcher: So, dit gaan doodeenvoudig oor die teks, oor die woorde...die boodskap.

Participant E: Ja.

Researcher: Terwyl....van aangesig tot aangesig... voel jy daar is 'n bietjie *judgement*.

Participant E: Ja tannie, want hulle kan so met jou gesels, maar dan so agter jou rug besluit wat om oor jou te *judge* soos jou hemp lyk nie reg nie, maar hulle sal jou ook nie sê nie.

Researcher: Dit gaan ook oor konsentrasie. Soos hierdie ou sal jou nou uitkyk, terwyl hy dit op die foon nie kan doen nie.

Participant E: Ja.. daar is die aandag meer gevestig op die woorde as op die voorkoms.

Researcher: En jy voel, dit laat jou meer belangrik voel, jy weet hulle hoor wat jy sê.

Participant E: Ja, hulle vind meer uit oor myself nie oor hoe ek lyk nie.

Researcher: Dit gaan oor jou.

Participant E: Ja.

Researcher: Goed hierso sê jy ook dat jy het 'n behoefte aan jou vriende se ondersteuning wanneer jy af voel....

Participant E: Ja.

Researcher: via die sosiale netwerke weereens. Goed, hoe ondersteun hulle jou en hoe ondersteun jy ander?

Participant E: Ek sal gewoonlik net 'n sterkte briefie skryf of ek sal met hulle praat oor wat is fout en wat kan hulle doen om dit net beter te laat voel en somtyds as ek af voel, dan wil ek nie eintlik kommunikeer nie, maar as hulle met my gesels en sê als gaan *okay* wees, sterkte jy weet ek's hier. Net daai woorde om te sê: ek is hier, laat 'n mens klaar beter voel.

Researcher: Okay. Voel dit ook vir jou of dit jy het altyd jou vriende by jou?

Participant E: Ja...ja. Hulle is nie ver nie.

Researcher: So, hulle is altyd in die omtrek, hulle is net 'n knoppie ver.

Participant E: Ja.

Researcher: En dit maak dit makliker wat die ondersteuning aanbetref. Jy weet jy kan dadelik met iemand praat.

Participant E: ...net bel. Sy is daar.

Researcher: Ja, of *chat* nie. Behalwe soos in die tyd voor selfone, was dit eintlik...dink ek was die vriendskappe heeltemal anders, want ons moes eers bymekaar uitkom om te kon gesels.

Participant E: Ja.

Researcher: So dit maak dit baie makliker en dink jy dit versterk ook die vriendskappe vinniger? Die feit dat jy heelyd daar is vir mekaar?

Participant E: Ja, op 'n manier versterk dit, maar solank jy net weet solank jy dit toepas op die foon jy dit toepas in die werklike lewe ook teenoor haar, so moenie sê jy is daar vir haar op die selfoon en as daar probleme is uit *back* nie, want jy is voltyds vir haar, jy moet haar help.

Researcher: So daar moet definitief 'n ooreenkoms wees.

Participant E: Ja.

Researcher: O, goed. Ons het al bietjie hieroor gepraat dat dit makliker is om aanlyn vriendskappe te vorm en te behou as in die regte lewe, want daar is nie *judgement* nie en die kommunikasie is makliker.

Participant E: Ja,

Researcher: Sou jy sê jy het meer selfvertroue op die sosiale netwerke tussen vriende as in die regte lewe?

Participant E: Ja tannie, dit is so...ja.

Researcher: Hoekom dink jy is dit so? Is dit weer as gevolg van die fisiese aspek?

Participant E: Ja, van die fisiese aspek en ek voel net as ek met hulle fisies gesels, dan is daar net altyd 'n manier wat hulle ... hulle luister nie eintlik nie. Dit gaan oor hulleself ... en dit is hoe dit is. En as ek oor die selfoon gesels kan ek dadelik sê wie ek is waar ek met julle staan en ek is eerlik, waar ek hier te skaam is om my opinie te lug.

Researcher: Goed die feit dat jy nie hoof skaam te wees nie op die selfoon nie, dit gee jou meer selfvertroue. Maak dit dan makliker om eers daardie persoon te leer ken voordat jy met hom gaan gesels?

Participant E: Ja, dan weet hulle wie ek is en waar ek met hulle staan.

Researcher: En jy kan op jou eie besluit, met hierdie ou wil ek vriende wees of nie.

Participant E: Ja, ek hoof nie op groepsdruk staat te maak nie.

Researcher: Terwyl jy nou groepsdruk noem, wat is die rol van groepsdruk in sosiale netwerke? Dink jy dit is erger of minder?

Participant E: Tannie, ek dink dit is gelyk, want as jy...sê nou net hierdie ou en meisie gesels en jou vriendin *like* dit nie, gaan sy outomaties ongeskik raak met jou en jou konfronteer dat jy naderhand nie meer lus is om met die ou of die meisie te gesels nie of jy *block* haar of *delete* haar nie. Dieselfde in die persoon: as jou vriendin of pêl haar nie *like* nie, gaan jy natuurlik jou rug op haar draai en gaan, want ek het dit al beleef en dit is nie 'n lekker gevoel nie.

Researcher: Is dit nou in die werklike lewe of op sosiale netwerke?

Participant E: Nee, werklike lewe. En as jy groepsdruk, sê nou jy's ...uhmm... jy praat nou oor hierdie outjie en sy sê nou vir jou...ja nee sy vertrou hom nie, dan... sy ken hom nie en sy wil hom ook nie ken nie. Dan gaan jy ook naderhand voel jou vriendskap is belangriker as om ander te leer ken. En dan gaan jy teruggetrek voel en jy gaan sê, okay ek gaan terugstaan, want as my vriendin so sê gaan ek saam haar stem. Al voel jy jy kan daai persoon vertrou en jy weet hoe sy is.

Researcher: O, ek sien. Dit is nie dat dit makliker is om toe te gee aan groepsdruk via die sosiale netwerke nie, dit is byna dieselfde. Ons het nou-nou ook daarvoor gepraat dat jy voel dit is belangrik om jou probleem met jou vriende te bespreek, maar jy sal dit nie met enige iemand doen nie.

Participant E: Nee.

Researcher: Hierdie is nogal 'n interessante ene: dit is makliker om goed weg te steek oor jouself en sou jy sê dis makliker om voor te gee op die sosiale netwerke?

Participant E: Tannie ek dink dit is makliker. Ek het dit self toegepas, want tannie ons het dit nie maklik gehad nie. So, ons het toe in 'n karavaan gebly voordat ons in 'n huis kon bly en dan is daar mense wat wou kom kuier. Dan sou ek vir hulle gesê het ek's te besig of ek is nie nou by die huis nie of ek sal voorgee byvoorbeeld dat...ja nee.. weet jy wat ek het te veel dinge om te doen en daar's nie tyd om by die huis uit te kom of iets nie. So dan wil ek nie hê hulle moet kom nie en dan gee ek voor daar is niks fout nie, dat ek net te besig is dat hulle nie vanaand by my kan kom kuier nie as gevolg van my bangheid en my skaamheid oor waar ek gebly het.

Researcher: En dit was baie maklik vir jou om dit so te doen?

Participant E: Ja.

Researcher: Goed, so dit is moontlik om 'n ander tipe identiteit aan te neem as dit wie jy werklik is.

Participant E: Ja.

Researcher: Was jy nie bang dat hulle een of ander tyd die waarheid gaan uitvind nie?

Participant E: Nee, tannie ek was bang dat hulle sou uitvind, maar toe kom die woorde nou net van my ma af dat as hulle werklik jou vriende is, sal hulle nie *judge* oor wat jy het nie, maar oor wie jy is. Dit gaan oor wie jy is en nie oor wat jy het nie. En ek het vir hulle duidelik gesê weet jy wat ek gaan nie langer vir julle lieg nie: ek bly daar en ek word versorg en dis nou net hoekom ek nie wou gehad het hulle moes kom kuier nie was oor waar ek bly.

Researcher: Jy het netnou gesê dat wanneer ander voorgee, is dit baie maklik om op te tel wanneer iemand liegstories oor homself praat.

Participant E: Ja...

Researcher: So basies kan 'n ou enige identiteit aanneem?

Participant E: Ja.

Researcher: Maar jy voel een of ander tyd gaan dit jou inhaal.

Participant E: Ja dit gaan.

Researcher: Vir die oomblik is maklik en jy het dit gedoen om jouself te beskerm..

Participant E: Ja, maar as 'n mens te diep ingaan, gaan dit naderhand baie erg word, want ek weet nie of tannie al op MTV gesien het daai van... uhh...dit gaan oor mense wat aanlyn vriende het op *date* en dan help hierdie mense om hulle te vat na mense toe en dan sien hulle altyd dat dit nie die mense is wat uitgekome het nie. So dis waar ek presies geweet het ek moet nie voorgee nie,

want waar moet ek stop? Waar trek ek die lyn? Want jy breek miskien iemand anders se hart of jy verniel iemand anders se lewe watof jy verniel jou eie lewe en dis nie wat 'n mens wil hê nie.

Researcher: Is daar mense in jou vriendekring wat so is wat dit nog doen?

Participant E: Ja tannie, daar is baie van hulle, want hulle voel net omdat hulle dit nie baie maklik in die lewe gehad het nie, glo hulle net die beste manier om te ontsnap is om iemand anders te wees. En dis waar ek hulle nou weer ondersteun en vir hulle sê weet jy wat mense gaan vir jou lief wees oor wie jy is en dit is so hulle gee nog voor, maar as hulle by my is, weet hulle presies wie om te wees en dit is nie om voor te gee nie.

Researcher: In daai tyd wat jy ook jou vriende ontwyk het en so... hoe het dit jou laat voel?

Participant E: Ongelukkig tannie, want dis nie lekker nie. Ek is nie eerlik nie, ek voel nie gerus nie... uhm... gaan ek dit ooit kan regmaak, want as 'n mens eers begin het, hoe hou jy op? My beste was om net die waarheid te praat en te sê weet jy wat dit is wie ek is en as julle dit aanvaar is ek bly en as jy dit nie aanvaar nie, was jy nie werklik my vriend nie.

Researcher: Toe het jy baie beter gevoel...

Participant E: Ja tannie.

Researcher: Hoe lank het dit jou gevat om tot by daai punt te kom?

Participant E: Plus minus... ek weet nie...'n jaar, want ons het omtrent twee jaar daar gebly en dit het my 'n jaar gevat. Ek was skaam tannie.

Researcher: Sjoue, ja dit moes baie druk op jou gesit het, maar op 'n manier het dit jou ook gehelp om te *cope* met jou situasie?

Participant E: Tannie ek het elke dag gevoel ek is nie eerlik nie, en party mense sien jy dag na dag en watse storie moet jy vandag spin en ek kan naderhand nie alles onthou wat ek gesê het nie. Jy is eenvoudig net rêrig bang oor wat hulle kan sê.

Researcher: Kom ons kom weer terug na die vraag dat jy goed voel wanneer jy met vriende aanlyn gesels. Jy sê dit gee jou meer selfvertroue.

Participant E: Dit is makliker om oor sake te praat waar jy nie *face to face* met hulle praat nie, in verband met verhoudings oor hoe jy voel oor die persoon of wat ook al. Dat jy net soos kan sê byvoorbeeld dink jy rêrig jy is mal oor die persoon? Mense kan jou nou vra en jy kan oop en bloot in hulle gesig lieg, maar as hulle jou vra dan kan jy *basically* daaroor nadink en rêrig sê jy doen nie of jy doen. So, jy het meer tyd om te dink...net daai dink wat jy gaan sê.

Researcher: So, jy het tyd om te besluit hoe jy wil reageer.

Participant E: Ja, of jy eerlik wil wees en of jy oneerlik wil wees. Dit is jou keuse, daai tyd moet jy vat en gebruik.

Researcher: As jy byvoorbeeld iets sê en jy sien sjoe almal reageer positief ... hoe laat dit jou voel?

Participant E: Dit kikker 'n mens op, want ek het al agtergekom as ek meer myself is, dan is dit nog steeds dieselfde, so ek hoef nie voor te gee dat byvoorbeeld ja nee ek kan 'n kar kry en almal is baie *excited* nie, soos byvoorbeeld sal ek sê ek gaan ingaan daarvoor ek gaan self werk daarvoor. As ek *happy* is behoort hulle ook *happy* te wees, want as hulle saam positief is, dan is dit beter.

Researcher: Sal jy meer gereeld met die persone kommunikeer wat gereeld positief reageer?

Participant E: Ja tannie, want dis nie lekker om met iemand te gesels as hy heelyd negatief is nie, want dit *spoil* mens se hele dag. Ek voel maak nie saak wat jou situasie is nie, los dit eenkant en wees gelukkig, wees positief want jy maak iemand anders se dag beter.

Researcher: Dit is dus weer eens 'n keuse wat jy maak – om kontak te maak met diegene wat positief is.

Participant E: Ja tannie.

Researcher: Ek wil net gou seker maak dat ek alles vir jou gevra het wat ek wou.... Whatsapp het nie werklik die opsie van *chat rooms* nie nê?

Participant E: Nee tannie, maar jy kan groepe vorm.

Researcher: Behoort jy aan sulke groepe?

Participant E: Nee tannie, want somtyds voel ek net sê nou daar gebeur dinge en daar is konflik daar tussen my vriende, hoe gaan dit my laat lyk?

Researcher: Dan is jy betrokke en jy wil nie noodwendig betrokke wees nie. So jy gesels aanlyn doodeenvoudig een tot een?

Participant E: Ja dis net een tot een.

Researcher: Maar jy kan met 'n klomp gesels....gelyk maar nie in 'n groep nie.

Participant E: Ja. Maar ek weet ook soos op Mxit dan het jy ook mos in die *chat rooms* ingegaan want jy wil nuwe mense ontmoet, maar op 'n stadium kan julle mos gesels oor die en dat. Sê nou jy sê hulle moet jou *add* net vir daai spesifieke persoon, dan kry jy omtrent dertig ander en dit is ook nie lekker nie...

Researcher: Jy wil eintlik net vriende wees met een....

Participant E: ...en dan kry jy al die ander by. En dit is dan maar net jou keuse of jy wil *accept* of nie. Dit is hoekom ek afgewyk het van Mxit af, sodat ek net een tot een op Whatsapp kan gesels.

Researcher: So persoonlik verkies jy dit so?

Participant E: Ja.

Researcher: Is daar nog baie kinders wat Mxit gebruik?

Participant E: Ja meestal. Ek dink ek het nog 'n profiel, maar ek gebruik dit ook nie meer nie – dis is maar net daar...

Researcher: So eintlik het WhatsApp Mxit oorgeneem?

Participant E: Ja, so paar jaar terug was Mxit alles. Nou het WhatsApp en Facebook als oorgevat.

Researcher: En BBM ook nê?

Participant E: Ja tannie.

Researcher: Het jy al meer van jousef geleer deur jou betrokkenheid by sosiale netwerke?

Participant E: Ja tannie. Ek het net geleer dat ek kan eerlik wees en as hulle dit aanvaar dan aanvaar hulle dit en as hulle nie is hulle doodeenvoudig net nie die regte persoon om dit te aanvaar nie. En ek het ook geleer dat ek kan kies wat ek wil hê en nie noodwendig saamstem oor iemand anders se begeertes...of wat ook al nie. So as hulle gesê het hulle is mal oor netbal en ek is nie mal oor netbal nie dan gaan ek natuurlik nie saamstem en sê dis 'n *great* sport net om in te wees nie. En ek het ook net geleer wees net daar. Gesels soos jy en die persoon sal wil gesels, want as iemand hou van die persoon wie jy is op die foon sal hulle lief wees en *nice* wees met jou in persoon ook, dit sal nie verander nie. Ek het geleer om myself te wees en nie voor te gee nie en dit leer 'n mens baie. En dit leer ook 'n mens om versigtig te wees oor wat jy sê.

Researcher: Verduidelik my bietjie daai ene...

Participant E: Soos as 'n mens....sê nou jy dink jy kan vir 'n persoon sê dis waar jy bly, of waar het jy gekuier of waar gaan jy kuier, kan jy versigtig wees, want sê nou jy gesels met 'n agtienjarige *laaitie* en dan kom dit uit dis 'n 35 jarige oom. Jy sal dit nie wil hê nie, so jy moet net versigtig...jy moet 'n lang rukkie vat en seker maak met wie jy gesels. En altyd as ek eers met 'n persoon gesels, dan vra ek kan ek net 'n foto kry van jou net om eers te sien wie daai persoon is, want ek's daai tipe: ek kan so na mense kyk en presies sê wie jy is, want ek het al op die harde manier geleer.

Researcher: Het jy al sulke foute gemaak?

Participant E: Ja tannie. Somtyds het ek te veel gesê soos waar ek bly maar nie spesifiek wat's die adres of iets nie, dan sal hulle ook partykeer sê ja nee ons het 'n huis in Springs of wat ook al, dan sal hy byvoorbeeld van Springs af wees en naderhand sal hulle mense ontmoet en als. En as jy fisies met hulle gesels dan kan jy nie wag nie, want jy sien uit en dan kom jy by die stadium van jy verwag toe nie die ou wat jy gedink het dit is nie, maar

gewoonlik is ek nie alleen nie. Maar dit was nou nie heeltemal my saak gewees nie, want die nommer was by 'n vriendin en dan gesels jy mos nou so en dan kom jy nou agter, maar dit is nou nie eintlik hoe dit is nie.

Researcher: En dan is 'n mens baie keer al te betrokke. En ek wou jou netnou al gevra het, wat is die ouderdomspeling van jou vriende?

Participant E: Van 17 af tot 24 omtrent. Die ander is van hierdie wat natuurlik ouer sal wees.

Researcher: Kan jy aan nog iets dink wat belangrik is om te weet oor sosiale netwerke en aanlyn vriendskappe?

Participant E: Ummm...

Researcher: Sal jy jou lewe kan voorstel sonder dit?

Participant E: Nee ek sal nie kan nie tannie, want ek weet net as jou ouer wat jou foon, dan voel dit of hy jou lewe wegvat. Jy kan nie kommunikeer nie, jy gaan nie, jy gaan nie weet wat gaan in die wêreld sonder dit nie.

Researcher: So dit laat jou ook voel jy is in kontak met die buitewêreld...?

Participant E: Ja en as jy dit nie het nie, dan voel jy leeg, jy voel 'n gemis, jy weet nie wat gaan vir wat nie.

Researcher: Basies hou jy dus jou vriendskappe aan die gang met daardie stukkie instrument. Dit is jou kontak met die buitewêreld.

Participant E: Ja tannie.

Researcher: Dit is baie interessant.

Participant E: Wat tannie dalk ook kan gebruik, is aanlyn verhoudinge. Eerlik tannie, ek het drie jaar terug het ek in die *chat room site* in Mxit ingegaan en ek het begin gesels met 'n outjie en ons het lekker begin gesels en als. Toe bly ek in Bloemfontein en hy bly in Middelburg en ek het net gevoel wat gaan dit help as ons saam is, maar jy raak so mal oor die outjie en hy sal jou bel uit die bloute uit. En dan raak jy mal oor die outjie en dan wonder jy wat sal gebeur as julle ontmoet of so.

Researcher: So jy raak werklik verlief... net op grond van gesels met mekaar.

Participant E: Ja jy raak verlief. En uhhh toe gebeur dit dat ek moes terugkom en Middelburg is soos in twee ure van hier af en ja... dan voel jy jy wil hierdie outjie ontmoet en dis al twee keer wat ons aanlyn *dating* probeer het, maar ons die afstand is te ver. Maar tannie hy het toe vir my kom kuier en tannie presies soos hy op die foon was, so is hy as persoon. En ek was bang oor hy die foto's gesien het, want 'n mens maak mens altyd mooi, maar as jy persoonlik ontmoet, dan weet jy nie fisies hoe lyk die persoon self nie, 'n mens kan altyd *Photoshop* of iets. Maar hy het my aanvaar soos ek is, en ons is vandag nou al 9 maande saam..

Researcher: So julle het toe regtig 'n paartjie geword.

Participant E: Ja.. en toe fisies mekaar ontmoet. So die aanlyn gesels kan 'n mens baie help om jou verhouding sterk te hou, maar jy moet jou metgesel of wat ook al net vertrou. So met die sosiale netwerk moet vertrou ook gepaard gaan.

Researcher: Is dit nie moeilik nie? Hoe kom jy op die punt dat jy weet jy vertrou hierdie persoon?

Participant E: Tannie jy moet hom fisies ontmoet om te weet hoe hy is. Dit is al wat help. Juis omdat ek weet watter tipe ou hy is, ja soms kom die twyfel van is daar nie dalk iemand anders nie, maar dis net van vertrou op jouself, gaan in, doen dit en as jy positief daar uitkom, soos julle is nog heeltyd saam sonder enige negatiewe punte, is dit die moeite werd gewees, maar as jy voel hy het jou verneuk, daar gaan nie daai vertrou weer terug wees nie. So dan weet jy presies hoe om dit op te los op 'n manier.

Researcher: Is dit nie in enige verhouding... die konfliktsituasie makliker nie, want jy kan 'n ding regtig waar deurpraat, want jy moet vir daai ou luister, want jy moet elke woord lees wat hy vir jou sê...

Participant E: Ja want as mense baklei dan stap jy sommer weg en so. Aan die ander kant is dit 'n voordeel, 'n mens kan 'n ding uitpraat en dit is nie altyd lekker om ver te wees nie, want jy wens hy was by jou, maar aan die een kant voel ek net daar is hierdie manier wat God ons gestel het. My storie is dat ek net eers 'n persoon wil leer ken voordat ek hom fisies ontmoet.

Researcher: Het julle toe later uit die *chat room* uit beweeg, want in die *chat room* deel jy alles met almal.

Participant E: Ja.. maar toe gaan ons apart en ons het begin gesels en alles en verder het dit uitgewerk, maar aan die begin is dit...jy is skepties oor watse tipe ou gaan dit wees. Veral toe ons die eerste keer ontmoet het: dit is altyd met die eerste ontmoeting wat die geselsies die slegste uitdraai. Dit kan of positief of negatief wees, hang af hoe eerlik 'n mens was.

Researcher: Ja en dan kom die waarheid uit nê? So die *face to face* ding speel tog 'n belangrike rol.

Participant E: Ja, maar eers fisies na die tyd.

Researcher: So die ys moet eers basies gebreek word.

Participant E: Ja beslis.

Researcher: Dit was nou baie interessant, baie dankie vir jou eerlikheid.

Participant E: Dis 'n plesier tannie.

