

**THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING ON THE SOCIAL
INTERACTION PATTERNS AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN THE NORTHERN
SUBURBS OF CAPE TOWN**

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation, **THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING ON SOCIAL INTERACTION PATTERNS AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN THE NORTHERN SUBURBS OF CAPE TOWN** in its entirety is my own original work, that I am the owner of its copyright and that I have not submitted it previously in its entirety or in part for obtaining any qualification. All the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. This is a dissertation of limited scope and must be viewed accordingly.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the qualitative study was to explore the phenomenon of social networking and the possible influences it could have on adolescents' way of interacting socially. The study was conducted from a gestalt perspective and also incorporated aspects of developmental theory. Learners (12-18 years old) from a high school in the northern suburbs of Cape Town participated in semi-structured interviews voluntarily. Parents and teachers also participated in the study by forming part of focus groups. The study indicated that although social networking is a beneficial social tool for adolescents, it could become an obstacle during social interaction which is not mediated through an electronic or mobile network. From the study it can be concluded that social networking is a positive social tool, which could become dangerous for adolescents' social interaction abilities when used inappropriately.

Key terms:

Adolescent development

Social networking sites

Social interaction patterns

Gestalt theory

Developmental theory

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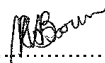
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To whom it may concern

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Margaret Rossouw

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Chapter 1:

Overview and rationale of the research

1.1 Introduction and research rationale

Social networking is a relatively current phenomenon and has become part of many individuals' daily routine (Guvi, 2007: 2; Ellison, 2008: 81; Meden, 2009: 6). This study aimed at looking specifically at the influence social networking has on the social interaction patterns of adolescents.

Social networking involves socializing with friends as well as strangers or new acquaintances on the internet or mobile websites. These websites have been designed specifically for the purpose of socializing (Ellison, 2008: 85-86; Mayayise, 2008: 23-24). Cranston and Davies (2009) define **social networking** as "communication between groups of people mediated at some point by internet technologies. This mediation often (but not exclusively) takes place through social network services (SNS) such as Facebook or Orkut, accessed via computers or, increasingly, mobile phones." Lenhart and Madden (2007: i) explain that online social networks are sites on the internet where people can create their own profile and connect this profile to others to create a personal network. Social network users then post information onto their profiles and use these social networking websites to contact others (Lenhart & Madden, 2007: i). Social networking therefore is a social activity of connecting and interacting with others and sharing information, photos, ideas and opinions, and these activities are accessed via the internet or mobile phone.

According to Louw and Louw (2007: 336), communication technologies such as social networking have an increasing presence during adolescence, because they become important social communication tools for adolescents. **Adolescence** can be defined as the period between childhood and adulthood (Bremner & Slater, 2003: xxiv; Geldard & Geldard, 2004: 3; Louw & Louw, 2007:

278). Louw and Louw (2007: 289) state that adolescence starts between the ages of 11 and 13 and ends between 17 and 21 years of age. Geldard and Geldard (2004: 5) in turn argue that adolescence starts between 11 and 14 years and ends at 15 to 18 years of age. For the sake of this study, the stage of adolescence will be viewed as being between 12 and 18 years. The researcher has been an educator at a local high school in the Western Cape and has experienced that adolescents do communicate with their peers mostly through the use of electronic devices and social networks.

According to literature, adolescents are within the age group that mostly engages via social networks and are among the most eager users of social networks (Lenhart & Madden, 2007: i). Lenhart, Rainie and Lewis (2001) emphasize that, more than any other age group, adolescents are within the age group that predominantly uses the internet for the purpose of connecting with others. Connecting with others and being socially active are important developmental tasks of the adolescent. The way in which adolescents interact socially is therefore of importance since social interaction is a constant need for an adolescent.

When discussing the **social interaction patterns** of adolescents, the researcher firstly explored the people adolescents socialize with. Evans and Keenan (2009: 277) found that most adolescents increasingly spend their time with peers. The researcher explored the different activities associated with adolescent socialization, especially within their peer group, in order to understand how adolescents make contact and spend time socially. This could be beneficial to gain insight into this phenomenon of social networking, as precautions could be formulated to counteract possible negative influences on adolescents' way of interacting with others. The influences on social interaction were explored within this study, since the researcher had found limited information pertaining to the topic of social networking and its specific influence on adolescents' social interaction patterns in South Africa.

In the light of possible changes with regard to the social interaction of adolescents concerns arise. The researcher aimed at exploring social networking amongst adolescents and the influence it might have on their social interaction patterns, since social interactions are of special importance during adolescence. The researcher explored these influences from both a gestalt and a developmental theory perspective in order to gain insight into the life of the adolescent.

Influence, according to the Longman Active Study Dictionary (2004: 384 s.v. influence), refers to a change that occurs, or changes in behaviour. These possible changes in terms of social interaction were what the researcher wanted to explore in order to get more insight into the phenomenon of social networking and whether it leads to changes in adolescents' social actions or behaviour. There is a dire need for more information on the impact of social networking and the influence this might have on the social interaction patterns of adolescents so that social networking may be both safeguarded and utilized in a positive way to enhance social interaction.

1.2 Problem statement

According to Mouton (2001: 52-53), research problems usually take the form of a question that focuses on the social problem of the research.. The research question that guided this study was: **What are the influences of social networking on social interaction patterns of adolescents?**

The purpose of the research was therefore to explore the possible influences the utilization of social networking has on the social interaction patterns practiced by adolescents. Within the initial literature review, it was indicated that social interaction and the manifestation of social skills are heightened during adolescence (Burger, Gouws & Kruger, 2000; Geldard & Geldard, 2004; Louw & Louw, 2007). According to Louw and Louw (2007: 336) the use of communication

technologies, like social networking, become more and more present during adolescence, because they become important social communication tools. From the constant accessing of social networks as a tool for social interaction, a possible influence on the adolescents' development of social skills can be detected.

Guvi (2007: 2-3) and Mayayise (2008: 27-28) mention concerns about the use of internet social networking sites. These concerns include changes within society as well as role changes within society. .

The question can therefore be posed whether social networking, specifically in the developmental phase of the adolescent, can be viewed as an aid in developing social skills, or perhaps as a hurdle influencing essential social development. In adding to this question, the role of parents and teachers regarding social networking within the adolescent phase needs to be explored. As these are valued role players within the adolescents' lives, their perception, or lack of information, about social networking, might influence its role within the adolescents' lives. The data gathered from this study could therefore be used to enable parents and teachers to safeguard adolescents from possible negative effects, as well as to enhance possible positive effects that may aid social development. The study aimed at initiating the discourse surrounding the influence of social networking within the adolescent developmental phase.

1.3 Goals and objectives, theoretical points of departure and the research question

1.3.1 Goals and objectives

According to De Vos and Fouché (2005: 104), a goal is the end result for which the researcher strives. Heppner, Kivlighan and Wampold (1999: 252) state that within qualitative research the goals of the study help the researcher in

understanding the context. The goal is what the researcher aims to do, the purpose of the study (Mouton, 2001: 50). An objective is the more tangible steps to achieve an intended outcome (Mouton, 2001: 50; De Vos & Fouché, 2005: 104). The goal of this study was to explore the influence social networking has on the social interaction patterns of adolescents in the northern suburbs of Cape Town. As stated previously, an objective is the actual steps that have to be taken in order to achieve the intended outcome.

The objectives of this study included:

Objective 1: A literature review which focuses on social networking amongst adolescents, specifically from a gestalt perspective, whilst incorporating aspects of developmental theory

Objective 2: Gathering information by means of:

- semi-structured individual interviews with adolescents in order to gain insight into their experience of social networking and also to gain insight into the way adolescents interact socially
- focus groups with the parents and teachers of adolescents using social networking sites in order to gain insight into their experience of adolescents who participate in social networking and also to gain insight into the way they view adolescents' ability to interact socially

Objective 3: To analyze the findings from the interviews and focus groups

Objective 4: Formulating concluding remarks about the findings and making recommendations with regard to the impact of social networking and the influence it might have on social interaction patterns of adolescents in order to both safeguard and utilize it in a positive way to enhance social interaction.

In order to reach the goals and objectives, the researcher firstly viewed the study through the lens of gestalt and developmental theories.

1.3.2 Theoretical points of departure

A theory, according to the Longman Active Study dictionary (2004: 775), is “an idea that tries to explain something”. Within the context of this study, the researcher incorporated a gestalt theoretical approach as well as developmental theory. Within gestalt, the field theory was used to explain how adolescents make contact with others. The researcher is of the opinion that adolescents make contact by means of a new virtual field of social networking to satisfy their social need. Socialization is of specific importance during the phase of adolescence as this forms part of their developmental tasks (as explained in chapter 2). It was therefore necessary for the researcher to incorporate **gestalt theory**, since gestalt looks at the interaction between an organism (person/the adolescent) and his/her environment (field/social network) (Yontef, 2005: 84).

When one revisits the title of the study, “The influence of social networking on social interaction patterns among adolescents in the northern suburbs of Cape Town”, the organism/environment aspect of gestalt theory comes to mind. Gestalt theory is concerned with the way in which people organize their world (or field) by organizing their experiences into meaningful wholes (Mackewn, 2007: 15). The researcher feels that this process of interaction between field and environment mirrors the adolescents’ socialization, i.e. contacting a social network to satisfy the need of socializing. Gestalt theory, and specifically field theory, focuses on interaction between the organism and the field. The gestalt concepts that were incorporated and explored in this study are: defining gestalt and its origins; gestalt formation and the contact cycle; contact boundary disturbances/resistance; organism/environment connection and field theory.

Concerning the second theory which was incorporated, namely **developmental theory**, the researcher reviewed the relevance of the adolescent’s development within the context of this study. Developmental theorists that were incorporated included Louw and Louw (2007), McConville and Wheeler (2002), Erikson (1950,

1968) and Butkatko and Daehler (2004). Development refers to changes during a person's life (Bukatko & Daehler, 2004: 3). The different aspects of adolescent development and their developmental tasks were important to the researcher in order to understand the social functioning of adolescents, which is the main focus of this study. This was elaborated upon in chapter 2.

1.3.3 Research question

According to Mouton (2001: 53), a researcher formulates the research problem in the form of questions, since this enables him/her to focus on the specific problem. Jansen (2007: 3) in turn states that the research question is what focuses the researcher's attention or "intrigues" him/her. In this study the research question was:

What influences does social networking have on social interaction patterns of adolescents?

1.4 **Research design and methods**

1.4.1 Research design

According to Mouton (2001: 55), a research design is "a blueprint of how you (the researcher) intend(s) conducting the research". It focuses on the logic as well as the aim of the research (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 70).

In this study a qualitative research approach was followed. This can be explained as a study which is determined by the researcher's "choices and actions" (Fouché, 2005: 269). Qualitative research was chosen as opposed to quantitative research. Gravetter and Forzano (2009: 147) define quantitative research as the process of "measuring variables for individual participants to obtain scores, usually numerical values that are submitted to statistical analysis for summary

and interpretation". Quantitative research looks at numbers and specifics, whereas qualitative research gave the researcher the opportunity to gain a more in-depth understanding of the adolescents' experience than merely stating research findings by means of numerical value. Since qualitative research is more focused on understanding a social phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005: 95), for example social networking, the researcher found it more appropriate for this study. Qualitative research aims at capturing the experience of the participant, giving a human view to the study as opposed to merely stating numbers and facts. In this study the researcher wanted to understand the importance of socializing for adolescents – how, in their eyes, their world depended on the contact they make with peers. The researcher wanted to gain this insight in order to understand the necessity of social networking for the adolescent and his/her development, since the researcher experienced the urgency with which some adolescents access social networks during her time as a teacher and counselor.

A distinction can be made between basic and applied research. A basic study seeks answers to questions that will have an impact on the way society thinks about a topic, and is founded in knowledge and understanding (Fouché & De Vos, 2005: 105-106). This was not the researcher's aim. This study was an **applied study** since it aimed at broadening knowledge and understanding (Fouché & De Vos, 2005: 105-106). Applied research, as defined by Bernard and Whitley (2002: 30), refers to research where the solution to a problem that is affecting some facet of society and its results are explored and the best solution is incorporated in order to better society. Within the context of the current study, it was the aim of the researcher to explore the new phenomenon of social networking and the possible influences it might have on adolescents' social interactions, looking holistically at the adolescent and his/her experience.

In order to do this, an **instrumental case study** was conducted. Fouché (2005: 272) notes that this type of study focuses on gaining more knowledge on a

certain social issue. Since the researcher wanted to gain more knowledge concerning the social phenomenon of social networking amongst adolescents, an instrumental case study was beneficial.

The objective of the research was **exploratory** since exploratory research aims at looking at basic information in a new area of interest (De Vos & Fouché, 2005: 106; Robson, 2007: 20). Since the phenomenon of social networking is a relatively new area of interest and the researcher aimed at exploring this new social phenomenon of social networking, exploratory research was applicable. The study also incorporated aspects of a **descriptive** study since there was a question surrounding the relation between social networking and the influence it has on social interaction (Mouton, 2001: 53-54).

1.4.2 Universe, population and sample

The **universe** refers to the possible people who fit the set criteria to form part of the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 173; Strydom, 2005: 193). In this study the universe included adolescents in the Western Cape who make use of social networking sites, parents in the Western Cape who have adolescents accessing social networking sites, and lastly teachers in the Western Cape who teach adolescents who access social networking sites. Based on the fact that the researcher made use of three different samples, i.e. adolescents, parents and teachers, she applied triangulation to this study. According to Heppner *et al.* (1999: 250), triangulation refers to “multiple methods” of data gathering which helps the researcher to form an understanding of the research.

The **population** of a sample refers to the participants of the study with whom the research problem is concerned (Gravetter & Forzano, 2003: 115; Strydom, 2005: 195). The population of this study included adolescents in the northern suburbs of Cape Town who regularly make use of social networking sites, parents of adolescents in the northern suburbs of Cape Town whose adolescent children

make use of social networking sites regularly, and also teachers who teach adolescents in the northern suburbs of Cape Town who make use of social networking sites regularly.

Gravetter and Forzano (in De Vos, 2005: 193) state that “the term **sample** always implies the simultaneous existence of a population or universe of which the sample is a smaller section or a set of individuals selected from a population”. Sampling can be explained as the process of selecting a portion of the population for a study (Leary, 2004: 117; Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 79).

Within this qualitative study, the sampling method used for all three groups, i.e. adolescents, parents and teachers, was **purposive sampling as well as non-probability snowball sampling**. According to Maree (2007: 178), purposive sampling looks at specific situations where sampling is done with a specific purpose in mind. Within this study, for example, the researcher specifically aimed at incorporating adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18 who are active social network users. Strydom (2005: 330) acknowledges that this type of sampling is beneficial for a researcher who evaluates collected data continuously and gathers data until saturation is reached. This is what the researcher intended to do with the data collected from adolescents, parents and teachers. She was unable to predict the amount of participants in the study, but gathered data until a point of saturation was reached. Thirteen adolescents participated, as well as six teachers and five parents.

Criteria for including adolescents in this study:

- a) Is between the age of 12 and 18
- b) Lives in the northern suburbs of Cape Town
- c) Has access to a computer/cellphone at least three times a week and uses this for social networking

- d) Has a profile on any social networking site on the internet
- e) May be male or female

Criteria for including parents in this study:

- a) Is a parent of an adolescent (12-18 years old) who fits the above criteria
- b) Lives in the northern suburbs of Cape Town
- c) May be male or female

Criteria for including teachers in this study:

- a) Is currently teaching an adolescent (12-18 years old) who fits the above criteria
- b) Lives in the northern suburbs of Cape Town
- c) May be male or female

After the sample was chosen, the process of data collection was initiated.

1.4.3 Data collection

Data collection was done by means of semi-structured interviews with adolescents and separate focus groups with parents and also with teachers. The interviews with the adolescents were done on a one on one basis by the researcher. The interview consisted of a list of open-ended questions (addendum B). The interviews were recorded as a sound file and saved on the researcher's external hard disk. Maree (2007: 87) states that semi-structured interviews are commonly used in qualitative research. The aim is to have predetermined questions, but interviewing also has flexibility since the researcher is allowed to respond to answers and probing. This was effective when working with adolescents since it gave them the opportunity to freely give their opinion and ideas concerning social networking and their experience of it.

Focus groups, in turn, refer to a research method which collects data through group interactions based on a specific topic determined by the researcher (Greeff, 2005: 300). Interviews were also recorded with a digital audio recorder, and permission was gained from participants beforehand (Maree, 2007: 89). The researcher transcribed all the interviews for the purpose of data analysis (Maree, 2007: 89).

1.4.4 Data analysis

According to Mouton (2001: 108), data analysis involves the breakdown of data into more manageable patterns or themes in order to understand the data better. The researcher listened to the various recordings of the semi-structured interviews with the adolescents. The recordings of the focus groups with parents and teachers were also listened to. All the recordings were then transcribed into written form, ensuring that each word was captured. With the help of the transcriptions, the researcher searched for corresponding themes and findings that emerged from the interviews and grouped them together. The different themes or patterns gained from the data were organized and then categorized through coding (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 05).

After the process of data analysis the findings were measured against the existing literature (explored in chapter 3) in order to increase **validity**. According to Afzal, Azeem and Bashir (2008: 37), validity refers to whether a study has measured truthfully what it had intended to measure at the onset. Golafshani (2003: 603) states that in order for the researcher to guarantee validity, he/she should be able to generalize research. The researcher attempted to do so by incorporating current literature into the findings in the theme section of this chapter. This was done to ensure that the findings were not viewed in isolation, but could be explained by looking at other studies. Since a lot of similarities to previous studies were found, the researcher was of the opinion that the study was done accurately, which enhances the validity. Triangulation, which also

enhances validity, was used within this study. Triangulation can be defined as a process of combining research findings in order to make data more accurate (De Vos, 2005: 361) or, as Mouton (1996: 156) explains it, triangulation is the inclusion of different sources of data collection and potentially increases validity. Since triangulation was applied in the study, the trustworthiness and validity of the study were enhanced further.

1.5 Ethical considerations

Ethics can be defined as “rules or ideas about what is morally right and wrong” (Longman Active Study Dictionary, 2004: 248). Ethics look at the moral issues within research. Mouton (1996: 10) explains that ethics provide a guideline on what is morally appropriate behaviour within a study. Ethics therefore ensure that the participants are not treated inhumanely or morally incorrect. Bless and Higson-Smith (2000: 100) include three aspects of ethical considerations in a study:

1.5.1 Privacy and voluntary participation

The first ethical consideration was **the right to privacy and voluntary participation**. According to Bless and Higson-Smith (2000: 100), this indicates that participation in a study should be voluntary and participants may refuse to give information, and privacy includes gaining direct consent from each participant and also from adults where children are involved. Concerning the ethical implications of this study, the researcher asked every participant individually whether or not they would be willing to take part in this study voluntarily. [The researcher informed participants that if they felt uncomfortable or had any questions or the need to discuss and work on any aspect of their lives after the sessions, the researcher would bring them in contact with members of the counseling team at the relevant school.] A letter (addendum C) was given to each participant (and the parent(s) of participants under the age of 18), parental

group participants and educator group participants so that they could read it, ask questions and, if they chose to participate, sign the letter.

The researcher received approval to conduct the study from the principal of the high school involved as well as the Western Cape Education Department (addendum A). Concerning confidentiality and privacy, the participants were informed that any information that was obtained in connection with this study by which any individual participant could be identified would remain confidential and would only be disclosed with permission or as required by law.

1.5.2 Anonymity

The second aspect mentioned by Bless and Higson-Smith (2000: 100) refers to **anonymity**. According to them, anonymity refers to not using names of participants and using a numbering system instead – this is regarded as essential by many respondents and helps to avoid biased responses from participants. Anonymity in this study was maintained by not using participants' names and using a number when referring to each participant in the research report instead. The name of the school was not mentioned anywhere. The researcher made it clear that all information would be locked up and only she would have access to it.

1.5.3 Confidentiality

Bless and Higson-Smith (2000: 100) mention confidentiality. Confidentiality refers to the fact that data are only used for the purpose as stated by the researcher and will not be given to any other person for any other reason. Within this study the researcher was the only one who worked with the interview recordings and numbering of participants. No information was given to any other party. The participants were also informed that the purpose of the research was to determine what influence social networking has on the social interaction patterns

of adolescents. There was no other purpose than this. A final aspect concerning ethics that has to be discussed is the influence of the researcher on the findings.

1.4.4 Researcher effects

According to Mouton (1996: 148), the researcher may sometimes have effects, which can pose a threat to the reliability of the data that are gathered. Mouton (1996: 148) calls this “researcher effects”. Mouton (1996: 151) is of the opinion that characteristics or attributes of the researcher pose a potential risk to the reliability of the research. The researcher therefore has certain ethical considerations concerning him-/herself. Firstly, final data gathered by the researcher may be influenced by the prejudices, expectations, attitudes, opinions and beliefs of the researcher (Mouton, 1996: 151).

The researcher is aware that these effects could have played a role during the research process, but the fact that she made use of the same semi-structured interview schedule for each participant helped to reduce these effects. The researcher was the only interviewer, i.e. no other interviewer’s effects were possible. The researcher also went to the school where the learners were educated, with the result that the environment was not new or threatening to the participants. The researcher gave a clear indication that the research was anonymous, i.e. that no other party would know what answers the participants gave.

Breakwell, Fife-Schaw and Hammond (2000: 248) also state that interviewing has the potential of involving researcher effects since the characteristics of the interviewer/researcher will influence participants’ willingness to participate and answer accurately. Various effects are visible in literature and cannot be eliminated, but one way of controlling these is to let the same interviewer conduct all the interviews (Breakwell, Fife-Schaw & Hammond, 2000: 248). This was

done by the researcher during this study. All the findings were measured against current literature in order to compare whether they were logical.

1.6 Outline of the study

The study was divided into four chapters, with each chapter addressing a different section of the research process:

Chapter 1: Introduction to the study as well as the research methods and data analysis that would be used in the study. Ethical considerations and the limitations of the study were also discussed.

Chapter 2: This chapter reviewed literature concerning the theoretical underpinnings that were used in the study, namely gestalt theory and developmental theory. The chapter also reviewed literature explaining the concepts of social interaction amongst adolescents, social networking and the reciprocal influence of these two constructs.

Chapter 3: Through the researcher's empirical work, themes emerged that were grouped into main themes and subthemes. These themes were then explored by incorporating literature and looking at the relevance of the underpinning theory of gestalt and the developmental theory.

Chapter 4: Finally, chapter 4 included recommendations and conclusions concerning the empirical findings of the study as whole. The researcher did this by revisiting the research problem and objectives. Limitations of the study were also mentioned.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter aimed at introducing the reader to the study and looked at the methodology behind the research. This chapter also looked at the ethical considerations that were relevant to this study in order to safeguard participants. Finally, the outline of the study was given as an overview. The following chapter will explore the literature as it pertains to the study in order to explain important concepts.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

De Vos (2005: 35) states that a literature review must be done in order to measure new-found research against current literature concerning the same topic. This chapter will serve as such a framework and includes the many dimensions and aspects embedded in the research topic. These include the understanding of the adolescent developmental phase, the concepts of social networking and social interaction, as well as the susceptibility of the adolescent to take part in social networking activities. This was done by incorporating theoretical backgrounds, as well as defining relevant and important concepts from current literature. In this chapter, gestalt theory as well as developmental theory will be explored to gain further insight and to contextualise the study. However, it is important to remember that all of the above concepts and frameworks was discussed, specifically pertaining to the adolescent.

2.2 Adolescents: development and the search for identity and conformity

2.2.1 Introduction to developmental theories

When looking at the literature involving adolescents, the researcher incorporated views from developmental and gestalt theory. This section will firstly focus on developmental theory, and gestalt theory will be discussed in section 2.5 of this chapter. According to Bukatko and Daehler (2004: 3), the word “development” refers to all the “physical and psychological changes in the individual over a lifetime”. Therefore development refers to changes during a person’s life. Different views about development emerged over the years, especially with regard to adolescence (Balk, 1995). Wheeler and McConville (2002: 51-52)

compares the developmental models that were developed in the past with each other in the following table:

Table 2.1: Comparative array of developmental models

	0-1 year	1-3 years	3-6 years	7-11 years	12-17 years	18 years
Freud	Oral phase	Anal phase	Phallic phase	Latency	Genital phase	
Erikson	Trust/mistrust	Autonomy/shame	Initiative/guilt	Industry/inferiority	Identity/diffusion	Intimacy/generativity
Piaget	Sensori-motor	Pre-operational		Concrete operations	Early formal operations	Full formal operations
Maslow	Physical survival		Safety	Love/affiliation	Self-esteem	Self-actualization
Kohut	Self-regulating	Empathic mirroring	Idealizing	Twinship	Emerge of mature self-objects	
Kegan	Incorporative	Impulsive	Imperial	Interpersonal	Institutional	Inter-subjective
McConville	Embedded self period				Disembedded self period <i>Differentiating – Interiorizing – Integrating</i>	

From table 2.1 it seems that different theorists (as cited in Wheeler & McConville, 2002: 51-52) have different terms and explanations when considering the development of adolescents. How the adolescent changes and adapts while growing up and becoming an adult is important for the researcher, since what is learnt through development will define a person's life. The adolescent's developmental context as well as understanding the adolescent within society is

important to the researcher when trying to gain insight into adolescent socialization. Therefore, the adolescent will be discussed within the organism/environment field (as will be explained within the gestalt field theory further in the chapter) and consideration will be given to the impact of the developmental phase of adolescents. The researcher is of the opinion that discussing the adolescent within his/her particular field also has to be done by incorporating the phase's developmental tasks. These tasks generally help the adolescent to live within his/her field. Sunderland (2007: 73) states that a person has to know how to act or behave in an acceptable way in order to fit in with people who surround them since childhood. She states that this can be defined as socialization and refers to the "acquisition of a wide range of social skills" (Sunderland, 2007: 73).

The different aspects of adolescent development and the developmental tasks are important as it enables the researcher to understand the social functioning of adolescents, with which this study is mostly concerned. The concepts that will be discussed are the phase and age of adolescents, developmental tasks, developing identity, peer group importance, and social interaction patterns.

2.2.2 The phase and age of adolescents

Adolescence is the period between childhood and adulthood (Bremner & Slater, 2003: xxiv; Geldard & Geldard, 2004: 3; Louw & Louw, 2007: 278). Louw and Louw (2007: 289) state that adolescence starts between the ages of 11 and 13 and ends between 17 and 21 years of age. Geldard and Geldard (2004: 5), in turn, argue that adolescence starts between 11 and 14 and ends at 15 to 18 years of age. For the sake of this study, the stage of adolescence will be viewed as being between 12 and 18 years.

Balk (1995: 8) states that most theories concerning adolescents label this specific stage as a time of conflict or a time of storm and stress. Erikson (1950:

234) viewed this period as the time when youth begins, characterized by rapid body growth, genital maturity and a psychological revolution within. He states further that adolescence is primarily concerned with the comparison that adolescents make between themselves and their society. Due to all the different changes that take place during adolescence, developmental theorists argue that they face certain challenges or tasks during this stage in their development (Bremner & Slater, 2003: xxiv; Geldard & Geldard, 2004: 3; Louw & Louw, 2007: 27). These developmental tasks will now be discussed briefly.

2.2.3 Developmental tasks

Rice (2001: 292) defines developmental tasks as “the skills, knowledge, functions, and attitudes that individuals have to acquire at certain points in their lives in order to function effectively”. According to many developmental views, adolescence is a stage of many changes and in order to cope with these changes, adolescents face certain tasks (Bremner & Slater, 2003: xxiv; Geldard & Geldard, 2004: 3; Louw & Louw, 2007: 27). The most important developmental tasks adolescents have, according to Burger, Gouws and Kruger (2000: 67), are socializing, fitting into society, gaining interpersonal skills, developing an understanding of personal and cultural differences and developing self-confidence.

In turn, Bauermeister and Leary (1995) mention three tasks that are specifically essential for social development during adolescence and also relate to some of the aspects mentioned above:

- creating caring and meaningful relationships;
- finding acceptance and belonging in social groups; and
- establishing interpersonal intimacy.

Bergevin, Bukowski and Miners (2003: 389) also argue along the same lines by stating that by adulthood, adolescents should be autonomous and emotionally regulated, have a sense of their identity and be able to form close relationships. The change occurs within the context (field) of interactions with the social environment, puberty, the family, the peer group and the self (Bergevin, Bukowski & Miners, 2003: 389). For the purpose of the study, the researcher summarized the above-mentioned literature concerning the developmental tasks of adolescents:

- the development and formation of identity;
- the development of social skills and forming new social and personal relationships (peer relationships and social interactions); and
- integration into society (social interactions and influences).

The above-mentioned tasks are explored further in the following sections of this chapter. Most theorists emphasize the importance of identity formation and agree that identity plays a big role in adolescence (Geldard & Geldard, 2004: 8-10; Louw & Louw, 2007: 309). The development of identity will be explored accordingly.

2.2.4 Development of identity

The term “identity” has mostly been associated with the work of the psychologist Erikson (1974). Erikson (1974: 128-135) stated that the adolescent phase forms part of the fifth psychosocial crisis of his developmental theory, namely *identity versus role confusion*. During the fifth psychosocial crisis, the adolescent’s task is to learn how to identify his/her own identity. Kroger (2007: 4) was of the opinion that identity is a very complex entity. The same author does not define a single encompassing definition for identity, but merely states that identity is “the study of who I am, and how my biology, psychology and society interact to produce that subjective sense of the person who is ‘genuinely me’” (Kroger, 2007: 4). Adams

and Berzonsky (2007: 280) found that, during adolescence, a person must form a new identity which enables him/her to cope with life throughout adulthood.

Seeing that finding an individual identity is an important part of adolescence, it is interesting that many adolescents seek more connections with others/peers (Geldard & Geldard, 2004: 9; Louw & Louw, 2007: 330; Newman & Newman, 2006: 45). Erikson (1950: 235) stated that in their search for identity, adolescents look for continuity and sameness, and in this process they “appoint” others (peers, family, etc.) to “play the roles of adversaries”. The researcher found it interesting that the adolescent is striving towards having his/her own identity and being viewed as a unique and individual person, but at the same time does not want to go through the process alone. This is the adolescent conflict: wanting to belong, but also wanting to be important individually. Newman and Newman (2006: 45) argue exactly this: An adolescent’s psychosocial crisis at this age is mostly “group identity versus alienation”. The researcher can therefore conclude that adolescents want to be individuals, but they have a need to form part of a society/peer group in order to confirm their own unique identity. Erikson (1950: 235) noted that searching for confirmation by others in order to establish an identity has a negative opposite, i.e. role confusion. Erikson (1950: 235) calls role confusion the “danger” of this stage of adolescence. Role confusion refers to the process where adolescents over-identify with others to a point where they lose themselves and their unique identity.

Identity and the formation of identity can therefore be an enriching process where an adolescent emerges as an adult who accepts him-/herself for who he/she is, or it can be a period of turmoil where being isolated and viewed as an individual can be frightening. Guvi (2007: 6) explains the process of identity formation in adolescents by viewing adolescence as a stage in life where friendships often take on a more active and essential role. This usually leads to some sort of generational conflict, since parents may still feel that their work as parents is still relevant, but the adolescent is busy with the development of an identity separate

from the family (Guvi, 2007: 6). It is also during this period of development that an individual gains the ability to interact with others, learns how to handle different situations, is exposed to the expectations of a career and develops personal values and his/her unique identity.

The researcher therefore is of the opinion that identity development is crucial to the adolescent's social functioning. In order to make good contact with others, a person's identity needs to be in place, but in order to have a settled identity, social contact must be healthy. Social skills and interaction and identity development are therefore the two main developmental tasks with which the researcher is concerned. Huebner (as cited in Guvi, 2007: 7) noted these psychosocial issues of adolescents and stated that during their adolescent years, the establishment of an identity through the combination of the opinions of others, including parents and friends, is heightened. When looking at current research, developing fake identities on social networks is a potential challenge. Louge (2006: 3) explains that on social networks adolescents are allowed to *create* their identity, especially on social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook. It makes sense that adolescents would want to engage in such an activity when one looks at the above discussions on identity and the need to fit into society.

For the adolescent, it seems that identity can be confusing, since it is still in the process of being realized. The adolescent struggles with contacting him-/herself and forming an identity, because this is still an unknown process that has to be developed, learned and integrated by the adolescent. The liberal sharing of the self and exposing the self on social networks also seem to be part of the concerns of social networking (discussed in section 2.4.3.2). This could be part of the search for identity and integration of the self. Social networking therefore helps to satisfy the social needs of the adolescent. Since socializing is highlighted during adolescence, it is almost obvious that adolescents will be the

group that makes use of this tool, since their existence revolves around socializing.

According to Erikson (1950: 234-236), adolescence can thus be summarized as the stage where identity starts to form, but also the stage where over-identifying with others (especially the peer group) can take place, which limits identity formation. Burger *et al.* (2000: 67) as well as Newman and Newman (2006: 45) discuss the importance of adolescents belonging to a peer group and the influence a peer group can have.

2.2.5 The importance of the peer group

According to Geldard and Geldard (2004: 10), the “major” challenge for adolescents is their need to gain a place within their society (field), and this process happens at a similar time as their need to gain their own identity. As stated previously, Newman and Newman (2006: 45) called this conflict during adolescence “group identity versus isolation”. Louw and Louw (2007: 330) argue the importance of “belonging” to a group, since peer groups are among the most significant social contexts during adolescence (Kiuru, Aunola, Nurmi, Leskinen & Salmela-Aro, 2008: 1). Bauman and Ennett (1996: 83) state that becoming more involved in peer relationships and wrapped up in friendships are defining activities during adolescence.

Geldard and Geldard (2004: 13) specifically looked at the role of peer relationships and found that it was considered to present problems for the adolescent universally. Along with making friends and building relationships, many adolescents want to belong to a group whose members share common attitudes and interests (Geldard & Geldard, 2004: 13). Louw and Louw (2007: 335) emphasize adolescents’ need to conform when belonging to a group. When in a group, adolescents conform to the ways of the peer group, which include the music they listen to, the clothes they wear, the places they go to, leisure activities as well as choosing partners for romantic relationships. According to Kiuru *et al.*

(2008: 1), during the stage of adolescence individuals tend to start spending more time in peer groups, and through these interactions with their peers, adolescents obtain certain social skills, attitudes and new experiences. Peers seem to play a crucial role in this process of social development (Bauermeister & Leary, 1995).

Geldard and Geldard (2004: 11) reviewed the impact of peer group relationships and socializing. They argue that adolescents have a need to find their place within society and fit in somewhere. This is a process which evolves and runs alongside the search for identity (Geldard & Geldard, 2004: 10), as was also explained by Erikson's adolescent psychosocial crisis. Geldard and Geldard (2004: 11) include the wider society, parents, family and peer group expectations which have an impact on the adolescent. The researcher is of the opinion that this can be linked to the gestalt field theory by looking at the impact of others on the adolescent's field, which includes family, society and peers (Perls *et al.*, 1951: 228). Field theory will be explored later in this chapter.

Urberg (as cited in Kiuru *et al.*, 2008: 1) presented a two-stage model of peer group interactions, in which the first phase is choosing a peer group. By choosing to connect with a particular peer group, adolescents select a social context that exposes them to a certain set of values, behaviours and opportunities. The second phase refers to socializing, where the individual adolescent either conforms or doesn't conform to the group's behaviour (Kiuru *et al.*, 2008: 1).

Social interaction is thus very important during the adolescent years, since this is the time when they discover their role within society and within their peer group, as well as establish close relationships (Geldard & Geldard, 2004: 11, 13). The ways they choose to interact with peers are important to the researcher, based on the above-mentioned outcomes stated by Urberg (as cited in Kiuru *et al.*, 2008: 1). Being in a specific peer group seems to define the individual adolescent. Who an adolescent is connecting with and who he/she is spending

time with can define who he/she is. Social interaction amongst adolescents will be discussed more comprehensively in the following section.

2.3 Social interaction patterns of adolescents

2.3.1 Social influences

Brian and Mukherji (2005: 156) determined that from the start of a person's life there are other people surrounding him/her who influence him/her. They further state that "we cannot see ourselves or other people as separate from our social and cultural background. From the start infants are brought up in a social setting, to obey social rules and to fit in with others around them". Parents and peers are the two main influences within an adolescent's social context (Louw & Louw, 2007: 325). According to Geldard and Geldard (2004: 27), the parental relationship is of major importance to the adolescent, despite the relationship between the parents themselves, whether being happily married, divorced or living together. However, Geldard and Geldard (2004: 27) do state that an adolescent benefits more from being in secure families, with parents who have functioning relationships in life. Although the level of actual disruption in parent-adolescent relationships is still being debated, Eccles and Wigfield (1996: 48) state that there is no doubt that parent-child relationships change during adolescence, partly because parents and adolescents also have fewer interactions and do fewer things together than they did earlier. Eccles and Wigfield (1996: 48) further argue that if "parents respond to this distancing in a developmentally supportive fashion, while at the same time providing ample guidance and control, their adolescent children exercise their increasing autonomy in a mature, responsible fashion and maintain positive relationships with their parents".

From the above-mentioned literature the main social influences in adolescents' lives can be summarized as those of the parents, peers and the surrounding

society/community. Since the researcher is now aware of the social influences which adolescents experience, the social activities which they participate in within their social context will be explored accordingly.

2.3.2 Social interaction and time spent socially

Evans and Keenan (2009: 277) found that most adolescents increasingly spend their time with peers. The way the family system was structured changes during adolescence and peer relationships multiply and become more intense as new demands and new social expectations are determined by the peer group. Girls tend to participate more in peer activities and home-based activities such as watching television, whereas boys are more likely to engage in physical and competitive sports or computer activities (Bremner & Slater, 2003: 396), which are not only home-based but could include internet shops or visiting peers who have computers. Bremner and Slater (2003: 396) further state that gender, culture, age, geographic location and race play an important part in social interactions, and that the most common factor is that adolescents engage with peer groups more and that these activities have to be arousing, since boredom is easily experienced and this, in turn, could lead to negative behaviour. Adolescents thus engage in a variety of activities.

Bergevin, Bukowski and Miners (2003: 389) found that adolescents participate in activities that range from necessary and mandatory to leisurely and recreational. Leisure activities include reading, watching television, sports, artwork and hobbies. When looking at these ways in which adolescents spend their time and how they interact socially, it is also important to look at factors which determine what they are doing at what time. The factors that influence adolescents' use of time include age, gender, race and geographic and individual characteristics (Bergevin, Bukowski & Miners, 2003: 389). When studying the ways in which adolescents spend their time socially, Bruno (1996, as cited in Bergevin,

Bukowski & Miners, 2003: 395), divided adolescents' time usage into four categories:

- 1) outer-directed time – the time allocated to achieving external goals;
- 2) other-people-directed time – time allocated to enhance popularity with others and develop close relationships;
- 3) inner-directed time – time allocated to self-development via hobbies, sport, creative activities and special interests;
- 4) non-directed time – passive- or relaxation-driven time allocated for entertainment such as television and movies.

The outcome of Bruno's (1996, as cited in Bergevin, Bukowski & Miners, 2003: 395) study will now be explained by looking at the following figure:

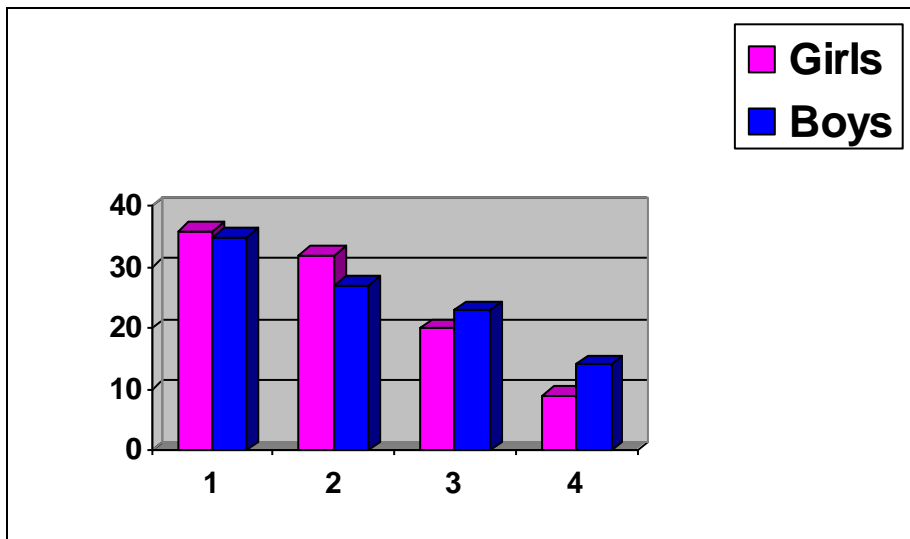


Figure 2.1: Time usage as studied by Bruno (1996, as cited in Bergevin, Bukowski & Miners, 2003: 395)

The results of Bruno's (1996, as cited in Bergevin, Bukowski & Miners, 2003: 395) study showed that 35% of American adolescent boys spend most of their time in outer-directed activities, followed by 27% who spend their time on other-

directed activities, 23% who spend it on inner-directed activities and 14% who spend it on non-directed activities.

Girls also showed the same sequence in the results, with 36% who spend their time on outer-directed activities, 32% who spend it on other-directed activities, 20% who spend it on inner-directed activities and 9% who spend it on non-directed activities. However, Bruno (1996, as cited in Bergevin, Bukowski & Miners, 2003: 395) found that girls showed a preference for other-directed activities, while boys showed more of a preference toward non-directed activities. Non-directed activities are passive activities and include watching television and other such entertainment. The researcher is of the opinion that social networking could also be classified as a non-directed activity, since it is also done for entertainment, and browsing on sites is a passive activity. This would therefore be an indication why social networking has become a popular activity amongst adolescents.

Larson, Bradford and Mortimer (2002: 1-20) investigated how adolescents are spending their time in the 21st century. According to their research, they found that adolescents do spend more time with their peers and, by doing so, they ultimately start creating youth cultures. In turn, these new cultures then reinforce the significance that adolescents attach to being part of their peer group, as explained in section 2.2.4 on peer group importance. Bremner and Slater (2003: 396) mentioned that the most common characteristic of adolescents across the world is that they engage with peer groups more than participating in any other activity. In other words, whatever activity they are participating in will be with friends/peers, therefore their main activity is socializing. The researcher is of the opinion that this is the reason why social networking is so popular amongst adolescents, because it increases adolescents' ability to socialize.

TNS Research Surveys (2009) conducted a study in which 1 000 South African adolescents, aged 13 to 19, from seven major metropolitan areas of South Africa,

were interviewed face-to-face concerning their social relationships. The study found that socializing with friends is an integral part of an adolescent's life. 72% of adolescents stated that they spent a lot of time socializing with their peers. The findings of the TNS Research Survey (2009: 3) also showed that 61% of adolescents stated that they experiment with new behaviour because of peer pressure.

It is therefore clear to the researcher that social interactions with peers are very important to the adolescent, based on all the above-mentioned literature. It seems that there is a need to interact and socialize during adolescence.

Since socialization is of such importance during adolescence, the possible influence that socializing through social networks could have on adolescents is of concern to the researcher. Adolescents are growing up in a new millennium and, as Larson *et al.* (2002: 2) states, there is "every reason to believe that population growth, globalization, new technologies, and other fast-moving changes will reconstruct the concept of adolescents again, in many forms". Therefore the researcher is of the opinion that the new way of communicating through social networks is one of these changes that could influence the social functioning of adolescents. However, the implications of these ways of communicating need to be explored fully, as they might become problematic for the healthy social development of adolescents.

As stated by Larson *et al.* (2002: 19), new information and communication technology (including social networking) is changing the "macro-worlds" that help to form adolescents' lives. Larson *et al.* (2002: 19) argues that history has shown that new technologies (including social networking) do not enter a vacuum; they rather adapt into an already existing social order and typically reinforce existing power structures. Information and communication technology is no exception (Larson *et al.*, 2002: 19). Whether this is a good or bad phenomenon in terms of adolescents' social interactions remains questionable to the researcher.

The literature has inspired the researcher to further explore the dynamics of social networking and the influence it has on the adolescent population of South Africa, and more specifically Cape Town.

2.4 Social networking and adolescents' use of this: forming a new society

2.4.1 Definitions and current social networks

This study will specifically look at the social interaction of adolescents on the internet and through mobile communication by using social networking sites. Social networking involves socializing with friends as well as strangers or new acquaintances on internet websites. These websites have been designed specifically for this purpose (Ellison, 2008: 85-86; Mayayise, 2008: 23-24). This includes mobile networking sites such as MXit. Cranston and Davies (2009) define social networking as “communication between groups of people mediated at some point by internet technologies. This mediation often (but not exclusively) takes place through social network services (SNS) such as Facebook or Orkut, accessed via computers or, increasingly, mobile phones”. Lenhart and Madden (2007: i) explain that online social networks are sites on the internet where people can create their own profile and connect that profile to others to create a personal network. Social network users then post information onto their profiles and use these social networking websites to contact others (Lenhart & Madden, 2007: i).

Social networking as a form of communication technology has two access pathways, i.e. internet and mobile (Cranston & Davies, 2009). Chat rooms and bulletin boards from the 1990s preceded the current social network services. Social networking services started to appear around 2002 with Friendster and have been developing since (Cranston & Davies, 2009). The success of these

modern social networks is largely because of the fact that they exist to feed people's need to socialize (Cranston & Davies, 2009).

Naidoo (2008: 1) defines social networking as a term used to identify sites that provide a series of ways for people to connect and "build webs of social history whereupon their interactions are based". Naidoo (2008: 1) further states that both Facebook and MySpace are well-known examples of networking sites and their popularity in specifically South Africa has grown greatly since 2007.

Mayayise (2008: 27) defined social networking by explaining that:

Web-based social networks create an opportunity for people of different age groups to meet ... these websites are used often nowadays because they are a virtual space where people find themselves using a common language and are also able to share their interests, ambitions and goals.

For the sake of this study, social networking will be defined as social communication between groups of people mediated at some point by internet or mobile technologies.

Social networking sites include popular sites such as Twitter, MXit, Facebook, Skype, MySpace and MSN Messenger (Wikipedia, 2010). Ellison (2008: 81), who researched the frequency of use of social networking sites amongst students in the USA, found that of all the students who were chosen as respondents, 85,2% were active social network users and that 95,5% of these 18 year old students specifically used Facebook. A further 58,8% of students went on social networking sites daily (Ellison, 2008: 81-81), indicating that social networking is important for these students. Mayayise (2008: 28) also notes that Facebook and MySpace are the most well-known of these sites and are very popular, with Facebook having 350 000 000 registered users and MySpace having over 471 152 724 registered users worldwide.

The above-mentioned sites all pertain to internet-based networks. A social network that is mobile-based is MXit. The MXit website (www.MXit.co.za) describes MXit as follows:

MXit is a suite of next generation social communication products, from a PC-based (personal computer) instant messenger for online chat to your own fully customizable social networking application to embed in your blog site or website. With the advances in Web 2.0 it's becoming imperative to own your own SNS (Social Networking Site), and MXit allows you to create and fully customize your own social networking world.

Research on social networking in South Africa, including MXit, showed that the majority of young people have access to a mobile phone and use it almost exclusively for MXit. MXit was set up in 2003 and, according to research, it processes 250 million messages per day, which are sent primarily via mobile phone by young people (Cranston & Davies, 2009). Cranston and Davies (2009) reviewed BMI-TechKnowledge Group's Digital Lifestyles predictions, and found that South Africans between the age of 16 and 24 prefer using MXit to Facebook (61% prefer MXit and 27% prefer Facebook). In 2007 Facebook users in South Africa numbered 87 000, while MXit had 5,2 million South African users (Cranston & Davies, 2009).

It is therefore evident that mobile use of social networking is a growing phenomenon in South Africa and Naidoo (2008: 1) states that mobile social networking has a range of mobile applications and mobile sites such as Twitter, Yeigo and Fring that are becoming popular. Naidoo (2008: 1) further states that social networking will continue to grow in South Africa. MTN and Vodacom have commissioned social networking sites that are primarily based on the idea of instant messaging, which are called "Nok Nok" and "Meep" (Naidoo, 2008: 1). These sites have been set up to counteract the hold that MXit has on the South African mobile market (Naidoo, 2008: 1).

Looking at the current statistics, the researcher is of the opinion that new technologies such as MXit and internet social networking sites might have an influence on the social interaction patterns of adolescents, specifically in South Africa. Why these social interactions through social networks are used specifically by adolescents is of interest to the researcher.

2.4.2 Social networks: social magnet for adolescents

Adolescents and young adults are among the most eager users of social networks (Lenhart & Madden, 2007: i). Lenhart *et al.*, (2001) state that adolescents, more than any other age group, use the internet for the purpose of connecting with others. According to the research of Cranston and Davis in 2009, the more frequent users of social networking sites are between the ages of 15 and 25 and in many societies around the world this age group (which includes adolescents) has grown up with access to digital communication (Cranston & Davies, 2009). According to research done by Whitlock, Powers and Eckenrode (2006: 1) at Cornell University, 80% of adolescents in the United States of America make use of the internet, and 40% of the adolescent youth use the internet daily. They also looked at what adolescents do while logged onto the internet. Activities include playing games, shopping, accessing information for schoolwork and downloading music, but research showed that adolescents primarily used the internet for social reasons (Whitlock, Powers & Eckenrode, 2006: 1).

The fast growth of social network sites such as Facebook, MySpace and MXit confirms the use of internet for social reasons and, according to Cranston and Davies (2009), is also an indication that digital technologies are changing the way people communicate. Many active users spend hours on the internet working and socializing by using social networking sites, which are perceived by some of these active users as an almost essential form of communication (Cranston & Davies, 2009). Louge (2006: 1) concurs with the above-mentioned

statement by saying that “it is critical to view the internet as a new social environment in which universal adolescent issues pertaining to identity formation, sexuality and self-worth are explored in a virtual world”.

Mayayise (2008: 5) also looks at the social effects which the internet could have on adolescents and explores the possibility that, because of its virtual nature, activities through the internet (such as social networking) have the potential to impact adolescents, and parents are often not aware of the social impact that internet usage (for example for social networking) can have on adolescents. As explained by the developmental theories in section 2.2.2 of this chapter, adolescents have certain developmental tasks within society, but when viewing the above-mentioned statement of Louge (2006: 1) and Mayayise (2008: 5), the researcher is of the opinion that these social and interpersonal tasks of the adolescent are now functional within the new-found context (the virtual world of the cellphone and the internet). A new society has been formed through these networks, but what about the old society maintained between person and person within a reality context? How big is this new society, and is it big enough to cause concern? Or, it could possibly be that adolescents’ development of social skills and interacting with others are influenced by the new context (the new field).

2.4.3 Is there an influence on society and social interaction?

Whether the influence of interacting virtually through social networking is positive or negative, the researcher believes that there could be a connection between social networking and current social interaction patterns amongst adolescents. Cranston and Davies (2009) state that “where SNS (social networking services) have been adopted, they can lead to significant impacts upon individual behaviour and patterns of behaviour within groups and wider society”. For example, in comparison with their socially competent peers, socially anxious adolescents usually prefer online self-disclosure and social interaction above offline social interaction (Valkenberg & Peter, 2010). In turn, Larson *et al.* (2002:

43) found that adolescents who were more solitary and lonely tended to have contact with *strangers* on the internet. The social impact of this new way of communicating may be the greatest for adolescents who do not fit into their local peer groups (Larson *et al.*, 2002: 43). Louge (2006: 2) also looks at internet communication and socially anxious adolescents and states that this type of communication enables them to practise social skills without the risks related to face-to-face interactions.

Social interaction therefore has changed for the socially anxious adolescents since they shy away from face-to-face social interactions and may prefer a more protected environment in which they feel less self-conscious to reveal their concerns, and the internet provides them with such an environment (Valkenberg & Peter, 2010). The reduced audio and visual cues of online communication lessen the constraints that socially anxious adolescents normally experience in offline settings (Schouten *et al.*, 2007, as cited in Valkenberg & Peter, 2010). Also, because socially anxious adolescents often favour settings in which their interactions can be prepared, they discover that they have control over their messages or how they communicate (Schouten *et al.*, 2007, as cited in Valkenberg & Peter, 2010).

Louge (2006: 3) summarizes the positive and negative outcomes for socially anxious adolescents as follows:

Moreover, creating fake identities deters from “real life” social situations as it allows for individuals to create any image of themselves with little or no social repercussions. Thus, although the internet may serve as a catalyst for communication (*as on social networking sites*) and also encourage and may increase social competence of socially anxious teens [adolescents], it may also encourage fake identities and false image of real life situations. These socially anxious teens [adolescents] may have a tendency to resort to computer communication as a substitute for real life interactions.

According to Valkenberg and Peter (2010), adolescents who are socially competent in offline settings will also use online communication technologies more often to communicate with friends. In other words, adolescents who are generally outgoing and regularly socialize with others in life will often also use the internet for socializing. Some adolescents also use other communication technologies, such as social networking sites and text messaging from their cellphones, since this offers quick, inexpensive online communication (Bryant, Sanders-Jackson & Smallwood, 2006: 4). This is therefore an easy and inexpensive way for adolescents to communicate and is thus one of the benefits of social networking.

2.4.3.1 Advantages of using social networking sites

As mentioned previously, social networking sites and text messaging through cellphones and internet offer fast-paced, inexpensive online communication to adolescents (Bryant, Sanders-Jackson & Smallwood, 2006: 4). Another advantage is the fact that communicating with family and friends has evolved and has now become very easy.

Valkenberg and Peter (2010) explain this by looking at the changes in internet use by adolescents over the past decade. According to their research, at least two changes with regard to internet use have been noted since the early evolution of the internet. Firstly, they argue that in the second half of the 1990s, it was difficult to maintain a person's existing social connections on the internet because the largest part of one's friends and family was not online yet. For example, in the study by Mesch (2001, as cited by Valkenberg & Peter, 2010), initially only 11% of adolescents used the internet and were active online. In the study by Kraut *et al.* (1998, as cited by Valkenberg & Peter, 2010), none of the respondents had internet access before their participation in the particular study. During that time, online contacts were separated from offline contacts. But in the present day and age, the majority of adolescents in Western countries have

access to the internet (Lenhart & Madden, 2007). Valkenberg and Peter (2010) further argued that “at such high access rates, a negative effect of the internet on social connectedness is less likely because adolescents have more opportunities to maintain their social network through this medium”.

Secondly, Valkenberg and Peter (2010) found that communication technologies that were popular among adolescents in the 1990s, such as MUDs (Multi-User Dungeons) and public chat rooms, were mostly used for communication between strangers. Currently, however, several communication technologies, such as instant messaging and social networking sites, for example Facebook, have been developed that encourage adolescents to communicate with existing friends and not only with strangers. European and American studies show that 84% to 88% of adolescents use instant messaging for communication with existing friends.

When looking at the popularity of social interactions that the internet provides, Louge (2006: 1-2) notes that easy and continuous access to the internet provides opportunities for adolescents to socialize and allows them to connect with their peers/environment as well as with complete strangers from across the world. Louge also makes the assumption that the internet is transforming the social world of adolescents by influencing how they communicate, establish and sustain relationships and get social support.

In addition, Mayayise (2008: 28) discusses some positive outcomes concerning social interaction on social networking sites and found that people who communicate on social networking sites tend to be more socially tolerant of others and also tend to respect other people’s opinions. He continues by stating that visitors to social networking sites tend to engage in critical reasoning more and make useful decisions, and also states that many of these profiles on social networking sites have even been linked to pages supporting social problems such as alcohol and drug abuse (Mayayise, 2008: 28).

Larson *et al.* (2002: 43) considers the social implications of the internet by saying that the internet enlarges the adolescent's world of peer relationships further, since it creates new opportunities to communicate with people outside their own immediate community, which includes people over distant barriers, ethnicity, age, physical appearance and sometimes even language.

These are only some of the positive influences that social interaction on the internet could have on adolescents. However, there are also concerns when looking at social networking by adolescents, since these online networks could affect the offline social and friendship networks in which adolescents are engaged (Bryant, Sanders-Jackson & Smallwood, 2006: 4).

2.4.3.2 Concerns in the literature about social networking

Little research has been done on the topic of internet socializing within a South African context and the influence it might or could have on social interactions as this was understood in the past. Social networking on the internet could be shaping a new social reality amongst adolescents, as mentioned by Louge (2006: 1). Whitlock *et al.* (2006) suggests that internet use by adolescents may facilitate social interaction by making it easier for individuals to connect with others they know as well as strangers. Whitlock *et al.* (2006) also states that online communication (as is done on social networking sites) may promote more truthful interactions since many people tend to reveal personal information more eagerly than when confronted in a face-to-face situation.

Louge (2006: 3) is concerned about this, since sharing such information poses a potential safety risk, because others could be lying about their identity, age or intentions. Mayayise (2008: 12) found that adolescents' use of social networks enable them to lie about their true identity. Marneweck (2006: 251-252) researched anonymity during socialization on the internet and found that "chatters" on the internet, as on social networking sites, were braver since they

could approach people or issues from behind their computer screen, masking their faces and therefore their identity.

Larson *et al.* (2002: 20) argues that the internet provides adolescents with access to information, institutions, people and virtual communities across the world without regard to age, gender, ethnicity, peer social standing or physical attractiveness. He also states that being able to engage in these activities on the internet helps adolescents to participate, collaborate, seek support and find affirmation, but it also creates new vulnerabilities, such as interpersonal manipulation and commercial exploitation, and it creates a medium for new ways of engaging in negative/delinquent behaviour.

Social networking seems to have some influence on the recent understanding of social interaction, especially amongst adolescents. who are the most eager users of the internet and also social networking websites (Lenhart, Madden & Hitlin, 2001; Cranston & Davies, 2009).

2.4.4 Why do adolescents make use of social networking?

As mentioned previously, adolescents use the internet mostly for social reasons (Whitlock *et al.*, 2006: 1). Bryant *et al.* (2006) studied the reasons why adolescents engage in social networking.

Bryant *et al.* (2006: 4) found that the popularity of social networking is threefold:

- 1) Firstly, youths are using social networks to improve communication among friends and family, to make plans with one another and to maintain social contact outside of their day-to-day face-to-face conversations.
- 2) Secondly, these technologies have been adopted by adolescents relatively quickly because instant messaging (such as MXit) are more convenient, less expensive (especially in some countries) and faster

than older technologies. The ability to time-shift and talk at non-traditional times are added uses.

- 3) Finally, research has shown that although preference for using social networks to communicate is definitely increasing, youths still tend to hold in-depth, important conversations offline.

Louge (2006: 3) explains that adolescents use social networks because they give them the the opportunity to *create* their identity and/or post their real identities, photographs and personal information, especially on social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook. Cranston and Davies (2009) explain that popular activities which adolescents participate in on social networking sites, such as Facebook, include:

- carrying on conversations with friends whom they see face-to-face on a daily level;
- communicating with old friends or acquaintances whom they do not meet regularly;
- sharing and discussing day-to-day experiences and activities by status updates, private messages, messages on profile walls and comments on shared media (Cranston & Davies, 2009).

Williams and Merten (2008) found that the two main reasons why people create blogs/profiles (for example on social networks) are the desire for creative self-expression and the wish to document and share personal experiences. In terms of adolescents, Williams and Merten (2008) are of the opinion that they actively explore new forms of self-expression, identity development and social interaction. The researcher feels that this is exactly why social networking is so popular among adolescents. They are in the developmental phase where identity and social development are at a highly sensitive level. Social networking plays to these needs, thus adolescents have a way of fulfilling them.

In turn, Cranston and Davies (2009) discuss the popularity amongst adolescents to access not only internet social networks but also mobile social networks. Users of mobile social networks such as MXit are turning to interaction with the online community by means of their mobile phones. Like internet-based social networks, MXit is a network that is accessed through a cellphone where people can upload their photos, indicate their status and communicate with people who are online instantly (Cranston & Davies, 2009).

The social world that the internet and mobile social networking sites open up for adolescents seems to serve as a new environment for adolescents to satisfy their needs. As explored in the developmental theories, developing an identity or view of themselves and contacting their peers through social interaction form part of these needs. Contacting their field/environment/peers to satisfy this need reiterates the concept of field theory, which is embedded within the gestalt theory.

2.5 Gestalt theory

The researcher is of the opinion that adolescents make contact with a new virtual field of social networking to satisfy their social needs. Socialization as a developmental task is of special importance during the phase of adolescence (as explained in 2.2.3). It was therefore necessary for the researcher to incorporate gestalt theory, since gestalt looks at interaction between an organism (person/the adolescent) and his/her environment (field/social network). If the researcher revisits the title of the research, namely “The influence of social networking on social interaction patterns among adolescents in the northern suburbs of Cape Town” in conjunction with the developmental task of socialization as discussed in section 2.2.3, the organism/environment aspect of gestalt theory comes to mind. Gestalt theory is concerned with the way in which people organize their world (or field) by organizing their experiences into meaningful wholes. The researcher feels that this process of interaction between field and environment mirrors the

adolescents' socialization, i.e. using a social network to satisfy the need of socializing. Gestalt theory and specifically field theory focus on interaction between the organism and the field. The following concepts of gestalt will therefore be explained and incorporated in the results given in chapter 3.

2.5.1 Defining gestalt and its origins

The gestalt theoretical approach was first introduced by Fritz Perls in New York during the 1950s and 1960s (Clarkson, 2004: 4; Mackewn, 1997: 12-13; Parlett, 2005: 42; Wheeler & McConville, 2002: 18). The history of gestalt therapy began with the book *Ego, Hunger and Aggression*, written by Perls in 1947, which was followed by *Gestalt Therapy* by Perls, Hefferline and Goodman in 1951. These books were seen as a type of revolutionary practice, a new way of looking at life. Frits Perls, Laura Perls, Isadore From, Paul Goodman and some followers were in great demand for presenting workshops and training and their popularity led to institutes being formed in New York, Cleveland and Los Angeles (Clarkson, 2004: 4; Latner, 2000: 14-15; Nevis, 2000: 3).

Many variations exist with regard to the definition of the word "gestalt". For example, gestalt can be defined as "an entity or whole of which the total is more than its component parts, which has a certain degree of structure and which remains recognizable as a whole as long as the relationship between the parts remains" (Blom, 2006: 18) or "a whole which is larger than the sum of its parts" (Davenport & Korb, 2008: 1).

In essence, the researcher understands gestalt as a holistic approach, looking at the unified whole instead of the various parts that form a whole (Perls *et al.*, 1951: xi; Mackewn, 1997:10). Parlett (2005: 44) mentions that this relationship between the parts and the whole needs to be balanced in order to connect with others, and that it is important to still maintain a separate identity from others. Gestalt therapy aims at helping a person to restore (or discover) his own natural

ability to self-regulate as an organism and have good and satisfying contact with others (environmental others), as well as with disowned aspects of oneself (internal others) (Yontef, 2005: 84).

Clarkson (2004: 5) adds to the understanding of gestalt theory by explaining that it helps people to identify certain needs and give meaning to their perception or experience of these needs, as well as their existence. A person's need mobilizes him/her to make contact with the field and this process of contacting the field can be seen as gestalt formation (Reynolds, 2005: 159). This happens between organism and environment.

2.5.2 Organism/environment connection

As mentioned previously, the term "gestalt" refers to the parts of a whole, and this relationship between the parts and the whole should be in balance in order to connect with others. During the phase of adolescents, forming social connections is an important developmental task. In order to have relationships, the adolescent has to make contact with the environment. Yontef (1993: 330) is of the opinion that no "core" or "self" can function apart from the contact between organism/environment and that this process takes place at the boundary between organism/environment. For the researcher, this corresponds with the adolescent who needs to contact his/her environment of social networking in order to satisfy the social need so that the "self"/"identity" can function properly.

Gestalt as a theory therefore looks at a person in relation to others. Perls *et al.* explained this connection with others as the organism/environment connection (Perls *et al.*, 1951: 228). Latner (1973: 13) states that the organism and the environment consist of a mutually dependent unity in which the organism is striving to regulate itself. Latner (1973: 13) also explains that the relationship between the organism and the environment is more than just a mutual relationship. The organism is "embedded" in the environment. When looking at

human beings as the organism, Perls *et al.* (1951) also argues that a human being cannot be viewed in isolation, because every human function involves interaction and making contact with others or the environment (Perls *et al.*, 1951: 228). According to Blom (2006: 29), “no experience can exist without contact”. Contact is therefore an important part of an individual’s experience(s). Contact refers to the process of acknowledging oneself and others by connecting and withdrawing, thus appreciating the differences between oneself and others (Polster & Polster, 1974: 105; Yontef, 1993: 203). When looking at the developmental theory concerning the social interaction of adolescents, the researcher is of the opinion that this process of connecting to and withdrawing from peers is strengthened during the phase of adolescence. This assumption is made on the grounds of developmental theory. Geldard and Geldard (2004: 11) stated that the impact of peer group relationships and socializing was high amongst adolescents since they have a need to find their place within society and fit in somewhere. This leads to the discussion of the individual contacting the field of which he/she is a part.

2.5.3 Field theory

Kurt Lewin was the father of field theory in psychology (Clarkson, 2004: 8; Mackewn, 1997: 15; Wheeler 1991: 27). As stated above, Lewin initially argued that it is impossible to view a person apart from his/her context, i.e. his/her environmental field. According to this theory, a person can only be understood within the system of which he/she is an integral part (Clarkson 2004: 8; Nevis, 2000: 20; Wheeler 1991: 27-28). The field theory has been developed from the gestalt theory, explaining this relationship and contact between the self/organism/person and the others/field/environment (Mackewn, 1997: 14; Nevis, 2000: 20; Parlett, 2005: 44).

The field theory was not initially part of gestalt theorists’ view of gestalt therapy. The work of Kurt Lewin was introduced and his views of interacting with a field

(unitary whole) were incorporated in gestalt as the field theory (Wheeler, 1991: 27; Parlett, 2005: 46). Lewin suggested that the field can be explained as a metaphor for the way in which a human, with all his/her own internal or personal drives and needs, interacts with external or social forces, and how this interaction between the organism and its environment are interacting with and affecting each other (Lewin in Parlett, 2005: 46). Or, as Yontef (1993: 297) stated, the field in gestalt therapy can be defined as the “totality of mutually influencing forces that together form a unified whole”. Therefore no one and nothing can be viewed in isolation and nothing is therefore independent (Perls *et al.*, 1951: 228; Nevis, 2000: 21).

The field theory looks at how the world is organized, Yontef (2005: 84) argues. Yontef (2005: 84) explains that the field theory considers how the world works, how its organization should be observed, and how change occurs for a person (organism). Mackewn (1997: 15) also argues that people also organize their world (or field) by organizing experience into meaningful wholes and that they have a strong urge to complete or attach meaning to their emotions. Organizing the field in order to understand emotions and experiences can lead to emotional satisfaction, integration, insight and ultimately closure (Mackewn, 1997: 16). Nevis explains the dynamic workings of the individual’s contact with the field by stating that,

If what exists is shaped, created as it is apprehended, the field is part of our awareness; our awareness is part of the field. The interaction is primary ... The field is ourselves too, we and the environment.

Reynolds (2005: 154) states that children are viewed in the context of their environment and develop in relation to this environment. Since adolescents are still in the phase of developing and maturing, the researcher is of the opinion that adolescents are also still developing in relation to their environment. The process

of contacting the environment/field occurs within a contact cycle, which will be explained in the following section.

2.5.4 Gestalt formation and the contact cycle

According to Blom (2006: 26), gestalt formation takes place in stages, and discrepancies exist amongst authors about how many of these stages form part of the process, although the content mostly corresponds with each other.

Blom (2006: 26) states that gestalt formation takes place as a cycle. In addition, Davenport and Korb (2008: 1) argue that the process of gestalt formation forms a cycle. They explain this by saying that “the process itself is construed as being cyclical, the closing of a circle, an experiencing of wholes, of gestalten”. The four stages of the contact cycle were originally described by Perls, Hefferline and Goodman (1951) as fore-contact, contacting, final-contact, and post-contact (Perls *et al.*, 1951), but according to Davenport and Korb (2008: 1) at the Gestalt Centre of Cleveland, the following concepts are important during gestalt formation: contact, awareness, attention and figure formation on the grounds of experience. Blom (2006: 26) integrated many different views, such as those mentioned above, which are of importance during gestalt formation into a five stage model. Blom (2006: 26) summarizes gestalt formation in the following five stages: awareness, mobilization, final contact, post-contact and withdrawal:

Stage 1: Awareness/sensation: This stage occurs when an individual experiences a need and becomes a figure in another person’s life.

Stage 2: Mobilization/choice of relevant action: After awareness of the need is experienced, the mobilization of the self to satisfy the need follows.

Stage 3: Final contact/action/contact: During this stage the individual engages in the act of satisfying the need and all other aspects form part of the person’s background.

Stage 4: Post-contact: When the need is satisfied, the individual experiences homeostasis, i.e. equilibrium is restored. The figure in the foreground now forms part of the background and the destruction of gestalt is complete.

Stage 5: Withdrawal: The individual is now in equilibrium or inbetween the gestalt destruction and the forming of a new gestalt.

The following diagram is a further visualization of how gestalt formation develops and then dissipates according to the Gestalt Institute of the National Capital (2006).

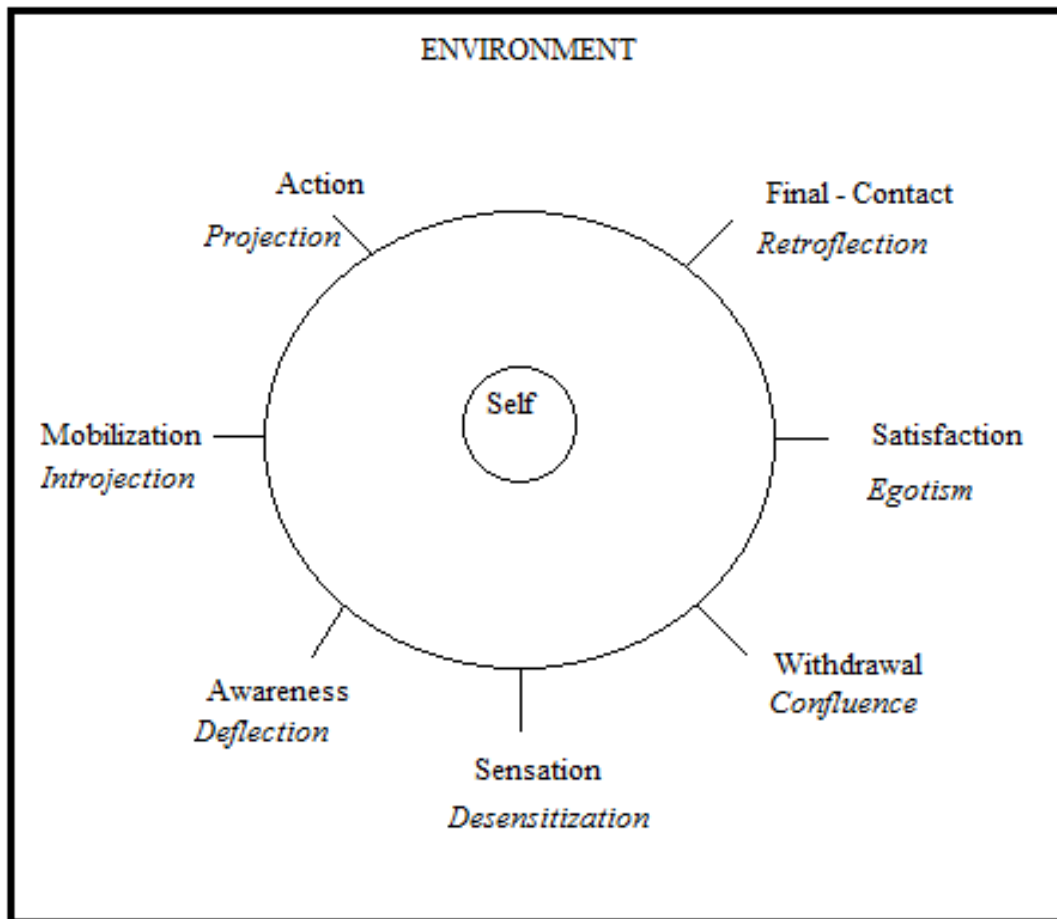


Figure 2.2: The cycle of gestalt formation and destruction

Finally, when discussing gestalt formation it is also important to mention the “triadic” process. This process looks at the development of gestalt through the movement between equilibrium, disequilibrium and modified equilibrium.

Peter Mortola (1999: 308) writes in the *Gestalt Review* that, according to gestalt theorists, individuals “are constantly engaged in an ongoing process of losing and then re-establishing organismic equilibrium”. Equilibrium is disturbed by a stressor, disequilibrium is experienced and action is taken to restore the balance. Perls calls this modified equilibrium. According to Mortola (1999: 308), human beings are continuously making sense of disequilibrium in their lives and experiences.

Mortola (1999: 311) quotes Perls, who explains that individuals are constantly losing and then regaining equilibrium by making adjustments, which he calls modified equilibrium. Mortola finally summarizes gestalt theorists’ views concerning the triadic process in the following table:

Table 2.2: Triadic elements of gestalt therapy theory

Theorist	Equilibrium	Disequilibrium	Modified equilibrium
Perls (1947)	Equilibrium	Disturbed equilibrium	Regained equilibrium
Perls <i>et al.</i> (1951)	Attempt of the organism to remain as it has been	Destruction of precious partial equilibrium	Assimilation of something new
Latner (1973)	Organism striving to regulate itself	Organismic imbalance occurs	Organism rebalances itself

(Mortola, 1999: 311)

In the attempt to maintain equilibrium, as explained above, it sometimes happens that there is a disturbance which disrupts equilibrium. This happens when the process of resisting contact or interruptions within the contact process take place (Reynolds, 2005: 162-163).

The way in which adolescents contact their field/world is important to the researcher, since socialization plays an important role during adolescence. For the purpose of this research, it is also necessary to take note of how this contact is disrupted, as this can lead to disequilibrium.

2.5.5 Contact boundary disturbances/resistance

According to Reynolds (2005: 162), Perls also viewed styles of contact as explained in the contact cycle as having possible areas of resistances, which are present in all the phases of the contact cycle. This is the process of the individual interrupting or resisting contact with the field/environment and is known as desensitization, introjections, projection, retroflection, deflection, egotism and confluence (Reynolds, 2005: 162-163). This way of making contact or having resistance will be explained briefly by looking at Yontef's description of each of the contact boundary disturbances (2005: 162-163):

- **Introjections:** This refers to the person blindly accepting beliefs, attitudes or expectations from the environment that remain foreign. In other words, other materials are just accepted within the self without assimilating or discriminating. Behaviour and values are taken and put into the self without thinking (Yontef 1993:137).
- **Projection:** This takes place when disowned aspects of the self are attributed to others or some aspects of the person's environment/field, in other words putting parts of the self onto others or other objects (Yontef 1993: 138).
- **Retroflection:** The individual treats him-/herself as he/she would treat others. This happens when aspects that are part of the self become

rejected by the self. It is “doing to the self what one wants to do to someone else or doing for self what one wants someone else to do for self” (Yontef 1993: 137).

- **Egotism:** This refers to the individual paying more attention to his/her own identity and boundaries than to those of other (Yontef, 2005: 163).
- **Confluence:** Aspects of the self merge with the other/environment, therefore no boundaries exist and the individual loses his/her own identity. Yontef (1993: 10) noted that this is a state where no differentiation can be made between organism/environment. In other words, the boundary becomes distorted, as if the individual has become one with it (Yontef, 1993: 10).

These interruptions or disturbances take place during the process of contact, as explained above. When contact with the environment is disrupted, a person’s survival is threatened. According to Wexberg (2002: 326), the ability to distinguish between the self (the person) and the other (field/environment/peer/family etc.) is very important for immediate and ultimate survival of an individual. Without the ability to make such a distinction, survival of the self is threatened (Wexberg, 2002: 326). The researcher is of the opinion that this can be linked to the development of the adolescent’s identity. If the adolescent cannot make good contact, identity development and the “survival of the self” cannot happen. The development of the adolescent and the process of contact making is therefore relevant and should be discussed when looking at the influence of social networking on these aspects.

2.5.6 Gestalt theory, adolescent development and social networking

The researcher incorporated views from gestalt because of its relevance in understanding how the adolescent makes social contact and therefore explains the social interaction patterns of the adolescent. Within the context of the adolescence phase, the ability to make good contact is important, since

contacting the field and learning social interaction are developmental tasks. A person who moves through adolescence enters the contact cycle at the mobilization phase, according to Wexberg (2002: 327). This is important because it is during this phase of adolescence and at this stage within the contact cycle where a paradigm shift is experienced by the self/adolescent. The adolescent is in the mobilization phase where he/she moves from defining him-/herself in the family environment and enters a broader peer, society and universal environment.

Wexberg (2002: 327) views this as a turbulent period due to the many changes involved, the biggest being moving away from the family and being more in contact with the self. It is therefore necessary for the researcher to take gestalt into account when researching the social interaction patterns of the adolescent. The researcher aims to understand and explore the adolescent in order to understand whether or not social networking could influence the social interaction of adolescents. A further aspect of gestalt that gives insight into this phase of adolescents is the contact boundary disturbances. The researcher is of the opinion that confluence might be one of the contact boundary disturbances experienced by adolescents during the process of social networking. Confluence refers to aspects of the self that merge with the other/environment, therefore no boundaries exist and the individual loses his/her own identity (Yontef, 1993:10).

The researcher noticed that conformity occurs at this phase of adolescence and can be linked to confluence, since the adolescent loses his/her own identity to become like his/her peers (group acceptance versus isolation). This will be explored in chapter 3 when discussing the findings.

Gestalt theory by itself, however, was not sufficient when trying to understand the social functioning during this specific phase of adolescence. According to Peverett (2007), gestalt therapy emphasizes aspects such as awareness, self-support and responsibility. This is the central focus since it stresses the

importance of the individual and downplays the importance of ongoing social relationships. Peverett (2007) also argues that the effect of the vocational, institutional and cultural systems of society, of which the individual is a part, is not brought into consideration. This could result in relationships being viewed as not as important as the inner individual, and this could lead to a decline in the importance of the family and other external pressures and difficulties. Thus, “the emphasis on the patient himself as being solely in possession of the key to his own destiny and happiness can distort the realities of everyday existence” (Shepherd, 1975: 238). Gestalt therefore could not be used as the only paradigm when viewing the adolescent as a whole. Social aspects of the adolescent also had to be taken into consideration, and this is why developmental theory was incorporated.

Gestalt and developmental theory give insight into the life of the adolescent, who is in a phase of change. This change, as mentioned above, is also toward being more in contact with the self. For the researcher, this relates to the development of identity. Since identity and socializing are important to the adolescent, based on the discussion of the developmental and gestalt theory, both theories play an integral part in understanding the influence that social networking could have.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher aimed to explore the current literature as it pertains to the title of this dissertation. In order for her to understand the constructs of the specific research, the following concepts had to be addressed: the adolescent and the phase of adolescence, socialization and social interaction, as well as social networking as it is currently understood. Furthermore, the paradigm within which the researcher looked at the particular research was gestalt theory. Since adolescence as a phase plays an important role in understanding the influence that social networking could have, the researcher incorporated views from developmental theory to understand the adolescent as a whole. In terms of understanding the adolescent as a whole within his/her environment and, more

specifically, in the new environment of social networking, views from gestalt and gestalt field theory were incorporated in order to understand the process of contact and social interaction. Chapter 3 will focus on the research methodology and provide the results obtained during the empirical study.

Chapter 3

Results and discussion of findings

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the relevant findings from the empirical study and includes the research methodology that was used. The chapter specifically looks at the research strategy, the preparation for the research, the process of gathering the data as well as the data analysis.

Developmental and gestalt theory were integrated in the findings to contextualize the data. The way in which the study was approached and conducted will now be discussed.

3.2 An overview of the research methodology

3.2.1 Research methods

In this study a **qualitative** research approach was followed. As explained in chapter one, qualitative research attempts to understand and explore behaviour or social systems based on the researcher's field of interest (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 48-49; Creswell, 2009: 173). Quantitative research, on the other hand, refers to data used to measure relationships between variables with the purpose of explaining, predicting and controlling phenomena (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005: 94). Gravetter and Forzano (2009: 147) define quantitative research as "measuring variables for individual participants to obtain scores, usually numerical values that are submitted to statistical analysis for summary and interpretation". Qualitative research enabled the researcher to understand the adolescent-experience of social networking since quantitative research focuses on numbers and specifics instead of the experience itself. Since one of the aims of qualitative research is to gain an understanding of a social phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod,

2005: 95), such as social networking, the researcher deemed it more suitable for this study.

This study was an **applied study** since it aimed to broaden knowledge and was used as an application for a social dilemma (Fouché & De Vos, 2005: 105-106). A basic study was not considered since a basic study obtains answers to questions that will have an impact on the way society thinks about a topic, and is founded in knowledge and understanding (Fouché & De Vos, 2005: 105-106). Applied research however refers to research where the solution to a problem that is affecting some facet of society and its results, are explored and the best solution is incorporated in order to better society (Bernard and Whitley, 2002: 30). It was the researcher's aim to explore the new phenomenon of social networking and the possible influences it might have on adolescents' social interactions, specifically by looking at the holistic experience of the adolescent.

The objective of the research was **exploratory**. This objective was chosen since exploratory research aims to look at basic information in a new area of interest (De Vos & Fouché, 2005: 106; Robson, 2007: 20). Babbie and Mouton (2001: 79) stated that it is when a researcher examines a "new interest". The researcher made use of exploration, since she aimed to gain insight into the world of social networking. Even more so, the researcher wanted to explore its possible influences on adolescents. Exploring this phenomenon could lead to greater insight within the literature, which also seemed limited when social networking and its influence on adolescents' social skills were investigated. Social networking is also a relatively new concept globally and in South Africa; therefore exploratory research seemed applicable in this study.

In order to do exploratory research, the researcher incorporated the **case study** strategy. A case study enables a researcher to explore an event, activity, process or individual in more depth by using a variety of data gathering procedures (Mouton, 2001: 149; Goodwin, 2003: 405; Creswell, 2009: 13). During the

process of data gathering, the activity of social networking amongst adolescents was explored by the use of semi-structured interviews with adolescents, as well as focus groups with parents and teachers.

An **instrumental case study** was applied. This type of case study focuses on gaining more knowledge concerning a specific social issue (Creswell, 1998: 62; Fouché, 2005: 272). The researcher aimed to understand what the adolescents' experience of social networking was in their own understanding. To achieve this objective, the researcher aimed to explore their perspectives and feelings regarding the concept of social networking. In order to gain insight into adolescents' processes, the researcher had to engage with the adolescents themselves, and an instrumental case study provided such an opportunity. In order to view the adolescent holistically, the researcher also made contact with their field. This was done by establishing focus groups with parents and teachers, since both these groups have contact with adolescents on a daily basis. Their experience of adolescents gave the researcher a holistic view of the life and behaviours of the adolescent.

3.2.2 Universe, population and the demarcation of the sample

Gravetter and Forzano (in De Vos, 2005: 193) state that “the term ‘sample’ always implies the simultaneous existence of a population or universe of which the sample is a smaller section or a set of individuals selected from a population”.

The **universe** refers to the possible candidates who fit the set criteria for forming part of the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 173). Strydom (2005: 193) in turn states that the universe refers to “all potential subjects who possess the attributes in which the researcher is interested”.

In this study the universe included three groups:

- a) adolescents in the Western Cape who make use of social networking sites;
- b) parents in the Western Cape who have adolescents who access social networking sites; and lastly
- c) teachers in the Western Cape who teach adolescents who access social networking sites.

The **population** of a sample refers to the participants of the study with whom the research problem is concerned (Gravetter & Forzano, 2003: 115). Strydom (2005: 194) argued that the population is the totality of people, events, units or records with which the research problem is concerned. The population of this study included three groups:

- a) adolescents in the northern suburb of Cape Town who regularly make use of social networking sites;
- b) parents of adolescents in the northern suburbs of Cape Town whose children regularly make use of social networking sites; and
- c) teachers who teach adolescents in the northern suburbs of Cape Town whose learners regularly make use of social networking sites.

Sampling can be explained as the process of selecting a portion of the population for a study (Leary, 2004: 117; Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 79). Gravetter and Forzano (2003: 115) state that a sample is “a set of individuals selected from a population and usually is intended to represent the population in a research study”. The sample is thus taken from the population.

Non-probability snowball sampling along with purposive sampling was used for all three groups, i.e. adolescents, parents and teachers. Non-probability purposive sampling refers to selecting a sample based on the researcher’s own knowledge of the population (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 166). According to Maree

(2007: 178), purposive sampling looks at particular situations where sampling is done with a specific purpose in mind. As stated in chapter one, the researcher has conducted interviews with adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18 who are active social network users. Prior affiliation as a teacher helped the researcher to locate these participants. Strydom (2005: 330) acknowledges that this type of sampling is beneficial for a researcher who continuously evaluates collected data and gathers data until saturation is reached. The researcher benefited from this, since evaluating data continuously gave her more insight into the research problem.

Snowball sampling, in turn, refers to collecting data by locating some participants from the target population and then asking those participants to provide information about more possible participants who fit the sampling criteria (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 167). Robson (2007: 99) is of the opinion that snowball sampling is beneficial in situations where it is difficult to get hold of a certain group of people as the researcher only needs one person at a time, which can then lead him/her to another participant. This is done when researchers “grab hold of whomever they can: friends, relatives, fellow-students, passersby, etc” (Robson, 2007: 99).

In this study the researcher found that the advantages of using snowball sampling were that she could locate participants who fit the criteria more easily and that these participants could provide the names of other possible candidates for participating in the study. If a subject had to be chosen from a more exclusive group in another type of study, the researcher feels that snowball sampling can become difficult since participants might not know any other possible participants who also fit the specific and exclusive sample criteria.

The sample for this research was selected according to the following criteria:

Criteria for including adolescents in this study:

- Male or female adolescents between the age of 12 and 18
- Lives in the northern suburbs of Cape Town
- Has access to a computer/cellphone at least three times a week and uses this for social networking
- Has a profile on any social networking site on the internet

Criteria for including parents in this study:

- Is a male or female parent of an adolescent (12-18 years old) who fits the above criteria
- Lives in the northern suburbs of Cape Town

Criteria for including teachers in this study:

- Is currently teaching an adolescent (12-18 years old) who fits the above criteria
- Lives in the northern suburbs of Cape Town
- May be male or female

The next step was to look at the trustworthiness and validity of the research, which will be discussed in the following section.

3.2.3 Trustworthiness and validity

Creswell (2009: 190) states that qualitative validity refers to findings which are checked by the researcher accurately by following certain procedures. According to Afzal *et al.*, (2008: 37), validity tries to measure truthfully what it intended to measure at the onset of the study. Furthermore, Golafshani (2003: 603) states that in order for the researcher to guarantee validity and trustworthiness, he/she should be able to generalize research. According to Marshall and Rossman (as

cited in De Vos *et al.*, 2005: 345), the trustworthiness of a study should reveal the truth of the findings. The latter should correlate with those of another study which is conducted within the same context and with the same participants. Furthermore, findings should be a true reflection of the participants and not a result of the researcher's prejudice (De Vos *et al.*, 2005: 345).

It is therefore the responsibility of the researcher to make sure that findings are accurate and representative of the participants' experiences. The researcher attempted to generalize findings by integrating previous literature into the empirical findings of this study. This was done in the theme section of this chapter, where all the researcher's findings were measured against existing literature. This was done to ensure that the findings were not viewed in isolation, but could be explained by integrating literature. Since a lot of similarities to previous studies were found, the researcher is of the opinion that the study was done accurately, which enhances validity.

Creswell (2009: 190) also states that qualitative reliability is important in a study and refers to the researcher's approach to the research. Creswell (2009: 190) is of the opinion that the qualitative reliability of research should be consistent across different fields and researchers. Within this study only one researcher worked with the data gathered and therefore no other biases could be of concern, since only one person worked with the data as researcher, interviewer and analyst. Creswell (2009: 191) also mentions some strategies to enhance validity. They are discussed as they pertain to this research:

- Firstly, Creswell mentions **triangulation**, which was used in this study. Triangulation can be defined as being a process of combining research findings in order to make data more accurate (De Vos, 2005: 361) or, as Mouton (1996: 156) explains, it is the inclusion of different sources of data collection and potentially increases validity. Golafshani (2003: 604) also states that

triangulation includes mixed methods of data collection and analysis. Triangulation was used in this study since it increases validity and trustworthiness because of the fact that the researcher made use of three different samples: adolescents, parents and teachers (Afzal *et al.*, 2008: 41; Maree & Van Der Westhuizen, 2007: 39).

- Another aspect that Creswell (2009: 191) mentions is the clarification of the researcher's bias. The bias of a researcher refers to his/her preconceived ideas or opinions with regard to a specific wanted outcome of the research. This should be avoided in order for research to be a true reflection of the participants' opinions and not the researcher's biased opinion. This was done through the researcher's explanation and rationale for the study, stated in chapter 1. The researcher mentioned that the research was initiated due to her involvement with adolescents as a teacher and counselor. Due to her involvement with the adolescents, the researcher realized that one should look at the controversial issue of social networking by gaining insight into the population group who accesses it most. This was done to reduce bias and clarify what the actual experiences of adolescents were.
- A third aspect that Creswell (2009: 191) mentions is spending time in the study field in order to gain insight into the lives and experiences of the participants. The researcher did this, since she worked at the school where the adolescents were interviewed. She was also a teacher and counselor at the school and worked with the adolescents. The researcher therefore became part of the adolescents' world of experience by spending time in the setting where they were involved every day.

Finally, it is also necessary to mention that when a researcher conducts a study, he/she also plays a part in the trustworthiness and validity of the study. Research

literature often mentions the fact that the interviewer's perceptions and opinion may influence the interview and its outcome. One way of controlling this is to make use of the same interviewer to conduct all interviews (Breakwell, Fife-Schaw & Hammond, 2000: 248). Within the context of this study, one interviewer was used to conduct all the interviews.

3.2.4 Data gathering

The researcher contacted a local high school that she was affiliated with through a recent teaching position and part-time counselling. Through her involvement, the researcher became aware of the popularity of social networking amongst adolescent users at the school. She had contact with learners who made use of social networks. Some of these learners fit the sample criteria and the researcher contacted them and their parents. This was done verbally and by means of written letters to gain permission from them to participate in the study. Written permission was also obtained from the Western Cape Education Department (addendum A), as well as the principal of the specific high school and the parents of the selected respondents. Permission was granted verbally as well as in written form. Adolescents, teachers and parents agreed voluntarily to participate in this study. Parents and teachers signed forms to give permission and adolescents gave permission verbally as well.

The following step in the research process was to gather data by interviewing the participants. After consent forms were signed by the participants, the interviews and the two focus groups were scheduled at the school.

Semi-structured interviews were used to interview the adolescents individually. Teachers met as a group and formed a focus group. This was also done with the parent group. The researcher obtained permission from each participant to record their voices. All the interviews were therefore recorded. Semi-structured

interviews are commonly used in qualitative research and will be elaborated upon accordingly.

3.2.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

The aim of semi-structured interviews is to have predetermined questions, but this type of interviews also have flexibility since the researcher is allowed to respond to answers and probe responses (Greeff, 2005: 292; Maree, 2007: 87; Robson, 2007: 74) The researcher could benefit from the semi-structured type of interview since the questions helped to focus both researcher and participant on the specifics of the study whilst still leaving room for open interpretations and unique opinions. The researcher could therefore ask a question and then respond to participants' responses. This became an open discussion with some of the adolescents being interviewed. The research schedule, which includes the questions that were used as a basis for the interviews (Addendum B), was thus only a starting point for the researcher. Some of the adolescents were eager to give feedback on their experiences of social networking and the flexibility of the semi-structured interview gave them the opportunity to do so.

However, interviewing has the potential to include influences from the interviewer's personality, opinion or characteristics that could influence participants' willingness to answer accurately. Various effects are visible within literature and cannot be eliminated, but one way of controlling them is to make use of the same interviewer to conduct all interviews (Breakwell *et al.*, 2000: 248). One interviewer was used to conduct all the interviews in this study.

Thirteen participants were interviewed, all of whom were between 14 and 18 years of age. Twelve of these participants were Afrikaans speaking learners and one was an English speaking learner. Four boys and eight girls were interviewed.

3.2.4.2 *Focus groups*

Focus groups as a research method refers to a method which collects data through group interactions based on a specific topic determined by the researcher (Greeff, 2005: 300). Robson (2007: 76) is of the opinion that group interviews can be an efficient way of gaining data from various people at the same time.

Creswell (2009: 179) summarizes the advantages of focus groups by stating that focus groups are useful when participants cannot be observed directly, that participants can provide historical information and that focus groups allow the researcher to control the line of questioning.

The disadvantages include (Creswell, 2009: 179):

- Providing indirect information filtered through the views of the interviewer.
- Providing information in a designated place rather than the natural setting.
- Not all people are equally articulate and perceptive.

In this study, two focus groups were interviewed with a semi-structured interview schedule. The first focus group included parents of children who were in the phase of adolescence and had frequent access to a social network. There were five parents in the group; all were female and Afrikaans speaking. The second group contained educators from a high school in the northern suburbs of Cape Town. There were six teachers in this group, five being female and one male, and all were Afrikaans speaking. Both focus groups shared their experience of adolescents making use of social networking sites, since they are the people who interact with adolescents on a daily basis. By interviewing these groups, the researcher aimed to incorporate people from the adolescents' field in order to gain further insight into their social functioning.

3.2.5 Data analysis

According to Creswell (2009: 183), the process of data analysis includes making sense of text and visual data, as well as preparing data to move deeper into the understanding of what the data represents. This is done in order to interpret the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2009: 183) or, as De Vos (2005: 333) states, data analysis helps to order, structure and give meaning to the data obtained. An examination of the data collected was done at the research site, as the researcher took notes and identified common themes and ideas expressed by the participants. The data were then analyzed away from the site after data collection was completed. Audio files obtained during the interviews were transcribed and read numerous times in order to identify corresponding themes (Esterberg, 2002). The researcher used codes to represent specific themes and ideas identified in the data (Creswell, 2009: 185-186).

The themes were identified by comparing answers in the semi-structured interviews and focus groups and connecting the themes that emerged during these interviews. The different themes or patterns gained from the data were organized and then categorized through coding (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 5). According to De Vos (2005: 338), the data obtained and themes observed have to be tested by searching through the data and challenging the understandings that have developed. The research then has to search for negative aspects that might occur as patterns in the study. This is what the researcher attempted to do. The themes that emerged were highlighted, grouped together and then organized under the theme headings. These results will be discussed in this chapter. The aspects that are relevant to the adolescents' field were revisited in order to understand the results of the research further. This was done by considering the developmental and gestalt theory, as explained in chapter 2, since analysis "must refine your conceptual framework and develop specific methods for observing in relation to that framework" (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 388).

A written report was then drafted after the theories and the data obtained were integrated since, according to De Vos (2005: 339), data analysis has to be concluded by writing a report in which the researcher presents what was found in the form of text, tables and/or figures. In this study, the researcher displayed the results of the study in the form of text, as indicated in this chapter.

Since most of the participants were Afrikaans speaking, transcriptions were done in Afrikaans and then directly translated into English for the sake of this dissertation. An example of an Afrikaans transcription is added as an addendum to this dissertation to serve as proof that translations were not manipulated. (Please see addendum D.) In order to view the results, the researcher had to take note of the initial research question in order to determine the answer in a correct and valid text form.

3.2.6 Research question

This study focused on the following research question:

What are the influences of social networking on social interaction patterns of adolescents?

Through the lens of the developmental and gestalt field theory, the researcher attempted to answer this question by integrating her findings with these theories as well as current literature.

3.3 Findings of the research

The following themes and subthemes emerged from the researcher's empirical study:

Theme 1: Peer importance and acceptance

Subtheme 1.1: Connecting with existing friends/peers.

Subtheme 1.2: Forming new social connections

Theme 2: Amount of time spent on social networks and the activities on social networks

Subtheme 2.1: Time spent on social networks and frequency of use

Subtheme 2.2: Activities

Theme 3: Feelings about social networking as experienced by adolescents

Subtheme 3.1: Negative feelings experienced by adolescents

Subtheme 3.2: Positive feelings experienced by adolescents

Theme 4: Social changes experienced by adolescents

Subtheme 4.1: Communication: physical versus electronic

Subtheme 4.2: Social interaction and change

Subtheme 4.3: Influence on identity

Subtheme 4.4: Sharing personal information

Subtheme 4.5: Managing conflict

Subtheme 4.6: Time spent in the company of others while on MXit

Theme 5: Parent-adolescent conflict concerning social networking

The main theme will first be indicated and discussed briefly, after which the subthemes will be mentioned.

Theme 1: Peer importance and acceptance

As discussed in chapter 2, peer groups are among the most significant social contexts during the phase of adolescence (Kiuru *et al.*, 2008: 1). Evans and Keenan (2009: 277) found that most adolescents increasingly spend their time with peers. In this study, participants mentioned this need to connect with their peers and existing friends and the fact that they spend time on social networks specifically with this aim:

Subtheme 1.1: Connecting with existing friends/peers

As Valkenberg and Peter (2010) state, several communication technologies, such as instant messaging and social networking sites like Facebook, have been developed that encourage adolescents to communicate with existing friends and not only with strangers. In addition, Mayayise (2008: 11) found that adolescents did not spend a lot of time communicating with strangers, but rather spent most of their time communicating with people whom they were acquainted with, such as friends. This can be seen in the responses of the following participants:

Participant 1: *It is nice because you can see your friends' photos, you can read their statuses on what their day was like ... and stuff like that. That is why it is nice.*

Participant 2: *So I go onto MXit when I need something from my friends, like homework or something. And, uhm, Facebook – I read just, like, the statuses and, like, what is going on in my friends' lives.*

Participant 3: *Because all my friends are on it.*

During the focus group with the parents, the parents also mentioned that their children use social networks to connect with their existing friends and not really to get involved with strangers as is the preconception:

Parent 3: *MXit is used a lot, but only with their friends.*

Parent 1: *They clearly know the difference between normal MXit with their friends that you ... that you say yes to, and then she also explained to me about the one where you ... where you go on chat rooms and things like that – for that you pay extra, which is taboo.*

Parent 4: *MXit definitely gets used by most teenagers, at my home as well. Uhm... they use it specifically to communicate with pals, friends, the people closest to them whom they know.*

Although it was acknowledged that social networks were used to connect with existing friends/peers, some participants also mentioned that they access social networks to meet new people and make new connections.

Subtheme 1.2: Forming new social connections

Another aspect of this subtheme concerning peer importance is that social networks are used to form new social ties and also to enhance new and current peer relationships:

Participant 2: *And then usually to get to know people, I will lie on my bed and MXit, because this is my favorite time of my day.*

Participant 3: *Because you get to know the person better because you can see what he is doing and what he likes to do.*

Participant 10: *I like it; I think it is a cool way to get to know people.*

Participant 9: *MXit, I think, when you want to make friends and get to know people.*

It is therefore evident that social networking is used to enhance sociability, which forms part of the adolescent's development, as explained in chapter 2. Valkenberg and Peter (2010) also found that social networking provides the adolescent with more opportunities to maintain social relationships. In addition, when looking at the possibilities regarding social interactions that the internet provides, Louge (2006: 1-2) stated that easy access to the internet provides opportunities for adolescents to socialize and allows them to connect with their peers/environment as well as with complete strangers from across the world.

Furthermore, chapter 2 explored adolescents' social need to interact with their peer group. This social interaction of adolescents can sometimes lead to over-identifying with the peer group. As Louw and Louw (2007: 335) stated, when adolescents are part of a group, they conform to the ways of their peers, which includes the music they listen to, the clothes they wear, the places they go to, leisure activities as well as choosing partners for romantic relationships. When looking at gestalt theory, this can also be viewed as confluence, which is a contact boundary disturbance. As explained in chapter 2, confluence refers to aspects of the self merging with the other/environment, therefore no boundaries exist and the individual loses his/her own identity (Yontef, 1993: 10). The researcher is of the opinion that conformity during adolescence does exactly this. It might be that adolescents make use of social networks as a way of conforming – as participant 3 stated, she is on MXit “because all my friends are on it”. Boyd (2007: 9-10) also found this aspect of adolescent conformity:

When I ask teenagers why they joined MySpace, the answer is simple: “Coz that’s where my friends are.” Their explanation of what they do on the site is much more vague: “I don’t know ... I just hang out.”

The separate focus groups of teachers and parents noted the occurrence of conformity and the role it is playing during the activity of social networking:

Teacher 4: *It creates a type of peer pressure at school, because once again, if you don’t have that type of profile, you’re an outcast – then you aren’t cool.*

Parent 5: *But it is shocking to me to see how early they start these days, because my daughter just turned 11 and she is making sounds, because she is someone who never conforms, you know – she’s a total individual and she is now making sounds that she wants a phone which has access to MXit.*

According to Kiuru *et al.* (2008: 1), during the stage of adolescence, individuals tend to start spending more time in peer groups, and adolescents obtain certain social skills, attitudes and new experiences through these interactions with their peers. Peers seem to play a crucial role in this process of social development (Bauermeister & Leary, 1995). This strengthens the researcher’s argument that social networking as a peer activity and a means of social interaction plays a role in the social development of adolescents. As stated by Larson (2002: 19), new technology (information and communication technology, including social networking) is changing the “macro-worlds” that help to form adolescents’ lives.

When the researcher reviewed Larson’s statement from a gestalt field theory perspective, this new macro-world could be seen as the environment of the adolescent, or the field, as explained in chapter 2 in the discussion concerning the organism/environment connection.

The researcher is therefore of the opinion that social networking now forms part of the adolescent's field – a new field which they engage with – because of the amount of time they spend on it and also its intensity and frequency for the adolescents, as viewed in the following theme. It seems that time is spent on social networks daily in most cases. This is showed as part of the following theme.

Theme 2: Amount of time spent on social networks and the activities on social networks

Subtheme 2.1: Time spent on social networks and frequency of use

It is clear from the research that adolescents make use of social networking almost daily. Twelve of the thirteen participants confessed to being on social networking sites daily. Participant 5, however, was the only one who stated that he was only on such a site every third day. Some of the participants also shared that they spent hours on social networking every day and not only a short while:

Participant 3: *About three hours a day ... yes, every day when I get a chance.*

Participant 4: *That's a good question. Well, it's only in the evenings that I log on, thus about two hours a day.*

Participant 9: *MXit ... mmm ... every day. [Laughs] It is the whole day!*

Participant 10: *Every day! For hours! [Laughs]*

Participant 11: *Uhm ... throughout my day, about eight hours.*

Bryant *et al.* (2006) specifically looked at the time spent on socializing over the internet and found that on average, study participants spend 2.2 hours per day

online with this technology. Among the most popular reasons for communicating online were “to keep in touch with friends” (92.0%), followed closely by “to make plans with friends” (88.0%). From the above-mentioned statements it seems that time is spent on MXit daily, and not for short periods, but extensive periods. The researcher is therefore of the opinion that adolescents use such an excessive amount of their time for engaging in social networks that other areas of their social interaction could become neglected.

The researcher is of the opinion that social networking is part of the adolescent’s field. Continuing with the theme of time spent on social networking sites and the frequency of accessing these networks, the focus group of teachers also mentioned the following:

Teacher 1: *Or they talk to each other while in class, because they are bored. Like, the child will, say for instance, sit in class A and then chat with his friend in class B ... I mean, at break-time they almost can’t take out their phones fast enough to jump onto MXit.*

Teacher 4: *During breaks, after school, anytime – when the bell has rung, their phones are out.*

Teacher 6: *They are even on at night when they wake up at night.*

Teacher 1: *It is easily 12 hours a day – easily. That little phone is always on.*

Another significant fact that the researcher came across was that some of the adolescent participants noted that the peak time of communicating via MXit was late at night:

Participant 6: *Yes, there are ... uhm ... I think more people find it relaxing, comforting to talk to other people about what’s actually going on in*

their lives. And at night when they get into bed ... they're just ... they're just themselves. They're relaxed. They're comfortable and they can then address whomever they need to address and just speak to people.

Participant 12: *Like from seven in the evenings till late. Seven o'clock till about nine o'clock ... yes. Like, lots of times I will get to school and I will hear, yes, o my word, but yes, I was on MXit yesterday morning, or this morning until three o'clock and then they are so tired at school and they don't concentrate on their school work and so on.*

Participant 13: *Most teenagers come on at about eight o'clock until two o'clock the next morning.*

The parents and teachers also mentioned the late night/early morning social networking by adolescents:

Parent 4: *Yes, that is why they are zombies at school, because they MXit throughout the night.*

Teacher 6: *They are even on at night, when they wake up at night.*

The researcher found it interesting to learn that various adolescents use social networks so late at night. Although the researcher could not find other literature concerning this, Breus (2010) found that "the use of social networks by adolescents influences sleep patterns, sleep deprivation and drug use". The researcher recommends that this could be an area for further exploration. Mayayise (2008: 15-16) did, however, look at the amount of time adolescents spent on the internet as a whole, and not only social networks. He found that adolescents spending time on the internet on a daily or weekly basis could be

due to the fact that they perform different activities on the internet, of which social networking is only one.

It seems that adolescents spend some time on social networks; there are thus certain activities that keep them occupied. These activities emerged as another subtheme.

Subtheme 2.2: Activities

Popular activities on social networking sites, according to the interviews, can be summarized as follows:

Table 3.1: Social networking activities as named by adolescent participants

Activities named	Participants who engage in these activities
1. Uploading and watching photos	1, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13
2. Finding out information about friends/people	1
3. Looking at other people's profiles	3
4. Reading people's comments and statuses	1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 11
5. Communicating with friends [chatting]	2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13
6. Updating one's personal profile	2, 8, 9
7. Playing games	4

Communication was the main activity mentioned by adolescents. Guvi (2007: 12) found that adolescent websites and blogs were more and more popular for adolescents, since they provided them with a place where they could share music, videos and photos as well as write about their experiences, thoughts and feelings about their everyday lives. Communicating and keeping in touch with friends were the obvious favourite activities when looking at the researcher's findings as well as those of Bryant *et al.* (2006). This was discussed in theme 1.

Watching and uploading photos was the second most named activity during social networking found by the researcher in this study. The following comments were interesting to the researcher, specifically regarding the activity of uploading and viewing photos on the social networking site Facebook:

Participant 6: *Mmm. That's a good question. I think it's become that ... uhm, where people ... It's just like photography, like a photo gallery – people who just post photos. The nice thing about it is that you can post things on it, but it depends on what you post on it and what photos you take ... uhm ... if I'd ... if I really have to answer this, then I would say, yes, it has become that – you can also post videos as well as recordings of yourself. It really has become a great way of advertising. If you are in the business world ... uhm ... it is a great way of advertising – your band or your company ... you can put yourself on Facebook.*

Participant 10: *But, yes, there is also a negative side, there were often photos of me on Facebook which I did not want on Facebook.*

Some of the parents also commented on inappropriate photos on Facebook:

Parent 2: *I'm stunned when I have time to sit and play around on Facebook, then you can go onto photos which people have posted on Facebook. Now it stuns me to see that photos that I took of me or you where we are doing whatever – that they posted those photos. Some of the photos are so shocking that I think, jeese, this is the type of photo which I should delete and not put on Facebook of all places. And then often they are ... say for example they are Peter's photos, where Peter himself is being exposed, and not only others who are being exposed.*

Parent 4: *You don't have control over the deleting of that group of photos. They must be deleted by the sender, and uhm ... that for me was shocking. I was ... In my matric year with my daughter, I went through exactly this. What was bad was that on their matric weekend away they received photos from one person who took the photos, so even if she was on the photos or not, the photos that were sent ... some of the photos were ... uhm – and this is my opinion – improper, on Facebook ... uhm ... they were not nice photos, and it is not even only about the photos; it is also about giving the photo a heading, to express what the photo meant to them, and ... uhm ... and when you ask that that child removes the photo that others can see on their profile ... This is exactly what teacher 2 is saying: It connects your child to what is shown there.*

Although most of the literature only refers to photo-taking and uploading as an activity, Meden (2009: 7) stated that when photographing self or friends, users also refer to some photos as being “Facebook photos” as if they are in a way appropriate for uploading and it is then expected that they will draw attention and will be commented on by others. The popularity of looking at photos and the social impact this could have, as was mentioned in the situations above, were not detected within the other literary findings and were mostly just mentioned as an activity.

According to Whitlock *et al.*, (2006), adolescent activities on the internet included playing games, shopping, accessing information for schoolwork and downloading music, but research showed that adolescents primarily used the internet for social reasons. Following on the above-mentioned summary, the researcher agrees with Whitlock *et al.* (2006) that it seems that adolescents access social networks primarily for social reasons.

Bryant *et al.* (2006) also found that adolescents make use of communication technologies such as social networking in the following ways:

Table 3.2: Bryant's findings regarding adolescents' activities

Keep in touch with friends	92.0%
Make plans with friends	88.0%
Play games	61.5%
Play a trick on someone	60.0%
Ask someone out	44.0%
Write something you wouldn't say in person	42.0%
Send non-text information	38.5%
Break up with someone	24.0%

The research has explored the amount of time spent on social networks as well as the activities that adolescents participate in when on these networks. What was interesting about the participation of adolescents in social networking was the variety of experiences they mentioned.

Theme 3: Feelings about social networking as experienced by adolescents

When asked about the opinions adolescents have about social networking, both negative and positive feelings were expressed by them, based on their experiences.

Subtheme 3.1 Negative feelings experienced by adolescents

1: Exposure:

Being exposed as a person and being exposed to inappropriate social interaction were two of the concerns that emerged from the interviews. Boyd (2007: 6) argues that adolescents are taking social interactions between friends or peers into the public field for others to witness. Boyd (2007: 6) is of the opinion that activities on social networks are significant, because they take place in a public space, since conversations between friends are public, profiles are publicly viewed, and comments are publicly observable. Adolescents made the following comments concerning this:

Participant 2: *And the “to go” idea of Facebook, MXit and the chat rooms doesn’t work for me, because it gets too personal, it’s ... there are certain things that does not really belong there. The people are very coarse ... the chat rooms, that stuff – I don’t go on them, because ... like, the people use crude words and go wild.*

Participant 2: *... and then your password is your own one. You should really protect that with your life, because a lot of people are like ... they get your number en then they hack in, and then ... like in ... they search ... and they get all your information and then they go onto your MXit and then they cause trouble ... because this has happened to me ... the people got like my ... uhm ... [giggle] ... the people got like my uhm ... [giggle] ... the people, like, got my number and then my pin and then ... [giggle]. I’m sorry, it’s very uncomfortable.*

Parent 2: *The children don’t always realize what they expose themselves to.*

Teacher 3: *Mostly about how upset they are, because this person has once again posted something on their wall, or this child has uploaded certain photos.*

This is evident in Larson's (2002: 20) research, which showed that the internet provides adolescents with access to information, institutions, people and virtual communities across the world. He further states that being able to engage in these activities also creates new vulnerabilities, such as interpersonal manipulation, and it creates a medium for new ways of engaging in negative/delinquent behaviour, as indicated in participant 2's story above. More participants commented about negative and delinquent behaviour that is currently emerging on these networks:

Participant 3: *Yes, you get funny people on Facebook who send you requests to be their friend and so on.*

Participant 6: *There are negative effects to social networking ... uhm ... such as ... you can fake your identity ... uhm ... and then arrange for a meeting with someone, and then you can just go slip ... uhm [mumbling unclear]. You can do anything ... pretty much anything to them. Uhm, there are going to be negative effects to pretty much anything out there – anything that has to do with technology at the moment.*

Participant 12: *Facebook is not actually that nice, because people around the world can read your thing.*

Participant 8: *O well, your MXit status can sometimes expose you a bit. When people are angry with you, then they put it on there and then, yes, everyone knows everything and it's like Facebook also – there are tagged photos of you and they might be personal and embarrassing*

and also statuses that are aimed at you and then everyone knows it.

Participant 12: *People can, like, often send stuff around that is not true en then they don't really know ... that which is now on Facebook ... then they don't know exactly who sent it, because you can do it by using a different name and stuff, and on MXit also, because you ... your cellphone number and MXit number aren't always the same, so then you can go on and you can use this strange name and then they don't know it comes from you.*

This is of concern to Louge (2006: 3), since sharing personal information poses a potential safety risk, because others could be lying about their identity, age or intentions. According to Williams and Merten (2008), this is not necessarily a bad thing. They found that topics that have been associated with adolescence and that were present in online profiles were especially in the areas of self-disclosure, peer relations, risk behaviours and sexual exploration. Williams and Merten (2008) are of the opinion that the content posted onto adolescents' profiles included aspects concerning identity and role experimentation as originally understood by Erikson's developmental stages. Furthermore, Williams and Merten (2008) were of the opinion that it will be advantageous to understand that adolescents use social networking sites to experiment with their identity by trying out different roles or personas. They concluded that it is more beneficial for researchers, parents and educators to have knowledge of the specific ways in which adolescents communicate with their peers and social networks and to view these interactions as a relatively safe method of role exploration.

Whitlock *et al.* (2006), in turn, noted that online communication (as is done on social networking sites) may indeed encourage more truthful interactions, since many people tend to reveal personal information more readily than when they are

confronted in a face-to-face situation. This also emerged as a subtheme and will be discussed under theme four.

A negative consequence that was mentioned was academic deterioration, which will be discussed in the following section.

2: Academic consequences:

It seems that the adolescents themselves noted that, due to the language usage on social networks, their language ability, and specifically spelling, has been affected:

Participant 5: *It affects your spelling. Like, MXit has abbreviations and words which are shortened to only a few letters, but you still understand what was written. But it still kind of affects your spelling ability.*

Participant 5: *Mmm ... kind of ... two of my friends whom I know well – I'm not going to mention their names – do struggle, because say for instance you write in English, the word "you" ... they only write the letter "u" instead of writing the whole word and then they do this in an essay or something.*

The focus group of teachers also mentioned the academic consequences of using social networks:

Teacher 3: *It is the reason why they can't speak in orals anymore; cannot be in conversations with each other one on one.*

Teacher 4: *It has an influence on their language and the way they write.*

Teacher 3: *You read past the mistakes, because everyone talks like that.*

Teacher 1: *Do you know, what irritates me is when they are writing a letter with “mwah” at the end.*

Teacher 3: *The things they write! And how they write it!*

Teacher 2: *Yes, they ask me to write MXit, because I don't understand what ma'am is writing.*

Guvi (2007: 2) found the following concerning the academic consequences of social networking by adolescents:

There is a growing recognition that teenagers' passion for these social networks is being ignited more by peer group sociability and play than academic learning. Subsequently there are increasing concerns of communications technology within schools. There are parental and public fears about the implications of this technology and its impact on behaviour. For example, recent public debates over the value of MXit highlighted fears concerning its addictiveness, use during school hours and sharing of explicit information amongst other aspects. It signals the current struggle between parents, children and the wider community about the meaning and changes brought about through the pervasiveness of communications technology within their children's lives.

It seems to the researcher that this is another issue to be looked at in future research. Although social networking seems to have negative effects, it does appear to have positive effects as well, as demonstrated by the adolescents' responses.

Subtheme 3.2 Positive feelings experienced by adolescents

Adolescents also had a lot of positive feelings about using social networks. When talking about social networking, many adolescents mentioned the positive uses of social networking. These comments included:

- Convenience

- Connecting and re-connecting with others who are far away
- Inexpensive

Convenience:

The following comments were made by adolescents concerning the aspect of convenience:

Participant 1: *It ... okay ... some people you can't see every day, and then MXit is there.*

Participant 6: *Uhm ... I think it's good. I think it's a great way of communicating, but if you do it in a sensible and responsible way.*

Participant 9: *I like it; I think it is a cool way of getting to know people, especially if you meet them over weekends and then during the week – I would get their number immediately, MXit and then, okay, what is your Facebook surname? Then I invite them on Facebook and then I can also see where they hang out, what type of friends they have and what type of person they are.*

Participant 6: *The good effects of social networking are that it is just a great way of communicating to a larger audience.*

As mentioned above, Bryant *et al.* (2006) found that social networking sites and text messaging by means of cellphones and internet offer fast-paced, inexpensive, online communication to adolescents. Another reason why adolescents make use of social networks is the fact that social networks enable adolescents to get into contact with people they haven't seen for a while or who live far away from them.

Re-connect and connect with people who are far away:

Louge (2006: 1-2) notes that easy and continuous access to the internet provides adolescents with opportunities to socialize, and allows them to connect with their peers/environment as well as with complete strangers from across the world. This was evident when looking at the adolescents' remarks:

Participant 2: *You search for people and it is ... it is very nice, because now you realize, ... but my best friend from preprimary ... you forget about them and all these people you can now recall, and those thoughts ... how it's going and all of that ... you can still chat on Facebook and everything is in relation with those people again and this is the nicest part of it.*

Participant 3: *Yes, I do, because if you want to talk to someone who is very far away, like in London or something, then you can communicate or something.*

Participant 6: *You might not get to see the person as much as you like and then you'll rather just talk to them on MXit, or if the person is in Jo'burg, you know, or in a far-away place, then it's just easier to talk to them on that.*

Participant 8: *So it has a nice side because you can communicate with someone who is far away; get in touch more.*

Inexpensive:

Guvi's (2007: 10) research showed regular mention of costs playing a role in the use of communication technologies amongst adolescents. According to Guvi's study, industry experts and academics noted that there had been a cutback in

the costs of these technologies and those adolescents were drawn to this aspect of social networking. Adolescents in this study also mentioned the fact that social networking was affordable. This can be seen in the following comments:

Participant 5: *Because it is cheaper than typing an SMS or ... uhm ... they don't have to waste airtime unnecessarily by phoning or anything or have expenses of SMS's or phone calls.*

Participant 6: *It's cheaper and you can talk to more people at the same time. It's cheaper than sending an SMS to one person and that's why I enjoy it.*

Teacher 1: *Yes, it is inexpensive and everyone can chat at the same time.*

It seems evident that adolescents use these technologies for many reasons, but also because of their affordability. This theme explored the experiences that adolescents voiced concerning their participation on social networks. A following theme that emerged in the research pertained to the social changes that were experienced by the adolescents themselves and were also observed by parents and teachers.

Theme 4: Social changes experienced by adolescents

Subtheme 4.1: Communication: physical versus electronic:

The fast growth of social network sites such as Facebook, MySpace and MXit confirms the use of internet for social reasons and is also one of the indications, according to Cranston and Davies (2009) that digital technologies are changing the way people communicate. Many users spend hours on the internet working and socializing on social networking sites, which is perceived by some users as

an almost crucial form of communication (Cranston & Davies, 2009). When looking at how communication has changed, some of the adolescents remarked:

Participant 4: *Because you lose self-confidence ... or something like that, and then it gets more difficult to talk to them ... directly.*

Participant 6: *In terms of the way we're communicating and it changes communication, it uhm, ja I think its changed drastically because now people use MXit and facebook as a front and they hide behind it, instead of confronting the people face to face. See I think its made people, I think its made conversations ... uhm ... and sorting out of problems a lot easier to handle simply because now people don't have to do it face to face, not sort it out personally, they do it interpersonally if that, if I can say that .*

Participant 13: *Because usually you were used to talking to people face to face and now you are so used to MXit, where you just type something and send it to someone, that you don't even know what to say to someone anymore when the person is standing in front of you.*

Meden (2007: 6-7) discussed this conflict of social networking and observed how users of web applications (such as social networks) have become creative in how they use these applications, how they communicate and interact with others, and use language and dialects. Meden's (2007: 6) concerns are that their use of such applications might be affecting the users' identities, and the fact that such technology might have a significance influence on their everyday life. This leads to the following subtheme, which concerns the effect on social interactions.

Subtheme 4.2: Social interaction and change:

It appears from the interviews that social networking seems to have certain social influences, and these influences seem to have led to social changes, as seen from the comments:

Participant 2: ... and everything depends on your profile picture – your name does not really matter, because people look at the photo.

Participant 6: If you go onto Facebook, you can put up a numerous amount of pictures on it – in fact, you can put videos on it ... uhm ... and this is how people now see you as a person if you now go onto ... If you have to go for a job interview and they are going to interview you, they can go onto Facebook or Google you ... gonna Google your name and your Facebook account will pop up, and they are going to go onto your account and they are going to see pictures of you: pictures of getting yourself drunk or jumping into a pool naked or something like that and your employer is going to think, I don't really want to employ someone of this nature. Uhm ... in terms of the way we're communicating ... and it changes communication, it ... uhm ... yes, I think it's changed drastically because now people use MXit and Facebook as a front and they hide behind it instead of confronting the people face to face. See, I think it's made people ... I think it's made conversations ... uhm ... and sorting out problems a lot easier to handle, simply because now people don't have to do it face to face ... not sort it out personally; they do it interpersonally, if that ... if I can say that.

Teachers and parents also seemed concerned with the social changes that they see amongst the adolescents whom they educate:

Teacher 3: *My problem with this is, if you communicate with someone verbally, you can hear when they are being sarcastic or when they are making a joke, but when you write something down, they don't understand the tone of it.*

Parent 3: *They are often not willing to ask something over the phone, but they will ask it on MXit.*

Parent 5: *... and yes, you know, in normal conversations you have to talk normally, using sentences and words you know, and that numbs them ... uhm ... with ... in the way they break up with someone. It ... just like that, just like that – it numbs them and also their emotions; it numbs their emotions.*

When looking at how and if social interaction patterns of teens have changed, the researcher recalls Vygotsky's developmental theory. The main focus of this theory, as explained in chapter 2, is that development is dynamic and never-ending, since it is a process where people and settings influence the child, and the child, in turn, then influences the people and settings surrounding him/her (Bukatko & Daehler, 2004: 31). The researcher argues that this is the essence of gestalt field theory: everything in an adolescent's field has an influence and everything the child does influences the field and this relationship between organism and environment. Latner (1973: 13) states that the organism and the environment consist of a mutually dependent unity in which the organism is striving to regulate itself. Latner (1973: 13) also explains that the relationship between the organism and the environment is more than just a mutual relationship. The organism is "embedded" in the environment. When looking at human beings as the organism, Perls *et al.* (1951: 228) argues that a human being cannot be viewed in isolation, because every human function involves interacting and making contact with the other/environment. (When looking at social interaction, the researcher is of the opinion that this pertains to the

adolescent's ability to contact the field in order to satisfy a need. As discussed, an adolescent has a need for fitting into society, making contact with peers, and being influenced by parents, peers and society. According to the researcher, it is this need that makes social networking so popular. In this case "popular" refers to the fact that social networks are generally accessed daily by adolescents, as explained in theme 1. It is therefore evident to the researcher that contacting this new field, namely social networking, should have certain influences.

Subtheme 4.3: Influence on identity:

Gross's research (2004: 654) highlights the fact that adolescents have the opportunity to lie about their real identity when engaging in online communication. These aspects of identity emerged from the interviews:

Participant 12: *I think it makes you cooler sometimes.*

On Facebook and MXit you can, like, lie about your age and upload fake photos.

Now if you have Facebook and you have the coolest phone and everything, then you are the most popular.

Participant 8: *Yes, it does, because I think they see your photos and see who you are and make their own conclusions about you – about how you are or who you are – by looking at your status and how you talk and things you post.*

Participant 6: *It's relative to the kind of person you are. Uhm ... to a certain extent, yes, because people then have an excuse to go get drunk, take pictures, put them on Facebook and say, yes, I got drunk – I didn't know. You know, when in fact they did know, and just not*

worry about it – they just want to show people and allow people into their lives and say, look how drunk I got. Uhm ... to a certain extent people abuse it, because then people go on Facebook to sort out what needs to be sorted out there and fight with people on Facebook instead of addressing it personally and that's where ... and that communication line has now ...

Erikson (1950: 235) argued that in their search for identity adolescents look for continuity and sameness, and in this process they “appoint” others (peers, family, etc.) to “play the roles of adversaries”. The previous author further argues that searching for confirmation by others in order to establish an identity has a negative opposite, i.e. role confusion. Erikson (1950: 235) calls role confusion the “danger” of this stage of adolescence. Role confusion refers to the process where adolescents over-identify with others to a point where they lose themselves and their unique identity. Gross (2004: 645) looked at these aspects of online identity and concluded that adolescents do often pretend to be people who they are not in reality; for example, they pretend to be people who are older and people who are famous. As stated above, Gross (2004: 645) argued that online communication creates an opportunity for adolescents to lie about their identity. This could become dangerous, as is the case with the following theme of sharing personal information on a social network.

Subtheme 4.4: Sharing personal information:

Williams and Merten (2008) state that the top two reasons why individuals create blogs (as on social networks) are for creative self-expression and sharing personal experiences. This seems relevant in this study when one looks at parents' and teachers' responses:

Teacher 5: *They are also not afraid to say something, because the other person can't see them.*

Parent 3: *They say things more easily there than saying something face to face.*

Parent 1: *It is shocking to her that they post these things for the world to see.*

Williams and Merten (2008) found that in “personal identifiable information (that were) disclosed by adolescents: 43% listed their full name; 10% listed their phone number; 11% disclosed their place of employment, and 20% revealed their online contact information (i.e. e-mail address). Overall, nearly half the sites analyzed contained information that could potentially jeopardize the identity security of the adolescent participants”.

In addition, Whitlock *et al.* (2006) states that online communication (as is done on social networking sites) may promote more truthful interactions, since many people tend to reveal personal information more easily than when they are confronted in a face-to-face situation.

This is of concern to Louge (2006: 3), since sharing such information poses a potential safety risk, because others could be lying about their identity, age or intentions. Social networking seems to have some influence on the recent understanding of social interaction, especially amongst adolescents, who are the most eager users of the internet and also social networking websites (Lenhart *et al.*, 2001; Cranston & Davies, 2009). Mayayise (2008: 69) also stated that in terms of social networking websites, adolescents tend to use these frequently, and some indicated that they go as far as meeting their online friends in person. This is of concern to Mayayise (2008: 69). What was interesting about this particular study was that adolescents did not mention the fact that they were sharing personal information. Participant 8 did, however, mention that some comments made were personal and exposing. Participant 2 mentioned that one

can write feelings and personal thoughts, but no one discussed the sharing of personal information such as numbers, addresses, etc.

This aspect could also be recommended for further study. Another concern for the researcher is the fact that some participants indicated that they would rather avoid conflict in person and use social networking instead to resolve conflict.

Subtheme 4.5: Managing conflict:

The handling of conflict was another aspect that emerged from the interviews. Some respondents said that they find it easier to resolve conflict on social networks and others still prefer using real-life conversation. The following was noted:

Managing conflict through a network:

The following comments were made by adolescents who preferred using social networks when handling conflict:

Participant 2: *Facebook and MXit have their days ... then MXit comes in handy, because on MXit you can't be disrupted – you can write text after text after text. No one can interrupt you ... you know? So that conflict, that atmosphere is still there, but you can say what you want to say. And no one can attack you, but as soon as you talk face to face, then it is impossible when that person gets on his high horse or something like that.*

Participant 6: *These days ... uhm ... I have come to terms with the fact that it is easier to talk to someone – in fact, fight with people – over ... people who would avoid you in person rather than try and confront you about something and then fight with you over MXit and you can*

physically be with them face to face and then there's no verbal communication, and what you say on MXit stays on MXit as well ... uhm ... I actually have an example: The other day when my friend ... uhm ... she called me over and instead of telling me on MXit why she was so upset, she chose to be upset with me in person – that irritated me a little bit and then I just thought to myself, well, why couldn't you have just told me on MXit beforehand? Technology just makes it so much easier for confrontation to be sorted out.

Participant 12: *Yes, because a lot of times ... then, like, my sister and I will, like, have a fight or, like, a friend and I would and stuff and then a person would go onto Facebook or MXit or something and then you will, like, leave it for a couple of days and then you will just send, like, an angry message in return and then you forget that you ever sent it and so on. And then after a few days you go on again and then you just say hello to the person, out of the blue, and then you are half forgiven and then you would just start to chat and talk and so on ... so, yes, I think it is kind of better than face to face sometimes, because with face to face people don't think before they talk and the other person's facial expression and everything just makes you more angry than on Facebook or MXit, where you can't really see them.*

Some adolescents did, however, state that they still prefer to manage conflict in person rather than on a social network.

Managing conflict through face to face interaction:

As stated previously, some adolescents mentioned the fact that they preferred resolving conflict face to face.

Participant 5: *I will go and talk through it with them, because it is bad, a bad example of your life, if you do it with an SMS or something. I would rather just go and talk it over.*

Participant 8: *Face to face, it is easier to say things that should be said. MXit hides one's emotions by only using words to say things and you don't know what the person really means.*

The above two responses concerning conflict once again show that social networking could be both beneficial and negative, depending on how it is used by adolescents. Mayayise (2008: 71) also mentions the fact that studies show positive and negative effects of online communication. Although adolescents are using social networks to communicate, it seems that there is still a tendency to communicate through offline conversations. Young people have been described as part of a “constantly connected” generation (Cranston & Davies, 2009), and how they connect with the social context is important to the researcher. This will be explored further in chapter 4.

The following subtheme also emerged and was of interest to the researcher.

Subtheme 4.6: Time spent in the company of others while on MXit:

Another interesting subtheme that emerged was that within social contexts, or situations, it seems that some adolescents would rather be in the context, but socially out of the context, by socializing on MXit or Facebook through mobile networks:

Participant 2: *Some people are crazy about their phones; it really is a bit crazy ... uhm, like, some people will sit and MXit while they are in the company of others.*

Participant 12: *My cousin – she’s, like, on the whole time; she will, like ... she will invite you to a sleepover, but she is on MXit the whole night and never talks to you.*

Participant 7: *Uhm ... if I am with my friends – never, uhm ... but if I am with my parents and it is very boring, I will quickly go to the bathroom and go on to see who is on and then go off again.*

Participant 2: *Well, if we ... uhm ... if we watch TV, then ... and we don’t have much to say, then it is nice – then I sometimes MXit.*

Although the researcher has not found literature specifically pertaining to the effects that the activity of social networking while in the physical company of others have on the social interaction patterns of adolescents, it is interesting to note this phenomenon for further study.

Theme 5: Parent-adolescent conflict concerning social networking:

Guvi (2007: 7) explained that during adolescence, the present understanding or focus of the family dynamics is shifted. During this phase, peer friendships mostly take on a more active role for the adolescent and because of this, there is often an component of generational conflict (Guvi, 2007: 7). The following participants responded to the question, “Have you and your parents ever fought about social networking?”

Participant 7: *[laughs] Continuously, infinitely.*

Participant 8: *Yes, my mom and dad has often said, put away that phone – you’re always on MXit, MXit, MXit! So, yes.*

Participant 9:

Participant: Every day. Every day. Not about Facebook, but about MXit. Every day.

Interviewer: Why? Because you spend too much time on it?

Participant: No, my parents will just walk into my room and say, "What are you doing?" Then I would say, "I am studying." Then he'd say, "you're not studying; you're on MXit."

Participant 5: *Uhm ... it is only if I am maybe on a little longer than usual.*

Eccles and Wigfield (1996: 48) state that parent-child relationships change during adolescence, and this is partly because parents and adolescents also have fewer interactions and do fewer things together than they did earlier. Therefore it seems that the parents' conflict with the adolescent is "normal" in this developmental phase, and this also seemed to be the case when referring to social networking by adolescents. Williams and Merten (2006) argued that parents should view social networking as a tool for helping them to understand adolescents better, instead of perceiving online content as a personal diary that adolescents can keep private.

3.4 Conclusion

The findings of this research have been analyzed and presented in the form of various themes that emerged from the interviews. The study aimed to look at the possible influence that social networking might have on the social interaction patterns of adolescents. A total of five themes were discerned in the data. From the above themes, the realization emerged that there is an influence on the social interaction patterns of adolescents. A lot of the data obtained agreed with the literature discussed in chapter 2 and were also relevant when the researcher looked at developmental theory and gestalt theory.

In the final chapter the researcher made recommendations and drew conclusions, based on the integrated knowledge of chapter 1, 2 and 3.

Chapter 4:

Final conclusions, recommendations and thoughts

“The research report is critical to the research endeavour because it is the vehicle by which the results of studies are typically disseminated.” (Heppner, Kivlighan & Wampold, 1999: 542)

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher revisits the goal and objectives of the study that were mentioned in chapter 1 and discusses their achievement within this study. Following this discussion, the limitations of the study are mentioned. The researcher also draws conclusions from the findings in chapter 3. Some recommendations for further study are also made on the basis of these conclusions.

The goal and objectives of the study will be reviewed in the following section.

4.2 Goal and objectives of the study

In this section the goal and objectives of the study will be indicated, whereafter they will be discussed in terms of the context of the study and whether they have been achieved or not.

The goal of the research was to explore the influence that social networking has on the social interaction patterns of adolescents in the northern suburbs of Cape Town.

To achieve the above-mentioned goal, the following objectives were formulated:

Objective 1: A literature review which focused on social networking amongst adolescents, specifically from a gestalt perspective whilst incorporating aspects of developmental theory (chapter 2).

Objective 2: Gathering information by means of:

- semi-structured individual interviews with adolescents in order to gain insight into adolescents' experience of social networking and also to gain insight into how adolescents interact socially
- focus groups with the parents and teachers of adolescents using social networking sites in order to gain insight into their experience of adolescents who participate in social networking and also to gain insight into how they view adolescents' ability to interact socially

Objective 3: Analyzing the findings from interviews and focus groups

Objective 4: Formulating concluding remarks about the findings and making possible recommendations surrounding the impact of social networking and the influence it might have on social interaction patterns of adolescents in order to both safeguard and utilize it positively to enhance social interaction.

Objective 1:

Firstly, concerning the first objective of the research, the researcher is of the opinion that this was achieved successfully within this study. By discussing developmental theory in chapter 2, the researcher was able to gain insight into the current phase of adolescents. The literature review enabled her to understand the social and emotional developmental tasks in the adolescent phase. This gave the researcher insight into the social world of the adolescent, emphasizing the impact that peer relationships and identity development have on the adolescent's world view. Furthermore, the way in which adolescents interact

socially was emphasized. This was important, since the aim of the study was to look at a social aspect, namely social networking.

Objective 2:

The second aspect of the literature overview in chapter 2 concerned the relevance that social networking has in adolescence, as adolescents form one of the main age groups who make use of social networking. The researcher conducted an extensive review which focused on various areas that are relevant to social networking. Finally, the researcher explored the use of social networks within the context of gestalt theory. Gestalt theory equipped the researcher to view the adolescent within his/her field and enabled the researcher to give meaning to the way in which adolescents make contact within their field, specifically with regard to conformity (or, as it is coined in gestalt theory, confluence) within the peer group interactions.

Concerning the second objective, the research participants were selected through purposive sampling, since the researcher specifically used adolescents on social networks for the study.

In order to gain a more holistic understanding of social networking amongst adolescents, the researcher made use of triangulation. This was done by having focus groups with relevant role players in the lives of adolescents, i.e. parents and teachers. The parents and teachers were also chosen by means of snowball sampling along with purposive sampling.

As mentioned in chapter 3, the interviews with adolescents were conducted individually in the form of semi-structured interviews, and the parents and teachers were interviewed in focus groups. According to the researcher, objective 2 was therefore achieved.

Objective 3:

Lastly, the researcher had to analyze the data which were gathered from the separate interviews. In her opinion, this objective was achieved, as the information gathered was analyzed by the researcher. She compared the adolescents' answers during the semi-structured interviews to those of the participants of the focus groups. Conclusions were drawn from these interviews and themes which emerged from the empirical data were then highlighted by the researcher (chapter 3).

Objective 4:

The fourth objective was to formulate concluding remarks about the findings and make possible recommendations surrounding the impact of social networking and the influence it might have on social interaction patterns of adolescents in order to both safeguard and utilize it positively to enhance social interaction.

In the opinion of the researcher, all the objectives of the study were achieved and the goal accomplished, as the study described and explored the phenomenon of social networking, specifically from an adolescent's perspective, while incorporating aspects of gestalt theory. The accomplishment of the goal and objectives of the research led to the formulation of the limitations of the study, which is focused on in the following section.

4.3 Limitations of the study

A limitation refers to "something that limits how good or effective someone or something can be" (Longman Active Study Dictionary, 2004: 431 s.v. limitation) In this study limitations addresses the restrictions within this study which made the study difficult to be totally effective. In other words, limitations are aspects that made the study challenging, or had an influence on the accuracy of and the

ability to generalize the findings. In the opinion of the researcher, the limitations of the study included the following:

- The adolescents were sampled from one school, which is a predominantly Afrikaans-speaking school. Since mostly Afrikaans-speaking participants were interviewed, not all South African cultural views were incorporated.
- The participants were mostly girls. By using snowball sampling, the girls in the original sample mainly referred other girls. The sample might therefore not be representative in terms of gender.
- The research was focused on one school in Cape Town and did not include any other participants from other provincial areas. This could limit the ability to generalize.

Recommendations to possibly address these limitations are included in the following section.

4.4 Recommendations

During the study the researcher became aware of certain areas that might need to be developed in future research. She also made the following recommendations which emerged from the findings of the research:

4.4.1 Benefits of social networking

During the interviews with the parents and teachers, the researcher noted that many of these adults were unaware of the activities on social networks and the beneficial value they could have for socializing amongst adolescents. It is the researcher's opinion that parents and teachers could be educated about the social benefits of social networking.

Following on the literature study in chapter 2 and the results in chapter 3, the researcher feels that social networking includes both positive and negative social outcomes for the adolescent, and both should be explored by caregivers (such as parents and teachers). This should be done in order to equip adolescents for using social networking for its benefits, but also to educate them on the dangers of social networking.

4.4.2 Negative influences of social networking

As stated above, there seems to be certain benefits for adolescents being on social networking sites, but there also seems to be negative influences. These influences could be explored further and parents and teachers could be educated on how to avoid the negative influences, for example by looking at the dangers of socializing with strangers, sharing personal information, changes in adolescents' socializing patterns and academic deterioration. These negative influences could be prevented by educating adolescents on the possible dangers of social networking. Parents and teachers form part of adolescents' daily development and could be educated on the boundaries and safeguards of social networking in order to guide and assist adolescents in the safe use of social networking.

4.4.3 Sampling method

As mentioned before, not all the cultural groups within South Africa had been included in this study due to the sampling method. It would be interesting to conduct a study which includes adolescents from various cultural groups in South Africa and examines their experience of social networking.

A more representative group in terms of gender and geographical area could also be beneficial. This could be done by using a random sampling method and then interviewing participants about their experience of social networking to see

how many participants engage with others on social networks. A survey could also be conducted to reach a larger number of adolescents.

4.4.4 Parental awareness

4.4.4.1 Knowledge about access to social networks

During the focus groups with parents, some parents stated that they were unaware of all the functions and activities on social networks. Parents therefore do not always know the dangers and activities that their adolescent is involved in. The researcher is of the opinion that parents should attempt to gain knowledge regarding the sites that adolescents visit. Parents need to start speaking to other parents, communicate with teachers and be aware of what is going on in the media. Parents should be informed so that they can examine the positive and negative uses of these sites in order to help educate their child about their benefits and dangers.

4.4.4.2 Educating learners at schools

Since teachers are experiencing the popularity of social networks within the school environment, teachers can incorporate “safe use” education concerning social networks. The researcher suggests that parents and teachers could introduce “safe use” of social networking by looking at the following:

- Sharing personal information can lead to strangers contacting a person and may lead to criminal activities.
- Meeting new acquaintances from social networks in person could be dangerous, since the person could have given false information.
- Using social networks as a positive tool to enhance socializing instead of using it to victimize others.

- When using social networks, learners/adolescents could be encouraged to practise reading and writing skills instead of using abbreviations and iconic language as they are currently doing.

4.4.5 Promoting healthy social development

Concerning adolescents' use of social networks, it could also be beneficial if adolescents take a stand against the negative behaviour which occur on social networks. Should adolescents inform parents, teachers and/or authorities of negative behaviour on these networks, a message could be sent out that adolescents are taking a stand against the misuse of social networking.

4.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the goal and objectives of this study were achieved. The limitations of the study were then discussed, which led to the formulation of the recommendations. The latter focused mainly on educating parents and teachers on both the benefits and negative influences that social networking could have on adolescents. The researcher is of the opinion that social networking is a positive and fun tool when used appropriately and for the purpose it was intended for, i.e. socializing. However, social networking should be used with caution, because when adolescents start using these networks to victimizes others or give information on these sites, which could be dangerous, matters can become problematic.

It can be concluded from the study that most of the adolescents enjoy making use of social networks and its popularity still seems to be growing. With all its various uses and the fast and inexpensive access that social networks offer, the researcher feels that social networking has become an innovative way for adolescents to voice their opinions, thoughts, feelings and ideas. It is a place specifically designed for communicating and connecting with others, which is

possibly the single most important activity practiced by adolescents. Social networks offer adolescents continuous, never-ending contact with their peer group. It is therefore almost obvious that adolescents embraced the emergence of social networks and re-invented social interaction.

Teachers and parents, however, mostly voiced their concern with regard to the negative influences that social networking could have, not only on the adolescents' safety, but also on their social, emotional and academic development.

The controversy surrounding social networking and whether it is a positive or negative commodity still remains. Social networking was initially designed to enhance social ability. This has indeed happened, but along with the good intention of promoting socialization also came dangerous consequences of social networks. It is therefore evident that if these networks are accessed within safe environments and used for positive social contact, no harm will come from it. However, if one is not aware of the dangers of such networks, they could lead to emotional or even physical harm. Since adolescents, who are the main users of these networks, are in the phase of developing social skills, they should be monitored and educated when using social networks. If this is done, social networking could enhance their healthy social development and functioning, and could ultimately help them to develop unique identities which could be integrated into the larger society.

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ADDENDUM A: Consent from Western Cape Education Department

Mrs Serahni Symington
504 Cascades 2
Tyger Waterfront
Bellville
7530

Dear Mrs Serahni Symington

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: THE ROLE SOCIAL NETWORKING PLAYS IN SOCIAL INTERACTION AMONGST ADOLESCENTS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The study is to be conducted from **01 April 2010 to 30 July 2010**.
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T. Wyngaard at the contact numbers above, quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

The Director: Research Services
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Audrey T Wyngaard
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**
DATE: 29 March 2010

ADDENDUM B: Semi-structured interview schedule

Semi-structured interview questions that were used for adolescents:

1. Which social networking sites are your favourite and why?
2. On which sites do you have a profile on?
3. What do you do when you are on these sites?
4. What do you think of social networking?
5. In what ways do you communicate with your family?
6. How do you communicate with your friends?
7. In which ways do you like to communicate?
8. Do you struggle to communicate with others by talking with them verbally?
Why or why not?
9. Are there some aspects of your schoolwork that are influenced by your interaction on social networking sites? Why do you think so?
10. How do you handle conflict in a social setting?

Semi-structured interview questions that were used for parents and teachers:

1. Are there learners that (does your child) talk to you about social networking? If so what do they say about it?
2. What do think about social networking?
3. How is social networking influencing school work?
4. How is social networking influencing adolescents' social interactions with others?
5. What influences do you think social networking has, or could have, on adolescents?
6. In your opinion, how much time do adolescents spend on these social networking sites? Elaborate.
7. After conducting interviews with various adolescents it seems that social networking could influence the way they interact with others in general. What do you think about this?

8. Some adolescents mentioned that they find it easier to chat online than in person, and visa versa. Do you have any comments about this?
9. A few adolescents mentioned that the peak time of being on Mxit is late at night and early mornings. What do you think about this?
10. A number of adolescents mentioned that they find it easier to deal with conflict on social networks. What is your opinion on this?

ADDENDUM C: Letter to participants

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

The influence of social networking on social interaction patterns among adolescents in the northern suburbs of Cape Town

[Incorporating views of parents and teachers of the chosen respondents.]

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Serahni Symington, student in MDiac Play Therapy from the Institute for Child, Youth and Family Studies at Huguenot College. The study will contribute to a research report of limited scope.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the research is to determine what influence social networking has on the social interaction patterns of adolescents.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we shall ask you to have one interview session with me, Serahni Symington. This session will take an hour. During this session we shall talk about social networking and social interaction. This session will be scheduled for a specific day between May 2009 and July 2010 at the school.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

If you feel uncomfortable or have any questions or the need to discuss and work on any aspect of your life after the sessions, I will bring you into contact with members of the counselling team at the school.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR SOCIETY

By participating in the study, you might gain a better understanding of social interaction and the importance it has for you and society. It can help you and others gain a better understanding of the role that social networking might play in social interaction, based on your experience.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

You will not receive any payment for your involvement.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be linked to you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by not using your names and using a number instead when referring to you in the research report. The name of the school will not be mentioned anywhere. I shall keep all information locked up and only I shall have access to it. Sessions will be recorded on video and only I shall see the recordings. When the research report is completed and all my examinations are finished, the video recordings will be erased.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You may choose whether to participate in this study or not. If you volunteer to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me, Serahni Symington, at 021 910 2855 or 074 142 0708, or my study supervisor, Dr Munita Dunn, at mdunn@hc.sun.ac.za.

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to _____ by Serahni Symington in [Afrikaans/English] and I am in command of this language or it was translated satisfactorily to [me/him/her]. I, _____ was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

[I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study/I hereby consent that the subject/participant may participate in this study.] I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of subject/participant

Name of legal representative (if applicable)

Signature of subject/participant/legal representative/parent/guardian (in the case of the participant being younger than 18)

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [name of the subject/participant] and/or [his/her] representative, _____ [name of the representative]. [He/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [Afrikaans/*English] and no translator was used.

Signature of investigator

Date

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH – PARENT/TEACHER

The influence of social networking on social interaction patterns among adolescents in the Northern suburbs of Cape Town

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Serahni Symington, a student in MDiac Play Therapy from the Institute for Child, Youth and Family Studies at Huguenot College. The study will contribute to a research report of limited scope.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the research is to determine what influence social networking has on the social interaction patterns of adolescents.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we shall ask you to do the following:

- To have one interview session together with other parents/teachers as part of a group.
- I, Serahni Symington, will facilitate this group.
- This session will take an hour to two hours.
- During this session we shall talk about social networking and social interaction, focussing especially on the adolescents' use of these social entities.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

If you feel uncomfortable or have any questions or the need to discuss and work on any aspect of your life after the sessions, I will bring you into contact with members of the counselling team at the school.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR SOCIETY

By participating in the study, you might gain a better understanding of social interaction and the importance it has for you and society. It can help you and others gain a better understanding of the role that social networking might play within social interaction, based on your experience.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

You will not receive any payment for your involvement.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be linked to you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by not using your names and using a number instead when referring to you in the research report. The name of the school will not be mentioned anywhere. I will keep all information locked up and only I shall have access to it. Sessions will be recorded on video and only I shall see the recordings. When the research report is completed and all my examinations are finished, the video recordings will be erased.

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You may choose whether to participate in this study or not. If you volunteer to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

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If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me, Serahni Symington, at 021 910 2855 or 074 142,0708, or my study supervisor, Dr Munita Dunn, at mdunn@hc.sun.ac.za.

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I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of subject/participant

Name of legal representative (if applicable)

Signature of subject/participant/legal representative

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the subject/participant*] and/or [*his/her*] representative, _____ [*name of the representative*]. [*He/she*] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [*Afrikaans/*English*] and *no translator was used*.

Signature of investigator

Date

ADDENDUM D: Example of transcript

Participant 2:

(ORIGINAL AFRIKAANS TRANSCRIPT)

Navorser: Okay. Hoeveel tyd per week spandeer jy op social networking sites?

Deelnemer: Wel, uhm, MXit – ek het nie baie tyd, ek het nie baie tyd wat ek spandeer op networking doen nie, soos, ek het nie baie airtime nie. So ek gaan op MXit as ek iets nodig het van my vriendinne of iets – my huiswerk of iets. En ... uhm, Facebook – ek gaan lees net, soos, die statuses en, soos, wat aangaan in die ... in my vriende se lewens. So dit is nie ... ek is nie so baie ... soos deesdae wat ek nou matriek is ... dit is nie meer soos wat ek in die verlede op MXit was nie ... soos, gewoonlik is dit, soos, as daar 'n sekere persoon op MXit is, dan was ek permanent op MXit. Maar nou is dit nie meer so erg nie. En daai "to go"-gedagte van Facebook, MXit en nog die chatrooms werk nie vir my nie, want dit raak te persoonlik; dis ... daar is seker goed wat nie eintlik daar behoort te wees nie – die mense is baie rof ...

Navorser: Okay, maar rof soos byvoorbeeld?

Deelnemer: Die chatrooms, daai goed. Ek gaan nie daar in nie, want dit is 'n bietjie rof, want ... soos, die mense mense gebruik kru woorde en gaan daar tekere en speel met mekaar en weet nie wat alles nie, maar dit is nogal rof.

Navorser: En is dit maklik om op hierdie goed te gaan?

Deelnemer: Dit is nogal. Jy benodig net 'n wap ... en 'n foon en dan is jy reg ... en dan gaan jy net op die website en dan download jy dit ...

Navorser: Okay, so daar is geen, soos, privacy-goed wat sê jy moet 'n ID gee of niks ...

Deelnemer: Gewoonlik is dit, soos ... jy nodig 'n username en dan 'n password,

maar gewoonlik is jou username soos ... ek weet nie hoe om dit te verduidelik nie. MXit is gewoonlik jou nommer ... soos jou selfoonnommer ... jou ... uhm ... network se username en dan jou password is jou eie een ... jy moet eintlik daai, soos, bewaar met jou siel, want baie mense is soos ... is soos ... hulle kry jou nommer en dan hack hulle in, nè, en dan ... uhm ... soos in, dan soek hulle ... en hulle kry al jou inligting en dan gaan die mense op jou MXit, en dan maak hulle moeilikheid ... want dit het al met my gebeur: Die mense het, soos, my ... uhm ... [giggel] ... die mense het, soos, my ... uhm ... nommer gekry en toe my pin en toe ... [giggel] Ek is jammer – dit is baie ongemaklik, en uhm ... ja ... en nou ... Waar was ek?

Navorser: Jou pin, en dan vat hulle jou pin?

Deelnemer: Ja, dan vat hulle jou pin en dan gaan hulle, soos, op jou ... jou profile nou en dan gaan jy nou ... en dan maak hulle moeilikheid ... en dis nogal scary, want jy weet nie wie dit is nie en dan moet jy jou pin heeltemal verander.

Navorser: Okay.

Deelnemer: En soveel pins as moontlik – soos, my pins verskil van my Facebook af tot my MXit en my ... soos, ek het, soos, al my verskillende pins; ek skryf dit nie neer nie – ek memoriseer dit, want dit is, soos, my lewe.

Navorser: Okay. Sê vir my op watter sites is jy alles?

Deelnemer: Wel, ek is nie op “to go” nie, want daai gedagte werk nie vir my nie en ... uhm ... ek is op MXit, ek is op Facebook en dit is sover wat ek weet ... en ek het my e-mail-adres.

Navorser: Okay. Oraait. Wat doen jy wanneer jy op hierdie sites is?

Deelnemer: Wel, uhm ... MXit is 'n chat ... jy chat met jou vriende ... jy't 'n profile, en Facebook is net so. MXit en Facebook het alles ... dit kom daarop neer dat alles is nou al ... soos, jy kan chat. Jy kan met jou vriende kommunikeer. Dit is alles kommunikasie, maar

Facebook is nou weer anders, want met Facebook het jy hierdie groot profile, en alles hang van jou profile pic af – jou naam maak nie eintlik saak nie, want meeste mense kyk, soos, die foto en dan kom hulle agter “nee, maar dis daai meisie”, so ... hulle konsentreer so op die foto dat hulle ... jou naam nie eintlik saak maak nie. Soos, as jy nou jou status het, is daar mos daai comment en like, nè, en dan ... soos, sê nou jy’t ‘n status soos “die dag is uitstekend gewees”, nè, en iemand comment nou daarop ... dan ... partykeer het jy soveel mense ... soos, ek het oor die 500 mense op Facebook, so jy onthou nie almal wat jy op Facebook het nie, dan like, soos, drie mense dit en dan gaan kyk jy nou wie is die persone ... want onmiddellik sien jy die naam en dan click jy daarop en dan sien jy, o nee, dis daai ander ou. So dit het alles verband met jou profile en hoe jy is en ... ek weet nie ... dis eintlik ... dis eintlik ... overrated. Want dit is nie ... vir my is Facebook glad nie meer dieselfde nie. Soos, in die begin was dit, soos, jy moet Facebook hê – jy moet dit hê, want, soos, jy kan soos met enigiemand ... net enigiemand invite ... maar dit is scary, want party mense oorsee ... sulke vet omies ... wat jou invite en goed ... dis nogals scary [lag].

Navorser: Hoor hier, maar jy sê nou jy het 500 vriende, omtrent. Ken jy almal van hulle? Waar kom jy aan hulle?

Deelnemer: Wel ... uhm ... my ma, sy’t ook Facebook. Maar ons kom oorspronklik van PE af, nè, en dit is Blouwaterbaai, so daai ... toe ons ... toe ek klein was – ek was mos preprimêr gewees in Engelse skole en soos daai ... daai lewe het ons, soos, kant toe geskuif om Kaap toe te kom. So al die mense wat jy, soos, ontmoet ... soos by kuiers, soos, ek het ... Saterdag het ek, soos ... uhm ... seker, soos, 15 mense ontmoet en dan add hulle almal jou en dan ... soos ... onmiddellik dan click jy maar jy het Facebook en dan invite hulle my ... dit is alles cool. Die mense ... jy ken die mense, maar jy is

nie, soos, so close met die mense soos wat jy nou buddies is met dié wat jou beste vriende is nie. Soos, jou beste vriende sal nou vir jou boodskappies los, maar gewoonlik is dit maar net mense wat jy ken. Maar gewoonlik is dit nie eers mense wat jy ken nie. Daar is, soos, nou die dag ... wat 'n ou my invite het, maar ek het dieselfde van. Dan stuur hy vir my, soos, op my wall nou, soos, ja, maar ons van is bekend en ons is mooi mense en ons praat baie en goed soos dit. Dit is eintlik snaaks as jy eintlik daaraan dink, want dit is, soos ... en, soos, my ma nou. Sy't nou ook Facebook – nou sit sy haar nooiensvan, nou kan ... dit is ... dit is nou interessant van Facebook; nou kan al haar matriekmense wat ook Facebook het, kom daarop. Jy search mense en dit is ... dis flippen lekker, want nou kom jou agter, nee, maar my beste vriendin van preprimêr ... jy vergeet mos van hulle en al hierdie mense bring jou nou op ... en daai gedagtes: hoe gaan dit en al daai ... Jy kan nog chat op Facebook en alles, so dan kom jy weer in verband met daai mense en dit is ... dit is die lekkerste van dit ...

Navorser: Okay, so jy kan half bande hou makliker met Facebook?

Deelnemer: Ja, ja, want jy kan weer in ... uhm ...in kommunikasie kom met hulle, want jy ... ek ... ek ... ek het regtig ... as jy MXit het, kort jy 'n nommer ... op Facebook kan jy net search vir 'n e-mail-adres, name, vanne – jy kan al daai goeters search, en dit is lekker, want dit is oor die wêreld en ... as jy nou dringend iemand op soek is na, dan kry jy dit, soos, sê nou maar ek skryf nou daar “Amanda”, dan is dit, soos, 500 results. En as jy dan nog 'n van het, dan is dit nog makliker, want dan gee hy, soos, almal, soos, Amanda asp ... nuh-nuh, en so, so dit is redelik maklik om ... om ...

Navorser: En dan kan jy weer re-connect met mense waarvan jy al vergeet het?

Deelnemer: Ja, ja.

Navorsers: Okay, wat dink jy van sites soos Facebook en “to go” en al daai goed? Hou jy daarvan; hou jy nie daarvan nie? Wat ... hou jy van gedeeltes of wat?

Deelnemer: Wel ... uhm ... Facebook is overrated, want dit is ... mense maak te veel ophef daarvan, want ... uhm ... ek gaan net op ... ek gaan, soos, een keer ‘n maand op, en dan gaan lees ek net wat die mense te sê het en goed ... maar party mense – hulle gaan te ver met Facebook. Facebook is daar om ... onthou, as jy nou iets daar wil gaan sê, sien almal dit. So, as jy nou gaan sê vir jou status, ja maar ... jy het nou ‘n aaklige dag gehad en jy skel die mense uit en jy vloek en gaan tekere daarop, dan sien almal dit ... en dit is nogal ... dit is nogal ... baie ongeskik, want dan onmiddellik label hulle jou. En dan is dit, soos, jy’t een status wat jou hele ... wat mense kan besluit, maar luister hier, ek wil nie jou vriend nou meer wees nie, of hulle kan weer vir jou sê oooo, jy’s so cool omdat jy nou vloek op Facebook. Dít hou ek nie van nie – as hulle begin ... as hulle begin met ... ja, lelke goed, dan trek ek my onmiddellik uit. Soos “to go” – dit is ... dit is aaklig. Ek hou nie daarvan nie; ek gaan nie op die chatrooms nie. As ek ... ek chat net met my vriende en die mense wat ek waarlik ken. Soos, sê nou ek ontmoet hierdie vreemdeling van my, dan sal ek met hom chat en hom weer beter leer ken, maar sodra hy, soos, persoonlike goeters begin vra, dan trek ek heeltemal uit. Dan ... dan onmiddellik ... dan sluit ek ... sluit ek af, maar verder is dit lekker, want, soos, verder ... soos, as jy nou wil lees wat die mense up to was die naweek ... soos party mense was Presley’s toe, meeste mense was, soos, Klipwerf toe – dit is redelik lekker.

Navorsers: Okay, dan weet jy wat aangaan?

Deelnemer: Ja, soos, as iemand verjaar ook, dan kan jy outomaties onthou, maar ek onthou, maar .. uhm ... daai persoon verjaar vandag. So dan is dit ook so ge-calendar, maar daai request wat hulle vir jou

gee. O my word, ek sweer ek het seker 200 van daai goeters wat ophoop en ophoop en ophoop, maar dit raak te veel – ek kan dit nie hanteer nie, maar, soos, notifications is lekker, want ek hou nie van die requests nie, maar die notifications ... dan tel dit soos alles wat soos ... die stuk wat jy, soos, gemis het. Almal is, soos, “you’ve been tagged in this photo”. Maar ek hou nie van daai nie. [lag] As hulle my tag nie.

Navorser: Hoekom hou jy nie daarvan, die foto’s, nie?

Deelnemer: O hel, nee, maar as dit ... uh ... uh ... party foto’s is, soos, kwaai, maar, soos, party foto’s is ’n bietjie ... [lag] ... soos daai mense wat jy... die memories wat jy nie eintlik wil onthou nie.

Navorser: [lag] Okay. Kan jy van die foto’s – soos, sê nou iemand anders het die foto van jou afgelaai en getag, nè – kan jy dit afhaal as jy nie daarvan hou nie?

Deelnemer: Jy kan die tag remove, maar jy kan nie die foto afhaal nie. Kyk, as jy getag word deur iemand, dan kan al jou vriende sien – die foto van jou. So dis “photos of me”, maar as jy nou die foto’s opsit, dan kan jy nou go ... go as you please ... dan kan jy dit remove of jy kan dit weer oplaai en alles. Maar dit is ’n bietjie moeilik om van die foon af te werk, want dit het mos nie al die requiries en goeters wat jy kan opgaan om dit te doen nie.

Navorser: Nou maar waarmee gaan jy die meeste op: op jou foon of op ’n rekenaar?

Deelnemer: Op my foon, want ons het ... ons internet het my ma geskuif na die werk toe – dis mos belangriker en nou ... nou gaan gewoonlik ... dan gaan ons, soos, dan ry ek, soos, na my ma toe en dan gaan Facebook ek daar, as sy ... as haar ... want my pa’le het hulle eie, soos, besigheid ... so ek gaan, soos, na my pa’le toe en dan Facebook ek maar daar as dit nou belangrik is. As ek foto’s wil kyk of foto’s op wil laai.

Navorser: Okay. Maar andersins is jy op jou foon?

Deelnemer: Andersins is ek op my foon. Dit is net statuses wat jy lees, eintlik.

Navorser: Okay, op die foon?

Deelnemer: Ja.

Navorser: Oraait. Okay. Uhm. Behalwe vir social networking en so, hoe kommunikeer jy met jou vriende andersins as Facebook en MXit?

Deelnemer: Wel, uhm. Ek hou nie van SMS'e nie. Want dit is te ... te clingy. Ek hou nie daarvan nie. As ek met iemand wil praat, dan bel ek hulle ... soos, dit is die enigste kommunikasie en dan ook as ek ... as ek na my vriende toe gaan. Ek het ... ek het nie, soos, tyd vir, soos ... as ek by my vriende is, dan gooi ek my foon eenkant toe – ek het nie ... as my foon lui, dan moet iemand anders dit optel, want ek het nie ... ek het nie daai, soos ... party mense is te erg oor hulle fone; dit is, soos, regtig bietjie mal en dan ... uhm ... soos, party mense, soos, sit in die geselskap en dan MXit hulle. Dan is dit, soos ...

Navorser: Maar gebeur dit baie dat ... dat tieners, of julle pelle, as hulle tussen mense is, op die foon is?

Deelnemer: Facebook, MXit, you name it – hulle sit ... gewoonlik by kuiers is dit nie so nie, maar as die kuier 'n bietjie droog is, dan is dit, soos ... haal maar jou foon uit; begin MXit.

Navorser: [lag] So as jy begin MXit, dan weet jy die kuier is verby?

Deelnemer: Ja. Dan moet jy maar huis toe gaan, hoor. Want dit is, soos, regtig ... dit is erg.

Navorser: Okay. Wat sal jy sê is die manier waarop jy die meeste kommunikeer?

Deelnemer: Praat.

Navorser: Praat. Okay.

Deelnemer: Ja, chat en praat.

Navorser: Okay, sê vir my met jou ouers – as jy tyd saam met jou ouers spandeer, sal jy MXit of Facebook terwyl hulle in jou geselskap is?

Deelnemer: Wel, as ons ... uhm ... as ons TV kyk, dan ... en ons het nie baie ... veel om te sê nie, dan is dit lekker; dan MXit ek partykeer. As ek, soos, TV kyk en ... want ek kan, soos, goed multi-task; ek kan, soos, met jou praat en MXit en alles doen op dieselfde tyd, so ... maar as ons, soos, restaurant toe gaan of tussen 'n familie-gathering ... ek sal nie ... ek sal nie waag om my foon uit te haal nie, want dit is ... dit is disrespekvol. Ek voel dit is baie ... vir my ...ekke ... ekke persoonlik is so. Ek sal nie vir my ma kan, soos, my foon uithaal en sê, luister hier, wag jy nou eers. Ek sal nie ... ek is baie family ... warm gevoel.

Navorser: Okay. Uhm. Wat is vir jou die lekkerste manier om ... te socialize?

Deelnemer: Uhm ... wel, kuier is vir my baie lekker. Soos, om met mense face to face te praat. En dan gewoonlik om mense te leer ken, sal ek op my bed lê en MXit. Want dit is vir my die beste tyd van my dag. Ons maak gewoonlik, soos, 'n chatroom. Ek en my niggie, dan invite sy my op en dan is dit al my beste mense in my lewe en dan maak ons, soos, 'n chatroom en dan praat ons net 'n groot klomp nonsens. En gewoonlik ... dan is dit, soos ... baie van my vriende, soos, is in Drosdy ... baie van hulle is in die koshuis, so dan is dit moeilik om met hulle, soos ... want gewoonlik bly hulle in die naweke en dan kan hulle nie, soos, afkom nie; dan chat ek maar, maar ... soos, maar as hulle my nodig het, dan stuur hulle vir my 'n "please call me" en dan moet ek op MXit gaan. Dan chat ons, soos, baie, maar gewoonlik ... gewoonlik los ek my foon en dan gaan ek net na kuiers toe.

Navorser: Okay. Hoekom dink jy verkies julle MXit en Facebook en sulke goed eerder as om te SMS of te bel?

Deelnemer: Bel vat baie geld, hoor.

Navorser: Okay.

Deelnemer: Maar as ek met my ma praat, dan bel ek my ma. Of ek gaan op Facebook en dan chat ek gou vinnig met my ma, [giggel] maar daar

kom “to go” weer in, want “to go” gee jou daai opportunity om te praat met die mense op Facebook en MXit. Maar ek hou nie van ... daai gedagte werk nie vir my nie. Daar is net iets omtrent “to go” wat ek nie van hou nie.

Navorsers: Okay, verduidelik vir my jou ... uhm ... dag en hoe jy kommunikeer deur die loop van jou dag? Watter mediums gebruik jy, soos voorskool: Gesels jy, SMS jy, MXit jy, Facebook jy? Wat doen jy by die skool; wat doen jy ná skool?

Deelnemer: Wel, ek MXit glad nie by die skool nie; dit is ... dit is ... en ek Facebook ook nie. Partykeer as dit belangrik is, as iemand vir my, soos, sê, luister, gaan kyk, daar is foto's opgelaaai van jou, dan gaan ek op. Dan is dit, soos, dringend [giggel]. Want ek remove dan tags en gaan tekere, want ek het my ma op Facebook, so sy kontroleer alles wat daarop gebeur. As jy die ... my ma is nogal bietjie streng op daai opsig, want sy wil nie 'n kommin kind hê nie [giggel]. Maar verder ... uhm ... as my dag begin by ... ek kom by die skool ... met my ma'le trek ek aan, luister musiek en goed, soos, ek eet nie in die oggende nie, so ons het nie daai ... daai oggend wat almal om die tafel sit en praat nie. Ons het nie dit nie. Ons ... my ma is in 'n bui in die oggende en my pa gaan sy way en dan is ons maar net almal op ons eie way en dan kom ons in die kar en dan luister ons musiek tot by die skool en dan gaan my ma'le werk toe, want my ma'le werk saam en dan kom ek by die skool. Maar ek het nie redelik baie vriende wat ... my vriende wat ek het, is uit my skool uit ... gewoonlik ... soos, ek het my beste vriende, soos, as ek kan sê beste vriende wat ... ek hou nie van om close te raak met mense wat in my skool is nie. Ek sal, soos, vriende hê wat ... wat close is, wat ek mee kuier en goed. Ek raak nie close met hulle nie, want sodra ek daai close het, dan weet ek daar gaan iets gebeur tussen ons. So ek praat, ek is vriendelik met almal – moenie my verkeerd verstaan nie – ek is vriendelik met

almal, maar daar is net sekere mense wat my seermaak, so ek ... ek het 'n baie vibe hierso by die skool, so ekke ... ek is nie baie "matriek 2010" soos die res van die ander nie. En ek is baie ernstig by die skool, so by die huis is ek 'n ander mens, so dan kom ek, soos, by die skool, dan gaan ek my eie way en dan, soos, kommunikeer ek met die mense as hulle nou met my wil praat – dan praat ons en dan ... uhm ... as ek by die huis kom, dan is dit bietjie 'n ding wat, soos, aangaan. Dan kyk ek eers my programme, soos vandag is weer *Gossip Girl*. Soos, dan kyk ek nou weer *Gossip Girl*, want ek kon nie gisteraand nie, want dit was mos Revue. So ... uhm ... dan vang ek nou eers op en terwyl ek dit kyk, dan chat ek nou met my vriende in die koshuis, want dan kan hulle chat, want dan is dit, soos, hulle studiebreek, maar dan MXit hulle hier onderlangs, so, ja, en dan ... dan is dit lekker. Dan gaan ek, soos, in die aand as ek nou lus is om te Facebook, net om te kyk wat daar aangaan, soos een keer in twee weke, dan gaan ek nou daarop en dan kyk ek maar net wat rondloop. En dan ... partykeer is dit boring, hoor, dan's dit regtig .. dit is ... gewoonlik is dit, soos, die mense wat sê ... okay ... dit reën ... en dan sal almal, soos, gelyk sê dit reën. En dit is, soos, regtig ... as jy in 'n hok bly, dan is Facebook die beste ding, want dan kom jy nie uit nie, [lag] maar as jy die res van die lewe het, dan is dit maar boring as almal sê dit reën [lag]. En dis koud ... maar ja.

Navorser: Sou jy sê dat jy ten minste een keer 'n dag op jou foon op enige van die netwerke is?

Deelnemer: Ja! Elke dag.

Navorser: Okay. Oraait. Uhm ... daar was nou nog iets wat ek jou wou vra oor ... o ... sou jy sê dat dit vir jou makliker is om met mense te kommunikeer via een van hierdie netwerke ... uhm ... as ons praat oor hoe om konflik te hanteer, of mense wat lelik is met jou. Is dit vir jou makliker om te text of te ...

Deelnemer: Absoluut.

Navorser: Of is dit makliker om dinge face to face met hulle uit te sorteer?

Deelnemer: Facebook, MXit het sy dae ... dan kom MXit baie in handy, want op MXit kan jy ondebreek – jy kan text ná text ná text skryf. Niemand kan jou onderbreek nie ... verstaan jy? Soos, daai konflik, daai atmosfeer is nog steeds daar, maar jy kan sê wat jy sê. En niemand kan jou aanval nie, maar sodra jy iets face to face sê, dan is dit onmoontlik as daai persoon op sy perdjie is of iets soos dit. En ... en gewoonlik is dit, soos, mense ... ek is, soos, regtig Dr. Phil op MXit, want almal ... almal ... ek weet nie wat is dit met my nie, maar ek is soos aantrekkingskrag ... ek sweer ... as ek instap by 'n plek en iemand is sad, dan moet ek maar vra, want ek het die sagste hart en, soos, almal voel dit aan [giggel]. Dan, op MXit, dan praat die randomste mense met my en dan gee ek maar vir hulle raad en goed, so dit is lekker, maar, soos, as ek mense ontmoet – dit is die lekkerste vir my. As ek, soos, as jy daai text ... daai lang tekste kan skryf en jy kommunikeer net so met die persoon. Dit is nie soos daai awkwardness [lag] wat jy, soos, met mense praat en dan's daar daai stilte nie. Dit is aanhoudend wat jy praat met die persoon en jy hou net jou geselskap aan die go.

Navorser: Dink jy jy gesels makliker met vreemde mense of mense wat jy net ontmoet het via 'n network, of makliker in persoon?

Deelnemer: Dit hang ook af wat jy doen. Soos, as jy by die skool 'n vreemdeling ... dan gaan jy mos so ... soos ... 'n nicer kon ... soos, oor jou ma en jou pa. Maar op MXit is dit lekker, want jy invite die persoon, en dan, soos in, “wat maak jy?” en dan begin jy en daai geselskap bou en bou en bou en dan leer ken jy die persoon ... so intiem sodat jy kan sê wat is jou kleur, jy kan, soos, vra enigiets. As daai ... as ... as die persoon kortaf begin raak, dan weet jy nou is dit tyd om af te gaan, want ek kan dit nie vat as iemand, soos ... hulle het mos daai MXit-taal, so hulle maak daai ... as hy sê okay of

jip. Dan sit jy daar en dink jy “nou wat nou?”, [lag] maar dit is lekker,
maar dit raak ook, soos ... dit is baie lekker om op Mxit te
kommunikeer as ...

Navorser: As in die regte lewe?

Deelnemer: Ja.

Navorser: Okay. Baie dankie.

Deelnemer: Dis reg.