

**THE IMPACT OF POSTMODERNISM ON THE SOCIAL
FUNCTIONING OF YOUNG ADULTS**

by

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Abstract

The impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults

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Postmodernism affects views and lifestyles, which in turn determine how an individual fulfils his roles, meets his needs, and grows and adjusts in his different systems. The nature of this impact on the social functioning of young adults from an ecological systems perspective is relevant for the social work profession and to social work practitioners working with young adults. Discovering more about this impact therefore formed the rationale for this study.

In this study, the mixed methods research approach was utilised seeing that it comprises both a qualitative and a quantitative component which, when mixed, provided a comprehensive analysis of the research problem.

Young adults' experiences and views of postmodern society could be considered as phenomena in the 'real world' which necessitated a qualitative approach to this study. In order to claim scientific accuracy, the impact had to be quantified. This implied measurement within a quantitative approach in order to produce precise and generalisable statistical findings.

The researcher started the empirical study with the qualitative approach. In this manner, rich data could be obtained to assist in the compilation of suitable questions to construct a questionnaire. Sequential timing, within the exploratory mixed methods design, with the qualitative data collected and analysed first, followed by the

quantitative data, therefore allowed for the one dataset to build upon the other. Mixing the datasets by means of an exploratory mixed methods research design provided a better understanding of the problem than if either dataset had been used alone. Exploratory factor analysis was used to reduce the data and promote the measurement of the impact of postmodernism.

From the conclusions it is apparent that global issues observed in the macrosystem affect all the ecological systems and impact the social functioning of the young adult. The reciprocal impact of people and environmental systems on the social functioning of young adults within a postmodern paradigm was evident in this research.

Personal experiences were highly valued, as well as a tendency towards 'own authority'. Postmodernism affects views and lifestyles, which in turn affects the young adult's performance of roles and his interactions within all his different social systems. A strong attachment to family and home, as well as the importance of roles as sons/daughters were found. It was found that young adults focus on 'the self' and on own needs and satisfactions, with contrasting views on the significance of formal structures, image and consumerism, (electronic) communication and interaction, diversity and personal future. Views regarding an uncertain future and personal roles evolve and change constantly, depending on social and economic factors. An increase in a need for spirituality in postmodern times was found.

The contemporary young adult between the ages of 18 and 25 years explores and experiments in terms of identity and lifestyle. Thinking, questioning, feeling and a strong focus on 'self' characterise this young adult. Views and values seem to be person-specific and based on emotions and experiences.

Keywords:

- Postmodernism
- Young adult
- Social functioning
- Roles
- Interaction
- Ecological systems perspective
- Formal structures
- Image
- Consumerism
- Electronic communication

Opsomming

Die impak van postmodernisme op die maatskaplike funksionering van jong volwassenes

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Postmodernisme beïnvloed sienings en lewensstyle, wat die wyse waarop die individu sy rolle vervul, behoeftes aanspreek, groei en aanpas binne sy verskillende sisteme, bepaal. Die aard van hierdie impak op die maatskaplike funksionering van die jong volwassene binne 'n ekologiese-sisteemperspektief is relevant vir die maatskaplike-werkprofessie en vir maatskaplikewerkpraktisyns betrokke by dienslewering aan jong volwassenes. Die verkenning van hierdie impak het die rasionaal van die studie gevorm.

Die gemengde-metode navorsingsbenadering is tydens hierdie studie benut, aangesien dit beide 'n kwalitatiewe en kwantitatiewe komponent omvat, wat wanneer dit gemeng word, 'n uitgebreide analise van die navorsingsprobleem verskaf.

Die ervarings en menings van jong volwassenes ten opsigte van die postmoderne samelewing kan beskou word as fenomene in die 'werklike wêreld', wat 'n kwalitatiewe benadering tot die studie genoodsaak het. Om wetenskaplike akkuraatheid te verseker moes die impak egter gekwantifiseer word. Dit impliseer meting binne 'n kwantitatiewe benadering om presiese en veralgemeenbare statistiese bevindinge te produseer.

Die navorser het die studie geïnisieer deur gebruik te maak van die kwalitatiewe benadering. Op hierdie wyse kon ryk data verkry word vir die samestelling van toepaslike vrae om 'n vraelys daar te stel. Opeenvolgende tydsberekening, binne die eksplorerende gemengde-metode navorsingsontwerp, met kwalitatiewe data eerste ingesamel en geanaliseer en dan die kwantitatiewe data, het toegelaat dat een stel data op die ander gebou kon word. Die meng van twee stelle data deur middel van 'n eksplorerende gemengde-metode navorsingsontwerp het 'n verbeterde begrip van die probleem verskaf as wat die benutting van een datastel alleen sou verskaf het. Eksplorerende faktoranalise is benut om data te reduseer en om die meting van die impak van postmodernisme te bevorder.

Vanuit die gevolgtrekkings is dit duidelik dat globale aangeleenthede wat binne die makrosisteem waargeneem word alle ekologiese sisteme beïnvloed en 'n impak op die jong volwassene se maatskaplike funksionering uitoefen. Die wederkerige impak van mense en omgewingssisteme op die maatskaplike funksionering van jong volwassenes binne 'n postmoderne paradigma blyk duidelik uit hierdie navorsing.

Persoonlike ervaring, sowel as 'n geneigdheid tot 'eie gesag' is hoog geag. Postmodernisme beïnvloed menings en lewensstyle, wat weer die jong volwassene se rolvervulling en interaksies binne sy verskillende maatskaplike sisteme beïnvloed. 'n Sterk gehegtheid aan familie en die ouerhuis, sowel as die belangrikheid van rolle as seuns/dogters is bevind. Dit is bevind dat jong volwassenes op 'die self' en op eie behoeftes en selfbevrediging fokus, met teenstrydige menings oor die betekenisvolheid van formele strukture, persoonlike beeld en verbruikersdruk, (elektroniese) kommunikasie en interaksie, diversiteit en persoonlike toekoms. Menings ten opsigte van 'n onsekere toekoms en persoonlike rolle ontwikkel en verander voortdurend, afhangend van maatskaplike en ekonomiese faktore. 'n Toename in 'n behoefte aan spiritualiteit in postmoderne tye is bevind.

Die kontemporêre jong volwassene tussen 18 en 25 jaar eksplorieer en eksperimenteer in terme van identiteit en lewensstyl. Om na te dink, te bevraagteken,

te voel, sowel as 'n sterk fokus op 'die self' karakteriseer die jong volwassene. Dit blyk dat menings en waardes persoon-spesifiek is en gebaseer is op emosies en ervarings.

Sleutelwoorde:

- Postmodernisme
- Jong volwassene
- Maatskaplike funksionering
- Rolle
- Interaksie
- Ekologiese-sisteemperspektief
- Formele strukture
- Persoonlike beeld
- Verbruikersdruk
- Elektroniese kommunikasie

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CHAPTER 1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Giddens (1999:1) quotes a concern expressed almost a thousand years ago: “The world is in a rush, and is getting closer to its end’ – thus spoke one Archbishop Wulfstan, in a sermon given in York, in the year 1014. It is easy to imagine the same sentiments being expressed today.” Giddens muses whether the hopes and anxieties of each period merely repeat and mimic those of previous eras. He answers his own question by saying that the world in which we live *is* different, seeing that we are living in and through a period of major historical transition (Giddens, 1999:1).

According to Craig (1998:587), ‘postmodernism’ can be regarded as a historical term that succeeds modernity. The definition of postmodernity will therefore differ depending on what is meant by ‘modern’. He points out that in the wider sense of ‘modernity’, the term ‘postmodernism’ takes on its full meaning and signals a revisionary change in the system of values and practices that were generally classified in European life (Craig, 1998:587). Rodrigues and Garratt (2004:173) suggest that modernism has not ‘ended’ so much as become imbedded in the ongoing programme of modernity, which is in itself a project without an end. Buschman and Brosio (2006:408) express a similar opinion when they explain that they regard postmodernist thinking as an extension of modernist thinking, rather than ‘post’ as ‘after’ or something entirely new. Beyer, Du Preez and Eskell-Blokland (2007:38) refer to an emergence *beyond* modernism, both in contrast to and inclusive of modernism. “It arose in the twentieth century after the two world wars and the long Cold War, amidst a climate of disillusionment with the restrictions of the scientific claims of positivistic social scientists” (Beyer et al., 2007:38). These authors state that postmodernism is regarded as a way of thinking and accepts not only facts, but also personal experiences and interpretations as real knowledge (Beyer et al., 2007:38).

The modern world is in a permanent 'fast forward' state. The idea of modernity, of living in the 'modern age', began in Europe during the late sixteenth century. Modernity implied a contrast with other 'ages' that were not modern. Europeans saw history as divided into three epochs: ancient, medieval and modern. "The Greeks and Romans did not know they were 'ancient'. Medieval knights did not realise they were in the 'middle' of history. But we, like our sixteenth-century ancestors, 'know' we are modern" (Smith, 1999:6, 7). Three powerful forces that are characteristic of the modern age can be identified: the modern national state, modern science and capitalism. However, at the heart of modernity is a struggle for 'betterment': being better, doing better, getting better. This struggle leads to competition between individuals, families, cities, empires, governments and companies (Smith, 1999:7). The question then arises whether postmodernism is the next epoch. Puttergill (2007) claims that the distinction between modernism and postmodernism is vague. He believes that postmodernism could perhaps be described as a moment within modernism, as some of the characteristics of postmodernism could already be discerned in modernism.

Smith (1999:9) emphasises that talk about postmodernity does not mean that modernity has ended. He argues that the idea of postmodernity is used by intellectuals who are trying to cope with the impact of four changes in the 'big picture' of modernity during the last three decades. "These four changes – the shrinking of the national state, the spiralling of risk, the globalisation of capital and the collapse of European imperialism – add up to a large-scale restructuring of the architecture of modernity" (Smith, 1999:10). Smith includes the last three decades in his argument. With regard to the origins of postmodernism, Truitt and Iachkina (2005:50) suggest that its roots go back at least forty years. These time frames are essentially similar. Linares (2001:403) presents a different view in that he argues that the stage at which postmodernism took over from modernism is uncertain and that the process proved to be laborious in that it went on throughout the twentieth century.

The abovementioned authors discuss a move or shift from modernism to postmodernism. Beyer et al. (2007:38) regard this shift as a *paradigm shift*. They regard a paradigm as "a system by which one understands the world" (Beyer et al., 2007:38).

Above, a short history of postmodernism was provided. It is also essential to study the nature of postmodernism in order to obtain a clear understanding of its impact on the individual's social functioning and more specifically the social functioning of young adults. Rosenau (1992:167-169) claims that postmodernism pleases some, frightens others, but leaves few untouched. It is therefore an ambiguous bequest of the Humanities to the social sciences. She describes postmodern social science as being in its infancy, with a vague shape and character; its contribution is still shadowy and fragmented. Postmodernism does, however, shake us out of our preconceptions and our 'normal' way of doing social science.

The concept 'postmodern' tends to be vague and elusive. Chandler's (in Berzonsky, 2005:126) description seems to be apt:

At its mercurial best, the term post-modernity is self-consciously intended, even by those who wear it by choice, to be one of those loose, baggy, portmanteau, sort of words that is imagined to look its best only when fully stretched to cover whatever unconventional ideas one already owns.

Berzonsky (2005:126) sets out Kvale's (1992) three different meanings of postmodern: "a cultural movement expressed via art, architectural, and literary forms; ...an era or age characterized by rapid technological innovations, consumerism...; an epistemological stance or type of thinking that rejects the notion of an objective given, directly observable reality."

According to Jacquard (1987) and Vattimo (1988), as cited in Rosenau (1992:5, 6), "[p]ostmodernists criticise all that modernity has generated and produced: the accumulated experience of Western civilisations, industrialisation, urbanization, advanced technology, the nation state, life in the 'fast lane'". They also challenge "modern priorities: career, office, individual responsibility, bureaucracy, liberal democracy, tolerance, humanism, egalitarianism, detached experiment, evaluative criteria, neutral procedures, impersonal rules, and rationality." Craig (1998:588) sees the challenges posed by postmodernism as follows:

Postmodernism specifically challenges the European culture that took its direction from the Renaissance, developed through the seventeenth century and the Enlightenment, and remains a common discourse for most citizens of Western democratic societies. ...postmodernism challenges the entire culture of realism, representation, humanism and empiricism. Postmodern critique thus goes to the very foundation of personal, social and institutional definition. Its challenges to knowledge and institutions are felt particularly in universities.

Rosenau (1992:15) delineates two broad, general orientations of postmodernism within the social sciences: sceptical postmodernism and affirmative postmodernism. She describes the sceptics, inspired by the Continental European philosophers (especially Heidegger and Nietzsche) as dark, filled with despair, speaking of “the immediacy of death, the demise of the subject, the end of the author and the impossibility of truth.” These sceptical postmodernists have a blasé attitude, having ‘seen it all’ and concluding that nothing new is possible. Overpopulation, genocide, atomic destruction, the apocalypse, environmental destruction and the death of the universe lies ahead. The affirmative postmodernists have a more confident and positive view of the postmodern age. They are either open to positive political action or they are content with the recognition of visionary personal projects that range from New Age religion to New Wave lifestyles and include a whole range of postmodern social movements (Rosenau, 1992:15, 16). “Most affirmatives seek a philosophical and ontological intellectual practice that is nondogmatic, tentative, and nonideological” (Rosenau, 1992:16). She continues by stating that within both affirmative and sceptical postmodernism, there is a range of extreme to moderate versions. These two dimensions crosscut one another as they overlap and do not constitute the neat ‘mutually exclusive, jointly exhaustive’ groupings that are desired by modern social science (Rosenau, 1992:16).

According to Berzonsky (2005:126), Rattansi and Phoenix (1997) pointed out that postmodernity is characterised by an ever-accelerating rate of social, economic and technological change, instant media access, and global access to goods, people and ideas. One also finds a continual demand for the consumption of dispensable products and goods that quickly become outdated, and scepticism about the relevance of most

social institutions and value systems as regards personal lives (Rattansi & Phoenix, 1997 in Berzonsky, 2005:126).

Smith (1999:156) states that in Bauman's views on postmodernity, there has been a radical shift away from production to consumption as a central integrating activity. Within modernity, *work* supplied identity, social bonds and social functioning – you were what you *did for a living*. By contrast, in a postmodern habitat, you *are* what you *buy*. “Advertisers train you to think this way from the moment you can blink at a television screen. Consumers are seduced into their purchasing role... It is the aesthetics of *consumption* that now rules where the work ethic once ruled” (Smith, 1999:157). In this environment, the poor are useless, out of place and inconvenient, because they do not conform to the way of life that is valued in the postmodern habitat (Bauman in Smith, 1999:157).

There seems to be no consensus on the nature of postmodernity. This is illustrated by Berzonsky (2005:127), who focuses on the concept of ‘knowing’ in his discussion of postmodernity: “Knowing is considered to be a constructive process of subjectively creating meaning, and those constructions always take place within a particular socioculturally based context of implicit assumptions, values, theoretical constructs, attitudes, and signs and symbols.” Berzonsky (2005:128) adds that observations and perceptions are shaped by the historical and cultural settings within which individuals live. Cooper and Webb (1999:119) express a similar view. They postulate that:

...‘postmodernism’, in which the dissolution of traditional structures of culture, tradition and authority lead to a set of circumstances in which no single principle, person or institution is capable of exercising overall control, or decisive influence, upon a given state of affairs. The increase in the diversity of forces and influences which bear upon any situation... is both a source and an outcome of the overall trend...

Some authors write about postmodernism with great enthusiasm. Inglehart (2000) and Mason (2001) could be described as affirmative supporters of the postmodern lifestyle. In summary, Inglehart (2000:215) holds that a growing body of evidence indicates that deep-

rooted changes in people's world views are taking place. These changes seem to be restructuring economic, political, and social life in societies around the world. A wide range of new social movements, ranging from environmentalist movements to women's movements, and to new norms concerning cultural diversity and growing acceptance of alternative lifestyles, has resulted from this change in world views (Inglehart, 2000:215, 224).

Mason (2001:51) emphasises the notion of a plurality of voices within late modern society, arguing that cultural pluralism makes space for those voices previously silenced by the marginalisation and denial of their identities, or by assimilation and the disintegration of their identities. These voices include those of ethnic groups who are not white or European, of women, of religious groups previously excluded by their minority status and of the rural and urban poor. Schweitzer (2004:4) almost echoes Mason's views when he describes postmodern life as follows: "Postmodernity is a time of many stories and also of many different voices – the voices of different age groups, of women and men, of different ethnicities, to only mention a few of the many possible perspectives."

Cultural pluralism, diversity and difference offer the opportunity to look at people's own experiences, values, practices and way of life from different perspectives. This may lead to greater tolerance, enhanced education, less narrow-mindedness, being more tentative about assumptions, being more respectful of others and also being humbler (Mason, 2001:51).

Rosenau (1992:11) states that postmodernism's appeal and magic can be found in its broadness, variety, open-endedness and lack of specific definition. These characteristics appeal to the affluent, the desperate and the disillusioned. She also sees postmodernism as "the luxury of a generation for whom scarcity seems remote"; who are "preoccupied with liberty rather than necessity" and with "the individual rather than the collective." She links this view with the opinion that postmodernism has received little attention in Eastern Europe, China or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Rosenau (1992:11) asks the following question: "Does this mean that post-modernism flourishes only when people

become accustomed to modernity and take it for granted?” Inglehart (2000:227) supplies other interpretations when he suggests that democratic institutions give rise to self-expression values, therefore, democracy makes people healthy, happy, tolerant and trusting and instils postmaterialistic values. Another interpretation provided by this author is that the processes of modernisation and postmodernisation gradually give rise to social and cultural changes that make democratic institutions progressively more likely to survive and flourish (Inglehart, 2000:227).

At this point, the postmodern individual needs to be considered. Rosenau (1992:53) describes the postmodern individual as the sceptic’s alternative to the modern subject. She describes the postmodern individual at length. Her argument is epitomised by the following summarising remarks (Rosenau, 1992:53, 54):

The post-modern individual is relaxed and flexible, orientated toward feelings and emotions, interiorization, and holding a ‘be yourself’ attitude. S/he is an active human being constituting his/her own social reality, pursuing a personal quest for meaning but making no truth claims for what results. S/he looks for fantasy, humor, the culture of desire, and immediate gratification. Preferring the temporary over the permanent, s/he is contented with a ‘live and let live’ (in the present) attitude... Post-modern individuals are concerned with their own lives, their particular personal satisfaction, and self-promotion. Less concerned with old loyalties and modern affiliations such as marriage, family, church, and nation, they are more orientated toward their own needs.

The postmodern individual is described as a ‘floating’ individual, without distinct reference points or parameters. He¹ is characterised by the absence of a strong singular identity, by fragmentation and a lack of self-awareness. The postmodern individual favours the unrehearsed, rather than the organised (Rosenau, 1992:54). Pearse (2005:9, 10) describes the attributes of postmodern people in similar terms, adding that postmodern conditions have made identity unclear. He argues that the problem of rootlessness has been compounded by a postmodern ideology. He posits that the notion of ‘personhood’

¹ For the sake of brevity, the masculine pronoun is used throughout as the generic pronoun and should be read as including female individuals. No gender discrimination is intended.

can no longer be taken for granted. Pearse expresses his concern regarding the postmodern individual as follows: "...the rootlessness of individuals left adrift in an anonymous pea-soup of humanity has become apparent" (Pearse, 2005:9). Botha (2007) confirms that rootlessness is indeed a postmodern phenomenon, suggesting that individuals may feel rootless because they believe that they do not have anything to hold on to. Much of their rootlessness is grounded in a lack of spirituality and a lack of certainty about religion.

In sketching the postmodernist individual, Rosenau (1992:55, 56) describes postmodernism's anti-humanism as follows: "S/he has little affection for a humanist stance, for any belief in the idea of progress, for any need to contribute to society. The post-modern individual repudiates the responsibility imposed by humanism that each modern subject carries on his/her shoulders. S/he adopts a post-modern anti-causal point of view because s/he has no desire to assume responsibility or insist on his/her role as agent." Rosenau places the postmodern individual's lack of desire to assume responsibility within the context of a political landscape which includes world wars, environmental disasters, the rise of religious fundamentalism, world-wide poverty and famine. She states that in the absence of cause and effect, a postmodern individual cannot be held personally accountable because these things 'just happen' (Rosenau, 1992:56). Farrell (1994:253) affirms the existence of such a lack of responsibility and of the demise of reason when he makes the following statement:

One result of the postmodern turn will be a scepticism about the virtue of rational reflection on our forms of life, in a manner that might be thought to have practical effects, since reason is either theological and metaphysical or the artefact of practices of power.

Spanish philosopher Marina (2000), as quoted by Linares (2001:410), describes the postmodern disposition with its:

...attractive air of flippancy, of play, of lack of commitment, its taste for incoherence which all of us find rather cold. There is a sense of provisionality, indeterminacy and pleasant superficiality which

facilitates the swift game of encounters or the opposite, of ships passing in the night.

The link between postmodernity, identity and moral ambiguity often leads to a focus on *youth*. For the purposes of this study, the postmodern individual or the postmodern disposition is seen as typifying and characteristic of young adults. Young adults who live in the new millennium have been born into and brought up in a postmodern paradigm, in a world which Giddens (1999:50) has described as an out of our control, 'runaway world'.

According to Taylor (1991), as cited in Mason (2001:50), a link exists between a deeply founded identity and a strongly developed sense of moral responsibility. He also stresses the necessity of commitment to significant others. Mason (2001:50) argues that an ethics of integrity provides the necessary underpinning needed for the development of moral responsibility. He links identity, moral ambiguity and youth as follows:

The excessively strong sense of individualism and the consequent withdrawal from commitment, the common acceptance of an instrumental approach to reason, the sense of life given identity, value and status in terms essentially of the accumulation of consumer products, and the pervasive devaluation of the worth of any deeper source of meaning, are all moral consequences of late modernity that particularly influence young people, who are still developing their sense of identity.

According to Botha (2007), meta-narratives (the grand stories) affect how we see ourselves. That grand story has changed; and this has an impact on social functioning. The way in which young adults carry themselves within society is radically different from the way in which people did this in the past. This leads to a completely different way of looking at the self and to a very different sense of identity.

In discussing Bauman's (2000) views on postmodernity, Gane (2001:270) talks about "...life organized around consumption... without norms insofar as it is guided by 'seduction', ever rising desires and volatile wishes." Continuing his reflection on Baumann's argument, Gane suggests that postmodern life can be compared to life in the

shopping mall, where “we are now individualized consumers ‘free’ to ‘shop around’ in the supermarket of identities” (Gane, 2001:270). Bauman (1997:180, 183) discusses the weakness of the human individual in *Postmodernity and its Discontents*. He refers to this ‘individual’ as “devoted to the art of consumer self-indulgence; ...the dread of experiencing less and not as strongly as others perhaps do; ...the postmodern strategy of peak-experience.”

Farrell (1994:245) discusses the ‘character of postmodern thought’ and relates this to “the character of a manufactured image.” This manufactured image is brought about by the experience of living in a world in which television, advertising, and media manipulation seem to give reality the character of this manufactured image. Farrell claims that the self has lost its former depth and has become “a shallow artefact of cultural production” (Farrell, 1994:245). Regarding the postmodern individual, Buschman and Brosio (2006:410) posit that the electronic media and related phenomena have caused the current ‘shrivelled attention span’ and ‘present-tense emphasis’.

As has already been discussed above, the concept of postmodernism is broad, vague and elusive. It challenges the traditional characteristics and values of Western civilisations. Changes in worldviews are influencing economic, political and social life. As Mason (2001:51) has stated, cultural pluralism, diversity and difference offer the opportunity to look at people’s own experiences, values, practices and ways of life from different viewpoints. There is an emphasis on the individual’s personal experiences and needs, enhanced by an ever-accelerating rate of social and technological change, as well as global access to commodities, ideas and people. A lack of responsibility and commitment, as well as a lack of personal accountability are ascribed to a strong sense of individualism, which particularly influences young people who are still developing their own sense of identity. Many young individuals value consumerism, in terms of both commodities and sensations, and they are focused on the self much more than on relationship(s).

In this study it is assumed that the postmodern lifestyle described above has an impact on youths and young adults in their different systems and their social functioning within these

systems. Hepworth, Rooney, Dewberry Rooney, Strom-Gottfried and Larsen (2006:16) argue that the ecological systems model provides a 'person-in-environment' perspective which recognises the impact of environmental factors on human functioning. This ecological systems model will be used in this study to explore the impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults. Two concepts of this ecological theory that are relevant to social workers are *habitat* and *niche*. A *habitat* consists of a person's physical and social setting within a cultural context. People's *niche* refers to the status accorded to or roles occupied by members of a society, which are necessary for a stable sense of identity. Individuals are engaged in constant transactions with other human beings and with other systems in their environment. The essence of ecological systems theory is the reciprocal impact of people and environmental systems. Ryke (2004:23, 24) describes a 'social niche' as the result of the transactional processes between people and their environment. She emphasises that a person's social niche includes the contribution that the organism (in the case of this study that organism is the young adult) makes within a particular ecological interaction and the meaning that he attaches to his place and purpose. A specific habitat provides several possible niches. The following could be distinguished as social niches: living arrangements, work, education, recreation and social relationships (Sullivan, 1997 in Ryke, 2004:25).

Germain and Gitterman, as cited in DuBois and Miley (2011:60), are supporters of the idea that people are active participants in influencing the world around them. People are also products of their environment. Gray and Lovat (2006:201) are of the opinion that systems theory provides better explanations for some types of human interaction than many other social and behavioural science theories. Zastrow (2013:100) points out that social work is increasingly using an ecological perspective in assessing human behaviour. This perspective involves considering the fit of individuals and their environments, which is the ecology of individuals in their 'life space'. This life space includes all the components of the social and physical environment which has an impact on them. This effect on human beings is described by Greif (in Potgieter, 1998:55) as an internal effect on people's feelings, thinking, behaviour and physical condition. This effect also reverberates through

the family and the groups to which the person belongs, and eventually reaches the community.

Hepworth et al.'s (2006:17) reference to roles, when they comment on the notion of a person's *niche*, relates to a person's social functioning, because, according to a social work perspective, a person's social functioning relates to him fulfilling his role(s) in society, to his role in the direct environment, and his role in relation to himself (DuBois & Miley, 2011:63). Potgieter (1998:27) discusses Hepworth and Larsen's (1993) views on social functioning and role fulfilment as follows:

Social functioning becomes visible in the way in which we fulfil our roles, as well as the manner in which we succeed in satisfying our own basic needs and those of people who are dependent upon us. The ability to contribute towards the maintenance of society as productive members, also gives an indication of our relatively successful functioning as a system.

DuBois and Miley (2011:63) essentially propose the same argument when they claim that social functioning incorporates striving toward a lifestyle that meets basic needs, establishing positive relationships, and emphasising personal growth and adjustment. The *New Dictionary of Social Work* (1995:58) emphasises roles and interaction in its definition of 'social functioning'. The following definition is provided: social functioning is an "(i)ndividual's **role** performance in its entirety at all levels of existence in **interaction** with other individuals, families, groups, communities and situations." In this study, the researcher uses this definition as a frame of reference, with particular emphasis on roles and interaction as indicators of social functioning.

Stean (in Davis, 1986:542) states that the term 'role' carries considerable meaning in social work, because it implies a means of individual expression, as well as a dimension of social behaviour. A role refers to the characteristic behaviours enacted by people who occupy certain social positions. According to Lindzey (in Davis, 1986:544), a role is "a patterned sequence of learned actions or deeds performed by a person in an interaction situation." Davis (1986:545) points out that since roles are enacted in interaction with

another, each actor has role expectations of his own role and has reciprocal role expectations of the other actors. She links roles and reciprocal interactions with the development and internalisation of a social identity. Davis, discussing Perlman's (1968) role theory, argues that society provides the basic script for behaviour, but that it is in the ongoing transactions between people that these scripts are acted out and that role behaviours are fine-tuned. Role prescriptions facilitate the daily interactions between people.

Regarding the other indicator of social functioning, namely interaction, Potgieter (1998:57) states every individual is unique and has his own characteristics and own ways of interacting. Thackeray, Farley and Skidmore (1994:13) comment that social workers are interested in the behaviour of people, in particular in their interactional patterns. This requires a holistic view of people and environments, which can only be fully understood in the context of their relationship to each other. This relationship is characterised by "continuous reciprocal transactions" (interactions) "in which people and environments influence, shape, and sometimes change each other." In transactional relationships, both entities are changed with consequences for both (Germain, 1991:16). To understand how an individual interacts, the systems within the environment with which he commonly (trans)acts must be considered. According to Hepworth et al. (2006:195), these systems include the individual's family or extended family; a social network (friends, neighbours, co-workers, club members, cultural groups); public institutions (educational, recreational, employment); personal service providers (doctors, dentists, hairdressers, bartenders, auto mechanics, landlords, bankers); and a religious or spiritual belief system. In his person-in-environment conceptualisation, Zastrow (2013:25) portrays these different systems in a similar way. He distinguishes between the family system, a social services system, the political system, the employment system, religious system, the goods and services system and the educational system. The focus of social work is the relationship between the individual and the systems which the individual interacts with.

When describing the goal of social work in 1964, Skidmore and Thackeray referred to the importance of both roles and interaction in terms of optimal social functioning. They

commented as follows: “The patterns, directions, quality and outcomes of man’s social relationships (social interaction) in the performance of his various roles (social functioning) become the professional concern of social work” (Skidmore & Thackeray, 1964:7). Decades later, several authors still hold that these two indicators, namely role performance and the mutual interaction between the individual and his environment, are the aspects of social functioning that are the fundamental concerns of social work (Thackeray et al., 1994:34; DuBois & Miley, 2011:63; *New Dictionary of Social Work*, 1995:58; Potgieter, 1998:27).

Potgieter (1998:56) refers to this mutual interaction between the individual and environment when he states that ‘inputs or inflows’ will ultimately sustain or change a system. Inputs include material resources, communication, traumatic events or social pressures. For the purposes of the current study, the researcher sees postmodernism as an inflow which can be analysed and utilised. Potgieter (1998:57) acknowledges the ideas of Goldstein (1974), who argues that inflow from larger systems can occur in the form of energy, communication, rules, norms, values and instructions that may be easy to respond to when they are compatible with the system’s own values and norms. However, when the content is too diverse or different from, or indeed incongruent with the smaller system (in this case the young adult), the inflow from the environment will create stress, conflict and deviance. Postmodernism has an impact on people’s views and lifestyles, which in turn determine how an individual fulfils his roles and how he interacts in and with his environment, meets his needs, grows and adjusts in the different systems in which he has to function.

Monette, Sullivan and DeJong (2002:6) are of the opinion that social research can provide much to an understanding of the behaviour of individuals and the social environment in which they function. They claim that knowledge of factors that influence behaviour can provide practitioners with insight into how to shape effective intervention strategies. A wide range of behavioural research is only indirectly linked to practice, but it can and does inform intervention.

The researcher's rationale for undertaking this study was to explore and to inform. The exact nature of the effect(s) of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults is relevant and topical. A contribution to an improved understanding of the impact of postmodernism on young adults' social functioning could provide knowledge about and insight into the often-debated postmodern paradigm, as well as into a life stage often described as 'troubled' and 'at-risk'. This rationale for this study was in line with Dominelli's (2005:226) suggestion that research is supposed to highlight issues, explore problems, raise additional questions and enhance critical reflection. The researcher believes that the study meets these requirements.

As has already been mentioned, postmodernism affects views and lifestyles, which in turn determine how an individual fulfils his roles, meets his needs and grows and adjusts in his different systems. The nature of this impact on the social functioning of young adults from an ecological systems perspective is relevant for the social work profession and to social work practitioners working with young adults. Discovering more about this impact was therefore a central objective and this formed the rationale for this study.

According to Glesne (2006:23), we tap into our subjectivity and passion to find research topics appropriate to our interest. The topic should, however, not be so personal that it is of little interest to anyone else, or be in an area where the researcher may be sidetracked or biased by emotional conflict. A passion to understand some phenomenon can motivate research, but over-involvement in a very personal issue may undermine the research. In this case, the researcher's interest was not related to any over-involvement with the issue. She takes a professional interest in and is concerned about contemporary young adults. Her interest was prompted by her work environment, which is a tertiary academic environment where most of the students are in their young adult life stage. As an educator, the researcher has observed these young adults in interaction with their environment and she very often speculated about the nature of their social functioning in a postmodern context. This social functioning is relevant to the field of social work.

1.2 PROBLEM FORMULATION

Commenting on the future of postmodernism, Pearse (2005:10) argues that we cannot go back: “We can no more recreate pre-modern conditions, and with it pre-modern unreflectiveness about selfhood/personhood, than we can turn back time itself.” More than a decade earlier, Rosenau (1992:12) also postulated that post-modernism was here to stay.

Rather than disappearing, post-modernism has become synonymous with enquiry itself in many areas of humanities, so much so that its nomenclature need not be made explicit. Literary criticism at many universities, for example, implies a post-modern agenda, assuming its terminology and its intellectual orientation without question. Conceptual approaches, including post-positivism, neo-structuralism, and post-Marxism, overlap with post-modernism substantially and monopolize an enormous amount of intellectual energy.

Rosenau (1992:182-184) contends that, even though postmodernism has not compensated for the weaknesses of structuralism, realism, systems analysis or any other major conventional paradigms, it would be an error to dismiss the impact of postmodernism on the social sciences; indeed, it might just possibly expand horizons in the social sciences.

There are, however, some who criticise a postmodern way of life. So, for example, Lindholm (2001:750-752) claims that postmodernists “assume, without question, that we should not judge others or impose domination, distinction and hierarchy”, seeing that “[s]uch judgements and impositions ... would immorally limit the powers of others who have agendas equally as valid as our own.” He criticises the postmodern request for the suspension of all boundaries (including the boundary between self and other), and the eradication of all judgements. He contests open and unlimited choice in a universe where all things are ‘equally alike and equally different’. Lindholm (2001:753, 754) argues that postmodernism stands on unsound logical ground. In his critique he states the following (Lindholm, 2001:755):

...[T]he high-sounding goals of tolerance, reciprocity, freedom, pluralism, creativity, equality, and self-expansion pursued by postmodernists are in fact the standard goals of Western liberal society itself, and are not alternatives at all. Secondly, these goals are without substantive content. Rather, they are grounded in a faith that has as its sole motivating credo the rejection of restraint and authority of all sorts.

Lindholm (2001:757) quotes Durkheim (1951), who observed that the more the individual has, the more he wants, since satisfactions received only stimulate instead of filling needs. Lindholm (2001:757) postulates that the relentless expansion of desires becomes the highest goal; craving replaces ethics, since individuals find their value and identity through appetite and consumption. Personal desire, therefore, becomes the sole incentive for action. Lindholm (2001:757) also quotes one of Durkheim's arguments that 'our age is not the age of liberation', but the age of the absence of goals and limits. A moral base is lacking. There is no faith in reason and no limits are imposed by traditional social relationships. Legg and Stagaki (2002:385) also refer to the incoherence of postmodernism when they point out that "it is not so much a philosophy as a crisis in philosophy."

The researcher has found much support for postmodernism, as well as criticism of postmodernism. Some authors make contradictory statements, while others are ambivalent about the nature and place of postmodernism as a paradigm for our times. These sentiments are illustrated by Lopez and Potter (2006:3), who comment:

It is the best of times. It is the worst of times. It is a time for the celebration of diversity. It is a time of fear of the Other who is different. It is a time of technological marvel and a time of fear and distrust of science. It is a time of unprecedented affluence and a time of the direst of poverty. It is a time of nostalgia for the old and enthusiasm for the new. It is a time of optimism and hope for humanity's possibilities of freedom and happiness and yet grim pessimism and fear about our future.

Smith (1999:213) paints a gloomy picture of the demise of modernity when he states: "...we postmodernists are now sadder and wiser spectators, observing modernity as, like

an ocean liner, lights blazing and band playing, it passes by and slips away into the distance, leaving mess and turbulence in its wake.”

Tomlinson (1997:243) asks where values come from. In his reply to this question, he emphasises that values come from lived human experiences, sifted and evaluated. Values are, therefore, a human construct that exist because “...we will it to be so, and they survive only if we go on working at their reinterpretation in each new generation’s unique experiences... we must work at giving our lives meaning and therefore value... or at least decency.” Tomlinson (1997:244) links values and morals when he refers to the ‘moral glue’ of common values. He highlights the current political panic about the state of the nation’s morals, especially those of the young. Berzonsky (2005:127) expresses his concern regarding the threat to traditional value systems as follows: “As options and life-styles have proliferated and the legitimacy of traditional value systems has waned, the basis for self-definition and maintaining a sense of identity has become increasingly problematic.” Hölscher (2005:237) quotes Reamer’s (1998) lament that religious and secular institutions and traditions seem to be increasingly losing their ability to ensure the moral conduct of individuals.

According to Mason (2001:48), modernity’s processes have led to a disillusionment of the world, which has in turn contributed to declining moral responsibility. The formerly mainly religious worldview of traditional society has collapsed, which has created a greater potential for more fluid identity construction and the rise of individualism. Taylor, drawing on Nietzsche and others, “...describes an increasingly atomistic and strongly individualistic outlook on the world that involves a consequent withdrawal from public life and a minimal sense of moral responsibility to others” (Mason, 2001:48). Mason (2001:48) supports Taylor’s view when he states that the collapse of a sense of the preordained order of things has resulted in a strong sense of individualism and a minimal concern for responsibility to others. Mason (2001:48, 49) portrays his concern regarding diminished moral responsibility in the following comment:

Despite our awareness of an increasingly global connectedness and global repercussions in these developments, the atomism consequent on the collapse of the traditional bonds of community vitiates, rather than increases, our sense of responsibility. In a world where identities are rendered increasingly shallow by the intensification of a consumerism that is ultimately futile as a source of existential meaning or authentic identity, moral responsibility is further diminished.

According to Mason (2001:50), the moral ambiguity of our times results from a collapse of traditional sources of authority and the uncertainty about which ethical code to follow. He sees the 'postmodern moral crisis' as a recognition that sources of moral authority which we might traditionally have turned to are contested. As a result, there is no fixed source of 'right' action. Gane (2001:269, 270) expresses a similar view when he states that there are no longer traditional patterns, codes and rules to guide and serve as orientation points for individuals. Individuals are left secluded and anxious with their own personal troubles and must therefore take responsibility for their own self-determination. They face a variety of different life choices on their own, which means that they face them with limited support. Pearse (2005:10) refers to a postmodern self-directedness. Tomlinson (1997:250) also reminds his readers of the frequent postmodern assertion that altruism is impossible.

Interpersonal and primary relationships seem to be affected by a postmodernist lifestyle. Mason (2001:62) maintains that the sense of reduced moral responsibility associated with the progressively fragmented and fragile nature of identity is a consequence of late modernity. He states that this phenomenon brings with it a loosening of the bonds of local community, and therefore a declining sense of moral responsibility in our primary relationships. Mason (2001:62) acknowledges both Bauman's (1989) and Giddens' (1991) views when he says that "this has led to the translation of individual needs for self-definition and authentic life into the need to possess consumer goods, as if through an identity with brand labels we might construct an identity for ourselves. The act of consumption has become an act of identity construction." Gane (2001:271) also indicates a correlation between 'consumerism' and interpersonal relations when he comments that the changing nature of interpersonal relations have become increasingly market-dependent. He draws this parallel to emphasise the unpredictability of both interpersonal

relations and consumerism. In his discussion of Bauman's *Liquid Modernity* (2000), Gane (2001:270) discusses the shift from marriage to cohabitation in personal relationships. 'Flexibility' is the slogan of many couples; and marriage 'till death do us part' is out of fashion and has become rare.

Mason (2001:64) states that postmodern individuals no longer "nurture" or "seek to be nurtured in our social environment" or in the meaning that might have been generated in relationships with community, with the earth and its seasons and with God. "We seek instead to reduce the risk and uncertainty of our lives in abstract calculation for the purposes of control. We turn less to each other and more to our technological ability to calculate and control" (Mason, 2001:64). Mason contends that an 'ethics of integrity' is needed when there is no meaning or purpose to our lives, no essence to our existence. He proposes that meaning, purpose and fulfilment might then be found in our sense of self and in our closest relationships: "If we become who we are by virtue, at least in part, of the relationships in which we exist, it is in those relationships that we may be nurtured in our dread of being utterly alone and of the eternal void." He adds that we can take strength simply in who we are if our sense of self is sufficiently strongly developed in our experiences and in our relationships (Mason, 2001:65).

As has been discussed above, the critics of postmodernism foresee problems and challenges in a variety of spheres of social functioning. The following were highlighted: the disintegration of boundaries and a concomitant elimination of judgements and comparisons; an intensification of consumerism, characterised by an expansion of desires, appetites and consumption. A strong sense of individualism was noted. Together with this, there is a diminished sense of moral responsibility in primary relationships. This diminished sense of moral responsibility is also detected in a demise of traditional value systems and a minimal sense of moral responsibility towards others. Sources of moral authority are contested. A diminished moral responsibility leads to an absence of goals and limits. This description brings to mind Rosenau's (1992:54) notion of a 'floating individual'.

If the researcher were to consider these opinions to be valid, she could assume that postmodernism could possibly have a negative impact on the social functioning of young adults. However, by contrast, supporters of a postmodern paradigm emphasise positive changes in worldviews. This is evident from the wide range of new social movements, new norms concerning diversity and alternative lifestyles. A plurality of voices, including the voices of the victimised, the marginalised and those 'at risk', is emphasised. As has already been discussed, Mason (2001:51) is of the opinion that cultural pluralism, diversity and difference offer opportunities to review one's own experiences and values from different perspectives. The result could be greater tolerance, less narrow-mindedness and greater tentativeness about making assumptions. This could result in humbler and more respectful human beings.

The researcher realised that there is much she does not know. The impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults has not been researched. The only reasonable assumption, in the researcher's opinion, would be that postmodernism, as a paradigm of our times, has an impact on our social functioning. The exact nature of this impact is not known, but it is of social concern in general and of social work concern in particular. This approach is in line with Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee's (2006:20, 29) suggestion that topics of research nowadays are strongly influenced by social conditions. They see a research problem as a problem that is of scientific and intellectual interest or that revolves around a practical concern. There may be a need for more information about a specific issue or to explain the relationship between existing variables.

Monette et al. (2002:6) believe that the purpose of research is to determine whether a problem exists and to indicate the severity of the problem, but Glesne (2006:29) argues that a research project is an attempt to address the ignorance that exists about a specific topic. Creswell (1998) as quoted by Fouché and De Vos (2005:90) suggest that in identifying a researchable topic, rather than refer to a 'problem statement', the term 'source of the problem' should be considered. This suggestion was appropriate for this study, because the source of the problem is a lack of scientific knowledge on the

relationship between postmodernism and the social functioning of young adults. This lack of knowledge formed the basis of the research problem.

1.3 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

1.3.1 Goal of the study

The goal of this study was to explore and describe the impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults, with particular emphasis on their roles and interaction from an ecological systems perspective.

1.3.2 Objectives of the study

The researcher aimed to reach the above goal by meeting the following objectives:

- to conceptualise and contextualise a theoretical framework regarding
 - ecological systems theory to analyse the complex variables for conceptualisation of young adults as persons-in-environment;
 - the social functioning of young adults within their social environment;
 - the general orientations, nature, characteristics and impact of postmodernism as a present-day paradigm;
 - young adulthood as a stage in life-span development;
- to explore and describe the impact of postmodernism on the role function(s) of young adults;
- to explore and describe the impact of postmodernism on the interaction(s) of young adults within their environment; and
- to reach conclusions and make recommendations regarding the impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults from an ecological systems perspective to make a contribution to the knowledge repertoire of social workers in order to enhance quality service to young adults.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

Glesne (2006:29) suggests that when attempting to determine the research question or statement a researcher should begin by formulating questions on the topic. These questions are generated by reading the relevant literature and by referring to the researcher's experience. The central question then becomes the research question or statement. Monette et al. (2002:8) advise researchers that the shaping of a question or concern should be specific. Questions should be narrowed down to specific issues for which empirical data can be gathered. Bless et al. (2006:21) support this view in their statement that a research question must be formulated in such a way that it can be handled in a single study. These authors also state that the question must refer to empirical facts and must be answerable through the observation of reality. Subjective factors, such as moral and ethical judgements or cultural beliefs, should not be the basis of research questions (Bless et al., 2006:23).

The following main research question and sub-questions have been formulated to reach the goal of the proposed study:

Main question:

What is the impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults?

Sub-questions:

- What is the impact of postmodernism on the *role performance* of young adults?
- What is the impact of postmodernism on the *social interaction* of young adults in their environment?

The answer to these questions could provide insight into the social functioning of young adults and could contribute towards an advancement of knowledge in the field of social work. Bless et al. (2006:23) are of the opinion that any advancement of knowledge in a particular field of research which is useful for the further development of that field is relevant to theory.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Answering questions about basic theoretical issues can often inform current practice. Similarly answering questions about practical problems can enhance the theoretical understanding of phenomena. This implies an overlap and a vague line between the goals of basic and applied research (Monette et al., 2002:5; Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95). In the opinion of the researcher, this overlap could also be noted in this research. Elements of the goals of both **basic and applied research** apply to this research – the extension of a knowledge base implied basic research; the findings of basic research could have implications for the practice of the social work profession. The goal and objectives of the research, therefore, could contribute to the social work knowledge base, as well as impact on social work practice.

In this study, the **mixed methods research approach** was utilised seeing that it comprises both a qualitative and a quantitative component which when mixed do not only corroborate, but also expand understanding. In this study both forms of data (numbers and words) were necessary in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:1).

As has already been explained, the research problem was formulated as a lack of knowledge regarding the relationship between postmodernism and the social functioning of young adults. The relevant knowledge base on the construct (in this case, postmodernity and its impact on the social functioning of young adults) was therefore inadequate. This lack of knowledge prompted the investigation of these phenomena in the 'real world'. Young adults' experiences and views of postmodern society could be considered as phenomena in the 'real world' which necessitated a qualitative approach to this study. However, Leedy and Ormrod (2005:135) point out that as a general rule, qualitative studies do not allow for the identification of cause-effect relationships. The impact of postmodernism on social functioning could therefore not be determined by means of a qualitative approach. In the researcher's opinion, in order to claim scientific

accuracy the impact had to be quantified. This implied measurement in order to produce precise and generalisable statistical findings.

In this study the researcher related the variables mentioned to determine the extent and frequency of relationships (Ivankova, Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:255). Conducting quantitative research enabled the researcher to determine the impact of postmodernism on social functioning of young adults. Seeing that measurement is one of the best means of creating objective scientific knowledge, this impact was measured by using a quantitative data gathering instrument. This objective knowledge, obtained by means of empirical evidence, could enhance the professional knowledge base (Delpont & Roestenburg, 2011a:172).

Both quantitative and qualitative data was therefore collected and analysed. The researcher believes that mixing the datasets, as proposed by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:7), provided a better understanding of the problem than if either dataset had been used alone. The mixing of the data therefore provided a more complete picture of the research problem. Using an **exploratory mixed methods research design** was therefore a logical next step in this research process.

In this study the relative weight of the two approaches were not equal. A greater emphasis was placed on quantitative methods in order to address the research problem stated for this research (Delpont & Fouché, 2011:444). The researcher started the empirical study with the qualitative approach that yielded lived experiences in the 'real world'. In this manner, rich data could be obtained to assist in the compilation of suitable questions to construct a questionnaire. Sequential timing, within the exploratory mixed methods design, with the qualitative data collected and analysed first, followed by the quantitative data, therefore allowed for the one dataset to build upon the other. This particular research design provided a plan or blueprint that ensured the kind of study which was envisaged by the researcher. Furthermore, it addressed the research problem of this particular study.

For the purposes of the study, the researcher regarded all the young adults living in South Africa as the **universe** of the study. Apart from the requirement of being literate in order to read and complete the survey questionnaire, being a major (in other words, at least 18 years of age²) and being between the ages of 18 and 25 years, no further distinctions were made and no other attributes were necessary.

The **population** of the study was envisioned to be young adults as described under the universe, but with the distinct requirement that they should frequent the Hatfield area in Pretoria. They need not be residents of Hatfield. The decision to select the Hatfield area was based on its metropolitan character and because it is a very densely populated area. The area is cosmopolitan in nature and is characterised by a blend of cultures and nationalities. The researcher initially regarded the population as literate young adults, between the ages of 18 and 25 years, who found themselves in the Hatfield area and who would be prepared to act as respondents, if they were selected by the researcher at a particular point in time. The population of the study, however, had to be modified as a result of insights developed during the pilot testing of the data gathering instrument, utilised during the quantitative phase of the research. Feedback was received on various occasions during the process of pilot testing the data gathering instrument that questions and/or concepts were ambiguous or unclear. To ensure comprehension the researcher modified the data gathering instrument and also made the decision to only recruit young adults who have completed grade 12 successfully to act as respondents. Seeing that a certain level of education was necessary for completion of the questionnaire, the researcher decided to only recruit young adults who were functioning on a tertiary level. As a result, the population of the study was young adults, between the ages of 18 and 25 years, who were registered as students at a tertiary institution within the Hatfield area. The motivation for this decision will be elaborated on in Chapter 5 under pilot testing of the data gathering instrument.

² Section 17 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 came into operation on 1 July 2007. According to this section, a child, whether male or female, becomes a major upon reaching the age of 18 years.

In the **qualitative phase** (first phase) of the study, where focus group discussions were conducted, non-probability sampling was implemented. Greeff (2011:365) as well as Leedy and Ormrod (2005:145) suggest that purposive sampling be employed in focus group interviewing, because individuals are then selected that will yield the most information about the topic under investigation.

The criteria for the composition of the four focus groups (consisting of a total of 47 group members) used in the study were the following: young adults, between the ages of 18 and 25 years who were registered students at the specific tertiary institution within the Hatfield area and who were willing to participate in a focus group discussion on their social functioning in a postmodern era. As will be discussed under the feasibility of the study (Chapter 5), the researcher obtained permission from the Registrar and the Dean of Students of the specific tertiary institution to recruit young adult students to participate in the research. This decision was based on the availability of suitable young adults on campus and the increased possibility of being able to conduct the research in settings familiar to the participants. Thus, a combination of purposive and availability sampling was used for the selection of the sample. A sample of 47 suitable young adult students for participation in four focus groups was recruited from a diverse group of students, representing different fields of study.

In the **quantitative part** (second phase) of the study, the researcher selected 1019 young adults at the tertiary institution mentioned, to complete a questionnaire on their social functioning in the present postmodern era. Where arrangements could be made with lecturers, with whom the researcher could establish contact, potential research participants were requested to participate in the study in their different classes on the campus of the tertiary institution.

The non-probability sampling method most appropriate for selecting these respondents was a combination of purposive and accidental sampling (Strydom, 2011a:232), also referred to as availability sampling or convenience sampling (Gravetter & Forzano, 2003; Rubin & Babbie, 2001). This means that the research participants were those individuals

that were nearest and most easily available. Gravetter and Forzano (2003:125) add to availability the criterion of willingness to respond. Young adults, male and female, who were between the ages of 18 and 25 years, who were registered students at the specific tertiary institution within the Hatfield area, who were willing to act as respondents and to whom the researcher could obtain access were therefore selected as respondents for this study.

The researcher conducted **four focus groups** with a total of 47 young adults as research participants. Purposive sampling was used and sufficient homogeneity ensured a free-flowing discussion of the focus group topic (Greeff, 2011:365). The interaction between the members of the group of young adults on an interesting and relevant topic stimulated ideas and encouraged group members to participate. As suggested by Ivankova et al. (2007:271), categories revealed through qualitative analysis were used to develop survey items for the questionnaire. In the context of this study, the researcher analysed qualitative data according to an integration of Creswell's (1998) analytic spiral and Marshall and Rossman's (1999) process of data analysis, as described by De Vos (2005:334-339).

As indicated by Delport and Fouché (2011:447) when discussing the mixed methods research process, data analysis in mixed methods research entailed analysing the qualitative data using qualitative methods and procedures and analysing the quantitative data using quantitative methods and procedures. During the process of data analysis the researcher connected data by developing the questionnaire as a quantitative data gathering instrument, based on the themes that were identified during the analysis of the qualitative data gathered during focus group interviewing. Categories identified by means of qualitative analysis were therefore used to develop the survey items for the questionnaire.

Questionnaires were used to measure the attitudes and orientations of young adults regarding a postmodern lifestyle and the impact of such a lifestyle on their social functioning. This impact was therefore measured by using a quantitative data gathering instrument in the format of a group-administered questionnaire.

Quantitative data was analysed by means of computer programs. A data capturer captured questionnaire responses electronically in Microsoft Excel. Thereafter responses were read into SAS (version 9.3) by the statistician. A range of descriptive and inferential statistical procedures was used (Bless et al., 2006:163). Descriptive statistics were used to describe the characteristics of the distribution of scores, such as average scores on variables and the degree of variation between scores. Inferential statistics were used to assist in making decisions about how data relate to original hypotheses and how data can be generalised (Salkind, 2006:150).

Questionnaire responses were captured electronically and read into a computer programme. Captured data was checked for accuracy against questionnaire responses. During consultation with statistical consultants, decisions regarding statistical procedures were made. Research findings were presented by means of exploratory factor analysis and ANOVAs of the eight research factors in terms of relationships with relevant demographic groups.

A detailed description of research methods used in this study will be presented in chapter 5 of this report.

1.6 ETHICAL ASPECTS

Babbie (2004:63) claims that ethics is typically associated with morality, which is concerned with right and wrong. Strydom (2011b:114) elaborates on this notion as follows: “Ethics is a set of moral principles... which offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students.” Gravetter and Forzano (2003:59) posit that research ethics is concerned with researchers’ responsibility to convey honesty and respect to all the individuals affected by their research or the documenting of the research. Bless et al. (2006:140) emphasise that researchers have the right to search for truth and knowledge, but not at the expense of the rights of other individuals. In the same

manner, participants have rights when they participate in a research study – these rights relate mainly to privacy and protection from harm. Research ethics diminishes harm to participants. In view of these considerations, the researcher took a number of steps to ensure that the study meets ethical requirements.

1.6.1 Informed consent

"Informed consent refers to telling potential research participants about all aspects of the research that might reasonably influence their decision to participate" (Monette et al., 2002:56). According to Glesne (2006:132), ensuring that participants give informed consent contributes to the empowering of research participants. Obtaining informed consent, according to Williams et al. (1995) as quoted by Strydom (2011b:117), implies that the following information should be supplied to research participants in as comprehensive a manner as possible:

- the goal of the research;
- the expected duration of participants' involvement;
- the procedures that will be followed;
- the possible advantages, disadvantages and dangers involved; and
- the credibility of the researcher.

Bless et al. (2006:142, 143) add to this the right to decline to participate: respondents have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any prejudice or disadvantage to them. Monette et al. (2002:57) have, however, argued that asking for written informed consent could reduce the willingness of research participants to participate, because it appears to contradict the researcher's assurance of confidentiality (the issue of confidentiality will be addressed under subsection 1.6.5).

In the study, the researcher required the full co-operation of the research respondents. The researcher needed the respondents to complete a lengthy questionnaire on different aspects of their social functioning. Written informed consent indicating their agreement to participate in the study was therefore required (See appendix A). The research respondents were informed that research data will be stored for a period of 15 years for

the purposes of research. For the purposes of obtaining informed consent, only respondents who were 18 years of age and older, who are literate and willing to respond were selected for participation.

The 'young adults' selected for the dominant quantitative study were selected from the specific tertiary institution within the Hatfield area. The 'young adults' selected for the less dominant qualitative study were also students who were registered at the same tertiary institution and who have reached the age of majority. Therefore, written permission to conduct the research was obtained from both the Registrar and the Dean of Students of the specific tertiary institution (See appendix B).

1.6.2 Avoidance of harm

Although in some studies physical injury cannot be ruled out completely, harm to respondents in the social sciences and in the field of social work mainly takes the form of emotional damage (Strydom, 2011b:115). Bless et al. (2006:141) point out that the researcher must be aware of possible adverse events or effects that could occur. Therefore, the researcher should have the firmest possible scientific grounds for conducting that particular research project.

Gravetter and Forzano (2003:63) suggest that psychological harm is a common concern. It is possible for participants to feel increased anxiety, anger, lower self-esteem or mild depression, especially where they feel that they have been deceived, tricked or insulted. Babbie (2004:64), moreover, reminds researchers that it is possible for psychological harm to occur even if no deception has been practised by the researcher. Social research projects may force participants to explore aspects of themselves that they do not normally consider. This could cause personal agony for participants.

Strydom (2011b:116) is of the opinion that possible harm to respondents should not be rationalised by stating that the study might eventually benefit the participants. Because all the possible situations that may arise during a study cannot be anticipated, it is not possible to establish whether any degree of harm will come to participants. He firmly states

that the nature of the research must be changed if there is a likelihood that harm could occur. Gravetter and Forzano (2003:63) hold a similar view. They state that the research experience should be evaluated to identify risk or harm. These risks should be removed from the study, or the study should be abandoned.

Babbie (2004:64) formulates the resolution of this dilemma as follows: “The ethical norms of voluntary participation and no harm to participants have become formalised in the concept of informed consent. This norm means that subjects must base their voluntary participation in research projects on a full understanding of the possible risks involved.”

In this study the researcher first ensured that there were sufficient scientific grounds for the research, based on the literature study and the pilot study. Respondents were informed about the goal and the procedures of the study. Moreover, the researcher continuously evaluated the research experience to identify possible risk or emotional harm to respondents. If at all possible, the nature of the research would have been changed if there appeared to be any likelihood of harm to respondents. No harm to respondents was observed however. Signed informed consent by research respondents implied their full understanding of the nature of the research, as well as of the fact that their participation was voluntary and that they had the option to withdraw.

Participation was not physically harmful. No emotional harm was foreseen and, as mentioned, seemed not to have occurred. The questionnaires were completed by respondents on an anonymous basis. Personal information could therefore not be linked to any specific respondent. The research respondents selected from the campus of the tertiary institution were informed in a covering letter that any emotional discomfort prompted by the contemplation and reflection of their social functioning could be followed up with Dr M Nolte, counsellor at the Student Support Centre.

1.6.3 Debriefing

According to Gravetter and Forzano (2003:70), a debriefing is a post-experimental explanation of the purpose of a study that is given to a participant, especially if deception

was used. Even though deception was actively avoided, debriefing of research participants was of the utmost importance to minimise possible harm generated by the research experience.

Salkind (2000), as quoted by Strydom (2011b:122), suggests that the easiest way to debrief participants is to discuss their feelings about the project immediately after the session or to send out newsletters informing them of the results of the study. Participants can then be provided with the opportunity to work through their experience and its aftermath. Possible harm, in spite of precautions against harm, can then be addressed (Strydom, 2011b:122). In order to avoid misinterpretation and possible harm, the researcher debriefed participants directly after focus group discussions by discussing their experiences relating to the research project. The principle of confidentiality and attempt at anonymity precluded the researcher's participation in debriefing respondents in the quantitative phase of the research, if such a process was needed at all. As discussed under 'Avoidance of harm', the research participants were informed in a covering letter that any emotional discomfort can be followed up with Dr M Nolte, counsellor at the Student Support Centre of the tertiary institution.

1.6.4 Deception of respondents

Deception of respondents has already been addressed by the researcher in the subsections entitled 'Avoidance of harm' and 'Debriefing'. These ethical issues overlap and must be considered holistically. Bless et al. (2006:144) state that deception occurs when the researcher hides the true nature of the study from the participants. If deception is intentional, the deception should not pose serious or long-term risks and the researcher needs to explain the true nature of the deception to the participants in the debriefing phase. Babbie (2004:68) also emphasises the use of debriefing if deception has occurred. He refers to debriefing as interviews to discover any problems generated by the research experience so that those problems can be corrected. Monette et al. (2002:58) are of the opinion that any debriefing after deception has been practised should be done in a positive and supportive way.

Strydom (2011b:119) distinguishes between deliberate deception and deception of which the researcher was not aware. He also stresses the importance of debriefing in addressing the possible consequences of deception. He does, however, state that no form of deception should ever be inflicted on respondents.

The researcher regards deception as unethical and certainly did not intend to practise any form of deception in the study. Unintended deception was unlikely as full disclosure of the rationale, goal and procedures of the research was made to the respondents in a covering letter that was distributed in conjunction with the informed consent form and the questionnaire.

1.6.5 Violation of privacy/anonymity/confidentiality

Glesne (2006:138) believes that research participants have the right to expect that the researcher will protect their confidences and preserve their anonymity. Monette et al. (2002:60) distinguish between anonymity and confidentiality as follows: anonymity means that no one, including the researcher, can link any particular data to a particular respondent; by contrast, confidentiality means ensuring that the data that has been collected cannot be linked to an individual by anyone other than the researcher. Gravetter and Forzano (2003:71) use very similar definitions of anonymity and confidentiality. They stress the importance of coding, in other words, assigning a code number or code name to a respondent.

Strydom (2011b:119) makes the following distinctions between these concepts: "Privacy implies the element of personal privacy, while confidentiality indicates the handling of information in a confidential manner... Information given anonymously ensures the privacy of subjects." Personal and sensitive information should be protected and may not be made available to anyone other than the researcher. Data collected from participants should be kept under secure conditions at all times (Bless et al., 2006:143).

Babbie's (2004:65) comment on anonymity is especially relevant to this research study. He makes the statement that the clearest concern in the protection of the subjects' interest

and well-being is the protection of their identity, especially in survey research. Anonymity can only be guaranteed when the researcher cannot identify a given response with a given respondent. Ethical conduct by the researcher can ensure confidentiality. Anonymity is, however, more difficult to ensure.

All respondents in the study provided informed consent. Questionnaires were completed anonymously, ensuring privacy and anonymity. However, anonymity does not apply to the focus groups, where only the principle of confidentiality could be applied. Hakim (2000), as quoted by Strydom (2011b:117), suggests that informed consent is a necessary condition for research, not a luxury or an impediment. The researcher conducted the study in an ethical manner and ensured the confidentiality of all the research participants by assigning a code name (focus groups) and code numbers (questionnaires) to the respondents.

1.6.6 Actions and competence of researcher

Walliman (2006), in Strydom, 2011b:123, says the following regarding the actions and competence of researchers: “Researchers are ethically obligated to ensure that they are competent and adequately skilled to undertake the proposed investigation. When sensitive investigations are involved, this requirement is even more important.” Strydom (2011b:124) adds that all possible risks and advantages of the investigation should be evaluated. In respect of sensitive investigations, he refers particularly to research across cultural boundaries. He states that “[o]bjectivity and restraint in making value judgements are part of the equipment of a competent researcher... Professionals in the caring professions are trained not to impress their own personal value systems on clients or patients” (Strydom, 2011b:124).

As was stated in the introduction to this proposal, the social work profession has a strong value base. Social workers often face complex ethical dilemmas and they are committed to ethical conduct and practice. The researcher, as a qualified social worker, is registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions. She therefore believes that she meets the ethical requirements set by Strydom (2011b). She has practical experience

in the field of social work and is currently employed in an academic environment where she supervises the research of postgraduate students.

1.6.7 Release or publication of the findings

Strydom (2011b:126) advises researchers to compile their research report as accurately and objectively as possible. The researcher has an ethical obligation to ensure that the investigation proceeds correctly and that no one is deceived by the findings. Information must be clear and unambiguous to avoid misuse by subjects, the general public and colleagues. Shortcomings or limitations should be mentioned clearly.

Babbie (2004:68) also mentions an ethical obligation to colleagues in the scientific community. This obligation concerns the analysis of data and the manner in which the results are reported. With regard to an obligation in terms of indicating shortcomings or limitations, he insists that these shortcomings must be made known to readers. Bless et al. (2006:145) argue as follows: “Researchers are not allowed to change their data or observations. The fabrication or falsification of data is a very serious ethical transgression... The final ethical responsibility always rests with the researcher.”

In reporting on the proposed study, the researcher took all the above ethical aspects into consideration in the writing of the thesis and in any subsequent publications. The research results will be released in the form of a thesis, made available through the Academic Information Centre at the University of Pretoria. Two manuscripts of articles for possible publication will be submitted to scientific social work and/or other journals.

Ethical clearance to conduct the research was granted by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities of the tertiary institution where the research was conducted (See appendix C).

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following were experienced as limitations of the study:

- Even though the research sample included 1019 respondents, research findings cannot be generalised to the larger population since the sample is largely homogeneous, in that it comprised of only young adults studying at a tertiary institution. The motivation for this decision, as discussed, was that a certain level of education was necessary for completion of the questionnaire.
- The views expressed are those of young adults from an urban area and even though they might be from rural and semi-urban areas originally, they were exposed to urban surroundings and influences during the period when the data was gathered.
- In terms of literature consulted on postmodernism, the researcher mainly utilised literature from the 90s, seeing that postmodernism was extensively debated at that specific point in time. This phenomenon is still presently addressed in literature, but its origin, nature and characteristics were extensively reported on two decades ago. This resulted in the researcher consulting sources from this specific time frame.

1.8 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Core concepts which appear in the title of the research will subsequently be defined and applied in the context of the research.

1.8.1 Impact

Several dictionaries were consulted to ascertain the possible meanings of the concept. They provide similar descriptions of 'impact'. The following are provided to illustrate this. The impact of something is defined as "the powerful and dramatic effect that something has/to have an effect on – to have an immediate and strong effect on something or somebody" (*Encarta Concise English Dictionary*, 2001:722). The *Oxford Concise English Dictionary* (1999:710) defines impact as follows: "A marked effect or influence/to have a strong effect on." Most relevant to this study, however, is the definition provided by the

Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture (1992:659): impact is a “strong and powerful influence or effect caused or produced by an idea, invention, event, etc.”

In the researcher’s opinion, the words ‘powerful, immediate, strong, dramatic’ conveys the intensity of the effect. The phrase ‘impact of postmodernism’ therefore conveys the notion that postmodernism has a direct and prevailing effect or influence on social functioning.

1.8.2 Postmodernism

Providing a single definition of the concept ‘postmodernism’ has proven to be difficult. Various descriptions can be provided on what it is *not*. However, there is some consensus on the fact that the exact nature of postmodernism is vague. Rosenau (1992:11) refers to the broadness of the term and the lack of any specific definition of the term postmodernism. Both Mason (2001:51) and Rosenau (1992:16) speak of its tentative nature. A lack of consensus and a certain amount of vagueness and elusiveness surrounds this concept.

Beyer et al. (2007:38) describe postmodernism as a way of thinking which allows for different interpretations of situations. It therefore stretches the conventional boundaries of what knowledge is. Rubin and Babbie (2001:30) state that, whereas a modernist view acknowledges the inevitability of our human subjectivity, a postmodernist view suggests that no ‘objective’ reality can be observed in the first place, only our different subjective views. According to Meinert (1998:49), “[p]ostmodernism is characterised by a pervasive relativism and the elevation of personal freedom and autonomy to the highest order.” All facts are equally valid, determined locally, rather than by larger systems. Murphy and Pardeck (1998:5, 6) argue that a postmodernist view rejects objectivism and absolutism and stresses pluralism, relativism and flexibility. This perspective challenges old theories, in particular those grounded in the ‘modern’ world, and calls for new paradigms.

For the purposes of the proposed study, the researcher therefore regards postmodernism as a new paradigm through which the world can be viewed. The relevance of this

paradigm for social work lies in its impact on social functioning and its impact on the reciprocal interaction between systems.

1.8.3 Social functioning

Hepworth et al. (2006:6) describe enhanced social functioning as addressing and meeting human needs in order to “enable individuals to achieve a reasonable degree of fulfilment and to function as productive and contributing members of society.” DuBois and Miley (2011:63, 64) regard social functioning from a social work perspective as the fulfilment of roles in society, in the immediate environment and in relation to the self. They distinguish between different types of social functioning, namely effective social functioning and at-risk social functioning. Effective social functioning describes the social functioning of individuals who are able to adjust successfully to stressors. At-risk social functioning means that “identifiable conditions exist that could have a negative impact on social functioning” (DuBois & Miley, 2011:64). In the *New Dictionary of Social Work* (1995:58) an emphasis is placed on roles and interactions in defining ‘social functioning’. This dictionary defines social functioning as an “[i]ndividual’s **role** performance in its entirety at all levels of existence in **interaction** with other individuals, families, groups, communities and situations.”

The researcher believes that social functioning should be considered within the transactional nature of a person-in-situation. Young adults’ social functioning cannot be looked at separately from the transactions between themselves and their environment. For the purposes of the proposed study social functioning refers to the meeting of needs and fulfilment of roles within the interrelationships and interactions between the self and the social environment, thus, within the context of the larger social structure and its different systems.

1.8.4 Young adult

McGoldrick and Carter (2005:38) describe early adulthood as follows: approximate ages are 21 to 35 years; development of the ability to engage in intense relationships; committed to mutual growth; satisfying work; commitment to parity for care of the family;

importance of career. Borysenko (1996), in McGoldrick and Carter (2005:38), defines early adulthood as follows:

The development of a core self, a strong, yet pliable identity in which the previous development of relationality, institution and the logic of the heart are combined in a conscious way, bestows life's most precious gift – the ability to relate to both self and others with true intimacy.

With regard to becoming an adult, Santrock (2006:432, 433) states that adolescence begins in biology and ends in culture. Therefore, the transition from childhood to adolescence begins with the onset of pubertal maturation, whereas the transition from adolescence to adulthood is determined by cultural standards and experiences. According to Arnett (2000) in Santrock (2006:433), emerging adulthood is the term now given to the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Santrock (2006:433) states that the age range for emerging adulthood is the age of approximately 18 to 25 years. An important factor, however, is that around the world youths are expected to delay entry into adulthood, because contemporary society requires adults who are more educated and skilled than they were required to be in previous generations. Santrock (2006:432) points out that experimentation and exploration characterise the emerging adult. These young adults are still exploring which career path they want to follow, what they want their identity to be, and which lifestyle they want to adopt.

The concept of a young adult is viewed differently by different cultural groups and nationalities. For the purpose of this study, the researcher identifies with Arnett's (2000; 2006) description of emerging adulthood and defines the young adult as an individual between the ages of 18 and 25 years, characterised by experimentation and exploration in a broad sense, but also specifically in terms of identity, career and lifestyle.

1.9 CONTENTS OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

- Chapter 1:** General introduction to the research, summary of research methodology utilised, ethical aspects applicable to the research, limitations of the study and definition of key concepts
- Chapter 2:** Theoretical foundation for the study: Ecological systems framework
- Chapter 3:** A thorough literature review of postmodernism as a present-day paradigm
- Chapter 4:** A thorough literature review of young adulthood as a stage in life-span development
- Chapter 5:** Research methodology utilised in the study
- Chapter 6:** Empirical findings of the qualitative research study
- Chapter 7:** Empirical findings of the quantitative research study
- Chapter 8:** Conclusions and recommendations based on research findings.

1.10 SUMMARY

Young adults who live in the new millennium are born into and brought up in a postmodern paradigm, where they are engaged in constant transactions with other human beings and with other systems in their environment. The essence of ecological systems theory is the reciprocal impact of people and environmental systems. Inputs and inflows from the environment include material resources, communication, traumatic events or social pressures. For the purposes of this study, the researcher sees postmodernism as an inflow which can be explored.

The impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults has not been researched. The only reasonable assumption, in the researcher's opinion, would be that postmodernism, as a paradigm of our times, has an impact on the social functioning of young adults. The exact nature of this impact is not known, but it is of social work concern in particular.

In this study it is assumed that a postmodern lifestyle has an impact on young adults in their different systems and their social functioning within these systems. Hepworth et al. (2006:16) argue that the ecological systems framework provides a 'person-in-environment' perspective which recognises the impact of environmental factors on human functioning. The ecological systems framework will be used in this study to explore the impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults. This specific framework will be the focus of chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION FOR STUDY: THE ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is the relationship between postmodernism and social functioning, specifically the influence of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults. To provide a rational, systematic ordering of knowledge, a theoretical orientation is needed (Zastrow, 2013:295). Delpont and De Vos (2011:47) stress the importance of a scientific knowledge base, while Ambrosino, Heffernan, Shuttlesworth and Ambrosino (2008:52) advocate a broad theory or framework to understand complex social welfare issues and to clearly and logically organise facts and ideas.

The influence of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults could quite possibly be researched from more than one theoretical foundation. However, the selection of the most relevant theoretical framework is essential for accurate theoretical and contextual insight into the phenomena of postmodernism and social functioning. Ambrosino et al. (2008:53) make the statement that many theories are applicable to social work seeing that social work draws its knowledge base from many disciplines. These theories include psychological theories (Freud), economic and political theories, sociological theories (Durkheim) and developmental theories (Piaget). All these theoretical perspectives are relevant to social work – looking at only one of them would be limiting.

When considering different theoretical approaches and deciding on the most relevant theoretical framework for research on social functioning and the internal and external factors that impact social functioning, the nature of social work as a profession should be considered. “[S]ocial work is a profession that focuses on the interface between a person and his or her environment. The profession more precisely deals with problems in social functioning and tries to facilitate the interaction between individual and environment” (Potgieter, 1998:52).

Ambrosino et al. (2008:53) make the statement that social workers, more than any other professional group, have directed their profession to the individual and beyond, to the broader environment. Definitions of social work emphasise enhancing social functioning, addressing the relationships, interactions and interdependence between people and their environments. Ambrosino et al. (2008:54) propose a broad framework that allows for identifying the diverse, complex factors associated with a social welfare problem, understanding how all the factors interact to contribute to the situation, and determining intervention strategies, which can range from intervention with a single individual to an entire society. This framework must account for individual differences, cultural diversity, growth and change at the individual, family, group, organisational, community and societal levels.

Ambrosino et al. (2008:54) propose that a generalist foundation of social work is based on a systems framework that also incorporates an ecological perspective. This framework is useful in understanding social welfare problems. They motivate their preference for an ecological/systems framework in the following manner: "...we are presenting a framework or perspective that allows us to view social problems and appropriate responses that incorporate a multitude of possible responses" (Ambrosino et al., 2008:54). This framework emphasises that the individual, group or community's lives are shaped by the choices they make, that the environment shapes their choices and that their choices in turn shape the way they interact with their environment. Ambrosino et al. (2008:53, 65) state that this cyclical perspective suggests that we cannot discuss the individual without including the environment or the environment without considering the strong forces of individuals in its formulation, seeing that the individual and the environment are adapting to each other constantly.

Zastrow (2008:51) points out that in recent years, social work has increasingly focused on using an ecological approach. This approach views human beings as developing and adapting through transactions with all elements of their environments. This approach also explores both internal and external factors. It views people as dynamic and reciprocal

interactors with their environments. A person-in-environment approach implies interactions with many systems.

It is noteworthy to consider the views of the original developers of the ecological systems perspective within the social work profession. Germain and Gitterman's (1980) work in terms of the ecological perspective is relevant and is still acknowledged by various authors, such as Hepworth et al. (2006), Zastrow (2007) and Ambrosino et al. (2008). In *The Life Model of Social Work Practice* Germain and Gitterman (1980:1) stated the following: "...we introduce what we call an ecological perspective and a life model of practice. The ecological perspective presents our view that human needs and problems are generated by the transactions between people and their environments." Germain and Gitterman (1980:10) are also of the opinion that the ecological perspective, with its emphasis on the life processes of adaptation and reciprocal interaction between people and their social and physical environments, is well suited as a platform for social work practice. They motivate this opinion by highlighting social work's distinctive purpose: "...to strengthen the adaptive capacities of people and to influence their environments so that transactions are more adaptive. Professional action is directed toward helping people and their environments overcome obstacles that inhibit growth, development, and adaptive functioning" (Germain & Gitterman, 1980:4).

The abovementioned authors (Ambrosino et al., 2008; Germain & Gitterman, 1980; Potgieter, 1998; Zastrow, 2007) therefore provide a rationale for the relevance of an ecological perspective as a basis for professional social work. Definitions of social work, which emphasise enhancing social functioning, addressing the relationships, interactions and interdependence between people and their environments, as well as the focus of social work on the interface between a person and his or her environment, were considered and what is clear is that the individual cannot be discussed without including the environment, or the environment without considering the strong forces of individuals in its formulation (Ambrosino et al., 2008:53; Potgieter, 1998:52).

Person-in-environment, transactions and adaptive functioning mentioned above form an integral part of the ecological perspective, of the nature of social work and of the social functioning of the individual, which will be discussed in this chapter. This indicates the extent to which the ecological framework as a theoretical perspective is interwoven and linked with and forms an integral part of social functioning. In this specific study, the ecological perspective therefore provides the context and theoretical framework for exploring and interpreting the influence of postmodernism (environment) on the social functioning of the young adult (person/ individual).

What has been established is that the systems framework incorporates an ecological perspective (Ambrosino et al., 2008:54). To understand and to indicate the relevance of the ecological perspective for this specific study on social functioning of young adults and postmodernism, it is thus important to first discuss systems theory as the basis of the ecological perspective.

2.2 SYSTEMS THEORY

Systems theory as a foundation for the ecological perspective will briefly be discussed by exploring systems theory in a broad sense and then discussing its relevance for social work. Rodway's (1986:516) formative work on systems theory is still relevant today. She stated that there are three types of systems; conceptual systems, real systems and abstracted systems. Rodway (1986:516) pointed out that the latter two systems have the greatest relevance for social work since real systems are living systems that can be observed, while abstracted systems are classes of behaviour and relationships that can be inferred from real systems. Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2009:10) define a system as "a set of elements that are orderly and interrelated to make a functional whole." Ambrosino et al. (2008:55) provide a similar definition of a system when they also refer to the concept 'whole' and then state that a system is "an entity composed of separate but interacting and interdependent parts."

The human body is a major system incorporating a number of smaller systems (for example, the muscular system, the skeletal system and the circulatory system). Systems theory was therefore initially used to explain the functioning of the human body. When one component of the human body fails to function effectively, the way in which the human body functions as a whole is affected. Systems theory gained increased attention in a number of fields, including business and engineering, because of the interaction between complex components (Ambrosino et al., 2008:55). Systems are however the basic entities of the natural and the social world (Pickel, 2007:394).

Within social work, systems theory as the basis of the ecological perspective emerged in the 1970s (O'Donoghue & Maidment, 2005:33). O'Donoghue and Maidment (2005:33) quote Reid (2002) who states that social work theoreticians were developing new ways to explain the connections between the personal and environmental aspects of practice, as well as finding a unifying framework of practice for the social work profession. O'Donoghue and Maidment (2005:33) refer to Vickey (1974) who developed the application of systems theory with individuals and families by examining the interactions between client-system and environmental-system and the role of input, feedback, transformation and output with regard to change in both systems.

According to DuBois and Miley (2011:59) systems come in all shapes and sizes. Families, teams, groups, organisations, clubs, gangs, neighbourhoods, communities and corporations are all systems. Patterns of relationships and the purpose and common attributes of their members distinguish one system from another. DuBois and Miley (2011:59) use the term "nested within each other" to describe the fact that each system, composed of smaller units, forms a part of a larger network of systems. These authors describe the human systems that social work practitioners work with as individuals, families, work groups, play groups, organisations, neighbourhoods and communities (DuBois & Miley, 2011:58). Hepworth et al. (2006:37) provide a similar account of social systems when they state: "Systems that often affect clients' needs include couple, family, and social support systems (e.g., kin, friends, neighbors, co-workers, peer groups, and

ethnic reference groups); spiritual belief systems, child care, health care, and employment systems; various institutions; and the physical environment.”

Zastrow (2013:19) has essentially the same views when he says that social workers are trained to have a systems perspective when working with individuals, groups, families, organisations and communities. He points out that a systems perspective promotes a broader understanding of a client’s problems by assessing the intricacies and interrelationships of these problems.

In order to understand the relevance of the systems theory as foundation of the ecological perspective in this specific study, the following key concepts will briefly be discussed: boundaries, wholeness/holism, relationship, homeostasis, stability and change (Ambrosino et al., 2008:55; Strauss, 2002:163; Zastrow, 2013:19).

2.2.1 Boundaries

The concept of boundary is an important aspect of any system. All systems have boundaries where one system ends and another begins (Ambrosino et al., 2008:55). DuBois and Miley (2011:59) point out that systems are basically separated from one another by boundaries that distinguish one system from another. An individual can be part of a larger system, for example a family system, a school system, a political system or an economic system. The systems theory allows for the organising of data to assist in understanding a situation, and its flexibility allows us to define systems and their boundaries in many ways (Ambrosino et al., 2008:56, 57). Ambrosino et al. (2008:56) stress the fact that the systems that are defined and the boundaries that are conferred on those systems are conceptual. We can therefore define them in whatever way we choose and which ever way makes sense. Boundaries can also be drawn wherever it seems appropriate, when using the systems theory.

According to Ambrosino et al. (2008:57) some systems have easily permeated boundaries between units in the system and those outside. These systems are referred to as open systems. When a family, for instance, readily incorporates other people, it can be

described as an open system. Some families represent closed systems. They are tightly knit and have rigid boundaries. Ambrosino et al. (2008:58) are of the opinion that the more closed a system, the less it is able to draw positive energy from other systems.

Amerikaner (2003:33) views people as 'open systems' in the sense that, when they are functioning well, the dynamic qualities of open systems apply to them and they can be seen as growing, healthy people. Within this 'open system' change is continual, seeing that exchange with the surrounding environment is ongoing. Amerikaner (2003:34) states that the integrity of the system is maintained throughout this exchange process by the development of boundaries. These boundaries must be permeable enough to allow exchange, but not so much as to allow the system to disintegrate.

2.2.2 Wholeness

Kirst-Ashman and Hull's (2009:10) definition of a system emphasises wholeness when they assert that a system is "a set of elements that are orderly and interrelated to make a functional whole." According to Zastrow (2013:19) the concept of wholeness implies that the elements within a system produce a unit that is greater than the sum of its parts. Systems theory is "antireductionistic" which means that a system cannot be understood or explained when broken down into its different components (Zastrow, 2013:19). Strauss (2002:164) describes a whole with its parts as a 'united multiplicity' or a totality. Systems deal with dynamic realities, which imply an emphasis on the interdependence between the different parts of a system as a whole. The mutual interrelationships between these parts constitute a dynamic whole. "Whole with its parts..." is further described by Strauss (2002:164) in the following manner:

One of the key concepts of all prominent variants of systems theory is therefore given in the relationship of the concept of a *whole with its parts* – irrespective of the way in which the interaction between these parts are conceived of, or concerning how the interaction between the *whole* and its (external) *environment* is envisaged.

Ambrosino et al. (2008:55) state that the larger system achieves synergy when it functions optimally. This is achieved when the combined energy from the smaller parts is greater than the total if those parts were to function separately.

2.2.3 Relationship

“The concept of relationship asserts that the patterning and structuring among the elements in a system are as important as the elements themselves” (Zastrow, 2013:19). Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2009:10) emphasise that these elements must also be interrelated. This interrelatedness implies a mutual relationship or connection. The set of elements must also be functional in the sense that together, they must be able to perform a task, activity or function and fulfil some purpose.

According to DuBois and Miley (2011:59) human systems are always interacting with other systems and substituting resources. This interaction is described as a “give and take”, “borrow and share, consume and dispose”, “accept and reject ... own resources and the resources of other systems” (DuBois & Miley, 2011:59). Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2009:10) refer to this interaction as a continual flow of input and output among systems. They see input as “the energy, information or communication flow received from other systems” and output as “the same flow emitted from a system to the environment or to other systems” (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2009:10). According to DuBois and Miley (2011:58) the general systems theory offers principles that describe how human systems operate and interact with one another.

2.2.4 Homeostasis

Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2009:11) describe homeostasis as the predisposition of a system to maintain a reasonably stable, constant state of equilibrium or stability. In essence, Zastrow’s (2013:19) description is similar: “The concept of homeostasis suggests that most living systems endeavour to maintain and preserve the current system.” Zastrow (2013:19) refers to examples supplied by Jackson (1965) where he noted that families tend to establish a behaviour balance and to resist adjustment. A state of imbalance is driven back toward the previous state of balance or driven towards a new balance.

Homeostasis, in other words preserving the current system, explains the imbalance when a family member improves through counselling or when a sexually abused child is removed from a maladaptive home. A systems perspective therefore focuses on input, output, and homeostasis with respect to many systems with which the system is interacting (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2009:11).

2.2.5 Stability and change

Strauss (2002:164) describes stability as “the relative constancy of an enduring or persistent whole/system.” Ambrosino et al. (2008:59) state that change or movement in one part of a system, or in one system, will have an impact on the larger system or on other systems. Interactions and interrelatedness, with a constant flow of energy within and across systems occur continually. If communication is open, the energy flow creates growth and change. Feedback among systems is therefore important.

Change is constant, since exchange with the surrounding environment never comes to an end. Change within one component of the system is seen as affecting the system as a whole (Amerikaner, 2003:34). Amerikaner (2003:34) emphasises that system change is irreversible, seeing that the process cannot be reversed to return to a prior condition. A ‘steady state’ is a state of development where the system as a whole remains relatively constant. System movement towards this steady state is marked by increasing autonomy, aided by positive and negative feedback.

In the introduction to the following section on the ecological perspective, the similarities and overlaps between the systems theory and the ecological perspective will be highlighted. Many of the concepts basic to the systems theory are embedded in the ecological perspective.

2.3 THE ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2009:13) state that basic similarities exist between systems theory and the ecological perspective. Both emphasise systems and focus on the dynamic interaction among many levels of systems. Some concepts are similar and each provides social workers with a framework with which to view the world. Furthermore, external interactions instead of internal functioning is emphasised by both. These authors do however emphasise two main differences between systems theory and the ecological perspective. Firstly, the ecological approach refers to living, vibrant exchanges with an emphasis on active participation; for example, people have active communications with each other and with their environments (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2009:13). Systems theory adopts a broader perspective, seeing that it can refer to non-living, mechanical procedures or to the functioning of a family. The second difference is based on an emphasis of different terms. The ecological approach focuses on transactions between individual and environment and the interface or point at which they meet. Systems theory addresses boundaries of subsystems within a system, and the maintenance of homeostasis or stability within a system (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2009:13).

Zastrow (2013:19) discusses the ecological perspective as a prominent force in social work practice, seeing that this perspective is used extensively by social workers. However, he views ecological 'theory' as a subcategory of systems theory. This view is echoed by Ambrosino et al. (2008:54) in the following statement: "The generalist foundation of social work is based on a systems framework that also incorporates an ecological perspective." These authors prefer the use of the term systems/ecological *framework* rather than *theory* seeing that systems/ecological perspective or framework is much broader and more loosely constructed than a theory. An advantage of this framework is that it is a conceptual framework that can be applied in many different ways to many different situations. This framework is valuable for developing insight with regard to social welfare problems and situations and deciding which theories are the bases for appropriate interventions (Ambrosino et al., 2008:54).

2.3.1 History of the ecological perspective

According to O'Donoghue and Maidment (2005:34) there are three phases of development in the social work ecological literature. They acknowledge the contribution of Gitterman (1996) as well as Gitterman and Germain (1976) in the first phase, which identifies concepts from ecology as a metaphor that assists social workers to conceptualise the transactions between person and environment. According to Ungar (2002), in O'Donoghue and Maidment (2005:34), the second phase involves the combination of the ecological perspective with systems theory to create a comprehensive framework for social work practice, while the third involves the development of a social ecological theory and signals a divergence from systems theory.

When the ecological perspective emerged in the 1970s, it was described as a form of general systems theory that was less abstract and was based on an adaptive view of human beings in continuous transactions with the environment. The ecological metaphor was used as a lens for viewing and conceptualising the exchanges between people and their environments. The aim was to facilitate the restoration of the adaptive balance between persons and environment by reducing stress, enhancing coping mechanisms or establishing stability (Germain, 1979; Gitterman, 1996; Germain & Gitterman, 1980; Gitterman & Germain, 1976 in O'Donoghue & Maidment, 2005:34, 35).

According to O'Donoghue and Maidment (2005:36) the synthesis of ecological and systems theory emerged from two pathways. These authors state that Spurin (1975) recognised that in adding ecological theory to systems theory sufficient commonalities existed for them to be used together under the title of 'ecological-systems theory'. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory of human development, however, held that the interaction between the developing person and the environment was crucial and recognised that the developing person was an active participant who adjusts to his environment. In this theory the environment involved a variety of settings with a range of interconnections that extended from the direct setting to larger social settings (O'Donoghue & Maidment, 2005:36, 37).

In the next subsection the concepts 'ecology' and 'ecological perspective' will be addressed as a point of departure before describing the ecological perspective in depth.

2.3.2 Defining ecology within an ecological perspective

In researching the ecological systems perspective the researcher found that it had value to consult formative works. After his article on "*An ecological perspective in case work practice*" in 1973, Germain published extensively on the ecological perspective in 1977, 1979 and 1981 (Hepworth, Rooney & Larsen, 2002:R10; Hepworth et al., 2006:594). According to Germain (1991:15, 16) "[e]cology is the science that studies the relations between organisms and their environments." He states that ecology "facilitates our taking a holistic view of people and environments as a unit in which neither can be fully understood except in the context of its relationship to the other." This relationship is characterised by continuous transactions in which people and environments influence, shape, and sometimes change each other. In transactional relationships both entities are changed with consequences for both. Transactional causality is therefore circular in the loop of social, cultural, emotional, psychological, biological and physiological processes (Germain, 1991:15, 16).

"Ecology seeks to understand the reciprocal relations between organisms and environments" (Germain & Gitterman, 1980:4). These authors extend this understanding to how species maintain themselves by making use of "the environment, shaping it to their needs without destroying it; and how such adaptive processes increase the environment's diversity and enhance its life-supporting properties" (Germain & Gitterman, 1980:4, 5). It is interesting to note that Germain and Gitterman commented three decades ago on man's pollution of the physical environment by the release of non-biodegradable matter produced by his technology. They also mentioned that social environments become polluted by poverty, discrimination and stigma, produced by man's social and cultural processes. Environmental systems are damaged and will have a negative impact on all who function within them when human beings use any component of their physical or social environments destructively (Germain & Gitterman, 1980:5).

2.3.3 Relevant ecological concepts

To understand the ecological perspective, the terms and principles involved should be clear. The following commonly used ecological concepts will be discussed in the next section: ecological environment, social environment, physical environment, layers and textures of the environment, person-in-environment, adaptation, transactions and 'goodness-of-fit'.

2.3.3.1 Ecological environment

"The ecological environment is conceived of a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls. At the innermost level is the immediate setting containing the developing person" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:3). Bronfenbrenner (1979:3) stresses the importance of observing beyond single settings to the relations between them, seeing that these interconnections can be as critical for development as events taking place within a given setting. He then points out that a person's development is intensely affected by events occurring in settings in which the person is not even present. Bronfenbrenner (1979:4) makes the statement that within each society or subculture there exists a blueprint for the organisation of every type of setting. This blueprint can be changed, resulting in a distinctly altered structure of the settings in a society. He discusses the positive or negative impact of a severe economic crisis occurring in a society on the subsequent development of children throughout the life span, depending on the age of the child at the time that the family suffered the financial crisis. Bronfenbrenner's (1979:4) rationale for the implementation/application of the ecological perspective is that the detection of such wide-ranging developmental influences becomes possible if one employs a theoretical model that permits them to be observed. He points out "that what matters for behaviour and development is the environment as it is *perceived* rather than as it may exist in 'objective' reality" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:4).

2.3.3.2 Social environment

Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2009:12) regard the conditions, circumstances and the interactions of human beings as their 'social environment'. To survive and thrive, the individual is dependent on effective interactions with the environment. Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2009:12)

describe the social environment according to the types of homes individuals live in, the types of work they do, the amount of money available and the laws and social rules they live by. All the individuals, groups, organisations and systems with which an individual comes into contact also form part of the social environment.

Ambrosino et al. (2008:26) mention the different environmental factors affecting quality of life and opportunities available for satisfactory growth and development – geography, climate and resources. These factors vary throughout the world. These environmental factors, as well as economic and political forces that determine the availability of opportunities and resources around which people organise their lives, also impact their social environment. Unpredicted economic trends may result in loss of jobs, discrimination limits opportunities for career development and pollution contributes to health problems (Ambrosino et al., 2008:26). The environment is therefore a major element in the opportunity structure, seeing that it can either provide opportunities or create challenges.

2.3.3.3 Physical environment

“The physical environment provides the context for all human interaction” (Germain & Gitterman, 1986:625). These authors state that humans form attachments to treasured objects and to the sense of kinship with the world of nature. Trust is based on security; security requires stable physical arrangements as well as social arrangements. Socialisation is the personal pronoun – my parents, my siblings, my friends and also my room, my clothes, my furniture, my apartment (Germain & Gitterman, 1986:625). According to Germain and Gitterman (1986:625) sense of identity is not only tied to primary and other human relationships, but is also associated with a sense of place, which could be a country, a town or the place of one’s origin.

Two ecological concepts regarding the physical environment that are especially relevant to social work are *habitat* and *niche*. Niche refers to statuses or roles performed by members of society. This concept will be discussed in more depth under social functioning and social roles. Habitat refers to ‘the places where organisms live’. For human beings, habitat consists of the physical and the social settings within specific cultural milieus (Hepworth et

al., 2006:17; Ryke, 2004:24). According to Taylor (1997) in Ryke (2004:25) a species' habitat is set by the availability of the resources needed for that species to maintain itself; a human habitat is therefore set by the availability of the resources needed for particular categories of people to maintain themselves.

Germain (1991:45) explains that in ecology, habitat is the designated physical setting where organisms are found, including their nesting places, homes and territories. For human beings, the physical and social settings of community, workplace and school constitute the habitat. Physical settings (dwellings, buildings, rural and urban layouts) must support the social settings of family life, interpersonal life, work life and spiritual life in ways that fit the lifestyles, ages, genders and cultural patterns of the residents. "The human habitat must provide a physical environment capable of supporting the full range of human needs and interests as they evolve biologically and culturally..." (Germain, 1991:45). Germain (1991:49) states that what people do in a physical setting makes a social setting out of mere physical space. Identification with this 'place' is an important component of one's identity and self-esteem, sense of competence, relatedness and self-direction.

2.3.3.4 *Layers and textures of the environment*

"The environment consists of layers and textures – layers being the social and physical environment, while textures are time and space" (Germain & Gitterman, 1986:623). The social environment is the human environment, consisting of other people and relationships, ranging from social networks to social institutions. The physical environment comprises of the built world (constructed by human beings) and the natural world (inherited by human beings). The social and the physical environment shaping each other, influenced by culture, interact in complex ways (Germain & Gitterman, 1986:623).

According to Germain and Gitterman (1986:626) the texture of space and people's special behaviours are influenced by age, gender, culture, experience and physical condition. Personal space refers to the amount of social interaction and distance desired by each person. The amount of desired space (a transactional phenomenon) is also influenced by culture, gender, age, physical, emotional and cognitive states. It therefore carries the

potential for distorted or conflicted interpersonal perceptions, communications and relationships.

2.3.3.5 Person-in-environment

According to Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2009:12) person-in-environment implies that people are continuously interacting with numerous systems around them. Family, friends, work, social services, politics, religion, goods and services, and educational services are some of the systems that people interact with on an on-going basis. A person-in-environment is dynamically involved with each of these systems. This dynamic involvement takes place in the form of communications and interactions (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2009:12). Zastrow (2008:51) also points out that the ecological perspective's emphasis is on people as dynamic and reciprocal interactors with their environments. He states that people interact with many systems. Within the person-in-environment conceptualisation, social work focuses on three separate areas; it focuses on the person, the relationship between the person and the systems he interacts with, as well as on the systems and seeks to reform them to meet the needs of the individual effectively (Zastrow, 2008:51).

Germain and Gitterman (1980:5) state that "the ecological perspective provides an adaptive, evolutionary view of human beings in constant interchange with all elements of their environment." Through processes of continuous reciprocal adaptation, human beings change their physical and social environments and are changed by them. The young adult's environment is constantly changing. He is also exposed to the wide variety of environments and systems mentioned above. The dynamic nature of the young adult and the systems with which he interacts, implies that the process is reciprocal and on-going.

2.3.3.6 Adaptation

Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2009:12) describe adaptation as the capacity to adjust to immediate environmental circumstances. This adjustment implies change. A person must change or adapt to new circumstances to be able to function effectively. Adaptation often implies a two-way process comprising both the individual and the environment (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2009:13).

In their description of *'The Life Model of Social Work Practice'*, Germain and Gitterman (1980:6) view adaptation as “an active, dynamic and often creative process.” People and their environments “form an ecosystem in which each shapes the other.” People either change environments or they change themselves to conform or to satisfy needs and reach goals. Germain and Gitterman (1980:7) point out that human needs and goals change over time and are variable across cultures and places. In the same manner, environments also change. These authors refer to physical processes of nature such as the weather, volcanoes and earthquakes. Biological, social and cultural processes of human beings also change the environment. Germain and Gitterman (1980:10) describe the purpose of social work as the strengthening of the adaptive capabilities of people and to influence their environments so that transactions are more adaptive. DuBois and Miley (2011:62) refer to Germain and Gitterman's *'Life Model'* (1980, 1996) and reiterate that the nature of the transactions between people and their environments is the source of human needs and social problems. “The purpose of social work is to enhance those transactions that maximize growth and development by matching people's adaptive capacities with environmental properties” (DuBois & Miley, 2011:62).

In 1991 Germain's discussion of 'adaptation' clarified this concept further. He stated that adaptation is the central ecological concept. This concept is often confused with the notion of adjustment. Adjustment implies a passive accommodation to the environment. Adaptation in contrast is action-orientated (Germain, 1991:17). Germain (1991:17) explains this concept in the following manner:

...human beings strive throughout life for the best person: environment “fit” possible between their needs, rights, capacities, and aspirations, on one hand, and the qualities of their environment, on the other. If the fit is not good, or if capacities, goals, life conditions, and so on change, then people may actively decide to change themselves or the environment or both. Such changes are termed *adaptations*.

Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2009:13) describe *coping* as “a form of human adaptation”, seeing that coping implies an endeavour to overcome difficulties; coping is therefore the way in which individuals deal with the problems they experience. Germain and Gitterman

(1986:623) indicate the interrelatedness of several ecological concepts when they state that like adaptiveness, stress and coping, relatedness, identity/self-esteem and competence are expressions of people-environment relationships.

The young adult is exposed to a variety of new systems which require adaptation, such as starting a new job or adjusting to tertiary education. Moving away from the parental home can be stressful and requires coping skills, competence and the ability to adapt.

2.3.3.7 Transactions

Hepworth et al. (2006:17) state the following regarding transactions within the ecological perspective: “Ecological systems theory posits that individuals constantly engage in transactions with other human and with other systems in the environment, and that these individuals and systems reciprocally influence each other.” To emphasise the concept ‘transaction’, Germain (1991:16) states the following, “[r]ooted in the notion of transaction, the ecological perspective points to theoretical systems that yield the needed understanding of human beings and their environments.” The concept *human being* is referred to “at all levels of organization from the individual to collectivities of various kinds and sizes” (Germain, 1991:16).

DuBois and Miley (2011:59) indicate the give and take between systems when they state that human systems are always interacting with other systems and exchanging resources. “Through give and take, systems borrow and share, consume and dispose, and accept and reject their own resources and the resources of other systems. These exchanges of resources are called *transactions*, or the processes through which systems exchange information and energy” (DuBois & Miley, 2011:59). According to these authors this give and take involves input, processing, output and feedback (DuBois & Miley, 2011:59). Ambrosino et al. (2008:59) also refer to energy and information when discussing continuous interactions and interrelatedness. They state that if communication is open, the energy flow creates growth and change. Feedback (information) among systems is important seeing that the systems/ecological perspective emphasises communication (Ambrosino et al., 2008:59).

Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2009:12) state that energy is “the natural power of active involvement among people and their environments.” Energy takes “the form of input or output. *Input* is a form of energy coming into a person’s life.” *Output* is “a form of energy going out of a person’s life.” Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2009:12) mention as an example of output, therefore ‘energy going out of a person’s life’, a person who volunteers time and effort to work on a political campaign. As an example of input, they mention that a person with deteriorating health may need physical assistance and emotional support to perform daily tasks. Germain (1991:464) also describes inputs from the environment as information, matter and energy. He states that open systems are made of matter and energy, and they exchange matter and energy with the environment. An open system transforms inputs and exports outputs back to the environment. Such outputs from communities, families and individuals include goods, services, and information. According to Germain (1991:464) these input-transformation-output processes illuminate the nested nature of open systems.

Hepworth et al. (2006:17) are of the opinion that from an ecological perspective, the satisfaction of human needs and the mastery of developmental tasks require adequate resources in the environment and positive transactions between persons and their environments. Some of the systems with which people commonly transact include: the family and extended family; the social network (friends, neighbours, co-workers, religious leaders, club members and cultural groups); public institutions (educational, recreational, law enforcement, social service, health care, employment, economic security and various government agencies); personal service providers (doctor, dentist, hairdresser, bartender, auto mechanic and landlord) as well as a religious/spiritual belief system (Hepworth et al., 2006:195).

Germain and Gitterman (1980:28) express the opinion that “in the complex transactions between people and environments, upsets in the usual adaptive balance or ‘goodness-of-fit’ often emerge.” They state that these upsets signify the stress generated by inconsistencies between needs and capacities and environmental qualities. Stress arises in three interrelated areas, namely life transitions, environmental pressures and

maladaptive interpersonal processes of relationships and communications. These stresses provide the field of social work with a social purpose, which is to strengthen adaptive capacities of individuals and to influence environments so that transactions promote growth and development (Germain & Gitterman, 1980:28).

These authors reiterated their view on transactions and the purpose of social work a few years later when they stated that helping people with problems provides social work with a clear and distinctive purpose – to improve the transactions between people and their environments and to facilitate a better match, a ‘goodness-of-fit’ between human needs and environmental resources. In their view social work is therefore provided with a key function by reinforcing the fit between people and their environments (Germain & Gitterman, 1986:631).

The young adult is exposed to a variety of systems by virtue of his personal, social, educational and/or employment roles. Constant reciprocal transactions occur in a give and take manner between the young adult and the different systems mentioned above (family, social networks, public institutions, personal service providers, as well as a spiritual/belief system). The young adult assumes different roles and responsibilities in situations of constant transaction. For many young adults the experience of performing transactions in an independent manner, without the assistance of immediate support systems will pose rewards and challenges.

2.3.3.8 ‘Goodness-of-fit’

‘Goodness-of-fit’ was referred to in the previous subsection and will now be discussed in more depth. Germain and Gitterman (1980:5, 6) apply the Darwinian concept of ‘fit’ in their concept ‘goodness-of-fit’ when describing the place of human beings within the environment:

Like all living systems, human beings must maintain a goodness-of-fit with the environment. The Darwinian concept of “fit” applies both to organisms and environments: to the fitness of the environment and the fitness of organisms, each with the other, and through which both prosper. If human beings do not secure the appropriate nutriment (input, stimuli, information, energy, resources) from the environment

at the appropriate time, their biological, cognitive, emotional, and social development may be retarded and their functioning impaired.

Adaptive exchanges of information, energy, and matter need to take place between persons and environments to prevent damage to either or both. Upsets in the usual adaptive balance or goodness-of-fit often emerge in the complex transactions between people and environments (Germain & Gitterman, 1980:5). In 1986 Germain and Gitterman referred to 'goodness-of-fit' as an 'adaptive balance' (Germain & Gitterman, 1986:619). The adaptive processes in human beings are psychological, social, cultural and biological.

Human beings have changed both themselves and their environments through language, knowledge, technology and belief systems. Modern societies pose demands that often exceed the limits of many or most people (Germain & Gitterman, 1986:620). Germain and Gitterman (1986:620) discuss 'life stress' and 'coping' in the following manner: "people experience stress when an imbalance exist between a *perceived demand* and a *perceived capability* to meet the demand through available internal and external resources." Stress is however not necessarily problematic as one person's challenge is another person's stress. These authors state that individual perceptions of challenge and stress are mediated by bio psychosocial functioning, age, sex, culture, and the nature of the perceived environment (Germain & Gitterman, 1986:620). Stress expresses a particular person-environment relationship and is therefore transactive in nature. Coping efforts require both internal and external resources, and therefore express a person-environment relationship, which implies both personal and environmental resources (Germain & Gitterman, 1986:620, 621).

Germain (1991:4) refers to Bartlett's (1970) use of the concepts *life tasks* and *coping* and then states that together, the two concepts reflect certain interactions or exchanges between people and environments. It is the social worker's professional task and purpose to maintain a dual, simultaneous focus on people and environments, in such a manner that people are empowered to make their own choices and decisions (Germain, 1991:4).

Adaptive exchanges are necessary to achieve a 'goodness-of-fit' with the environment. The young adult requires internal and external resources and a well-adjusted person-environment relationship to cope in an ever-changing postmodern era where the world is in a permanent 'fast forward' state (Smith, 1999:6). The present day postmodern lifestyle, with its diminished moral responsibility and the unpredictability of interpersonal relationships, could possibly have a negative impact on the social functioning of young adults (Mason, 2001:62; Gane, 2001:271). The postmodern time therefore poses challenges in terms of the young adult's adaptive balance, also described as 'goodness-of-fit'.

The interactions and exchanges between people and environments will subsequently be discussed.

2.3.4 Levels of interaction within an ecological perspective

Ambrosino et al. (2008:60) state that one criticism of the systems/ecological framework in social work is that it is too complicated. These authors state that the social scientists, Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Garbarino (1992) address this concern by dividing the system into different levels, or layers of the environment, where each level impacts other layers. For Bronfenbrenner the ecology of human development was based on a concentric arrangement of systems, where the microsystem is the smallest and most direct system that a person experiences. The macrosystem represents the wider social policy and socio-cultural setting and includes the ideological, customary and legal norms. This system influences all the other levels of the environment (O'Donoghue & Maidment, 2005:37).

Bronfenbrenner (1979:16) describes the interaction between a person and his environment as follows: "[H]uman development is a product of interaction between the growing human organism and its environment... the principle asserts that behaviour evolves as a function of the interplay between person and environment..." Bronfenbrenner (1997:21) refers to this evolving scientific perspective as the *ecology of human development* and provides the following description of this concept:

The ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded.

Bronfenbrenner (1979:22) points out that three features of this definition are crucial. Firstly, the developing person is viewed as a growing, dynamic entity. Secondly, the interaction between person and environment is viewed as two-directional, characterised by reciprocity. Thirdly, the environment is not limited to a single immediate setting but is extended to include interconnections between such settings, as well as to external influences deriving from the larger surroundings. The ecological environment is conceived as “a nested arrangement of concentric structures, each contained within the next. These structures are referred to as the *micro-*, *meso-*, *exo-*, and *macrosystems*” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:22).

Various authors (Ambrosino et al., 2008:63; Arthur & McMahon, 2005:212; Beyer et al., 2007:25; Caldwell & Darling, 1999:59), when discussing the different levels of interaction, also referred to as levels of the environment (micro, meso, exo, and macro), acknowledge Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) contribution as the basis of the ecological perspective. They have added the following views, which further clarify the different levels of interaction. Arthur and McMahon (2005:212) state that the individual as a system does not live in isolation, but as part of a much larger contextual system. The individual is therefore both a system and a subsystem. In the same manner the broader contextual system comprises subsystems, specifically the social system and the environmental system. According to Arthur and McMahon (2005:212) the social system refers to other people’s systems with which the individual interacts and is representative of Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) ‘microsystem’. Arthur and McMahon (2005:212) state that the social system comprises subsystems related to family, educational institutions, peers and the media. Caldwell and Darling (1999:59) refer to “daily life environments, influenced by the variations and interactions of personal and situational variables, which afford either risk or opportunity.”

These different levels of interaction, as described by Bronfenbrenner (1979), will subsequently be discussed. Bronfenbrenner's original description of the levels of interaction will be presented and then enhanced with more current views by prominent authors in the field of social work.

2.3.4.1 Microsystem

Bronfenbrenner (1979:22) defines a microsystem as follows: "A microsystem is a pattern of *activities, roles, and interpersonal relations* experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics." Bronfenbrenner (1979:22) describes a *setting* as a place where people can engage in face-to-face interaction – a home, day care centre, play ground and others. The factors "*activity, role and interpersonal relation* constitute the elements, or building blocks, of the microsystem." Bronfenbrenner (1979:22) elaborates on the term *experienced* in the following manner: "...the scientific relevant features of any environment include not only its objective properties but also the way in which these properties are perceived (experienced) by the persons in that environment." Bronfenbrenner (1979:23) acknowledges the ideas of Kurt Lewin (1931, 1935, 1951), who emphasised reality, not as it exists in the objective world but as it appears in the mind of the person, with the focus on the way in which the environment is perceived (experienced) by the human beings who interact within and with it.

Beyer et al.'s (2007:25) definition of the microsystem is that it is "any context of which the person in focus has immediate experience and personal interaction in a direct way"; "[i]t includes the *interpersonal relationships* that the individual experiences within these settings." Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2009:17) view individual, personal characteristics and experiences as micro events, while Ambrosino et al. (2008:63) describe the microsystem as the level which includes the individual and all persons and groups that incorporate the individual's day-to-day environment. "This level incorporates the individual's level of functioning, intellectual and emotional capacities, and motivation; the impact of life experiences; and the interactions and connections between that individual and others in the immediate environment" (Ambrosino et al., 2008:63).

The young adult's microsystem level incorporates his own personal characteristics, such as his physical and biological characteristics, intelligence, his culture and gender, his interactions, exchanges and relations in his intimate and most direct immediate setting, with his friends, parents, family members, fellow students, peers, teachers and/or employer. The young adult's personal experiences, activities and roles in his immediate setting constitute his microsystem level.

2.3.4.2 Mesosystem

A mesosystem comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates (such as, for a child, the relations among home, school, and neighborhood peer group; for an adult, among family, work, and social life).

Bronfenbrenner (1979:25) states that a mesosystem is therefore a system of microsystems, which is formed whenever the person moves into a new setting. Interconnections may take a number of additional forms, namely "other persons who participate actively in both settings, intermediate links in a social network, formal and informal communications among settings, and ...the extent and nature of knowledge and attitudes existing in one setting about the other."

Bronfenbrenner (1979:209) proposes four general types of interconnections within the mesosystem. The first is multisetting participation, which is the most basic form of interconnection between two settings, since at least one manifestation of it is required for a mesosystem. Multisetting participation occurs when the same person engages in activities in more than one setting. Bronfenbrenner (1979:209) says that it can also be defined as the existence of a direct or first order social network across settings in which the person is a participant. The existence of such a network/mesosystem is established at the point when the person first enters a new setting.

The second interconnection is indirect linkage. When a person does not actively participate in both settings, a connection between the two may still be established through a third party who serves as an intermediate link between persons in the two settings.

Participants in the two settings are therefore not meeting face-to-face. Such second order connections can be more remote, involving two or more intermediate links in the network chain (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:210).

The third interconnection is intersetting communications. These communications are messages transmitted from one setting to the other with the intent of providing specific information to persons in the other setting. This communication can occur in a variety of ways; directly, by means of face-to-face interaction, telephone conversations, correspondence, notices or announcements or indirectly via chains in the social network. Communications may be one-sided or interactive (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:210).

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979:210) the fourth interconnection is intersetting knowledge, which refers to information or experience that exists in one setting about the other. This type of knowledge may be obtained by means of intersetting communication or from external sources, for example different types of media. “The most critical direct link between two settings is the one that establishes the existence of a mesosystem in the first instance – the *setting transition* that occurs when the person enters a new environment” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:210). Bronfenbrenner (1979:216) states that the most important mesosystem function of social networks is that they serve as channels for transmitting information or attitudes about one setting to the other.

It is also the view of other authors that meso events involve interactions with other people in the immediate environment. According to Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2009:17) these experiences often concern relationships with peer groups and immediate work groups. These authors are of the opinion that family events lie somewhere between the micro and meso levels. Beyer et al. (2007:25) define the mesosystem as the set of linkages between microsystems that the person enters. Beyer et al. (2007:25) refer to Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) view that development will be enhanced if the different settings in which the developing person is involved are strongly linked – as an example they refer to the probability that a child will learn values if the values taught at school and at home correspond. Ambrosino et al. (2008:63) state of the mesosystem level that this level

involves the relationship between two microsystems that are linked by some person who is present in both microsystems. The interactions in one microsystem influence the interactions of the others.

The young adult's mesosystem level incorporates the linking of two microsystems, because of the young adult's involvement in both systems. This multisetting participation occurs for instance when he engages in activities within his family as well as within the tertiary institution, should he be a student. His interactions in one microsystem influence his interactions in the others.

2.3.4.3 Exosystem

Bronfenbrenner (1979:25) defines an exosystem as follows: "An exosystem refers to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person." Bronfenbrenner (1979:25) provides examples of an exosystem in the case of a young child. The exosystem might include the parent's place of work, a school class attended by an older sibling or the parents' network of friends.

To demonstrate the operation of the exosystem as a context influencing development, a causal sequence involving at least two steps has to be established. The first is to connect events in the external setting to processes occurring in the person's microsystem. The second is to link microsystem processes to developmental changes in a person within that setting. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979:237) the causal sequence may also run in the opposite direction. It must however be shown that a two-stage sequence has occurred.

Bronfenbrenner (1979:242) uses the example of television viewing as illustration. He states that the primary danger of the television screen lies not so much in the behaviour it produces as the behaviour it prevents – the talks, the games, the family festivities and the argumentation through which much of the child's learning takes place and his character is formed. Bronfenbrenner (1979:242) explains that the television program enters the home from an external source. It therefore constitutes part of the child's exosystem. This

powerful medium exerts its influence not directly, but through its effect on the parents and their interactions with their children. It therefore represents a second-order effect, operating not completely within a microsystem but rather across ecological borders as an exosystem phenomenon.

Beyer et al. (2007:25) confirm this second-order effect when they state that “the exosystem consists of interconnections between the micro- and mesosystems and those systems with which the person has no direct contact, but which may affect his experience or the functioning of these two systems.” The exosystem describes the community-environment level, namely the medical, educational and recreational resources in the neighbourhood. Beyer et al. (2007:25) state that the exosystem is also referred to as the organisational level. Ambrosino et al. (2008:63) also refer to the community-level, when referring to the exosystem level. This level incorporates factors that may not relate directly to the individual but affect the way the individual functions. Ambrosino et al. (2008:63) point out that this level includes factors such as workplace policies (of parents, which impact their children), school board and community policies, community attitudes and values, as well as economic and social factors within the community.

The young adult’s exosystem level incorporates factors that may not relate directly to him, but affects the way he functions. An exosystem refers to one or more settings that do not involve the young adult as an active participant. The young adult who depends on his parents for financial assistance, for example, is influenced on an exosystem level by the retrenchment of this parent. This therefore represents a second-order effect, operating not completely within the microsystem but rather across ecological borders as an exosystem phenomenon.

2.3.4.4 *Macrosystem*

Bronfenbrenner (1997:26) provides the following definition of macrosystem:

The macrosystem refers to consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies.

Bronfenbrenner (1979:26) points out that “[t]he systems blueprints differ for various socioeconomic, ethnic, religious and other subcultural groups...” These blueprints reflect different belief systems and lifestyles, which assist in preserving the ecological environments specific to each group. Cultures and subcultures can be expected to be different from each other but relatively homogeneous internally in the following respects: the types of settings they contain, the kinds of settings that persons enter at successive stages of their lives, the content and organisation of activities, roles and relations found within each type of setting and the extent and nature of connections existing between settings entered into or affecting the life of the developing person. “[T]hese consistent patterns of organization and behavior find support in the values generally held by members of the given culture or subculture” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:258).

Bronfenbrenner (1979:265) makes the statement that the macrosystem also undergoes a process of development and in doing so lends movement to all its composite systems down to the level of the person. The members of a changing society therefore necessarily experience developmental change at every psychic level – intellectual, emotional and social.

According to Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2009:18) macro events involve people’s transactions with large organisations and systems around the individual. Ambrosino et al. (2008:63) are of the opinion the macrosystem consists of societal factors such as the cultural attitudes and values of the society (attitudes toward women, people of colour, the poor and violence); the role of the media in addressing or promoting social problems; legislation and social policies.

Beyer et al.’s (2007:25) description of the macrosystem is similar. They also refer to “the wider system of ideology and organisation of social institutions common to a particular social class, ethnic group or culture to which a person belongs.” It includes attitudes and values as well as the policies that govern behaviour, economic trends, gender roles, social class and cultural values (Beyer et al., 2007:25). Woodside, Caldwell and Spurr (2006:259) include belief systems regarding societal conceptions of ethnicity, socio-

economic status, as well as best practices for structuring society and institutions. These authors simplify their statement by referring to money, gender, ethnicity, social class and culture as components of the macrosystem. Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2009:18) state that macro events may include poverty, discrimination, social pressures, and the effects of social policies. The sources surrounding the individual cause or contribute to problems experienced by the individual (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2009:18).

The young adult's macrosystem level incorporates the broader social context, belief systems and lifestyles, as well as values generally held by members of the given culture or subculture. Keenan and Evans (2009:37) discuss the chronosystem which Bronfenbrenner included in his model to indicate that "development occurs in historical time." All aspects of time impact on development within the ecological system, seeing that all the embedded systems change over time. "Historical events which occur in time... have important effects on development" (Keenan & Evans, 2009:37). These authors refer to the work by Elder (1974) which indicates the substantial impact of the economic depression of the 1930s on the lives of children growing up during that period. The impact of global issues, such as postmodernism as a present day paradigm can be observed within the macrosystem. The postmodern lifestyle does however have an impact on the young adult within all his different systems and his social functioning in these systems, seeing that it affects his views and lifestyles, which in turn affect how he adjusts in his different systems (see Figure 2.1). Discovering more about the nature of this impact within the South African context forms the rationale of this study.

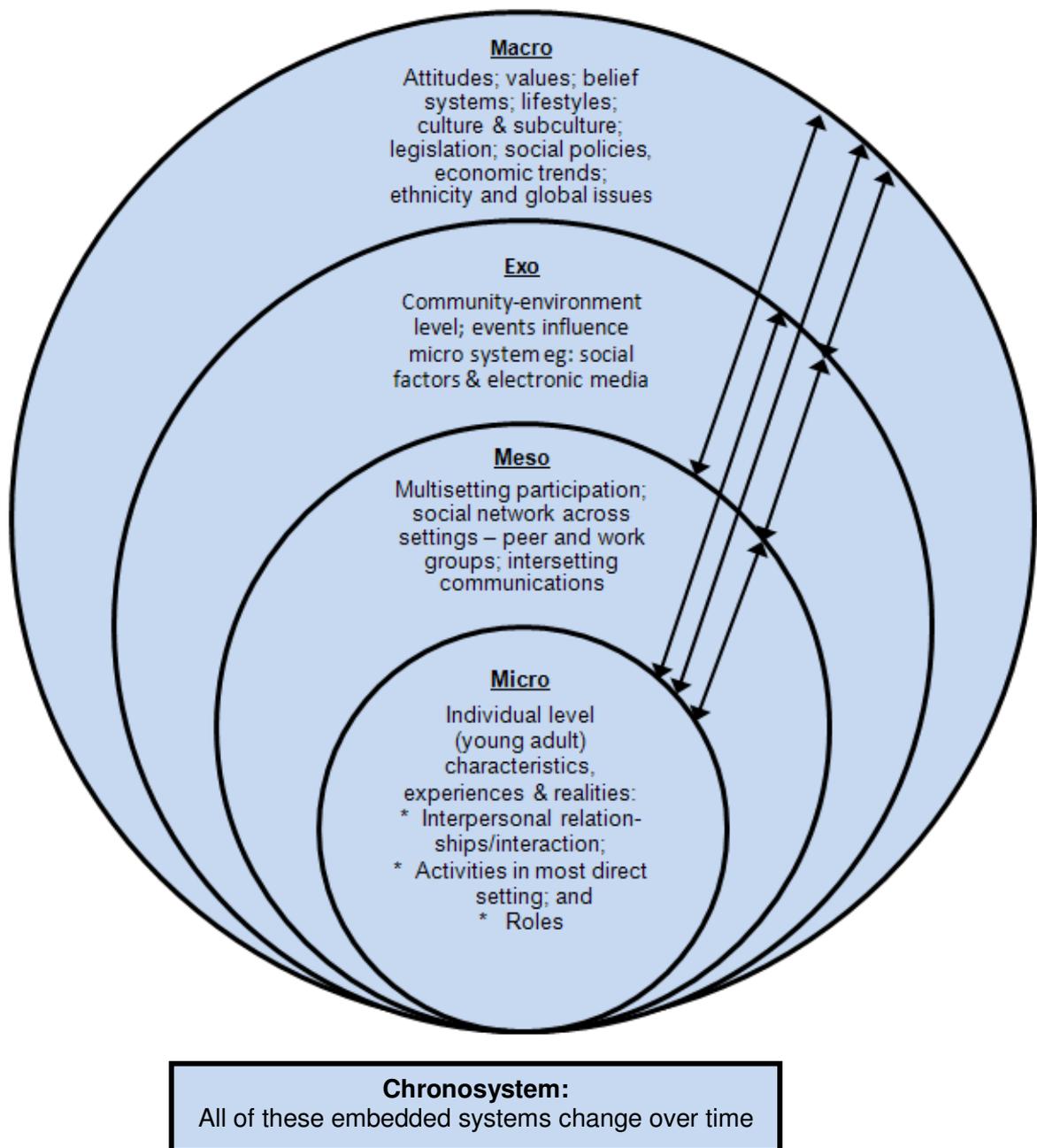


Figure 2.1: Levels of the ecological system (Ambrosino et al. 2008:61; Keenan & Evans, 2009:36)

Figure 2.1 demonstrates the manner in which the various levels of interaction, also referred to as the levels of the environment, in which the young adult functions, interact constantly and impact on one another. Ambrosino et al. (2008:64) view the ecological

framework as a guide to understand how systems interact with and are shaped by the broader environment. Ambrosino et al. quote Garbarino (1992) who states that deciding where in the environment each factor fits is not as important as the interdependence and interactions between the different levels of the environment and how they influence and are influenced by the developing system (Ambrosino et al., 2008:64). The chronosystem indicates that all aspects of time impact on development within the ecological system, seeing that all the embedded systems change over time (Bronfenbrenner in Keenan & Evans, 2009:37). The chronosystem is particularly relevant in terms of postmodernism and this research when regarded as “the spirit of the contemporary age” (Potter & López, 2001:3). Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2002:16) summarise their discussion of the different ecological systems with the statement that knowledge about human behaviour and the social environment is essential in order to understand the total picture.

The individual’s social functioning as a system and as a subsystem takes place within the various levels of interaction, also referred to as levels of the environment on the micro, meso, exo and macro levels. The social functioning of the individual will now be discussed.

2.4 SOCIAL FUNCTIONING

A rationale for the relevance of an ecological perspective as a basis for professional social work has been presented in this chapter. Definitions of social work, which emphasise enhancing social functioning, addressing the relationships, interactions and interdependence between people and their environments, as well as the focus of social work on the interface between a person and his or her environment, have also been addressed.

As has been indicated, the ecological framework emphasises that the individual, group or community’s lives are shaped by the choices they make, that the environment shapes their choices and that their choices in turn shape the way they interact with their environment. This cyclical perspective suggests that we cannot discuss the individual without including

the environment or the environment without considering the strong forces of individuals in its formulation (Ambrosino et al., 2008:53, 54, 65). This ecological perspective is the context for considering the influence of postmodernism on the social functioning of the young adult. The assumption was made in chapter 1 that the postmodern lifestyle has an influence on youths and young adults in their different systems and their social functioning within these systems. To understand this influence, social functioning and the indicators of social functioning, namely roles and interaction (DuBois & Miley, 2011:63; *New Dictionary of Social Work*, 1995:58; Potgieter, 1998:27), will be discussed.

When considering Hepworth et al.'s (2006:6) view of social functioning, their incorporation of ecological concepts is significant. These authors state that the enhancing of social functioning involves addressing common human needs that must be effectively met to enable individuals to achieve fulfilment and to function as productive and contributing members of society. To achieve 'goodness-of-fit', resources need to be matched with needs. Social work is therefore directed to the interface between people and their environments. "Tapping into these resources generally involves enhancing transactions between people and their social or physical environments" (Hepworth et al., 2006:6).

Germain and Gitterman's (1980:10) link between the ecological perspective and social functioning is equally distinctive when they state that social work's purpose is "to strengthen the adaptive capacities of people and to influence their environments so that transactions are more adaptive." The focus is on people as well as their environments with the aim of overcoming obstacles that inhibit growth, development and adaptive functioning. Germain and Gitterman (1980:12) point out that people's needs and problems are located in the interface between person and environment.

As indicated in chapter 1, the definition for 'social functioning' used as a frame of reference for this study is the definition provided by the *New Dictionary of Social Work* (1995:58) which states that social functioning is an "[i]ndividual's role performance in its entirety at all levels of existence in interaction with other individuals, families, groups, communities and situations." In this definition roles and interaction are the indicators of social

functioning. When describing the goal of social work in 1964, Skidmore and Thackeray (1964:7) referred to the importance of both ‘roles’ and ‘interaction’ in terms of optimal social functioning. Decades later, several authors still hold that these two indicators, namely role performance and the mutual interaction between the individual and his environment, are the aspects of social functioning that are the fundamental concern of social work (DuBois & Miley, 2011:63; *New Dictionary of Social Work*, 1995:58; Potgieter, 1998:27). These two indicators of social functioning will subsequently be discussed.

2.4.1 Roles

Once again, the researcher found appropriate and relevant information by researching the views of seminal sources on the concepts relevant to this research. In terms of roles, Lindzey (1954), in Davis (1986:542), makes the statement that the concept ‘role’ is drawn from the theatre and has been passed down through the centuries to characterise the observable behaviours persons enact in their patterned interactions with others. Davis (1986:542) elaborates that this statement captures the central view of role theory, namely that the individual plays many parts in his life and that the basic scripts are provided by others. The enactment is however uniquely his own. Davis (1986:542) quotes Linton (1936), who conceived of persons as “enacting one role for each of the many statuses they occupied”, and acknowledges Merton (1957) who observed that “there were actually a set of different roles – that is, a role-set – potentially associated with each status.” Davis (1986:542) is of the opinion that the positions which individuals occupy in society influence the various ways behaviours are enacted in interactions with others. Behaviours also vary when individuals interact with different persons. Stenius, Veysey, Hamilton and Andersen (2005:182) discuss this variation and they state that certain roles tend to have greater or lesser value. Identification with roles also varies. According to these authors role theory suggests that roles can have a profound impact on individuals’ lives, particularly in terms of how others relate to them (Stenius et al., 2005:182).

Social position and social status are used interchangeably in the literature to refer to a ‘socially recognised category of actors’ (Davis, 1986:544). Davis (1986:544) mentions that even though the term ‘status’ is more frequently used, she prefers the term ‘position’

seeing that it is less value-laden. *Ascribed positions* are those that are independent of the qualities of the individual and depend on accidents of birth, social experience or maturity. Common ascribed positions are woman, man, child and adult. *Achieved positions* are those that are attained through skill or effort. Common achieved positions are social worker, musician and politician. *Status* refers to the value of the position. The most common criteria used to determine status are prestige, wealth and authority. A role refers to the characteristic behaviours enacted by people who occupy certain social positions (Davis, 1986:544). According to Lindzey (in Davis, 1986:544) a role is “a patterned sequence of learned actions or deeds performed by a person in an interaction situation.”

Davis (1986:544) discusses *role-set*, *role expectations* and *role complementarity* as relevant aspects in the context of roles. Role-set refers to the varied roles potentially associated with any single position. Different sets of behaviours are enacted for different role partners. “Role expectations are the set of expectations for the behaviors of a person or a position held by a particular person or by a generalized other.” Davis (1986:544) continues by stating that since roles are enacted in interaction with another, there are both role expectations held by the actor and reciprocal role expectations of the other. Role expectations vary. Some are held by society, others are group specific; however, role expectations differ as a function of ethnicity or socioeconomic class. According to Davis (1986:544) *role complementarity* exists when “the role behaviour and role expectations of persons in an interpersonal system are harmonious.” Role complementarity results in satisfactory role relationships, while lack of complementarity results in dissatisfactory relationships as well as individual and interpersonal stress.

Norms are role expectations that serve to prescribe behaviours that ought to be performed by the person holding a given position. Davis quotes Kingsley Davis (1966): “[I]t is largely through... (norms)... that... (a person’s)... conduct is regulated and integrated with the conduct of his fellows.” Norms and expectations have been used interchangeably. Role expectations that are socially prescribed are however more commonly referred to as ‘norms’. In his discussion of norms and roles, Radley (1996:34) points out that norms are not shared by all, seeing that some norms prescribe what should be done; others only

describe what most people do. Norms are therefore not shared by all. There are no “unbending prescriptions” in terms of roles and behaviour (Radley, 1996:34).

According to Stenius et al. (2005:183) social roles define expectations for behaviour as well as ascribe value to the behaviour and the individual. These authors state that “each role has a prescribed value based on societal perceptions of what that role entails, ranging from extremely valued to extremely devalued.” Societal expectations regarding appropriate behaviour accompany the attainment of new roles, which greatly impacts behaviour (Stenius et al., 2005:183). Germain (1991:271) emphasises the acquisition of new roles throughout the life course. This occurs throughout adulthood seeing that childhood socialisation does not prepare the individual for all the adult roles that are undertaken in an increasingly complex society. The family and environmental settings are major arenas of adult socialisation. This is where the individual acquires new statuses and their associated roles and learns to carry them out. According to Germain (1991:271) people usually move into new statuses and roles by choice and because of the pressures of maturity, such as affiliating with community groups and institutions as a child, a youth and an adult. All of these are rich in socialisation experiences.

When the status of the young adult is considered, multiple roles are implied, each with different levels of demands. The young adult could be a student at college or university or could recently have entered an occupation. Apart from this role, this young adult probably functions in the role of son/daughter, brother/sister, friend, fellow student, partner, peer, and many others. Germain (1991:272) refers to the role of student and states that the varied socialisation demands are heavy; they include acquiring new knowledge, skills, values and norms, beliefs and attitudes, and a professional self-concept.

Davis (1986:546) links role performance with social identity. She states that social identity is the sense of ourselves that we derive from the positions we occupy and the adequacy with which we and the significant others in our lives judge our role performance. Social identity is developed and internalised by means of the reciprocal interactions the individual has with others. Social identity reflects the complexity of a myriad of role relationships. “At

one and the same time we may be mothers in relation to children, children in relation to mothers, students in relation to teachers, and teachers in relation to students” (Davis, 1986:546).

Davis, discussing Perlman’s (1968) role theory, argues that society provides the basic script for behaviour, but that it is in the ongoing transactions between people that these scripts are acted out and that role behaviours are fine-tuned. Role prescription facilitates the daily interactions between people.

According to Hepworth et al. (2006:17) the concept “[*n*]iche refers to statuses or roles occupied by members of the community.” One of the tasks in development is to find one’s niche in society, which is crucial to attaining self-respect and a sense of self. Opportunities congruent with human needs should exist in society to facilitate the acquiring of these statuses or roles. Germain (1991:50) takes a broader view of niche when he states that “[i]n the case of human beings, niche is used as a metaphor for the status or social position occupied in the social structure of the community by particular groups.” He therefore relates niche to power and oppression seeing that what constitutes a growth-supporting, health-promotion human niche is defined differently in various societies and in different historical eras. Niches are shaped by political and economic structure, and by systems of education, health and mental health care, child welfare, juvenile justice, welfare, work and the media (Germain, 1991:51). Young adults who live in the new millennium as a present day era have been born into and brought up within a postmodern paradigm. Postmodernism has an influence on the young adult’s views and lifestyles, which in turn determines how he fulfils his roles and interacts with his environment.

Various authors (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:22, 25, 85; Stenius et al., 2005:184, 193) discuss the concept role within the microsystem. This will be discussed briefly seeing that postmodernism as a life context applies within this specific level of interaction.

2.4.1.1 Role as microsystem concept

As defined under 2.3.4.1 a microsystem is “a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics.” The factor ‘role’ is one of the building blocks (elements) of the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:22). Bronfenbrenner (1979:25) describes ‘role’ as “a set of behaviours and expectations associated with a position in society, such as that of mother, baby, teacher, friend...”

An ecological approach requires some modification of the generally accepted definition of role. This modification requires expectations about reciprocal activities and relations. Incorporating these factors, Bronfenbrenner (1979:85) then describes role as “a set of activities and relations expected of a person occupying a particular position in society, and of others in relation to that person.” Stenius et al. (2005:184) also emphasise society and the environment when they refer to ‘ongoing life context’ and its impact on roles. Once again the relevance of postmodernism as a life context and its impact on roles can be emphasised. These authors stress the importance of examining the context in which a given role exists and also determining how changes in one role may influence other areas of the individual’s life. Changes in one role are often linked to changes in another role. This means that one positive change could create other required opportunities (Stenius et al., 2005:193).

2.4.1.2 Status changes and role demands

Germain and Gitterman (1980:89) make the statement that human action takes place in a social, cultural and physical context. This context comprises of a variety of social systems, such as the family, peer group, social network of significant people, bureaucratic organisations and social institutions. Human action is influenced by personal and interpersonal processes, and is regulated and patterned by cultural norms and values. “In every social system to which the individual belongs, [he] occupies a social status; each such status comprises a set of interrelated roles” (Germain & Gitterman, 1980:89).

According to Germain and Gitterman (1980:90) the various expectations with respect to statuses and roles may conflict with one another and compete for time, energy and interest. The individual has to balance the diverse status and role responsibilities imposed by each of the social systems he belongs to, taking into account motivations and capacities, cultural beliefs, norms and values, the relevant significance of the statuses and roles, and the limitations and opportunities provided by the various physical settings in which he is involved. Hepworth et al. (2006:38) state that social systems have distinctive properties “including power distribution, role definitions, rules, norms, channels of communication, and repetitive interactional patterns.”

2.4.2 Interaction

As mentioned previously, the two indicators of social functioning are social roles and social interaction. The concept ‘interaction’ is however not only significant within social functioning. This concept also forms an integral part of the ecological perspective and has therefore been discussed in this chapter. The focus of the ecological perspective is on the interaction between person and environment, on transactions and on adaptive functioning. Interaction is viewed as two-directional and characterised by reciprocity. Human systems are always in interaction with other systems within the environment (DuBois & Miley, 2011:59). The different levels of interaction within the ecological environment were reviewed when discussing the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:22). The following statement by Ambrosino et al. (2008:64) was quoted earlier to illustrate the interdependence between these systems: “...a systems/ecological framework emphasizes that our lives are shaped by the choices we make, that the environment shapes our choices, and that our choices in turn shape the way we interact with our environment.” This statement also highlights the reciprocal interaction between the individual and the environment.

When discussing the significance of social interactions as a component of social functioning, Moore and Mellor (2003) quote Dumas (1998) and Sheridan et al. (1996) who are of the view that appropriate social and interpersonal relations are the most substantial indicator of social adjustment. The early influence of perceived parental interactions has

been related to people's subsequent well-being. Moore and Mellor (2003) also state that a major component of social interactions among children is with their peers, particularly at school. Social interaction with parents and peers therefore seems significant in terms of the social functioning and social well-being of the child. Zastrow (2013:96) emphasises social interactions with significant others. Significant others in the life of the young adult could include family members, partners, friends, peers, fellow students, other close relatives and neighbours (James, Witte & Galbraith, 2006:54).

Miell and Dallos (1996:2) indicate that interactions and relationships are fundamental to everyday functioning; not only for physical survival, but also for emotional well-being. The young adult is involved in a series of relationships at any one specific time. Interactions and relationships with friends, family members, peers and colleagues extend over time. Therefore, they evolve, develop and change (Miell & Dallos, 1996:3). Interactions do not take place in a void, but within a social and cultural context. Dallos (1996:151) makes the statement that both the pleasures and satisfactions, as well as the problems and conflicts of interactions and relationships can be traced to the core constructs, the understandings, beliefs, expectations and explanations that we have about people with whom we are interacting and about our relationship with them (Dallos, 1996:151).

2.4.2.1 Problems in interaction

"As men and women live together, problems of relationship and interaction emerge" (Skidmore & Thackeray, 1964:3). Skidmore and Thackeray (1964:3) make the statement that one of the premises that social work and social welfare is based on, is that the individual has personal, family and community problems resulting from his interaction with others. Potgieter (1998:57) states that every system is unique, with its own characteristics and its own ways of interacting. Interaction takes place within relationships among individuals and in relationships between individuals and the organised social resources of the community. The individual's social relationships constitute the interaction between man and his environment (Skidmore & Thackeray, 1964:6, 35). Radley (1996:27) points out that when considering the individual's social interaction, his perspectives or frames of reference should also be kept in mind.

When discussing the focus of social work, Skidmore and Thackeray (1964:8, 12, 13) emphasise interaction in the following manner: “Certainly the main focus of the social worker is upon helping people to improve their social functioning, their ability to interact and relate to others... social work (is)... interested in people, their interactions, and understanding these interactions... interested in the *why* of human interaction.”

As mentioned, problems may emerge in relationships and in interactions. Potgieter (1998:228) makes the statement that people may experience problems as a consequence of ineffective interaction and that problems may at times be intensified by the dysfunctional communication patterns within a system. Interactional difficulties include struggles for power and authority, unproductive arguments, the inability to direct messages to the appropriate receiver, vagueness and accusations, lack of openness, faulty self-expression and an inability to give and receive correct feedback. Many interactional difficulties are repeated over and over and are transferred from one relationship to another and may lead to the same negative consequences in various human relationships (Potgieter, 1998:228). Zastrow (2013:96) agrees with this view when he says that people often manifest similar interactional patterns in their social relationships. The manner in which a person interacts in one setting will provide indications to his difficulties or successes in interactions with others. A person may however interact atypically in order to convey an atypical message. Zastrow (2013:97) mentions interacting with a police officer as a possible example of atypical interaction.

Basic communication skills are a prerequisite for successful interaction. Potgieter (1998:228) states in this regard that every system depends on communication skills for its survival and that the development of communication skills requires constant attention. The process of socialisation in the family of origin normally provides the context for learning these skills and should prepare family members for the intricacies of life (Potgieter, 1998:228). According to Steinmetz, Clavan and Stein (1990), as well as Horne and Passmore (1992) in Potgieter (1998:228), the natural demands of family processes are however of such a complex nature that many families fail to act as a suitable training ground for its members in this respect. Potgieter (1998:228) quotes Noller and Fitzpatrick

(1993) who are of the opinion that the ability to communicate effectively should be fostered as a basic life skill which will enable a system to improve its social functioning through problem-solving and conflict resolution.

2.4.2.2 Interaction within the broader environment

Bronfenbrenner (1979:16) refers to the interplay between person and environment in his statement that human development is a product of interaction between the growing human organism and its environment. DuBois and Miley (2011:59) refer to transactions when referring to the exchanges between human systems, other systems and resources.

It is Germain's (1991:15, 16) view that ecology is the science that studies relations between organisms and their environments. This science facilitates "a holistic view of people and environments as a unit in which neither can be fully understood except in the context of its relationship to the other." This relationship is characterised by constant reciprocal associations in which people and environments affect each other. Germain (1991:16) emphasises that both entities are changed, with consequences for both. To understand how an individual and other involved systems interact, these systems within the environment must be considered. According to Hepworth et al. (2006:195), these systems include the individual's family or extended family; the social network (friends, neighbours, co-workers, religious leaders, club members, cultural groups); public institutions (educational, recreational, employment, law enforcement, health care and mental health and various government agencies); personal service providers (doctor, dentist, hairdresser, bartender, auto mechanic, landlord, banker); and a religious or spiritual belief system.

Human beings are dependent on the environment for the fulfilment of basic needs. Social work practice is directed to the interface between people and their environments (Hepworth et al., 2006:6). Aspects of social functioning which concern social workers are role performance and shared interaction between man and other human beings. Even though problems can challenge individuals to improved effort and achievement, they often add to the collapse of social functioning (Skidmore & Thackeray, 1964:35). Blakely and

Dziadosz (2007:154) also emphasise the link between role behaviour and interaction in their statement that role behaviour is a response to interactions with others. These authors state that a person's view of himself is based on observations of others; therefore, social role behaviour in social positions is a response to others' expectations. Blakely and Dziadosz (2007:154) refer to a statement by Blumer (1969) that role behaviour is a response to interactions with others. The manner in which an individual therefore regards his social role behaviour seems to be grounded in his perceived view of what others expect of him (Blakely & Dziadosz, 2007:154).

2.5 CONCLUSION

“Ecology seeks to understand the reciprocal relations between organisms and environments” (Germain & Gitterman, 1980:28). These authors state that, for social work, ecology appears to be a more useful metaphor than the older, medical-disease metaphor that tended to view human beings and environment as relatively separate entities. An ecological perspective appears to be more useful because social work has always been committed both to helping people and to promoting more humane environments (Germain & Gitterman, 1980:28).

Postmodernism affects views and lifestyles, which in turn determine how an individual fulfils his roles and how he interacts within social systems on the different levels of interaction. In order to develop insight into the social functioning of the young adult, postmodernism as a worldview and its influence on social functioning will be discussed in chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

POSTMODERNISM AS A PRESENT-DAY PARADIGM

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Contextualising 'postmodernism' in terms of this study is no mean accomplishment. Confusion reigns with regard to a definition and a description of the nature and impact of postmodernism. The exact origin of postmodernism is also elusive. Readings on postmodernism from the perspectives of philosophers, sociologists, theologians, historians, psychologists, political scientists and social workers indicate that they differ in their approach, as well as in their affinity towards and attraction for this paradigm. Based on the following literature study, it seems that there are no consistencies in terms of the issues mentioned. Providing a universally accepted 'truth' on this topic seems to be an impossibility.

In an attempt to study the influence of postmodernism on the social functioning of the young adult, the origins of postmodernism and different views on modernism and postmodernism will be supplied. Studying different views makes an attempt at conceptualisation of 'postmodernism' possible. The nature of postmodernism, specifically its influence on the individual, its influence on language, roles and relationships, the virtual society, consumer society, the postmodern lifestyle, globalisation, morality, as well as the period beyond postmodernism will be addressed in this chapter. A discussion of 'postmodernism' as a present-day paradigm provides the context for understanding the social functioning of the young adult living in the new millennium.

3.2 THE ORIGINS OF POSTMODERNISM

To study origins means to study beginnings. The study of beginnings could also clarify the reasons for beginnings. In studying postmodernism and its nature it makes sense to

explore whether its origins point towards a possible void that existed and/or the driving force and the evolvment which lead to postmodernism.

Jordanova (2000:116) states that there are a number of criteria according to which the past can be divided up; to produce manageable chunks and also to organise our thoughts about it. Common division are according to rulers or dynasties, around key events or individuals, descriptively by epoch, century, decade or millennium, moods and patterns. Jordanova (2000:118) points out that related adjectives (Anglo-Saxon, Victorian and Napoleonic) are also terms of style and that this is especially obvious in relation to houses, furniture, jewellery and clothing. Even though we associate 'style' with art, music, fashion and culture, it is part of historical practice. According to Jordanova (2000:118) style and periodisation are closely related, jointly shaping the historical imagination. Period and style also shape the way in which whole eras can be imagined and thought about, as the phase 'Victorian values' indicate. Jordanova (2000:122) seems to favour the concept 'era' when stating that "our own era is implicated in their definition." This definition that she refers to is the definition of the 'modern' era, which seems to have started with the French Revolution.

According to Brooker (1992:1, 2), Faulkner pegs the dates for modernism in England at 1910 to 1930. This Brooker sees as very narrow and mentions that other versions are anywhere between 1880 and 1950. He then provides the following array of dates for the beginnings of postmodernism (Brooker, 1992:4, 5):

Arnold Toynbee detected its beginnings in the 1870's; Charles Olson and Irvin Howe, though they mean different things by it, saw it as emerging in the 1950's; Fredric Jameson, in one account, 'in the late 1940's and early 1950's', in other, around 'the end of the 1950's or the early 1960's'; Charles Jencks's as beginning on 15 July 1972 at 3.32 p.m. For others, postmodernism is a phenomenon of the eighties.

Brooker states, rightly so, that these different perspectives do not add up to form a complete picture. He describes this as "[w]hat you get is what you see from where you stand" (Brooker, 1992:5). He himself states that the terms 'postmodern' and

'postmodernism' surfaced in the 40s and 50s, also described as the early post-war period in America. To confuse the issue of origin further Brooker (1992:4), as already indicated, argues that there are postmodernisms as well as modernisms; that there is no absolute singular cultural entity or absolute historical break; and no absolute inside or outside. Arac (1986:xii) had a similar view when he made the statement that it remains unsettled whether the relation of the 'postmodern' to the 'modern' is more a break than a continuity. He refers to Habermas who identifies the modern with the still-unfulfilled project of the Enlightenment, while the postmodern remains a threatening shadow rather than something that has quite occurred (Arac, 1986:xii, xiii). According to Jordanova (2000:128) 'the Enlightenment' was both a movement of ideas, as well as the time period (the eighteenth century) in which it occurred. The Enlightenment suggests intellectual changes and also a move towards a more secular, rationalistic and democratic worldview. Returning to the origins of postmodernism, Bertens (1995:40) adds his affirmative voice to that of Arac (1986) when stating that a typological definition of the postmodern is awkward in terms of periodisation and that it is not a matter of chronology; "[t]he postmodern spirit lies coiled within the great corpus of modernism..."

When considering the origin of postmodernism it is essential to do so while also taking cognisance of its impact on different disciplines since its conception during the 1960s. Bertens (1995:111) provides the following chronology. Until the early 1980s the debate on postmodernism remained almost exclusively confined to architecture and to the arts. This changed dramatically during the course of the 1980s when postmodernism engaged the serious attention of professional philosophers and of leftist critics. Between 1981 and 1984 postmodernism became an indispensable concept in theories on the contemporary. "Jürgen Habermas, Jean-François Lyotard, Fredric Jameson, Jean Baudrillard, and Richard Rorty definitely put postmodernism and postmodernity on the theoretical map" (Bertens, 1995:111). According to Bertens (1995:111) the traditional left, the radical left, and even liberal humanists, joined the debate. During the late 1980s postmodernism also manifested itself in the socio-economic, political and the cultural-philosophical sphere. Bertens (1995:9) makes the statement that postmodernism has, in the course of the 1980s, filtered into and affected a large number of disciplines. This wide proliferation of the

postmodern is responsible for the frequent use of the terminology, outside its original core area, the humanities and has led people to speak of the postmodern world that we inhabit.

Hölscher (2005:238) states that many suggestions have been made over the past decades as to what constitutes postmodernism; whether we have actually entered a postmodern age, and if so, what could be considered its starting point. Regarding our current historical moment Jenkins (1997:3), in contrast, does not ask questions or make vague suggestions. He makes the following statement:

...I think that we live today within the general socio-economic and political condition of postmodernity. I don't think we have a choice about this. For postmodernity is not an ideology or position we can choose to subscribe to or not, postmodernity is precisely our condition: it is our historical fate to be living now.

This author makes the interesting statement that even though we cannot choose to live in postmodernity, we can exercise what he refers to as 'picking and choosing' between postmodernity and modernity, rather than 'going for' one or the other. He describes modernism as objective, disinterested, unbiased, truth, certainty and postmodernism as readings, positionings, reality effects, truth effects and rhetorical discourses (Jenkins, 1997:4, 5). Brooker (1992:4) also argues that there are postmodernisms as well as modernisms.

Against this background of the origin of postmodernism, the crucial question is whether we still find ourselves within postmodernity today. Ermarth (1997:52) makes the statement that postmodernism is not new "and it is not over." Lyotard (1997) refers to postmodernism as an eternal condition. Jenkins (1999:31) on the other hand states that postmodernism may have a short shelf-life and that it will certainly not last forever. He, however, states that intellectuals should not turn their backs to what is arguably one of the most momentous events in the history of intellectual endeavour. He provides the following explanation for this statement: postmodern theorising "represents one of the most concentrated outpourings of intellectual vitality in the 'history of the West'" (Jenkins, 1999:31). Jenkins (1999:31, 32) provides as rationale for this statement that the Western

tradition, stretching back over at least two and a half thousand years, produced 15 to 20 intellectual giants; their names well known, from Plato and Aristotle through to Aquinas, Descartes, Kant, Mill, Marx and others. While, today, it is possible to draw up a list of 15 to 20 intellectuals who have, in the space of 30 to 40 years, undermined, reworked and gone beyond the whole of that Western tradition. Jenkins (1999:32) mentions the following modernists; Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Heidegger and postmodernists; Barthes, Foucault, Lacan, Derrida, Lyotard and Rorty. He refers to their 'intellectual brilliance' and states that "postmodernism seems to be a vehicle through which, at the end of the experiment of modernity, a little bit of newness is entering our world" (Jenkins, 1999:32). Potter and López (2001:3) echo Jenkins' view when they state that postmodernism was the most significant intellectual current which swept the academic world in the last third of the twentieth century. These authors state that "postmodernism served to capture the spirit of the contemporary age" (Potter & López, 2001:3).

Bertens (1995:9, 10) clarifies that it is not the world which is postmodern, it is the perspective from which that world is seen that is postmodern. We have therefore entered a new historical era; that of postmodernity. This description, supplied by Bertens summarises the content supplied by most of the readings presented in this section. The world could certainly also be described by using an array of other descriptive words and adjectives. For the purpose of this specific study, where a present-day paradigm needs to be specified in order to research social functioning, a postmodern perspective seems the most appropriate.

In order to understand the nature of 'postmodernism' clarity is needed regarding the concept 'postmodernism'. Various ideas and perceptions will be provided in this search for clarity.

3.3 CONCEPTUALISATION OF 'POSTMODERNISM'

Different views exist regarding the concept 'postmodernism'. These views are either complementary or diverse. For some, the topic of 'postmodernism' is highly emotive and contentious. In order to conceptualise postmodernism in a balanced manner, in terms of this study, different views should be studied and analysed.

Various authors refer to postmodernism as a *condition* (Jenkins, 1997; Polan, 1986; Lyotard, 1997; Bauman, 1997). For instance, Polan (1986:59) quotes Lyotard's contention that our *condition* is universally, inevitably and eternally a postmodern condition; one of language games, a dissociation of cause and effect and a denial and rejection of 'ends'.

Ermarth (1997:48) does not refer to a postmodern condition, but agrees with regard to the '*period*' we live in and provides a political focus on postmodernism when she reminds us that 'modern' indicates a 'period' and a discourse that had pre-eminence between the Renaissance and the turn of the twentieth century, therefore modern culture supplanted medieval culture. She then makes the following statement: "What succeeds *that* 'modern' culture is 'postmodern'" (Ermarth, 1997:49). Zagorin (1997:299) refers to an *era*, when he discusses his disenchantment with postmodernism; "being at the end rather than at the commencement of an era." In terms of periodisation, Zagorin refers to Jameson's (1984) use of the word '*society*' when he refers to the following types of societies; post-industrial or consumer society, media society and electronic society.

Brooker (1992:26, 29) in contrast, refers to the *age* of mega consumption and to a historical period of postmodernity, while Palmer (1997:110) talks of postmodernity as an age of excess.

Both the concepts 'modernism' and 'postmodernism' have been referred to by the views of the abovementioned authors. These concepts are crucial to an understanding of the nature of 'postmodernism' and will therefore be highlighted.

3.3.1 The concept 'modernism'

Several authors (Buschman & Brosio, 2006; Du Toit, 2000; Ermarth, 1997; Jenkins, 1999; Pearse, 2005) state that modernism preceded postmodernism. It is therefore crucial to review the concept 'modernism' in an effort to understand that which followed modernism. Du Toit (2000:50) makes the identical statement when he says that the postmodern time cannot be understood without an understanding of modernism.

According to Jordanova (2000:124) the term 'modern' is slippery and contains hidden agendas. She does however state that 'modern' can be associated with innovation, with what is related to the present and to the future. Modern is therefore synonymous with 'clean, hygienic, not using coal'. Possible defining characteristics of modernism could include (Jordanova, 2000:125):

...advanced capitalism, economic specialisation and high levels of the division of labour, the types of urbanisation found initially in the nineteenth century, the period since the French Revolution, the development of cultural avant-gardes, post-Newtonian science, the use of steam (then electric and nuclear) power in industrial production, mass production, the discovery of the unconscious, and the legacy of the Enlightenment.

Jordanova (2000:125) points to a contrast between early modern and modern history. She shows that earlier the main distinction had been between the medieval period and modernity, where medieval was seen as more static, with a slower pace of change, and also as lacking institutions that aided modern life, for example, printing. In current history, the early modern period sits between the medieval period and modernity, with its precise boundaries undefined. Early modern is moving towards modernity, described by Jordanova (2000:125) as the overture to the main proceedings.

According to Williams and Sewpaul (2004:556) modernism is characterised by reason, rational thought, objectivity, neutrality and systematic enquiry. These features allow humanity to make sense of nature and society. According to modernism the world is based on universal principles that are discoverable.

Broadly speaking, we are not living in ancient or medieval times; we are therefore living in modern times. If descriptions of modern times as rational, objective, unbiased, responsible, certain and precise are considered (Williams & Sewpaul, 2004:556), then it seems as if we might have moved beyond modernism. The characteristic features mentioned do not ring true in terms of our present day, with its emphasis on choice, personal experiences and interpretations, multiple truths and alternative views. These characteristics fit with Potter and López's (2001:3) "spirit of the contemporary age", which contrasts with the universal principles of modernism, described above.

3.3.2 The concepts 'postmodernism' versus 'modernism'

Kirk (1997:316) provides a quote by David Harvey (1991) on the concept 'postmodernism', where he stated that "no one exactly agrees as to what is meant by the term except that postmodernism represents a reaction to or departure from modernism." Harvey however contends that seeing that the meaning of 'modernism' is also very confusing, 'postmodernism' is doubly so. Harvey (1991) in Kirk (1997:316) describes the features of modernism and postmodernism as fundamentally oppositional. In its opposition to modernism's objective reality and absolute truth, postmodernism holds an appeal to flexibility and the exciting contemporary 'scene'. Kirk (1997:318) emphasises that these terms and characteristics are highly contested.

Sewpaul (2005:211) also emphasises oppositional features. She describes modernism in the following manner: "Modernism holds that it is reason, rational thought, objectivity, neutrality and systematic enquiry that allow humanity to make sense of nature and society, and that the world is based on universal principles that are discoverable." In contrast, the main features of postmodernism "are its critiques of totality, reason, essentialism and universality" (Sewpaul, 2005:211).

In 1992 Brooker stated that the concept postmodernism is not widely acknowledged or understood. His view is that it is not just a word for the description of a specific style; it is a periodising idea that correlates the emergence of new formal features in culture with the emergence of a new type of social life and a new economic order. He refers to "consumer

capitalism, the disappearance of a sense of history, the way in which our contemporary social system has begun to lose its capacity to retain its own past, to live in a perpetual present, without traditions of the kind which all earlier social formations have had” (Brooker, 1992:164, 165, 179). In describing this concept, Brooker (1992:3) is of the opinion that it is important to consider how and for who postmodernism has functioned, when one considers that it questions all absolutes, it has to do with deconstruction, with consumerism, with television and the information society.

Bertens (1995:3, 5) is of the opinion that postmodernism constitutes several things at once. It has been defined as the ‘attitude’ of the 1960s counterculture, or as the ‘new sensibility’ of the 1960s social and artistic avant-garde; it is radically democratic. As a concept, it has been unstable seeing that not one definition of postmodernism has been recognised or has been widely accepted (Bertens, 1995:12).

A decade later, Thompson (2004:ix) states that ‘postmodernism’ is a very flexible and diffuse term. It incorporates a variety of standpoints, even contradictory ones and amalgamates trends and outlooks from various sources. Thompson (2004:ix) furthermore refers to its controversy – generating both passionate attachment and relentless hostility. He agrees with Bertens (1995:3, 5) by concurring that the ‘term’ postmodernism means several or many different things – he mentions that it is a ‘portmanteau’ word (Thompson, 2004:6). Seeing that these phrases only succeed in confusing one and end up being non-specific and vague, it is important to clarify this concept further. Thompson (2004:133) does provide a definition in the glossary to *Postmodernism and History*, where he states: “[i]n its earliest manifestation an architectural style, postmodernism has come to be regarded as a view of culture which is wholly sceptical towards any claims of certainty in science or society...” It seems as if this concept ‘means many different things’. Descriptions are also provided of what it is *not*. For example, Thompson (2004:24) confirms this confusing state of affairs when he says that the point has been made several times that postmodernism does not have a single and a determinate meaning.

Ermarth (1997:48, 50) states that the term 'postmodern' has acquired considerable currency in recent decades, but that it means quite different things in different contexts. She refers to the popular use of the word 'contemporary' and states that she prefers 'postmodern' seeing that it is a chronological indicator, a concession to a general awareness that something is happening in the post-Renaissance, post-Reformation, and post-Enlightenment West.

In reviewing *Essays on Postmodernism and Social Work*, Goldstein (1996:427) adds to the confusion when he makes the statement: "If you think you can define it, you do not understand it... the act of defining cannot fully succeed."

As has been indicated, many attempts at an accurate definition of postmodernism have been made. This concept still seems vague and elusive. However, for the purpose of this research, postmodernism is regarded as a relatively new paradigm through which the world can be viewed. The relevance of this paradigm for social work and specifically in the context of this study lies in its influence on social functioning and its influence on the reciprocal interaction between systems.

Whether postmodernism is referred to as a condition, a period or a historical era, it seems to be our present-day paradigm; thus, the way in which the world is viewed. It was noted that Jenkins (1999:31) is of the opinion that postmodernism may have a short shelf-life. Pearse (2005:10), however, stated later that our condition is postmodern and that we cannot go back to pre-modern conditions. Buschman and Brosio (2006:408) concur and make the statement that tertiary students are growing up in a postmodern culture where conflicts over postmodernism remain sharp. They state that it is still the subject of vigorous debate in a variety of fields, including the academic area where it has been declared passé. When addressing the social functioning of the young adult, it is therefore relevant and crucial to study the nature and influence of postmodernism as a present-day paradigm.

3.4 THE NATURE OF POSTMODERNISM

According to Brooker (1992:xi, 2), both modernism and postmodernism are primarily phenomena of twentieth century Anglo-American and European culture. In his view, “postmodernism abandons the conformities of museum, gallery and library and sketches a culture that is superficial; a society with all the variety and flatness of its favourite icon, the television screen.” He asks whether postmodernism is modernism reborn, the second time as soap opera? He uses the following phrases to describe the postmodern; “aesthetics of consumption, politics of cultural subversion energised by new social movements.” Brooker (1992:165) distinguishes between “high culture and so-called mass or popular culture”, when describing postmodernism. He equates postmodernism to “kitsch, advertising and motels, the Las Vegas strip, the late show, science fiction or the fantasy novel.” In a more positive sense, Brooker (1992:xi) states that some find new hope in this “end to old certainties, a redeeming fall into everyday life from the heights of intellectual, artistic and political élitism” (Brooker, 1992: xi, 2).

Baudrillard (1997:43) likens postmodernism to a short-circuit between cause and effect, which provides an enlightening analogy. He illustrates this by stating that “right at the heart of news, history threatens to disappear; at the heart of hi-fi, music threatens to disappear; at the heart of experimentation, the object of science threatens to disappear; at the heart of pornography, sexuality threatens to disappear.” He asks “Where must stereo perfection end? Where must news reporting end? The boundaries are constantly being pushed back because it is technical obsession which redraws them” (Baudrillard, 1997:43). Baudrillard (1997:45) elaborates further on this preoccupation with instantaneousness when he refers to “the instantaneity of news... cancelling the flow of time, cancelling delay, suppressing the sense that the event is happening elsewhere.” Seeing that we no longer have any confidence in the meaning or purpose of an event, we want to experience it at the instant of its occurrence, as if we were there (Baudrillard, 1997:46).

Buschman and Brosio (2006:410) also place emphasis on the present when they state that “the electronic media and related phenomena have caused the current shrivelled attention

span and present-day emphasis”, when describing the ‘postmodernist mood’. This mood is clearly portrayed by what Hassan (2003:4) refers to as “a willy-nilly family of words, applying to postmodernism” in the following manner: “...fragments, hybridity, relativism, play, parody, pastiche, an ironic sophisticated stance, an ethos bordering on kitsch and camp...” These words depict a mood that is revealing of the nature of postmodernism. Regarding this nature, Clive Beck (in Bushman & Brosio, 2006:408) states that “...as a general cultural phenomenon it has such features as the challenging of convention, the mixing of styles, tolerance of ambiguity, emphasis on diversity, acceptance (indeed celebration) of innovation and change...” Hassan (2003:4) uses the concept relativism to describe the mood of postmodernism. Du Toit (2000:53) also singles out ‘relativism’ and adds ‘subjectivism’ in his description of the nature of postmodernism.

Rosenau (1992:11) asks whether postmodernism simply reflects “adolescent rebellion, midlife professional crisis, [and/or] opposition to the ‘establishment’ by those who feel deprived of power.” She wonders whether the content of postmodernism, with its accent on the marginal, the ignored, those deprived of power; explains the attraction within disciplines (Rosenau, 1992:11). According to Brooker (1992:25), however, the suppressed, the marginal and the silent are seen and heard due to postmodern technologies and theory. Postmodernists have taken account of new social movements, mobilised questions of race and gender as well as social class. The use of postmodern communication technologies has assisted new humanitarian movements and pressure groups in their alignment with the suppressed and the marginal (Brooker, 1992:25). Kirk’s (1997:325) view of postmodernism is related when he states that postmodernism places an emphasis on difference, diversity, complexity, nuance and fragmented thoughts and actions. Inving (in Atherton & Bollard, 2002:430) concurs when he states that postmodernism sometimes gets credit for “beginning to hear other voices – those of women, gays, blacks and other visible minorities, colonized peoples, the working class, religious groups that were forced to keep silence for so long.” Buschman and Brosio’s (2006:410) statement that pluralism has become a primary postmodernist intellectual value therefore seems pertinent.

Readings on the nature of postmodernism leaves one with the tendency to agree with Smith (1999:14) that there is no consensus on the nature of postmodernity. Smith (1999:15, 16) states in *Zygmunt Bauman: Prophet of Postmodernity* that Bauman believes that we are entering a new epoch, brought about by the restructuring of modernity. Postmodernity is the human condition that arrives after people stop believing in the promises made by modern ideologies, after they refuse to accept that “socialism will bring equality and freedom, or that fascism will purify society, or that democracy will give power to the people, or that science gives humankind the power to bend nature to its will” (Smith, 1999:15, 16). For Bauman, the essential features of postmodern men and women are that they are thinking, feeling, choosing human beings (in Smith, 1999:16). Ewalt’s (1994:245) statement that meaning is supplied by the experiencer, not by a specific event, emphasises these essential features as described by Bauman. Brown’s (2006:590) view on postmodernist thinking is related when she states that “[p]ostmodernist thinking assumes that there are a multitude of truths dependent on the viewer’s context and influences and how the viewer constructs their personal reality.” This reminds of Derrida’s teachings that everything is interpretation (Haskell, 2009:271). When considering these views, the essential features; thinking, feeling and choosing describe the young adult living in the present-day paradigm. More than a decade earlier, Bauman’s (1997:177) statement about the reluctance of the postmodern mind to enclose the world in a grid of neat categories and clear-cut divisions, conveyed a similar message.

Rosenau (1992:12) clarifies the position of postmodernism in the humanities by stating that “rather than disappearing, post-modernism has become synonymous with enquiry itself in many areas of the humanities.” She continues by declaring that “much discussion in the social sciences today takes place within the post-modern agenda, assuming its terminology and its intellectual orientation without question. Conceptual approaches... overlap with post-modernism substantially and monopolize an enormous amount of intellectual energy” (Rosenau, 1992:12).

Himmelfarb (1997:172) is most eloquent in her criticism of postmodernism when she states that postmodernism entices with the call of liberation and creativity, but it may be an

invitation to intellectual and moral suicide. Followers and critics alike agree that postmodernism is fundamentally and radically anti-humanistic and anti-historical. Zagorin (1997:300) echoes this sentiment when he states that “a central element in postmodernism is its hostility to humanism.” He reminds us that Foucault predicted the ‘end of man’; postmodernism rejects humanism as an outmoded historical object/relic. As a consequence postmodernism lends itself to an obvious relaxation of cultural standards and sanctions an extreme heterogeneity without any critical or ordering principle (Zagorin, 1997:300). Cooper and Webb (1999:119) agree and state that a postmodern trend in social life is the suspension of traditional structures of culture, tradition and authority which leads to a state of affairs in which no single principle, person or institution is capable of exercising overall control or critical influence within a given situation.

Du Toit (2000:54) holds a similar view in terms of authority. He states that pure knowledge is an illusion and authoritative structures are suspect and therefore incompatible with the postmodern tendency not to think in absolutes, not to make final conclusions, but to rather focus on personal experiences and on own interpretation.

3.4.1 The postmodern individual

Rosenau (1992:53) provides a description of the postmodern individual. Her description of this individual was provided in chapter one. Seeing that her description seems pertinent, her summarising remarks are reiterated in this chapter.

The postmodern individual is relaxed, orientated towards emotions and feelings and portrays an attitude of ‘be yourself’. Culture, humour, fantasy and instant gratification are strived towards. The concern of the postmodern individual is with his own needs, his own life and his personal satisfaction, while modern affiliation, such as marriage, family, church and nation are of much less concern (Rosenau, 1992:53, 54).

The postmodern individual is thus described as a ‘floating’ individual, characterised by the absence of a strong identity. There can be deduced that this individual emphasises choice, free expression, individual participation, private autonomy and personal liberation. One

value or moral norm is not better than any other. He is against rules and norms. These characteristics suit the postmodern individual's fluctuating, ever changing personal identity (Rosenau, 1992:54). Berzonsky (2005:129) argues that an individual cannot be held accountable without a sense of identity. He describes the 'stuff of social life', which are legal obligations, moral responsibilities, promises, contracts and loans – these would be meaningless if people did not own their past. Life would lack purpose and meaning in the absence of a continuum that links present actions to the promise of the future (Berzonsky, 2005:129).

Durkheim (in Lindholm, 2001:757) states that the more an individual has, the more he wants, seeing that satisfactions received only stimulate, instead of fulfilling needs. According to Lindholm (2001:757), "the continual expansion of one's desires becomes the highest goal, craving replaces ethics, since one finds one's value and identity through appetite and consumption." This can also be described as a reliance on personal desire as the only incentive for action. Lindholm (2001:757) refers to a postmodern image, sketched by Harvey (1989), of individuals as artists manufacturing their own identities. He points out that Durkheim (1951) argues that our age is not the age of liberation, but the age of an absence of goals and limits. Lindholm (2001:757, 758) adds his own impression when he refers to the collapse of all norms, and then adds Arendt's (1968) impression of the absence of a moral base, without faith in reason, and without the limits imposed by traditional social relationships. Lindholm (2001:758) refers to Hegel's belief that "human beings have a deeply rooted need to posit identities for themselves; to distinguish themselves from outsiders and simultaneously to find a kinship with those who are deemed closest."

In discussing the postmodern individual, reference has been made to identity and moral responsibility. The link between postmodernity, identity and moral ambiguity often leads to a focus on *youth*. For the purposes of this study, the postmodern individual or the postmodern disposition is seen as typifying and characteristic of young adults. Young adults who live in the new millennium have been born into and brought up in a postmodern

paradigm, in a world which Giddens (1999:50) has described as an out of our control, 'runaway world'.

In a postmodern environment, the following are called into question: national, ethical and religious loyalties, two-parent nuclear families, communication by means of print as opposed to electronic media, the objectivity of science, the subjective nature of ethics and the emotional basis of religion (Hanan, 1999:253). Hanan (1999:253) emphasises that young people appear to be turning in one of two directions, narcissism or fundamentalism. In his description of narcissism, Hanan (1999:253) quotes an entertainer who spoke about the evolution of grocery-counter magazines:

'First there was *Life*,' he said. 'Life is good, nice and broad – shows a wide panoply of interests. Then we saw the emergence of *People*. People are part of life. Then there was *Us*, and after that *Self*. Soon I expect to see a magazine called *Me*. You open it and see only mirrors inside'. This entertainer spoke about a powerful movement among young people – along with their elders – that focuses primarily on themselves.

Hanan (1999:253, 254) continues his discussion of the self-centeredness of youth by reflecting on Narcissus, the Greek mythological character, who spent his days staring at his own reflection in the water. This image depicts a powerful theme of our age, as people have centred increasingly on themselves. The result is fragmented social interactions. Commitments to ideals outside the self have also been called into question. Williams, Sawyer and Wahlstrom (2006:241) refer to social interactions and relationships when referring to the fact that young adults seem to be committed to themselves first and marriage later, if and when it happens at all. In his *Sibling Society*, Bly (1996:46) says that for some time now, our own spark of life has often been more compelling and more important to us, than the flame of the larger group. According to Hanan (1999:254), the difficulty with this turn towards the self is that it results in utter meaninglessness.

Where Hanan (1999) and Bly (1996) focused on self-centeredness, Mason described the taken-for-granted attitude of the youth. Mason (2001:50) quotes Maxine Green (1988),

who describes youths as likely to remain “in the taken-for-granted and the everyday”, which means “unreflective consumerism” and “a preoccupation with *having* more rather than *being* more.” Self-dependence rather than relationship is valued; self-regard and “self-regulated behaviour rather than involvement with others” are seen as vital; and, above all, “an absence of interference.” The “shopping mall culture” of fast-food counters, clothing stores, video games and MTV defines the youth. Green (in Mason, 2001:50) paints a dark picture when she describes young people as consumers of sensation, violence and criminality, who believe that “human worth depends on the possession of commodities, community status, a flippancy way of talking and good looks.”

This postmodern individual’s language is impacted by his focus on ‘self’, his perceptions and experiences. Subsequently the impact of postmodernism on language will be discussed.

3.4.2 Postmodernism and language

It is Thompson’s (2004:2) contention that the essence of the postmodernist enterprise is its concern with language. Objects, events, processes can only exist for humans once they are conceptualised – the material world must be grasped by language; language constantly enters into reality. Kirk (1997:319) agrees and refers to the writings of Joyce and Steadman Jones who both emphasise the key significance of language and discourse in the construction of social reality. According to Kirk (1997:321) these two historians seem to say that there is no reality beyond language and discourse – for example, no economy, no society, no cultural or political systems and structures, but only economic, social, cultural and political discourses. Based on this, Kirk (1997:319) concludes that language, in representing thought, is of key significance in the formation and the cognisance of reality.

Marwick (2001:13) criticises postmodernists for their invention of new words and for assigning new meanings to old words. He refers specifically to the following words: ‘discourse’, ‘discursive’, ‘theorise’, ‘narrativise’, ‘deconstruction’, ‘textuality’ and ‘textualise’. Marwick (2001:13) describes this as elaborate vocabulary for basic ideas that are quite

simple. He refers to "...bourgeois dominance of knowledge, ideology and language, where all communications are texts." Marwick (2001:251) is of the opinion that much of what we think we know about current events does not come from direct observation, but is communicated to us in language, principally through television and newspapers.

In Marwick's (2001:13) view, as stated, postmodernists use elaborate vocabulary for basic ideas. Rosenau (1992:8), however, states that these different terminologies incorporate oppositional views of the world. In postmodern social science, the focus is on alternative discourses and meaning rather than on goals, choices and behaviour. Postmodernists avoid judgment; they offer readings, not observations, interpretations and findings. "They never test because testing requires 'evidence', a meaningless concept within a post-modern frame of reference" (Rosenau, 1992:8). In Rosenau's (1992:8) view, within a postmodern viewpoint, social science becomes more subjective and humble as truth gives way to tentativeness. Linares (2001:404) refers to 'a new way of thinking' and also emphasises the conversion of 'language' to 'discourse' and 'conversation' to 'narrative'. The significance of this conversion to 'discourse' and 'narrative' lies in the need of the postmodern individual to be heard without being sanctioned by traditional and formal structures.

As mentioned above, Marwick (2001:13) refers to the fact that postmodernists invent new words. Thompson's (2004:2) statement that the material world is grasped by language and that language constantly enters into reality is experienced in the present-day by the fact that new words are created. These new words could be considered slang, but the fact is that these words are used, especially by young adults. In his article on *Words with Lex-appeal* (derived from the word lexicographers), Ronge (2010) makes the statement that "words are as personal to us as the hairstyles we choose and the clothes we wear. Language, like fashion adapts to a changing lifestyle." As an example, Ronge (2010) quotes the "Oxford USA dictionary, whose lexicographers chose 'unfriend' as the new word of 2009." This is a verb that means to remove as a 'friend' on a social networking site. This word took on other forms and 'unfriend' became a noun, used for people you have come to distrust or for those who take advantage or have been outgrown. An

unfriend is someone from whose company you have removed yourself. An example of another such new word is 'tramp stamp', which refers to a tattoo on the lower back. Language is also affected by the dominant personalities of the age. According to Ronge (2010) the "Oxford USA dictionary lists fifty words derived from the name of President Barack Obama." 'Obamania' and 'Obamafication' of Washington are some of the examples. "Obamarama' could last as long as 'Reaganomics' did..." (Ronge, 2010).

When focussing on the language spoken by the youth, there seems to be a universal language that computer literacy demands. According to Bly (1996:31) these young people are wearing the same jeans, listening to the same music and speaking the same language. They sometimes feel more vitally connected to siblings elsewhere than to family members in the next room. This connection is often virtual in nature, which introduces a discussion on the virtual society.

3.4.3 Virtual Society

It has often been said that the microprocessor is the most important invention of the 20th century (Michael Malone, 1995 in Williams et al., 2006:20). This 'silicon chip', used in all computers, facilitated the revolution in consumer electronics, massive databases, and definitely the Internet (the Net), which is the worldwide computer-linked 'network of networks'. The contributions of Tim Berners-Lee, who developed the system that debuted in 1991 as the World Wide Web, expanded the Internet into a worldwide mass medium (Williams et al., 2006:20).

Higham (2001:160) states that while internet technologies allow for a wide range of online activities, academic attention has focused largely on interactions between individuals, either via e-mail, chat rooms or other simulated environments, such as Multi-User Domains. These activities substitute spoken conversation that previously required physical presence. Online interactions "introduce new possibilities for playing with identities" (Poster in Higham, 2001:160). Higham continues by stating that Poster's (1990) view of 'computer writing' is that it serves to destabilise "existing hierarchies in relationships and re-hierarchize communications according to criteria that were previously irrelevant." Face-

to-face interactions are influenced by the real-world characteristics of the participants (their sex, their voices and other visible cues), whereas online interactions are influenced by factors such as typing speed, as well as individual desires, ideas and feelings of the participants. According to Poster (in Higham, 2001:161) the most significant consequence of online interaction is that it disperses “the subject, dislocating it temporarily and spatially.” Space and distance therefore become irrelevant in cyberspace, as the physical location of the data is irrelevant.

According to Higham (2001:162) “[c]yberspace has thus been constructed as a new ‘postmodern’ area of ‘reality’ that exists above and beyond the real physical world.” In cyberspace the individual transcends the limits of the natural world and of his own embodiment. Higham (2001:162) points out that Poster describes computer writing as the “quintessential postmodern linguistic activity.” Within the postmodern framework, discourses online seem to be all-powerful, in the sense that the individual can recreate himself and his world by using different descriptions, which creates a postmodern subjectivity that transcends the boundaries of cyberspace (Higham, 2001:164). The Internet and online discourses have a tremendous attraction for the youth and for young adults; no doubt, because of the rationales presented by Higham. The attraction certainly also relates to the fact that this mode of communication is convenient, immediate and economical.

According to Higham (2001:165) virtual environments are assumed to be better than real life, as they allow us to ‘be more’. The absence of the conditions of possibility of successful communication in the real world enables new discourses to develop. Higham (2001:165) however reminds us that there are moral consequences resulting from an assumed transcendence of the physical world and our bodies. She states that physical presence is still a vital element of direct human-to-human connection (Higham, 2001:166). Higham (2001:166) points out that the absence of the body and face-to-face contact makes it difficult to recognise the needs or real nature of others. There is therefore no responsibility to meet those needs or to create an environment conducive to meeting the needs of others. “Without directly meeting others physically, our ethics languish. Face-to-face

communication, the fleshly bond between people, supports a longterm warmth and loyalty, a sense of obligation for which the computer-mediated communities have not been tested” (Heim in Higham, 2001:166).

Benokraitis (2008:25) also reflects on the impact of virtual communication on human interaction. She states that electronic mail (e-mail), instant messaging (IM), and discussion lists are intrusive seeing that some users of these technologies replace close personal relationships with superficial yet time-consuming online interactions. Benokraitis (2008:25) points out that frequent internet usage decreases participation in extracurricular activities and opportunities to meet new people. According to Nie and Erbing (2000) and Reisberg (2000) (in Benokraitis, 2008:25) people in the general population, who spend more than ten hours a week on the Internet report a decrease in social activities and less time spent talking on the phone with friends and family.

Botha (2009:13) refers to the eradication of boundaries in cyberspace. She quotes a psychologist, Jansen van Rensburg (2009), who states that Facebook users share much more information about themselves than they would in real life situations. Fowler (2012) lists some interesting Facebook facts, which illustrate the popularity of this specific mode of virtual communication. There are at present one billion monthly active Facebook users, making Facebook one of the fastest-growing sites in history. At the present time people have made 140 billion friend connections on Facebook. The popularity of Facebook amongst young adults is confirmed by the fact that the “median age of a user joining today is about 22, down from 23 for a user who joined at the time the site hit 500 million users” (Fowler, 2012).

Benokraitis (2008:25) as well as Botha (2009:13) point out that electronic communication has encouraged long-distance conversations between parents, children and relatives that might not occur because of busy schedules or high telephone costs. Family members and friends who are scattered can become or stay connected in this manner. Williams et al.’s (2006:20) view provides a balance with their statement that technology can have both bad and good effects on relationships. As an example they point out that air travel may take

breadwinners away from their families, but email, cell phones and videoconferencing may keep them connected. Parment (2012:99) makes the statement that social networks are online, international and open. The implication of this is that individuals who are knowledgeable, and who have cultural and language skills will more easily navigate and utilise the opportunities that these networks provide.

In summary, internet technologies allow for a wide range of online activities that substitute spoken conversation which requires physical presence. Space and distance has therefore become irrelevant. The Internet and online discourses have an attraction for the youth and for young adults; the young adult can create himself within a postmodern subjectivity where boundaries are eliminated. Close personal relationships are often replaced by superficial and time-consuming online interactions. Electronic communication however has both positive and negative effects on relationships as mentioned above.

3.4.4 Consumer society

Bertens (1995:162) quotes Jameson (1983) for whom postmodernism is a periodising concept, characterised by the emergence of a new type of social life and economic order, which he refers to as a consumer society. This consumer society is characterised by new consumption patterns, by an ever faster turnover in the areas of fashion and styling, by ever-present advertising and the media and by the explosion of suburbia.

Joyce (1997:345) refers to “present day notions of materialism”, while Bauman (1997:180) describes individuals in this consumer society as “constructed as sensation-gatherers, to seek and find.” Bauman (1997:180) refers to “the art of consumer self-indulgence” and the “postmodern strategy of peak-experience”, where there exists “the dread of personal inadequacy, of experiencing less and not so strongly as others perhaps do” (Bauman, 1997:182). Bauman’s (1997:180) postmodern paraphrase for peak-experience is ‘the this-worldly ecstasy’. Buschman and Brosio (2006:411) state that, although the dominance of television may be overtaken by other media, it has been the most powerful vehicle of presentation. It features “an uninterrupted flow of decontextualized pictures”, with an “emphasis on surface and a collapsed sense of time and space.”

Rattansi and Phoenix (1997:111, 112, 114) refer to our contemporary period as one of 'consumerism', where, when reworking Descartes famous manifesto one can state 'I shop therefore I am'. This seems to describe young people in the age of consumer culture, where choice of clothes, music styles and speech/slang are crucial to the construction of youth identities. Rattansi and Phoenix (1997:112) state that Western societies may be characterised as consumer societies where individuals distinguish themselves by their public consumption of particular 'designer' labels, in the form of cars, clothes, accessories, exotic holidays, body treatments, foods and drinks. These authors view the term 'fashion victim' as indicative of a popular and sociological view that regards label-obsession and the intense emotionality and pressures surrounding the possession of the latest 'badges' as a sad outcome of the forms in which capitalism and sophisticated marketing have turned the dreams of young people into a never-ending trap (Rattansi & Phoenix, 1997:113). Rattansi and Phoenix (1997:113) quote Harvey (1989) who associates the young consumer with flexible production, aggressive marketing, advertising images and flexible accumulation.

Valentine (2003:45) also links consumption and the construction of young people's identities when she states that material possessions are not only things in their own right; they also convey meanings about, for example, 'style' and 'class'. She also points out that consumption rituals mark social relationships of inclusion and exclusion – friendships and family ties are examples of this. Valentine (2003:45) quotes Holbrook and Jackson (1996) who are of the opinion that consumption is not just a simple momentary act of purchase, it "is a social process whereby people relate to goods and artefacts in complex ways, transforming their meanings as they incorporate them into their lives." Valentine (2003:45) then concludes that goods are consumed for what they signify, for distinguishing the self, as well as for use value. In the act of consumption, young people in particular are active agents in the production of youth styles and identities (Valentine, 2003:45).

Bauman (1997:179) describes the individual in the postmodern consumer-oriented society as pleasure-seekers or sensation-gatherers. In Bauman's words these postmodern men and women "are choosers. And the art of choosing is mostly about avoiding one danger:

that of missing an opportunity – because of not seeing it clearly enough, or not chasing it keenly enough...” (Bauman, 1997:178). According to Bauman (1997:179), the criteria by which performance is assessed “are notoriously resistant to all quantification.”

In reporting on her research on consumption, Valentine (2003:45) discusses the French sociologist Maffesoli’s (1995) concept of neo-tribes. Neo-tribes are “ephemeral groups formed in the flux of contemporary consumer societies, replacing the earlier collectivities of class, gender and ‘race’, demanding intense emotional investments and being spatially located in shopping malls, sports venues and concert halls and stadia” (Rattansi & Phoenix, 1997 in Valentine, 2003:45). These neo-tribes or groups are transient, characterised by their short-lived and temporary nature. Valentine (2003:45) also refers to Malbon (1998, 1999) who drew on Maffesoli’s work to understand the emotional community generated through clubbing. Developers, as well as leisure and cultural industries are embracing the hankerings of young people ‘to have a good time’ by earmarking certain sectors of cities as ‘leisure, cultural or entertainment spaces’ and thus promoting the development of ‘club and café cultures’ and music venues. Many of these landscapes are targeting the youth as consumers (Valentine, 2003:46).

In their typically philosophical style Rattansi and Phoenix (1997:113) point out that “not all commentators agree that young people are simply dupes of the juggernaut of commodification.” They state that not many stereotypical postmodernists will argue that “consumer culture has completely destroyed enduring collective identities and replaced it with a free-floating individualisation in which young people are free to construct and reconstruct identities simply by buying and displaying fashionable items” (Rattansi & Phoenix, 1997:113). In defence of postmodern young people, Rattansi and Phoenix (1997:113) state that “[c]hoices exercised in the sphere of consumption, for example in favour of healthier life-styles or a cleaner environment assumes a considerable importance, together with various forms of self-reflexivity such as a range of psychotherapies and techniques of self-growth and development.”

In the above discussion Rattansi and Phoenix (1997:113) make a connection between consumerism and lifestyle. A postmodern lifestyle, also described as the postmodern habitat will be discussed in the following section.

3.4.5 A postmodern lifestyle/habitat

Williams et al. (2006:19) make the statement that according to acclaimed management theorist, Peter Drucker (1993), there occurs a sharp transformation in which, within a few decades, “society rearranges itself – its world view, its basic values, its social and political structure, its arts and its key institutions.” According to Williams et al. (2006:19) we are presently living through such a transformation, caused by the Industrial Revolution, technological change, globalisation and the mass media and popular culture. These authors emphasise individualism versus familism with their statement that powerful economic forces caused families to move from a philosophy of familism to a philosophy of individualism. Before the Industrial Revolution, human labour, instead of machinery, was the principal means of producing goods. Families lived mainly on farms and in villages and produced goods and services for themselves, which made them an economic unit. The philosophy of familism applied, where decisions made were based on family collective concerns rather than on individual concerns. According to Williams et al. (2006:20) increasingly, family decision making is changing to the philosophy of individualism, where decisions made are based on individual concerns. Individualism displayed by parents has led to a search for personal fulfilment with a resultant reduced focus on children, which may have contributed to absent parents and a less nurturing environment. The consequence of this is a rise in juvenile delinquency, violence, and divorce (Hewlett, 1992 in Williams et al., 2006:20).

This philosophy of individualism, with its focus on personal fulfilment and individual concerns, characterises the postmodern lifestyle where, according to Smith (1999:150), the occupants of the postmodern habitat have a rootless and inconclusive existence, seeing that they construct their identities through trial and error. Within this existence, the only visible point of continuity is the human body itself. The human body is the focus of sensation and display. Men and women impose cruel regimes upon themselves to get fit

and slim. “What men and women ingest (food, drink, drugs) and what touches our skin (cosmetics, clothes) become deeply interesting topics” (Smith, 1999:150). When discussing *Bauman’s Vision of Modernity and Postmodernity*, Smith (1999:151) points out that inhabitants of the postmodern habitat show their allegiances by adopting ‘*symbolic tokens of belonging*’. These might include clothing, furniture, residential areas they live in, types of housing, kind of food and drink they consume, nature of leisure time, books they read, works of art they admire and the opinions which they hold and repeat. This implies choice and freedom, which in turn brings uncertainty, leaving people with a need for reassurance. According to Smith (1999:151) they obtain this once “their choice of symbolic tokens (these clothes, those opinions and so on) conforms to popular taste or if it concurs with the views of experts whom they trust.”

The freedom to choose which symbolic tokens to adopt is however not equally distributed. People who are richer and more knowledgeable have a wider choice. Smith (1999:151) points out that the postmodern habitat is stratified. The favoured minority, with access to credit and expertise, are at the top. The broad middle stratum also has sufficient money and knowledge to participate in the postmodern culture described. The poor are at the bottom, without the money needed for a free existence within the postmodern habitat. They find themselves marginalised within socio-political arenas dominated by those with “credit cards and bank accounts” (Smith, 1999:151). Smith (1999:154) summarises this postmodern habitat by saying that its shopping malls present themselves as a kind of consumer paradise, governed by consumer desires and choices regulated by the market and public opinion.

Closely linked to consumerism and a consumer society, is the production and circulation of symbolic goods. This is the tendency in consumer culture which favours the aestheticisation of life, which is the assumption that the aesthetic life is the ethically good life (Featherstone, 1991 in Bertens, 1995:212). Bertens (1995:212) discusses Featherstone’s (1991) view that postmodernism as a sociological concern is to be identified with the ‘lifestyle’ of what he calls ‘the new middle class’, which he defines as the ‘new cultural intermediaries’ and the ‘helping professions’. Shopping malls, revamped

museums and theme parks offer themselves as sites of aesthetic consumption, where consumption and leisure are meant to be constructed as 'experiences'.

Smith (1999:159) points out that even if this postmodern lifestyle seems cosy, companionable and controlled, Bauman does not believe that it is. Fear of loneliness and isolation underlies our behaviour. In the postmodern habitat everyone is a stranger to most of the people he or she meets. Bauman states that the postmodern stranger is neither a familiar neighbour nor an alien. He is of the opinion that strangers have aspects of both. They are close by as if neighbours, while remaining distant and unknown like aliens (Smith, 1999:161).

The postmodern habitat is therefore not quite what it seems. "It conveys the image of being a pleasure park, a consumer's playground, a place where you can pick-and-mix lifestyles and beliefs according to taste" (Smith, 1999:160). According to Bauman the communities that people form in the postmodern habitat are often full of good intentions. They seek stability and they hunger for warmth and security, but they are manufactured, "put together deliberately – rather than having existed from time immemorial" (Smith, 1999:161).

Inglehart's (2000:215) opinion regarding the individual's world view relates to Smith's (1999:159) postmodern lifestyle and postmodern habitat. According to Inglehart (2000:215) a growing body of evidence indicates that deep-rooted changes in world views are taking place. These changes seem to be reshaping economic, political and social life in societies around the world. Inglehart (2000:223) expresses himself in terms of values and norms in the following manner: "Postmodern values emphasise self-expression instead of deference to authority and are tolerant of other groups and even regard exotic things and cultural diversity as stimulating and interesting, not threatening." It is Inglehart's (2000:223) opinion that postmodern society is moving toward sexual norms that give wider flexibility regarding individual sexual gratification and individual self-expression. He states that this change in world views has given rise to a wide range of new social movements, from environmentalist movement to the women's movement and to new norms concerning

cultural diversity and growing acceptance of gay and lesbian lifestyles (Inglehart, 2000:224).

Rattanski and Phoenix (1997:100) concur and make the statement that gender identities are subject to transformation with the increase of women's participation in work outside the home. This trend is accompanied by much higher levels of male unemployment. "Together with the increasing significance of consumption in identity construction and the rise of the women's and gay and lesbian movements and their impact on life styles, there is an emergent crisis of conventional forms of masculinity and femininity" (Rattanski & Phoenix, 1997:100).

When discussing a postmodern lifestyle, the consequences of technological innovation must be taken into account. Benokraitis (2008:24, 25) considered the impact of technological innovation on the postmodern lifestyle. She states that technological innovations like television, digital video discs (DVDs), microwave ovens and personal computers (PCs) have affected lifestyles. Popular culture – which includes television, pop music, magazines, radio, advertising, sports, hobbies, fads, fashions and movies – is one of our major sources of information and misinformation about values, roles and family life (Benokraitis, 2008:24, 25). Television is predominantly influential in transmitting both fact and fiction. The fact that in a 65-year lifetime, the average American spends nine years in front of a television set, highlights this impact (tvturnoff in Benokraitis, 2008:25).

According to Williams et al. (2006:22) the following are part of a huge empire to fight boredom in modern life: "the mass media, the entertainment industry, all those companies trying to sell new cars, clothes, music, and magazines with tips for spicing up your sex life". Williams et al. (2006:22) have similar opinions to those of Benokraitis (2008:24, 25) (above) on the impact of popular culture and the provision of misinformation, when they state that the mass media and 'their sidekick', popular culture, are a major source of much of the information, both accurate and inaccurate, that is provided regarding roles, beliefs and values in our lives.

In this specific sense, a role is defined by Williams et al. (2006:22) as “the pattern of behaviours expected of a person who occupies a certain social position within a certain group or culture.” As an example of the effect of misinformation on roles, which then impacts lifestyle, Williams et al. (2006:22) state that popular magazines might encourage a person to be wild and sexy for his or her partner, but sober and responsible for his or her children. Beliefs are defined as the definitions and descriptions that individuals have about what they regard as true. One of the many beliefs of the mass media is that long-term marriages are ‘successful’ and short-term marriages are ‘failures’, or that people who are handsome or beautiful are better than those who are not. In the same manner, the media encourages conflicting values, where values are deeply held beliefs and attitudes about what is right and wrong, what is desirable and undesirable (Williams et al., 2006:22).

Schweitzer (2004:88) studied the modern understanding of adulthood and the still growing influence of the media on this understanding. He refers to the *Disappearance of Childhood* by Neil Postman (1982) where Postman points out that the modern image of adulthood has a cultural background that is closely related to the media, seeing that the understanding of adulthood always changes when new media enter the picture. Postman (in Schweitzer, 2004:88) points out that access to printed information drew an information borderline between childhood and adulthood. This borderline began to dissolve during the second half of the twentieth century, with the enormously growing impact of media that focuses on pictures and images, rather than on the written word. “Now everything is accessible to everyone, at all ages and at all times... the secrets of adult knowledge concerning sexuality or violence no longer exist. Television brings it all to the home for whoever has two eyes through which the images can enter consciousness” (Schweitzer, 2004:88). Postman hypothesises that the always present and accessible imagery of television reduces the distinction between adults and children, creating a new hybrid that he describes as a fusion of child and adult (the child-adult) who, “in front of the tube, may not be distinguished anymore” (Postman as quoted by Schweitzer, 2004:88, 89). Joseph Chilton Pearce makes the statement that the evolution of human intelligence has stopped. As an alternative image, he offers a naked three-year old with its thumb in its mouth, looking at a television set (Pearce in Bly, 1996:135).

The following conclusion could be drawn: mass media and specifically television has therefore eroded the boundaries between adult and child, it has encouraged early and shallow sexuality and has stopped the evolution of intelligence. Somewhere during this fusion of child and adult, the postmodern young adult emerges. This young adult could probably be described as both exceptionally knowledgeable and remarkably ignorant.

A postmodern lifestyle has evolved within a global environment. Some lifestyle issues are also global issues, for instance the wide range of new social movements which are global in nature, but they directly impact lifestyle. Some of these new social movements will be discussed under 'globalisation'.

3.4.6 Globalisation

According to Ramose (2002:627, 633) many dictionaries and textbooks are in accord that to globalise means to make world-wide in scope and application. For Williams et al. (2006:21) globalisation can be seen as the trend of the world economy toward becoming a more interdependent system. This interdependent system is rapidly changing the world in which we live. The notion of a 'global village' was posed by communications philosopher, Marshall McLuhan (1951, 1962, 1964, 1967) during the 1950s and 1960s, as television exploded throughout the world. The shrinking of time and space transpired as air travel and the electronic media made it easier for the people of the globe to communicate with one another. "[With] the invention of cell phones, pagers, fax machines, and voice mail, the world became even faster and smaller" (Williams et al., 2006:20).

The 'god' of globalisation is money, which commands the relentless pursuit of profit at whatever cost (Ramose, 2002:629). Ramose's (2002:629) view is that the roots of contemporary globalisation lie embedded in the rise of industrialisation, particularly in the United Kingdom and the subsequent world-wide spread of the British economic model through colonialisation. Williams et al. (2006:21), however state that a global economy resulted from the end of communism in Eastern Europe; countries opening up their economies to foreign investors and governments around the globe deregulating their economies. According to these authors these three events set up conditions by which

goods, people and money could move more freely throughout the world, resulting in a global economy. “The global economy is the increasing tendency of the economies of the world to interact with one another as one market instead of many national markets” (Williams et al., 2006:21).

According to Rattanski and Phoenix (1997:100) various other issues impact the global environment. They mention that “the emergence of feminist, gay and lesbian politics allows us to introduce the broader context of the rise of the ‘new social movements’ and various forms of single issue and identity politics as key features of late modernity.” As an example of some of these global issues, they mention “the rise of the Greens and issues of local and global environmental degradation, anti-racism and campaigns around the homeless” (Rattanski & Phoenix, 1997:100). For young people, changes are accelerated by the profusion of cultural forms – music, cinema and fashion (Rattanski & Phoenix, 1997:100; Valentine, 2003:45). Valentine (2003:47) points out that a manifestation of what Beck (1992) refers to as “the ‘risk society’, is that traditional socialising agencies of family, school, church are no longer key agencies of social reproduction.” She supports Rattanski and Phoenix (1997) when she states that along with this, older, class, gender and national loyalties have been eroded and there has been a rise of new social movements and various forms of identity politics, for example, Greens, anti-racism, lesbian and gay politics (Valentine, 2003:47).

Within this global community, where new social movements and various forms of single issue and identity politics have arisen, communication of information between physical locations has become easy, fast and cheap. Physical proximity, therefore, has no special importance; decision-making forums occur somewhere in global cyberspace (Smith, 1999:156). Smith (1999:156) reminds us that the pace of change increases every year. He mentions that Bauman compares the global economy to an accelerating truck with no one at the wheel. In Bauman’s view there has been a radical shift away from production to consumption. In modernity ‘work’ provided identity to people; you are what you *do* for a living, while in a postmodern habitat, you are what you *buy*. The individual is trained by advertisers to think this way; “[c]onsumers are seduced into their purchasing role” (Smith,

1999:157). In this postmodern world Bauman sees the poor as out of place; as flawed consumers (Smith, 1999:157).

In his discussion of Bauman's *Globalization: the human consequences*, Smith (1999:152) quotes Bauman as saying "[t]he world is a global salad bowl from which they can pick and choose – a cultural light lunch that never ends." This portrays a picture of globetrotters as the postmodern elite. Smith quotes Bauman (1999:152) who describes their habitat as global, stretching to include all the airports they fly from, all the hotels and restaurants they frequent. This mobile elite "provides the models and heroes whose life-styles are pictured in the advertising that draws less-rich-but-still-affluent consumers into the retail parks and leisure facilities within easy reach of their homes." These celebrities are watched on television, at the cinema, in magazines and newspapers; their lives become a pattern of existence for millions of admirers. "The audience, hypnotized by fame, accepts the values and world-view expressed by the global doings of the mighty few" (Bauman in Smith, 1999:153). What seems clear is that a postmodern society provides freedom and choice to some, but restricts others.

As was pointed out by Ramose (2002:629), the 'god' of globalisation is money, which commands the relentless pursuit of profit at whatever cost. Rattanski and Phoenix (1997:100) point out that globalising forces have disrupted more traditional views and sentiments, which resulted in the decline of the nation state. Gender identities are similarly subject to transformation with the increase of women's participation in work outside the home. This trend is accompanied by much higher levels of male unemployment. This tendency can be linked directly to economic trends within a postmodern society.

- **Economic trends within a postmodern society**

According to Williams et al. (2006:240) adultolescents ("adults" + "adolescents"), instead of striving for self-sufficiency, do the opposite: they move back in with their parents. This was once considered "the ultimate loser move", in the words of Williams et al. (2006:240). This trend has however been driven by economic realities during recessionary times, with jobs being scarce, starter homes expensive, and high-paying careers often requiring a graduate

degree (Williams et al., 2006:240). Benokraitis (2008:24) concurs with her statement that the higher-paying jobs require at least a college education. When writing about postmodern challenges, Schweitzer (2004:87) quotes Wade Clark Roof, who states that young people face an uncertain economic future. Youth is no longer the best time of one's life (contrary to the widely held belief). Young people now constitute one of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the population. The move from an industrial to a post-industrial economy over the past decade has left young people disenfranchised (Roof in Schweitzer, 2004:87):

We have told youth that they need education, and they do, but the fact of the matter is that today's youth live in an educationally inflated world. Numerous jobs that once required only a high school education now require a university education, even though the jobs are virtually the same. We educate our children more than we did in the past, and still many youth only see for themselves rather dismal prospects for the future: part-time jobs, poor pay, and competition in a global economy where unpredictable market shifts directly affect opportunities.

Young people were described by the abovementioned authors as vulnerable, disadvantaged and disenfranchised. Valentine (2003:46) is of the opinion that they are susceptible to becoming marginalised because vulnerability is embedded in the idea of transition. She states that marginality is often conceptualised in terms of exclusion from paid employment, but she reminds us that there are many different routes to economic and social marginality, seeing that transitions to work and domestic independence dovetail. Having no home address or the 'wrong' address can be a barrier to gaining work; while having no income via paid employment negatively impacts young people's housing prospects (Valentine, 2003:46).

As stated above, young people move back in with their parents. Apart from offering familiarity and emotional support, families offer economic benefits. According to Williams et al. (2006:18) it is almost as easy for one person to clean house, do laundry or buy groceries for three or four people as for one. "Such savings in time and money result from what are called *economics of scale* – a reduction in the cost per unit because of the

increased size of the ‘household production facilities’” (Williams et al., 2006:18). This extended period of dependency could lead to young people struggling to be recognised by their parents as adults. Where young people reject parental values and articulate their individuality, tensions become evident (Jones, 1995 quoted by Williams et al., 2006:240).

The present economic conditions are bleak for the young adult living in South Africa. On the cover page of *‘Die Burger’* Rademeyer (2009:1) compares the more than three million young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 years, who are unemployed and without education and training to a social time bomb. In *The Times* of 7 January 2010, Ndlovu quotes these very same statistics and voices his concern about the skills mix in the supply of young people, which is not suited to South Africa’s economy (Ndlovu, 2010:7). This is not only an education problem, but a social and economic disaster, seeing that the lack of participation of these young people in the economic sphere impacts their opportunities in life. Rademeyer (2009:1) quotes research by the Centre for Higher Education and Training (Chet), the Further Education and Training Institute (Feti) at the University of the Western Cape, the government and the Ford Foundation (2009). According to this research, young people who have matriculated earn 40% to 70% more than those with a lower education. Those with a diploma or certificate earn between 170% and 220% more, while those with a degree earn more than 250% and 400% more than those who did not complete grade 12.

Rademeyer (2009:1) points out that colleges and universities have capacity restrictions. The amalgamation of tertiary institutions in South Africa reduced opportunities for young people. The problem has further been compounded by the influx of approximately 2 million foreign workers with good quality qualifications, who entered the labour market. Opportunities for tertiary education has to be created and extended drastically to address this dismal situation that millions of young people in South Africa find themselves in. Rademeyer (2009:1) suggests that the quality of academic staff at colleges should improve.

The performances of the 2011 matriculants made news headlines. A slightly higher national pass rate (70.2%) was reported for 2011 compared to that of the previous year

(Govender, 2012:8; Motshekga, 2012:5) In terms of participation rates, Motshekga (2012:5) wrote that “the Department of Basic Education (DBE) is seriously concerned about the declining trend in numbers and particularly the significant decline in grades 11 and 12.” This statement is supported by education analysis, Graeme Bloch, quoted by Govender (2012:8), who said that caution should be exercised when analysing matric results seeing that the numbers of those who wrote the exams have gone down and 50% of the children are not making it through the system. Metcalf, Orkin and Glennie (2012:6) report that the quality profile is mixed at subject level. The pass rates have improved in physical science, history and business science, but in mathematics the pass rate has remained unchanged, with the decline in candidates resulting in a decline in passes. Only 18.51% of candidates passed mathematics with more than 50% (Jansen, 2012:13). This could be indicative of a dysfunctional education system, disinterested teachers and pupils, a general lack of discipline and motivation to succeed and excel. There seems to be a general decline in feelings of responsibility and pride in achievement. Changes in attitudes and perceptions could be linked to a general moral decline, which seems to be typical of our present-day paradigm.

3.4.7 Morality within a postmodern society

Ermarth (1997:53) refers to the fear that postmodernism signifies an end to morality. She is of the opinion that in terms of traditional morality, this fear is not unfounded. Zagorin (1997:299) also addresses postmodernism and values when he states that the basic impulse of postmodernism lies in its denial of the values and assumptions of the preceding high modernist movement. On the topic of values and morality Himmelfarb (1997:167) declares that postmodernism is intentionally far more radical than either Marxism or the new ‘isms’, all of which are committed to the Enlightenment principles of reason, truth, justice, morality and reality. Postmodernism rejects/denies both the values and the rhetoric (style or idiom) of the Enlightenment. In rejecting the ‘discipline’ of knowledge and rationality, postmodernism also rejects the ‘discipline’ of society and authority; undermines and challenges the structure of society (Himmelfarb, 1997:167). Atherton and Bollard (2002:422) refer to ‘standards’ in their criticism of postmodernism. They state that in the

postmodern mind, the whole idea of standards of any kind or under any circumstances in any field of knowledge or practice comes into question and everything becomes relative.

Bertens (1995:32) raises his concern by referring to a general onslaught on traditional values and motivations. Smith (1999:17) discusses Zygmunt Bauman's view that the postmodern world is a world of rootless strangers where men and women try to survive and create meaning by drawing on whatever personal resources they happen to have. Bauman sees the postmodern world as a world where people do not have the reassuring guidance of moral absolutes enforced by higher powers. When men and women are confronted with ethical dilemmas, "they can no longer refer them 'upwards' to bureaucrats, professionals, politicians, scientists or 'experts' acting as a kind of moral priesthood... in fact, they have to – choose for themselves which rules of behaviour to follow in particular life situations" (Smith, 1999:18). As can be seen from the following extract this is not a simple matter (Smith, 1999:18):

How do they judge which rules are 'best'? Do they follow the customs of the group they happen to be amongst at that moment ('when in Rome ...') or do they apply their own rules and standards? If the latter, are they, for example, attempting to be 'fair', seeking to be 'humane' or just trying to be 'themselves'? If they are attempting to be 'fair', how do they decide what others 'deserve'? If they are seeking to be 'humane', how do they judge other's best interests? If they are trying to be 'themselves', how do they decide who 'they' are? They have to figure it out on their own without a teacher to correct their homework.

According to Bauman (in Smith, 1999:18) in the new postmodern world, the responsibility for trying to answer questions like these belongs to each one of us. These queries cannot be forwarded. Smith (1999:158) points out that postmodern men and women have to adapt to a very high level of uncertainty and risk, seeing that they do not receive clear and consistent signals from 'above' or 'outside' about the nature of reality or what moral rules they should follow; they therefore create their own reality and make moral rules for themselves. Bauman emphasises in *Postmodern Ethics* that there are no moral rules; postmodernity brings cognitive and moral uncertainties (in Smith, 1999:164, 166).

Jenkins (1999:2) proposes a different view of morality when he states that we are now at a postmodern moment when we can forget history and ethics altogether and start to formulate new moralities. This, however, seems to not be a straightforward task. Gray and Lovat (2006:204) state:

Less than ever are complex multicultural, multi-valued and multi-faith societies like those of South Africa, Australia, the USA, Canada and the UK able to determine agreed ethical action by scientific audit. With increasingly significant populations of Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu, conservative Christian and “New Age” followers, a new pluralism is invading the space once dominated by the secularism of social science. In this space the trusted and largely unquestioned methods of yesteryear appear aseptic and incapable of addressing satisfactorily the concerns of its inhabitants.

For Donovan (2003:288) the formulation of morals does seem to be straightforward. Her definition of ‘moral’ suggests that it is concerned with the difference between right and wrong and between ‘good’ and ‘bad’. Gray and Lovat, (2006:207), however, refer to Habermas’s placement of morals in the subjective realm, when he states his belief that our moral beliefs are deeply personal matters, seeing that only we can know whether or not we are being true to our values. They state that Habermas places emphasis on knowing ourselves as the person doing the knowing. Gray and Lovat (2006:207) state that Habermas uses the term ‘emancipatory knowing’ when he grounds truth in “the feeling of personal freedom we feel when we are thinking and acting with integrity such that the truth sets us free, anchors us and makes us sure that our behaviour is being guided by our personal moral beliefs and values.” Tomlinson (1997:243) states that values come from lived human experiences, which are sifted and evaluated. Values are human constructs. We must therefore work at giving our lives meaning and therefore value. Tomlinson (1997:244, 250) refers to the ‘moral glue’ being washed out when he refers to the contemporary moment where the individual is being reared only with regard to ‘self’ and with the assertion that altruism is impossible.

From the discussion above, it seems as if the individual living in today’s postmodern paradigm rejects standards and traditional values. Morals are personal matters. The

individual lives according to own personal moral beliefs and values with a focus on the 'self'. There seems to be a focus on own 'best interests' and a lack of empathy with others. This was illustrated by a T-shirt slogan seen recently, stating 'It's not that I forgot; I just don't care'.

Berzonsky's (2005:133) view on morality is worth mentioning. He states that we live in a relativistic, postmodern age of continual social, political, economic and technological change. According to Baumeister (in Berzonsky, 2005:133, 134), historically there was a socially based public consensus about moral character and how people should behave. Consequently, youth internalised the standards, goals and expectations of others. In the postmodern age, the validity of value bases is questioned and lifestyle variations and options have increased. To adapt effectively, people need to act, solve problems and make decisions. Berzonsky (2005:134) states:

They need a frame of reference within which they can decide which options, possibilities, lifestyles, problem solutions, roles, moral principles, and so forth are better or more credible than others. A set of personal commitments provides a relatively consistent standpoint that can be adopted and relied on amidst the flux and impermanency of postmodern life. There is no absolute, universal standpoint that can be adopted, however.

The above statement, especially Berzonsky's view of 'personal commitment', seems to support Habermas's placement of morals in the subjective realm, as he believes that our moral beliefs are deeply personal matters (in Gray & Lovat, 2006:207).

According to Taylor (1991 in Mason, 2001:50) a more strongly developed sense of moral responsibility is associated with a more deeply founded identity and with a commitment to significant others. Mason (2001:50) argues that an ethics of integrity provides the necessary underpinning needed for the development of moral responsibility. He links identity, moral ambiguity and youth as follows: "[t]he excessively strong sense of individualism and the consequent withdrawal from commitment..." are "...moral

consequences of late modernity that particularly influence young people, who are still developing their sense of identity” (Mason, 2001:50).

Inglehart (2000:224) states that a postmodern worldview has diminished the need for the reassurance that religion traditionally provided. This worldview brings about a decline in the need for total and unconditional rules. A decreasing recognition of unyielding religious norms regarding sex and reproduction is also found. Lyotard (in Legg & Stagaki, 2002:386) states that “most Westerners ...are postmodernists, living in a consumer society that has rejected the metanarratives of science and religion.” According to Hölscher (2005:239) Lipovetsky holds a similar view when he describes late modernity as signified by the increasing ‘liberalisation’ of individuals from such ideas as self-sacrifice, accountability to morals, ideas and values. Hölscher (2005:239) states that it is claimed that religious and secular institutions and traditions are losing their ability to ensure the moral conduct of individuals.

Schweitzer (2004:89) holds a very similar view on morality and religion. He states that the “...secular city ... has become a meeting place of many different religions and of a variety of worldviews. In many countries around the world, the influence of traditional religious institutions like the church has decreased markedly and still seems to be on the decline”. Schweitzer (2004:89) does however point out that other forms of individual religion and a new interest in spirituality have increased. A spiritual hunger seems apparent during postmodern times – this was not expected by the modern prophets of secular society. Religious individualisation and pluralisation may mean that the many voices of people who do not conform to the image of modern adulthood may finally be heard (Schweitzer, 2004:89).

Morality or the absence thereof filters through various key aspects of the young adult’s life. As was discussed above, a more strongly developed sense of moral responsibility is associated with a commitment to significant others (Taylor, 1991 in Mason, 2001:50). This lack of commitment is evident in the relationships and the roles of the young adult living in the present-day paradigm.

3.4.8 Relationships within a postmodern society

Postmodern social and economic life is not only evident in materialism; it also seems to have infiltrated interpersonal relationships. According to Bauman (in Gane, 2001:271) personal relationships are infused with the 'spirit of consumerism'. Relationships have become increasingly market-dependent. What Bauman means by this, is that these relationships reflect the unreliability and unpredictability of the market. It seems as if the 'spirit of consumerism' also impacts moral responsibility. Mason (2001:49) quotes Bauman (1989) who states the following: "In a world where identities are rendered increasingly shallow by the intensification of... consumerism... moral responsibility is further diminished."

Mason (2001:62) also indicates a link between moral responsibility, identity and personal relationships. He states that "diminished moral responsibility, associated with the increasingly fragmented, fragile and transient nature of identity ...implies the loosening of the bonds of local community, and hence a diminished sense of moral responsibility in our primary relationships." Consumption has become an integral feature of identity construction (Mason, 2001:62). The meaning that might have been generated in relationships is no longer nurtured, therefore we value our technological skills necessary to calculate and control more than our relationships with others (Giddens in Mason, 2001:62).

According to Mason (2001:65), if there is no meaning or essence to our existence, then meaning and purpose might be found in two connected domains: in our sense of self and in our closest relationships. He elaborates as follows (Mason, 2001:65):

If we become who we are by virtue, at least in part, of the relationships in which we exist, it is in those relationships that we may be nurtured in our dread of being utterly alone and of the eternal void. And if our sense of self is sufficiently strongly developed in our experiences and in our relationships, then we may take strength simply in who we are... nurturing the relationships that in turn nurture us, depends on our respect for the dignity of others and on our accepting responsibility for the consequences of our decisions. A strongly developed sense of self will also depend on respect for the dignity of our own being.

When quoting Giddens (in Mason, 2001:62), reference was made to technology and technological ability. The impact of internet technologies and online activities on face-to-face interactions and relationships was mentioned in the discussion of 3.4.3 Virtual society. The Internet and online discourses have a tremendous attraction for the youth and for young adults. Online interaction has revolutionised the communication and interaction styles of today's young adults. These new communication styles have advantages, as was discussed. As however been pointed out by Heim (in Higham, 2001:166), face-to-face communication supports long-term warmth and loyalty and a sense of obligation, which is not required in online interactions. Virtual interaction with its eradication of boundaries in cyberspace replaces close personal relationships, with the result that interaction becomes superficial. In this manner, postmodern virtual life has infiltrated interpersonal relationships.

3.4.9 Roles within a postmodern society

Rattansi and Phoenix (1997:104) make the statement that “individuals occupy multiple positions and therefore have a range of identities”, with different identities “acquiring salience in different contexts.” These multiple positions are based on specific social positions – class, gender and ethnicity and also on ideologies, such as racism. These conflicting pulls act upon young people and “generate a huge variety of possible ways of living out different positionings.” These multiple positionings within different social contexts imply the fulfilling of multiple roles.

Mason (2001:49) is of the opinion that our existence is fragmented into the occupation of many different roles, none of which may be adequate to define our identity. “We therefore do not readily take responsibility for the consequences of the roles we temporarily occupy, since the occupation of the role is so fleeting as not to make it meaningfully constitutive of our identity” (Mason, 2001:49). Mason (2001:49) comes to the conclusion that our actions are not based on honour and accountability. Consequences of our actions lead us to seek the authority of rules to which we can turn for guidance. The collapse of traditional sources of guidance, however, makes us uncertain of which ethical code to follow, resulting in no given source of right action.

According to Schultz (2004:281, 282) it is necessary to rethink moral boundaries and rules in a postmodern society, seeing that different norms demarcate public and private morality. Schultz (2004:282) quotes Niebuhr (1960) who is of the opinion that 'justice' is the highest moral value of society, whereas 'unselfishness' holds the same status for individuals. Postmodern society is characterised by "a blurring of public and private lives" as well as the reality that we all occupy *multiple roles*. "One may now be a worker, a parent, a child, a citizen, a friend, a taxpayer, and a host of other roles simultaneously" (Schultz, 2004:290).

The young adult could, for example, also occupy most of the roles mentioned and then be a student additionally. Work and private roles seem to be less easily differentiated. Schultz (2004:290) makes the statement that "no longer can the neat, clean lines of modernity be invoked to understand and describe the roles people occupy and, with that, the norms applied to judge their performance of their roles." Thus Schultz (2004:293) is of the opinion that the lines between the public, private and non-profit sectors have become less meaningful for individuals, who seek employment wherever economic opportunities exist. He therefore states the following: "for reasons at both the individual, or micro level and the more structural, or macro level, the relationship between the public, private, and nonprofit worlds has changed" (Schultz, 2004:293). Schultz (2004:293) continues by stating that the values of our place of work differ from those of our private lives. In our private lives, ethical norms are honesty, duty to friends, respect and many other values, while the public, private and non-profit sectors all address ethical concerns regarding trustworthiness, conflicts of interest, and moral accountability. Regarding our present paradigm, Schultz (2004:293) concludes that "[i]n our postmodern world, the boundaries are blurred... both the traditional social roles and the language used to describe these sectors is being challenged."

Valentine (2003:40) makes the statement that in a new modernity, which implies changes in the labour market, familial relations and class cultures, new life situations and a shift in ways of thinking about how individuals relate to society, are created. Young people are in a state of ambivalence – they can no longer see where they are heading, and what futures await them. This impacts roles, seeing that the life course is no longer planned around

employment history. The significance of this is that the potential pathways that young people can follow after school are becoming more diversified. Traditional agencies such as the family, school and church channelled individuals into set roles. According to Valentine (2003:40) social change is eroding traditional forms of knowledge and communication. “Faced with a proliferation of choices, young people’s biographies are increasingly reflective in that young people can now choose between different lifestyles, sub-cultures and identities” (Valentine, 2003:40). These choices imply increased risk – in particular in the form of blame or guilt if they subsequently find themselves on the margins of society as a result of their own choices. Valentine (2003:40) points out that young people make choices regarding: “entries into the labour market and exit from schooling; familial dependence; consumption and identities; and social commitments.”

Summarising comments:

Although there seems to be no consensus on what postmodernism is, it can be described as radically democratic, an age of excess with a present-day emphasis and a preoccupation with instantaneousness. Relativism is important in this age, therefore postmodernism can also be described as a relativistic postmodern age of continual social, political, economic and technological change.

The following can be highlighted as the *core characteristics* regarding the nature of postmodernism, as discussed in the preceding section:

- Focus on relativity, pluralism, diversity and extreme heterogeneity.
- Rejection of traditional values and norms; absence of goals, limits and a moral base.
- Emphasis on own personal moral beliefs and values with a focus on the self.
- Focus on self and personal satisfaction, own experiences and feelings; own interpretations.
- Consumption; lifestyle; leisure – with emphasis on pleasure and an immediate gratification of own needs; impact of consumption on identity construction.
- Globalisation: new social movements (political, humanitarian, social class, gender, race) and an uncertain economic future.
- Decline of rigid religious norms.

- Suspension of traditional structures of culture, tradition and authority.
- Lack of commitment regarding traditional roles and relationships – impacted by a changed morality and the virtual society we live in.
- Virtual communication (instant messaging, blogging and social networking, for example Facebook).
- Technological innovation: smart phones, tablets and popular culture.

These characteristics were emphasised in the different readings on the nature of postmodernism. The manner in which they influence the social functioning of the young adult will be discussed in the next chapter. It is however important at this point to ask, “What lies beyond postmodernism?” The answer to this question will be addressed in the next section of this chapter.

3.5 BEYOND POSTMODERNISM

Himmelfarb (1997:170) asks “But what of postmodernism...? Will it last? Is it just another of those intellectual fashions that periodically seize the imagination of a bored and fickle academia?” She answers these questions by saying that given the volatility of intellectual and academic life, it is hard not to anticipate a not-so-distant future when postmodernism will be succeeded by something referred to as post-postmodernism. Himmelfarb (1997:170) predicts a disaffection with postmodernism, because the appeal or novelty will wear off. She foresees a desire to return to greater objectivity and integration, and less self-interestedness. Zagorin (1997:299) supports this view by stating that, as the name implies, postmodernism carries with it strong connotations of decline, exhaustion and of being at the end rather than at the commencement of an era. Potter and López (2001:4) agree with this view. They state that it seems to be a sociological fact that intellectual and academic life has its fashions and enthusiasms. Seeing that “postmodernism is inadequate as an intellectual response to the times we live in, a new and different intellectual direction must come after postmodernism” (Potter & López, 2001:4).

In direct contrast, Bertens (1995:14) refers to postmodernism's overwhelming self-confidence during the 1990s. He is of the opinion that "[i]nstead of nearing its exhaustion... it has remade itself to ride the crest of the explosively increased interest in feminism, multiculturalism, and whatever had been marginalized by mainstream culture" (Bertens, 1995:13). Pearse (2005:10) has already been quoted to say that our condition is postmodern and that we cannot go back to pre-modern conditions. Buschman and Brosio (2006:408) concur and make the statement that tertiary students are growing up in a postmodern culture where conflicts over postmodernism remain sharp.

Schweitzer (2004:91) states that the postmodern challenges are by no means only detrimental. These challenges may be detrimental from a modern point of view, but they include many healthy possibilities, and they provide a new openness exactly where the modern life cycle tended to become suffocating. New opportunities seem to arise for a more humane shape of adult life.

In his article '*Beyond Postmodernism*' Hassan (2003:3) asks the question, "What lies beyond postmodernism? Of course, no one knows; we hardly know what postmodernism was." He highlights the individual's own evolution in postmodern times and personalises this by saying "because I have changed, postmodernism has changed, the world has changed..."

Du Toit (2000:59) makes the statement that the new South Africa is irrevocably part of a new time frame, from which we cannot escape. In his view we are, without choice part of the present postmodern time frame.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Readings consulted referred to postmodernism as either a condition, a period, a historical era, a culture, a society or an age. Neither of these seems appropriate for research regarding the influence of postmodernism on the social functioning of the young adult. For

the purpose of this study, postmodernism is therefore referred to as a present-day paradigm.

In the process of defining the concept 'postmodernism' and describing the nature of this paradigm, it seemed as if 'modern' and 'postmodern' partially co-exist. The following serves as an example: Williams and Sewpaul (2004:564) quote from Giroux (1992) in their implementation of both modernism and postmodernism in global standard setting. They state that they have retained (Giroux, 1992 in Williams & Sewpaul, 2004:564):

...modernism's commitment to reason, justice, agency and the power of the human being to contribute to development and change. Modernism has done much to contribute to discourses that are ethical and political. However, postmodernism provides a challenge to all totalizing discourses, places an important emphasis on the contingent and specific and provides a new theoretical language for developing a politics of difference.

Hassan's (2003:3) statement that "postmodernism was born in strife and nursed in contention; it still remains moot", underlines the controversial nature of this paradigm. His attempt at a definition seems vague, but portrays the mood of this paradigm. "Perhaps postmodernism can be defined, after all, as a continuous exercise in self-definition. Or perhaps we can simply call it the equivocal autobiography of an age" (Hassan, 2003:4). Hassan (2003:4) states that an autobiography is a "verbal interpretation of a life." Similarly, "postmodernism is a collective interpretation of an age."

Researchers and authors quoted in this chapter express themselves in a lofty and philosophical manner. In this process, a contentious and controversial topic is often complicated even more. Simply put, it seems that postmodernism is not over. It seems to be an eternal condition, seeing that it, more than any other condition, era, period or paradigm, has captured the spirit of our contemporary age.

An attempt was made to establish the nature of postmodernism. Determining the range and content of the 'nature' for the purpose of this study was difficult. After an extensive

literature study it seemed as if a specific focus on the postmodern individual, postmodernism and language, the virtual society, consumer society, a postmodern lifestyle, globalisation, morality, as well as relationships and roles within a postmodern society has been the most relevant when considering the focus of this research on the social functioning of the young adult.

In order to develop insight into the impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of the young adult, young adulthood as a stage in life-span development will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

YOUNG ADULTHOOD AS A STAGE IN LIFE-SPAN DEVELOPMENT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Young adulthood is described by Borysenko (1996) in McGoldrick and Carter (2005:38) as the time for the development of a core self, a strong but pliable identity and the ability to relate to both self and others with true intimacy. According to Fulmer (2005:215) the two most important developmental tasks of young adulthood is the fulfilment of work tasks and relationship tasks. The family's task during this period is the providing of material and emotional support, described by Fulmer (2005:215) as 'enabling preparation'.

Arnett (2006:120) makes the statement that the life circumstances of the young adult are extremely diverse "and their pathways in love and work change frequently." The researcher aims to capture the diverse nature of young adulthood in this chapter. However, before commencing with this discussion the life-span and the different periods of the life-span should be considered.

4.2 THE LIFE-SPAN

Development is 'the pattern of movement or change' that begins at conception and continues through the human life span. "[D]evelopment involves growth, but it also includes decline" as a result of aging and dying (Santrock, 2009:7). Sigelman and Rider (2009:2) define development as "systematic changes and continuities in the individual that occur between conception and death, or from 'womb to tomb'". They describe these changes as systematic, seeing that they are orderly, patterned and enduring, not brief and unpredictable (Sigelman & Rider, 2009:2). Santrock (2009:8) points out that the belief that development occurs throughout life is central to the life-span perspective. Early adulthood is also not the endpoint of development seeing that no age period dominates development. The traditional approach to the study of development emphasised extensive change from

birth to adolescence, little or no change in adulthood and decline in old age. Gerdes, Louw, Van Ede and Louw (1998:473) also support the developmental adulthood model with its underlying assumption that the adult continues to develop his human potential. This assumption underlies the developmental theories of Gordon Allport, Abraham Maslow, Charlotte Bühler and Erik Erikson, for whom development is a continuous process and who believe “that periods of crisis and tension are part of the developmental process, particularly if they lead to new adaptations and insights” (Gerdes et al., 1998:473).

According to Sigelman and Rider (2009:2), the systematic changes and continuities of human development fall into three broad domains: physical development, cognitive development and psychosocial development. Changes in one area will affect the other areas, seeing that human beings are ‘whole beings’. Sigelman and Rider (2009:3) point out that most modern developmental scientists reject a simple model of the life-span, seeing that they recognise that developmental change at any age involves both gains and losses. These authors summarise development in the following manner: “In short, development involves gains, losses, neutral changes, and continuities in each phase of the life span” (Sigelman & Rider, 2009:3).

4.2.1 Conceptualising the life-span

Development across the whole of life is referred to as life-span psychology or life-span development (Dacey, Travers & Fiore, 2009:4, 5; Beckett & Taylor, 2010:114). Beckett and Taylor (2010:114) quote Baltes (1987) who identified seven main principles of the life-span perspective, namely that development is a lifelong process; it is multi-dimensional and multidirectional; the process can be affected by life experiences and it involves both gains and losses; it is an interactive process between the individual and his environment; life-span development is culturally and historically embedded and it is a multidisciplinary field of study.

Sigelman and Rider (2009:3) point out that age periods of the life-span are approximate and a rough indicator of development. There are differences among individuals of the same ages and age, gender, race and other characteristics also mean different things in

different societies. Role, status, privilege and responsibility according to age group are assigned in a diverse manner in different societies. Sigelman and Rider (2009:4) also point out that different societies have their own way of dividing the life-span into socially meaningful periods. In Western industrialised societies, life-span is usually visualised as a straight line that extends from birth to death, divided into age periods. Different age periods imply different age norms, which in turn influence people's decisions about how to lead their lives. Sigelman and Rider (2009:5) provide the following summary of the concept 'life-span':

We must view development in its historical, cultural, and subcultural context. We must bear in mind that each social group settles on its own definitions of the life-span, the age grades within it, and the norms appropriate to each age range, and that each grade experiences its own set of life events. We must appreciate that the major periods of the life span recognized today – adolescence, middle age, and so on – have not always been considered distinct and that they bring with them different experiences in different cultures.

Dacey et al. (2009:5) emphasise that each age (for example adolescence, young adulthood) has its own developmental agenda and therefore contributes to the entire life-span. 'Age' in this sense refers to periods of the life-span.

4.2.2 Periods of the life-span

Young adulthood, also described as early adulthood, is one of the major periods of the life-span. Different researchers view the delineation of these age periods in their own unique ways. Classification according to Santrock (2009) is infancy, early childhood, middle and late childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, middle adulthood and late adulthood. Sigelman and Rider's (2009) classification is very similar. They differentiate between the prenatal period, infancy, the preschool period, middle childhood, adolescence, early, middle and late adulthood. Dacey et al. (2009:6) demarcate the periods of the life-span in the following manner: prenatal, infancy and early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, middle adulthood and later adulthood.

The delineation of age periods changes over time and is viewed in different ways by different researchers. This is demonstrated by Brynner (2005:369) when he states that adulthood is delayed or “gets pushed back... to ever older ages.” This is in opposition to an earlier anticipation of adulthood brought about by biological maturation and sexual experimentation, which occur at earlier ages. Brynner (2005:369) points out that this is a paradox which suggests that childhood as a life stage, rather than adolescence, is being squeezed. Brynner (2005:369) states that “[t]he teenage adolescent of yesteryear is being joined by the pre-teen adolescent of tomorrow.” Heinz (2009:3) supports Brynner (2005) with his statement that the borders between all phases of the life course have become fuzzy seeing that the timing and duration of transitions are less age-dependent and demand a series of individual decisions. The instabilities of the life course derive from the tensions between “uncertain life chances and the culture of individualism which expects that people actively shape their biographies” (Heinz, 2009:3). This culture of individualism is characteristic of the postmodern lifestyle with its focus on individual concern and personal fulfilment (Williams et al., 2006:20).

Sigelman and Rider (2009:5) refer to the importance of viewing development in a historical context. Heinz (2009:4) regards this historical context as specific events which take place within ‘time and place’. Circumstances and events influence the timing of decisions and therefore also influence transitions. Carter and McGoldrick (2005:8) however emphasise changes in family cycle patterns due to socio-economic, gender and cultural factors. All these different variables create nuances that impact life-span development over time. The impact of these nuances on *young adulthood* is especially evident. Young adulthood seems to be the stage in the life-span which draws attention and captures the imagination most when different generations are described. In terms of *this* research on the social functioning of the young adult, it is important to review the young adult as a millennial or a member of generation Y. It is the researcher’s view that characteristics of the millennial provide a context for studying the young adult.

The concept millennial or generation Y evolved from earlier descriptors that were used to depict different generations. The ‘Silent Generation’ (Martin, 2004:62; Social Science and

the Citizen, 1995:2), also described as the 'Matures' and the 'Veterans' were born before 1946. They have memories of the Great Depression, therefore they internalised the values of hard work and thriftiness (Hagevik, 1999:39; Wallis, 2009:62). According to Hagevik (1999:39) their world view was shaped by events such as World War II. Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt were major role models and infectious diseases, including polio, were contained and wiped out by penicillin and the Salk vaccine during this time period.

The baby boomers were born between approximately 1945 and the early 1960s (Hagevik, 1999:39; Martin, 2004:62; McIntyre, 2011:141). They were therefore born after World War II and through the 1950s. As children this post-war generation experienced economic prosperity. Their parents had secure jobs and were optimistic about the future. According to Hagevik (1999:39) this led to a 'buy now pay later' philosophy. This generation experienced the Vietnam War. They became known as the "sex, drugs and rock and roll" generation, for whom "[b]irth control changed the way adults made reproductive decisions" (Hagevik, 1999:39).

This generation was followed by generation X, who were born between 1961 and 1981 (Marinucci, 2005:505; Wood, 2006:24); or according to Martin (2004:62) between 1965 and 1977. Both Gozzi (1995:331) and Losyk (1997:39) ascribe the term "Generation X" to the Canadian writer, Douglas Coupland, who wrote a novel with this title in 1991. Members of generation X were young adults by the 1990s. In his review of Hanson's *The Cinema of Generation X: A Critical Study*, published in 2002, Keller (2003:89) describes generation X through Hanson's (2002) eyes as "raised on vast amounts of TV, music videos, advertising, and video games." A few years earlier Losyk (1997:40) referred to generation X in the following manner: "This generation has watched more TV, and as a result has probably witnessed more violence and murders, than any generation in history." Swift (1998:220) echoes these views with his statement that generation X has opinions about everything, is characterised by the cinema and modern advertising and is in the words of Hepburn (1998) "the first generation to be fully raised on television."

Krug (1998:18) describes the latchkey environments in which generation X grew up, with no one at home after school to attend to their needs. This forced the young adults of this generation to be independent and to work for what they wanted. Generation X witnessed their parents as workaholics, with little balance in their lives. They also witnessed record divorce rates and reduced church attendance (Krug, 1998:18). Losyk (1997:40) states that “40% of X’ers are products of divorce, and many were brought up in single-parent homes.” He is of the view that this shaped their view of the family and the world. They received a negative message about their value and worth and this seems to have made them cynical (Losyk, 1997:40).

Losyk (1997:40) points out that generation X is much more diverse than their predecessors, the baby boomers. Krug (1998:18) also refers to the fact that they welcome diversity and flexibility. They were the first generation who was technology driven; growing up with personal computers and video games. Having viewed their parent’s lives as restricted, they valued uniqueness and flexibility. They placed a high premium on living a balanced life with time for themselves and their families (Krug, 1998:19).

When comparing baby boomers with generation X, Gozzi (1995:333) sees more similarities than differences. He points out that “[c]ommon to both, there is an idealism and a hope that the planet can be put right.” When referring to generation X Schmidt (1997:174) states that the problem is not generation X, but the fact that the whole culture is moving away from values. He refers specifically to the core values of higher education and singles out “immaturity and poor motivation... poor skills and poor attitudes” (Schmidt, 1997:173). Swift (1998:220) made the following statement when describing generation X: “I am entertained; therefore, I am.” Certainly this statement could also describe generation Y, the millennials, living in 2012. What seems clear is that certain characteristics of postmodernism apply to both generation X and to generation Y – the millennials. With hindsight one can however make the statement that *that* which was ascribed to generation X applies even more so to generation Y.

Generation Y was born between 1980 and 2002 (Parment, 2012:1; Lower, 2008:80; Wood, 2006:24). Monaco and Martin (2009:21) refer to this generation as the millennials, seeing that they started to arrive on tertiary education campuses in 2000. They were initially referred to as generation Y but the millennial 'label' is preferred (Jamieson, 2008:28; McAllister, 2009:13; Lowery, 2001:6). Lowery (2001:10) interviewed Strauss (2001), who stated in the following manner that the "Y" term is disliked by youths and young adults: "I have never heard any of them use it. For the most part they want to differentiate themselves from Gen Xers, and they would definitely rather feel and be treated like something new, not something further down the scale."

The millennials are described as progressive thinkers who get bored easily (Lower, 2008:80; McAllister, 2009:13-15). Their desire to be entertained and stimulated is evident in their lifestyle. Lower (2008:80) refers to their multitasking abilities, their ability to process information quickly; therefore they are "constantly looking for new approaches and seeking the next challenge." When describing formative influences, Lower (2001:81) explains that "[t]he events, trends and circumstances of a generation's first 20 years shape its core values and social traits – and these in turn influence attitudes, decisions, and preferences." Amongst others, she singles out the following as formative influences for generation Y/millennials: "HIV and AIDS, ...the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack, ...date-rape drugs, ...casual Fridays, body piercings, ...tattoos, ...low-rise pants" and casual dressing, ever-present technology and fast moving fun (Lower, 2001:81).

The millennials are a TV generation who are used to getting information in snippets. Bennett, Sagas and Dees (2006:573) remind us that this generation has watched more television than generation X members and "were more likely to watch action sport events... play video games, specifically action-based or role-playing games." Both McAllister (2009:14) and Jamieson (2008:28) refer to the desire of millennials to be "plugged-in" constantly, no matter where they go. Monaco and Martin (2009:22) state that the millennial generation was born during the ages of the "protected child, where children were considered an integral and protected part of the family unit... in contrast to the generation X children, who were seen as being a burden on the family and a generation of

neglect. McAllister (2009:14) also describes the millennial as sheltered. She refers to them as the “Baby on Board” generation, with “helicopter parents”, who hover to come to their defence. This amount of positive reinforcement from parents leads to the millennial generation being confident about the future (McAllister, 2009:14).

The different ‘generations’ were shortly described above. A generation is about twenty years long and is described by Strauss (2001), interviewed by Lowery (2001:7), as “a series of birth cohorts who share a common location in history and a common peer persona that reflects their collective identity as well as a sense of having shared experiences.” These descriptions of the different generations could be seen as ‘labelling’ and stereotypes (Gozzi, 1995:331). Losyk (1997:39) however stresses the fact that “no generation is homogeneous in its beliefs, values and attitudes.” It is therefore important not to label and ascribe stereotypes to any specific generation. From the above description of the different generations it seems evident that each generation impacts the next one. Manaco and Martin (2009:23) verify this with their statement that generations are influenced by “the time and events in history that surround them, but they are also influenced by their parental generational trends and styles.”

Considering the context of the millennial, young adulthood will be addressed as a stage in the life-span. What seems clear is that adulthood is classified into three periods – early, middle and late adulthood. The specific focus of this research is on young adulthood.

4.3 YOUNG ADULTHOOD

When considering young adulthood as a period in the life-span, it is interesting to note that wide variations exist in what is considered young or early adulthood. Researchers differ regarding the demarcation of young or early adulthood as a life stage. It is of interest in terms of this research on postmodernism and the young adult to consider these views.

In table 4.1, early adulthood or young adulthood is portrayed as a stage in life-span development. It seems as if the average starting age of early/young adulthood is approximately 20 years of age. Both Fulmer (2005) and Santrock (2009), however, are of the view that 18 years is a more accurate starting age for the depiction of early adulthood. In South Africa a child becomes a major upon reaching the age of 18 years (Section 17 of the Children’s Act 38 of 2005). It therefore seems appropriate to pinpoint 18 as the starting age of early/young adulthood, especially within a South African context.

Table 4.1: Early adulthood as a stage in life-span development

EARLY ADULTHOOD		
	LIFE-SPAN	AGES
Gerdes, Louw, Van Ede & Louw (1998)	Early adulthood	20 – 39 years
Newman & Newman (1999)	Early adulthood	24 – 34 years
Fulmer (2005)	Early young adulthood	18 – 21 years
McGoldrick & Carter (2005)	Early adulthood	21 – 35 years
Arnett (2000, 2006)	Emerging adulthood	18 – 25 years
Dacey, Travers & Fiore (2009)	Early adulthood	19 – 34 years
Sigelman & Rider (2009)	Early adulthood	20 – 40 years
Santrock (2009)	Emerging adulthood	18 – 25 years
Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman (2013)	Young adulthood	18 – 30 years

McGoldrick and Carter (2005:38) describe early adulthood as follows: approximate ages are 21 to 35 years; the development of the ability to engage in intense relationships; commitment to mutual growth and satisfying work; commitment to parity for care of the family; and the importance of career. With regard to becoming an adult, Santrock (2006:432, 433) states that adolescence begins in biology and ends in culture. Therefore, the transition from childhood to adolescence begins with the onset of pubertal maturation, whereas the transition from adolescence to adulthood is determined by cultural standards and experiences.

According to Arnett (2000:268; 2006:111) emerging adulthood is the term now given to the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Santrock (2009:417) acknowledges Arnett's (2000; 2005; 2006) 'theory of emerging adulthood' and agrees that the age range for emerging adulthood is the age of approximately 18 to 25 years. An important factor, however, is that worldwide youths are expected to delay entry into adulthood, because contemporary society requires adults who are more educated and skilled than they were required to be in previous generations. Heinz (2009:6) refers to this extended period before reaching adulthood as "an extended period of semi-adulthood". Santrock (2009:417) points out that experimentation and exploration characterise the emerging adult. These young adults are still exploring which career path they want to follow, what they want their identity to be and which lifestyle they want to adopt. Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2013:425) consider young adulthood as the period from 18 to 30 years when people are launching themselves "in the adult world."

Arnett (2006:111) states that the social, economic and demographic changes which occurred over the past 50 years have resulted in significant changes during the late teens and early to mid-twenties for those in developed countries. This has resulted in a long 'youth' period. He makes the following statement: "it makes more sense to describe it as two periods, adolescence (roughly age 10-17) and emerging adulthood (roughly age 18-25)" (Arnett, 2006:111). Arnett (2006:119) describes his term "emerging adulthood" as a new term for a new and first-time phenomenon – "the period of years that now lies between the attainment of biological maturity and the entrance into stable adult roles."

The researcher identifies with Arnett's (2000; 2006) 'emerging adulthood' as a stage of the life-span and also as a concept to describe the age period, but prefers to refer to the subjects of this research as young adults and not as emerging adults. The concept "young adult" is an accepted and frequently used term in scientific literature on this specific life stage. Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2013:425); Eitle, Taylor and McNulty Eitle (2010:296); Mulder (2009:207); Bucx and Van Wel (2008:78); Côté and Brynner (2008:252); Krings, Bangerter, Gomez and Grob (2008:94); Shulman and Ben-Artzi (2003:217), as well as

Smart and Sanson (2003:9), amongst others, all refer to ‘the young adult’ in their research and publications.

The concept young adult is viewed differently by different cultural groups and nationalities. For the purposes of this study, the researcher defines the young adult as an individual between the ages of 18 and 25 years, characterised by experimentation and exploration in a broad sense, but specifically in terms of identity, career and lifestyle.

Young adulthood, as a stage in the life-span, will subsequently be discussed with specific focus on physical development, sexual development, cognitive development, emotional and social development, moral development, work and career, as well as lifestyle.

4.3.1 Physical development

According to Sigelman and Rider (2009:148) the body of the mature adolescent or young adult is at its prime seeing that it is strong and fit, with its organs functioning efficiently. The body is, however, aging slowly and steadily over the life-span. Most systems increase to a peak between childhood and early adulthood and decline slowly thereafter – this applies to all physical functions. In terms of appearance and structure, only minor changes in physical appearance occur in the 20s and 30s (Sigelman & Rider, 2009:148).

Dacey et al. (2009:355), as well as Santrock (2009:420, 421) effectively state the same when they say that early adulthood is the period during which physical changes slow down. Between the ages of 19 and 26 years the internal organs attain their greatest physical potential. The young adult is in prime condition as far as speed and strength are concerned. After the age of 26 years the slowing process begins; the spinal discs settle, causing decrease in height; fatty tissue increases, causing increase in weight; muscle strength decreases; reaction times level off and stabilise and cardiac output declines (Dacey et al., 2009:355). Gerdes et al. (1998:475) are of the opinion that physical decline only starts at the age of 30 years. They estimate that many aspects of physical functioning are at their best from age 20 to age 30. Muscle power and physical skills are at their best, while sensory functioning, specifically certain of the eye’s features, hearing, taste, smell

and touch are also at their best during early adulthood. It can thus be deduced that the body of the young adult between the ages 18 and 25 years is at its prime.

Santrock (2009:420, 421) makes the statement that not only does the individual reach his peak performance during early adulthood, but during this time he is also the healthiest. Few young adults have chronic health problems; they have fewer colds and respiratory problems than when they were children. Gerdes et al. (1998:475) similarly state that, generally, people younger than 40 enjoy excellent or very good health. They quote research by Birren et al. (1981), Norton (1997) and by Papalia and Olds (1995), who made the following recommendations for the maintenance and promotion of good health: a balanced diet, exercise, adequate sleep, not smoking, maintaining healthy body weight, moderate use of alcohol, a healthy sex life and avoidance of promiscuity, effective coping with tension and the use of safety belts in motor cars.

Santrock (2006:437) refers to research by Csikszentmihalyi and Rathunde (1998) regarding “hidden dangers in the peaks of performance and health in early adulthood.” These researchers state, as quoted by Santrock (2006:437), that young adults are able to “draw on physical resources for a great deal of pleasure, often bouncing back easily from physical stress and abuse. However, this can lead them to push their bodies too far.” Negative effects of abusing your body may not show during early adulthood, but will probably surface later in early adulthood or in middle adulthood (Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1998 in Santrock, 2006:437).

Santrock (2009:421-425) discusses health-impairing lifestyles frequently observed in young adulthood, which relates to eating and weight, regular exercise and substance abuse. These lifestyles impact the physical development of the young adult. The views of several researchers will be integrated in this section.

- **Eating and weight**

Even though obesity is on the rise, dieting has become an obsession. Dieting is of great interest to the public (young adult), health professionals, policy makers, the media and

powerful diet and food industries. The fixation with excessive thinness can lead to chronic dieting and severe health risks (Brownell, 2000 in Santrock, 2006:439). When discussing 'a postmodern lifestyle', the human body was portrayed as the focus of sensation and display. As a result young men and women impose cruel regimes upon themselves to get fit and slim.

The link between body image and emotional well-being is emphasised by Dacey et al. (2009:305) with their statement that dissatisfaction with your body leads to feelings of inadequacy, loss of control and decreased self-esteem. These are risk factors for eating disorders. Young people, especially women, are under huge pressure to stay attractive. This leads to pressure to stay physically fit (Dacey et al., 2009:359).

- **Regular exercise**

Dacey et al. (2009:359) point out that one of the most popular trends of recent years has been the fitness craze. This craze is evident in gyms, spas, exercise classes and designer clothes and shoes for working out. Researchers, quoted by Santrock (2006:441), have found that exercise benefits not only physical health, but mental health as well. Exercise specifically improves self-concept and reduces anxiety and depression (Moses et al. in Santrock, 2006:441). An additional benefit of regular exercise is that "[a] consistent and negative relationship between physical activity and smoking emerged across both sex and age. The greater the intensity of youth's physical activity, the less likely they were to smoke" (Charilaou, Karekla, Constantinou & Price, 2009:969). Smoking as a component of substance abuse will be discussed in the following section.

- **Substance abuse**

Dacey et al. (2009:357) state that the young adult consumes alcohol to attain the relaxed, uninhibited feeling that alcohol tends to produce. Eitle et al. (2010:297) refer to research by Arnett (2005) stating that the contemporary young adult experiences "freedom from social control, ...traditional institutions, traditional gender roles, economic pressures, and other behavioural constraints." Together with this freedom, the young adult experiences

identity confusion, instability in relationships and roles and a tendency to focus on the self. All these factors could be regarded as possible risks for substance abuse.

Santrock (2009:424) examined the extent of substance abuse, specifically alcohol and cigarette smoking, among tertiary students and young adults. Regarding alcohol consumption, he quotes extensive research by several researchers (Eisenberg & Wechsler, 2003; Glassman, 2003; Schulenberg et al., 2000). It seems clear that heavy, binge drinking often increases during tertiary education, taking its toll on students. This behaviour is more common among men than women and students living away from home in residences. Eitle et al. (2010:297) quote a number of reasons for an association between college attendance and heavy episodic drinking. They list living with same aged peers, living away from home, living in residences, academic demands and the availability of alcohol at parties and at shops close to campuses. According to Wechsler et al. (2002), as cited in Santrock (2009:424), almost half of binge drinkers reported problems that included: missing classes, physical injuries, troubles with police and having unprotected sex. Verster et al. (2003) reported in Santrock (2009:424) that “binge-drinking college students were 11 times more likely to fall behind with their studies, 10 times more likely to drive after drinking, and twice as likely to have unprotected sex than college students who did not binge drink.” This study also found that after an evening of binge drinking, memory retrieval was significantly impaired during the alcohol ‘hangover’ the next morning. It is interesting to note that Wechsler et al. (2002) describe binge drinkers as men who, within a two week period, drink five or more drinks in a row and women who drink four or more drinks consecutively in a two week period. They mention as a special concern the increase in binge drinking by females during emerging adulthood (Wechsler et al., 2002 in Santrock, 2009:424).

Santrock (2006:442), however, refers to research by Bachman et al. (1996, 2002) who found that often when individuals reach their mid-twenties, many have reduced their alcohol and drug use. The main findings of these researchers are that college students drink more than youths who end their education after high school; young adults who do not engage in tertiary education tend to smoke more; singles use marijuana more than married

individuals; drinking is heaviest among singles and young divorced individuals; and young adults who consider religion to be important in their lives are less likely to take drugs than their less religious counterparts (Bachman et al., 1996, 2002 in Santrock, 2009:442, 443).

Santrock (2009:425, 426) emphasises the addictive nature and health risks of cigarette smoking. He states that “[n]icotine, the active drug in cigarettes, is a stimulant that increases the smoker’s energy and alertness, a pleasurable and reinforcing experience.” It also stimulates neurotransmitters that have a calming or pain-reducing effect. Dacey et al. (2009:359) make the statement that peer pressure from friends is the major reason that young adults smoke. Young people who smoke tend to be extroverted, risk-takers, impulsive and more disobedient towards authority than non-smokers. It must be noted that this is according to research done in the United States of America, where smoking is more frowned upon than in a country like South Africa. Some young adults see smoking as a way to appear older and sophisticated. These authors are of the view that among young women, smokers are less athletic, more social, study less and subsequently obtain lower grades, and generally dislike school more than non-smoking females (Dacey et al., 2009:359).

Santrock (2006:444) describes addiction as a sequence of behaviours which is categorised by an overwhelming association with the use and the procurement of a drug. This can occur in spite of negative consequences linked to the use of the drug. He discusses the strong tendency to relapse after quitting or withdrawal. According to Santrock (2006:445) both the biologically based, disease model of addiction and the non-disease, life-process model of addiction, has supporters. Both these models seem relevant when considering the biology and psychology of the young adult.

4.3.2 Sexual development

In order to understand sexual behaviour in young adults, it is imperative to take note of how sexual behaviour during adolescence has changed in recent years. Santrock (2009:361) provides a context when he says that “[a]dolescence is a time of sexual exploration and experimentation, of sexual fantasies and realities, of incorporating

sexuality into one's identity." Adolescents think about their sexual attractiveness, sex acts and what the future holds for them in terms of their sexual lives. Most adolescents will ultimately develop a mature sexual identity, despite the fact that they experience periods of confusion and vulnerability (Santrock, 2009:361). Santrock (2009:361) also reminds us that sexual development and interest in sex are normal aspects of adolescent development.

Television and its sexual content, as well as advertisers who use sex to sell their products, DVDs, music videos and the lyrics of music, as well as Internet websites contribute to the sexual culture and a casual attitude about sex. Almost a decade ago, Binson, Dolcini, Pollack and Catania (1993:268) reflected on the high levels of sexual risk-taking behaviour of the young adult with their statement that "young adults delay making long-term commitments; they have sex more often and have more sex partners during a given year than any other age-group."

Attitudes about sexual behaviour and sexual behaviour itself have changed over the years. In their research, Binson et al. (1993:270) found that young men aged 18 to 25 years were more than twice as likely as young women to have had more than one partner. These researchers do however ascribe this difference to the propensity of women to underreport, and among men to over report sexual activities (Binson et al., 1993:270). According to Sigelman and Rider (2009:367), contemporary teenagers are involved in more intimate forms of sexual behaviour at earlier ages than adolescents of the past were. The percentage of adolescents with sexual experience increases steadily over the adolescent years. According to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (2006), as cited in Sigelman & Rider (2009:367), reflecting the decline of the double standard, the sexual behaviour of females has changed much more than that of males and the difference between the sexes has narrowed. There are higher rates of oral sex or anal sex among today's high school students seeing that they do not believe that oral sex constitutes having sex (Prinstein, Meade & Cohen, 2003 in Sigelman & Rider, 2009:367).

When focussing on sexuality in young adulthood, Gerdes et al. (1998:485) emphasise an important fact when they discuss sexuality and emotional intimacy. They declare that it is particularly during early adulthood that sexuality and emotional intimacy begin to coincide. They point out the contrast to adolescent sexuality, which may be more egocentric seeing that identity has not fully developed. An increase in sexual activity does therefore not automatically imply a corresponding increase in emotional intimacy. “The establishment of a personal identity is, therefore, a prerequisite for a mature, adult sexual relationship, which is characterised by caring and respect for the other person” (Erikson, 1963; Fromm, 1972; Orlofsky, Marcia & Lesser, 1973 in Gerdes et al., 1998:485).

Gerdes and Van Ede (1993:462) link sexual behaviour and a change in norms and values. These changing norms and values are evident in cohabitation and extramarital relationships, with an emphasis on individual freedom and the pleasure aspect of sexual activity. This has a direct influence on marriage patterns. Binson et al. (1993:270), as well as Newman and Newman (1999:392) point out that the main change in the marriage pattern has been that more young adults postpone marriage until the end of their twenties. Newman and Newman (1999:392) state that the fact that the age of marriage is delayed is associated with various other social developments, including having fewer children and also having children at a more advanced age. Delaying the age at marriage also relates to changing norms regarding sexual experimentation as a single person. “[I]t seems probable that an increasing proportion of men and women will remain single throughout their 20s, giving the domains of school and work greater influence in the early formulation of a lifestyle” (Newman & Newman, 1999:393).

According to Sigelman and Rider (2009:369) adult sexual lifestyles are as varied as their personalities and intellects. Some adults remain single, others actively seek a range of partners – some have one partner at a time, while there are those that lead celibate lives. According to Laumann et al. (in Sigelman & Rider, 2009:369) men have more sexual partners than women, but most members of both sexes have just one sexual partner at a time.

As discussed in chapter 3, it is Inglehart's (2000:223) opinion that postmodern society is moving toward sexual norms that give wider latitude for individual sexual gratification and individual self-expression. He states that this change in world views has given rise to new norms and acceptance of gay and lesbian lifestyles (Inglehart, 2000:224). King (2005) in Santrock (2006:446) states that "[t]oday, it is more accepted to view sexual orientation along a continuum from exclusive male-female relations to exclusive same-sex relations rather than an either/or proposition." Michael et al. (in Santrock, 2006:447) emphasise that some young adults are also bisexual, being sexually attracted to people of both sexes. Speculation about the origin of sexual orientation has been extensive. According to Hyde and Lamater (2005) in Santrock (2006:446) "[a]ll people, regardless of sexual orientation, have similar physiological responses during sexual arousal and seem to be aroused by the same types of tactile stimulation... no difference between LGBs [lesbian, gay and bisexuals] and heterosexuals in a wide range of attitudes, behaviour and adjustments."

Santrock (2006:447) discusses extensive research on the causes or basis of same-sex relations. A possible biological basis of same-sex relations was explored by D'Auquelli (2000) and Quinsey (2003) in Santrock (2006:447), but the result of hormone studies have been inconclusive. It seems as if an individual's sexual orientation is most probably determined by a blend of genetic, cognitive, hormonal and environmental factors (Baldwin & Baldwin in Santrock, 2006:447). Santrock (2006:447) came to the conclusion that "[m]ost experts on same-sex relations believe that no one factor alone causes sexual orientation and that the relative weight of each factor can vary from one individual to the next."

4.3.3 Cognitive development

Gerdes et al. (1998:498-504) describe the term 'cognitive development', when applied to adulthood, as that certain changes take place regarding intelligence, post-formal operational thought and memory. They state that some of these changes may be more noticeable than others. Gerdes et al. (1998:493) refer to research by Denney (1984, 1989) which indicates that there is a certain point at which cognitive abilities begin to decline. Certain abilities begin to decline in late adolescence or early adulthood. Certain aspects,

however, influence cognitive performance. One of these aspects is physical factors. Gerdes et al. (1998:495) state “that Bashmore and Goddard (1993) argue that adults who have a lifestyle that includes regular aerobic exercises experience a slower rate of decline in their information-processing speed.” This is attributed to their improved oxygen intake, which enhances the brain’s processing efficiency and subsequently leads to better cognitive performance. Gerdes et al. (1998:495) continue by providing a conclusion by Stones and Kozma (1988) that adults who do physical exercise regularly perform cognitively better than those who do not exercise.

Gerdes et al. (1998:495-496) also discuss the impact of lifestyle and level of education on cognitive abilities. It seems as if the average person with an average social status and an intact family, with average involvement in his environment, will retain his cognitive abilities; the privileged person with a high social status, who is constantly exposed to new experiences may improve his cognitive ability, while the average person from an intact family with diminished interest in learning new things will show decreased cognitive abilities. The greatest decrease in cognitive ability will be shown by the isolated older person who is poor, unhappy and probably divorced or widowed. In terms of level of education, the younger adult will have the advantage, because of more recent experience of examinations. Therefore, level of education and examination experience will affect IQ test performance. What this suggests is that context is significant. Gerdes et al. (1998:496) make the statement that different life stages are associated with specific contexts. “[I]n early adulthood, adults usually enter a career, marry and become parents. They use their cognitive abilities in the contexts of work and family” (Gerdes et al., 1998:496). The manner in which the young adult thinks is therefore determined by their circumstances and the demands presented by the specific life stage (Gerdes et al., 1998:496).

Dacey et al. (2009:360-368) state that cognitive functioning peaks during young adulthood. Santrock (2009:432, 433) concurs and discusses Piaget’s research on cognitive development, where he came to the conclusion that an adolescent and an adult think qualitatively in the same way and therefore that formal operational thought (logical, abstract and idealistic thought) is entered in early adolescence at around 11 to 15 years of

age. Piaget did believe that the young adult is more *quantitatively* progressive in his thinking seeing that he has more knowledge than the adolescent. Adults also increase their knowledge in a specific area. Santrock (2009:433) mentions that some developmentalists, specifically Keating (1990), believe that it is not until adulthood that many individuals consolidate their formal operational thinking. What Keating means by this is that individuals may begin to plan and hypothesise about intellectual problems in adolescence, but they become more methodical and refined at this as young adults. Santrock (2009:433) refers to a related perspective on adult cognitive change when acknowledging the research by Schaie and Willis (2000) who argued that adults do progress beyond adolescents in their use of intellect. As an example he referred to the fact that in early adulthood individuals often shift from attaining knowledge to applying knowledge – especially where long-term career goals and an attempt to achieve success in their work are pursued.

According to Santrock (2009:433) the above refers to “realistic and pragmatic thinking.” In terms of “reflective and relativistic thinking”, he refers to research by Perry (1970, 1999) who describes changes in cognition that take place in early adulthood. Perry (1970, 1999, as quoted by Santrock, 2009:433) states that adolescents often view their world in terms of polarities – right/wrong, we/they, good/bad:

As youth age into adulthood, they gradually move away from this type of absolutist thinking as they become aware of the diverse opinions and multiple perspectives of others. Thus in Perry’s view, the *absolutist, dualistic thinking* of adolescence gives way to the *reflective, relativistic thinking* of adulthood.

Santrock (2009:433) reports on postformal thought in the following manner. He refers to the fact that some theorists (Kramer, Kahlbaugh & Goldston, 1992; Commons et al., 1989) have identified cognitive changes in young adults and proposed a new stage of cognitive development. Postformal thought is qualitatively different from Piaget’s formal operational thought, as it involves understanding that the most appropriate answer to a problem requires deep and contemplative thought and can differ from one circumstance to another (Kramer et al., 1992; Commons et al., 1989 in Santrock, 2009:433). Postformal thought

also implies that solutions to problems need to be rational and that emotions and subjective factors can impact thinking. According to Santrock (2009:434) researchers have found that young adults are more likely to engage in this postformal thinking than adolescents are, seeing that they become more sceptical about there being a sole truth and they are often not willing to accept an answer as final. Sigelman and Rider (2009:205) state that several researchers have suggested that adults are more likely than adolescents to see knowledge as relative rather than absolute. Relativistic thinking consequently means understanding that knowledge is dependent on the subjective perception of the knower; therefore, a problem can be regarded in numerous different ways (Sigelman & Rider, 2009:206). Dacey et al.'s (2009:361) understanding of 'relativism' is essentially similar. This understanding is based on research by Perry (1968, 1981) which indicates that all views are equally right; anything can be right or wrong depending on the situation.

Santrock (2009:434) asks how strong the research evidence is for a postformal stage of cognitive development. He answers this question by stating; this stage is however controversial seeing that "the research evidence has yet to be provided to document it as clearly a qualitatively more advanced stage than formal operational thought" (Santrock, 2009:434). Sigelman and Rider (2009:207) share these sentiments with their statement that it is unclear whether relativistic or other forms of advanced thinking might qualify as a new postformal stage of cognitive development. What does seem clear to these researchers is that only a minority of adults, especially those who have received advanced education, show these types of thinking.

For Sigelman and Rider (2009:207, 208) cognitive growth does not end in adolescence. Adults are likely to display formal-operational skills in their areas of expertise. Some well-educated adults may advance to postformal modes of thought such as relativistic thinking. "Yet age does not tell us much about how adults think; life circumstances and the demands placed on people to think at work, in the home, and in the community often tell us more" (Sigelman & Rider, 2009:207).

4.3.4 Emotional and social development

Gerdes and Van Ede (1993:485) mention in their discussion of intimacy and attachment that attachment can be placed under either emotional or social development – under emotional development because of its association with certain feelings such as joy and satisfaction. It can also be placed under social development because of its focus on the interpersonal. Attachment occupies a central place in the development of the individual and also forms part of personality development. Attachment therefore centres on a search for intimacy with a significant other person (Gerdes & Van Ede, 1993:485). These authors state that intimacy has much in common with attachment, but intimacy refers more to the degree of familiarity. Intimacy can also relate to different aspects, such as emotional, intellectual, sexual and spiritual intimacy. According to Newman and Newman (1999:417) an intimate relationship has both cognitive and affective components. Partners are able to understand each other's point of view. They usually experience mutual regard that reflects their respect and their affection for each other. Intimacy permits the disclosure of personal feelings and the sharing and development of ideas and plans.

According to Sigelman and Rider (2009:332), as well as Santrock (2009:450), Erikson's theory of psychosocial growth confirms that adults grow and change over the life-span. Erikson saw early adulthood as a time for dealing with the psychosocial conflict of intimacy versus isolation. Erikson theorised that a person must attain a sense of individual identity before being able to commit himself to a shared identity with another person. Sigelman and Rider (2009:333) explain this as knowing yourself before being able to love someone else. These authors summarise their rationale for this statement in the following manner (Sigelman & Rider, 2009:333):

The young adult who has no clear sense of self may be threatened by the idea of entering a committed, long-term relationship and being 'tied down', or may become overdependent on a romantic partner (or possibly a close friend) as a source of identity.

Newman and Newman's (1999:417) definition of intimacy as the capacity to experience an open, compassionate, loving relationship with another person without fear of losing one's

own individuality in the process, closely compares with that of Sigelman and Rider (2009). Sigelman and Rider (2009:333) ask the question whether identity indeed paves the way for genuine intimacy. They reviewed research on this topic and discussed a study by Whitbourne and Tesch who found that graduates who had well-formed identities were more likely than those who did not, to be capable of genuine and lasting intimacy. Newman and Newman (1999:417) express themselves on the topic of identity and its relation to intimacy, in the following manner: "...the possibility of establishing intimacy depends on individuals' perceptions of themselves as valuable, competent, and meaningful people."

Newman and Newman (1999:417) stress the importance of the unique task associated with young adulthood to establish an intimate relationship with someone outside one's family. Gerdes et al. (1998:545) hold the same view. They state that it is one of the young adult's major developmental tasks to develop intimacy with others. This intimacy implies the ability to establish close relationships with others and to be able to give and receive friendship and love. In terms of this process of give and receive, they state that both persons must contribute to the relationship, which means that the process must be mutual (Gerdes et al., 1998:545). Antonucci (1990) in Gerdes et al. (1998:548) points out that friendship relationships are often more beneficial and contribute to more positive feelings than family bonds. Friends choose each other and these choices are, according to Gerdes et al. (1998:548), based on qualities that constitute a good companion and a source of emotional support. In contrast, the personalities of family members are often incompatible (Gerdes et al., 1998:548). Santrock (2009:451) is of the view that friends can in some cases provide a better buffer from stress and be a better source of emotional support than family members. They state that this might be because friends choose each other, while family ties are obligatory. Hurlock (1980), as cited in Gerdes & Van Ede (1993:487), accentuates the increasing selectivity that discerns the choice of friends during early adulthood from the choice of friends during adolescence, when popularity is sought. The young adult starts to value fewer like-minded friends.

The emotional and social development of the young adult will be discussed in more depth by exploring relationships and social networks; intimate relationships; love and exclusivity; and social roles.

4.3.4.1 Relationships and social networks

Sigelman and Rider (2009:430) observe that relationships with family and friends are just as important during adulthood, as earlier in life. These relationships do, however, take on different qualities over the adult years. Young adults are forming romantic relationships and friendships, choosing to associate with people who are similar to themselves – just as adolescents and children do. According to Reis et al. (in Sigelman & Rider, 2009:430) the tendency toward more intimacy with the other sex which began in adolescence carries on into early adulthood. Young adults, especially single ones, seem to have more friends than middle-aged and older adults (Fischer & Philips; Fischer et al. in Sigelman & Rider, 2009:430).

Sigelman and Rider (2009:431) report on the parallels between an infant's attachment to a parental figure and a young adult's love for a romantic partner – therefore, the study of adult romantic relationships from the perspective of attachment theory. According to Hatfield and Rapson (2000), as cited in Sigelman and Rider (2009:431), parent-infant attachments and adult romantic attachments are not identical. However, both want to be close, take comfort from the bond and are upset by separation. Like the love of a parent for an infant, romantic love frequently involves deep attachment, commitment and emotional intimacy. Sigelman and Rider (2006:415) discuss many different research studies on this phenomenon. Their reference to research by Conger et al. (2000), however, provides a pertinent description of these parallels in terms of attachment: "Receiving warm and supportive parenting as a child appears to be associated with engaging in warm, supportive behaviour in romantic relationships as a young adult – and, as a result, enjoying a high-quality relationship" (Conger et al., 2000 in Sigelman & Rider, 2006:415). A positive relationship between the parental bond and the well-being of young adults was also found in research by Bucx and Van Wel (2008:85). These authors make

the statement that the relationship with parents remains important for the psychological well-being of young adults (Bucx & Van Wel, 2008:85).

Sigelman and Rider (2009:433) point out that early attachment experiences may predict the future, but do not determine it. What is significant is that friendships remain important across the life-span and that the young adult typically has many friends. It is evident that close attachments to other people are essential to normal cognitive, social and emotional development.

According to Smart and Sanson (2003:4), social competence is an important component of social development and is essential for satisfying relationships with parents and friends. Gresham and Elliot (1990), as cited in Smart and Sanson (2003:4), describe social competence as “socially acceptable learned ways of behaving that enable a person to interact effectively with other people.” Smart and Sanson (2003:8) state that childhood and adolescent social competence are powerful precursors of social competence in young adults. Young adults who are socially competent display “clearly defined factors of empathy, assertion, responsibility and self-control” (Smart & Sanson, 2003:8). These researchers found that competency in one of these four facets were related to competencies in the others. They also express the view that socially competent young adults were less likely to experience depression or participate in antisocial behaviour. They were more likely to feel satisfied with their lives, and to have “closer and more satisfying relationships with parents and friends than those who were less socially skilled” (Smart & Sanson, 2003:8). Hawkins, Letcher, Sanson, Smart and Toumbourou (2009:89) refer to young people taking increasing responsibility for their actions and displaying an increase in “positive characteristics such as self-control, compassion and respect.” Hawkins et al. (2009:91) state that according to Eisenberg (2003) “[s]ocial competence has been conceptualised as an important positive developmental facet underpinning successful social relationships.” Social competence therefore enables young people to interact effectively.

4.3.4.2 Intimate relationships

Robinson (2000:775) bases her statement that individuals “focus on the development of intimate relationships during late adolescence and early adulthood” on the views of Erikson (1963; 1968). “Successful resolution of the issue of intimacy (specifically, the crisis of intimacy versus isolation) enables the young adult to maintain committed, enduring intimate relationships” (Erikson, 1968; Orlofsky, 1993 in Robinson, 2000:775). Robinson (2000:775) refers to Perlman and Fehr’s (1987) view that despite the variations in definitions of intimacy, three themes have been identified: interdependence, self-disclosure and affection. What is also of significance is that many of the patterns that young adults bring into their relationships with significant others are developed in the relationships they have within the family of origin (Aylmer, 1989 in Robinson, 2000:775). In terms of the development of intimate relationships, the family is evidently an important developmental context. In research by Robinson (2000:782) she has found that “a positive mother-child relationship and family adaptability provide young adults with important tools for developing successful interpersonal relationships.” This researcher also found that “family cohesion was not related to intimate relationships in young adulthood” (Robinson, 2000:782).

Regarding intimate relationships, Newman and Newman (1999:392) make the statement that early adulthood is a time when men and women explore the possibility of forming relationships that combine emotional closeness, shared interests and a shared vision of the future, as well as sexual intimacy. Not all intimate relationships end in marriage. Newman and Newman (1999:393, 394), ask the question: “What determines whether or not the dating relationship will end in matrimony?” They state that a basic factor is the person’s underlying desire to marry, as well as the readiness of the two individuals for a long-term commitment. Work on identity must also have progressed far enough so that the possibility of a deep, emotional involvement with another person will be seen as exciting rather than frightening. Often a personal agenda determines readiness for marriage, such as completing a degree or earning a certain income. Newman and Newman (1999:394) state a very obvious fact, but one that is crucial; partners are selected from among those who are available for interaction. One should then also take cognisance of the fact that not

everyone who is available is necessarily suitable or an appropriate choice. Newman and Newman (1999:394) point out that the young adult's style of interaction – whether shy and withdrawn or expressive and outgoing – influences the numbers and kinds of interactions he has with others. They state that generally, the choice of a partner depends on the network of interactions in which he is involved.

4.3.4.3 Love and exclusivity

Sternberg (1988), as cited in Newman and Newman (1999:422), describes love as a set of feelings, thoughts and motives that contribute to communication, sharing and support. According to Sternberg's theory, almost all kinds of love may be viewed as a combination of three dimensions: intimacy, passion and commitment. In this theory *intimacy* means the emotional investment in a relationship that promotes closeness and connection; *passion* is the expression of physical and psychological needs and desires; while *commitment* is the cognitive decision to remain in the relationship. "Each of these dimensions is stronger in relationships that are perceived to be exclusive and that have a good chance of enduring than they are in more casual, temporary dating relationships" (Whitely, 1993 in Newman & Newman, 1999:422).

Santrock (2006:474) refers to romantic love as passionate love, or 'eros'. Romantic love has strong components of sexuality and infatuation – this often predominates in the early part of a love relationship (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2000, 2004; Metts, 2004 in Santrock, 2006:474). The importance of romantic love in young adulthood must not be underestimated. Berscheid, Snyder and Omoto (in Santrock, 2006:474) state that "[r]omantic love is especially important among college students. One study of unattached college men and women found that more than half identified a romantic partner, rather than a parent, sibling, or friend, as their closest relationship."

Newman and Newman (1999:422) describe exclusivity, the shutting out of others, as a core pathology of this period. They admit that exclusivity is, to some extent, a natural element in intimate relationships. They do, however, caution that exclusivity can become destructive to one's ability to have relationships. Exclusivity should not be characterised by

intense jealousy and rivalry towards anyone who shows an interest in one's friend or loved one.

As mentioned, not all intimate relationships end in marriage. Binson et al. (1993:270) make the claim that for unmarried young adults, monogamous sexual relationships are short-lived. Newman and Newman (1999:398) state that in contemporary society, cohabitation may be the preferred option for many couples in an intimate relationship. According to DeMaris and Rao, (1992 in Newman & Newman, 1999:398) research literature shows that those couples who have cohabited before marriage are more likely to divorce than those who have not. They state that this pattern has been observed in the United States, Sweden and Canada. Newman and Newman (1999:398) point out that a number of explanations have been suggested to account for the greater instability of marriages following cohabitation. Thomson and Colella (1992) suggest that because of the non-traditional nature of cohabitation, it is suggested that people who cohabit have certain characteristics that may lead to the formation of unstable marriages. These individuals may be unconventional and may be less committed to the institutions of marriage as a lifelong relationship (Thomson & Colella, 1992 in Newman & Newman, 1999:398).

Newman and Newman (1999:414) point out that young adults in intimate relationships need social networks. The partners in a committed relationship become acquainted with individuals and other couples, forming their social network. They form friendships in the neighbourhood and at work. They could also become involved in the social life of their community. Newman and Newman (1999:414) point out that “[t]he orientation of the nuclear family towards outsiders is developed during this stage.” An important factor in the establishment of adult friendships is the degree of intimacy shared by non-family members. Some couples have a few close friends only, while others have a large circle of acquaintances. This difference in orientation towards friendships determines the extent to which one depends on the family to meet individual needs for intimacy, approval and companionship. A difference between partners in their orientation towards friendships could be a potential source of tension in close relationships (Newman & Newman, 1999:414).

4.3.4.4 Social roles

Newman and Newman (1999:386) make the statement that ‘social role’ is one of the concepts most commonly used for understanding adulthood. Roles are learned and acted out during childhood. Adults, however, assume multiple roles that expand their opportunities for self-expression and that provide a variety of social demands. Adulthood can be considered as a series of gradually more differentiated and complex roles that the individual plays for extensive lengths of time. “The salient roles of adulthood, such as worker, spouse, friend, parent, teacher, mentor, or community leader, give structure to adult identity and meaning to life. Role changes provide opportunities for growth and redefinition” (Thoits, 1986 in Newman & Newman, 1999:386). Newman and Newman (1999:386, 387) point out that only in adulthood do individuals experience the behavioural requirements of many of their roles. The young adult can either conform to role expectations, revise them or reject them. Bucx and Van Wel (2008:73) point out that new roles imply new patterns of interaction. Therefore, role conflicts and role strains produce tensions. Additional stresses of adulthood result from the need to refine certain role expectations in order to preserve one’s sense of self (Newman & Newman, 1999:387).

Newman and Newman (1999:387) discuss Neugarten et al.’s (1965) concept of the ‘social clock’ as a way of understanding adulthood. The term refers to “age norms and age expectations [that] operate as prods and brakes upon behaviour, in some instances hastening behavior and in some instances delaying it” (Neugarten et al., 1965 in Newman & Newman, 1999:387). Neugarten and associates (1965), as cited in Newman and Newman (1999:387), suggest that social class groups tend to agree on the appropriate age for important life events, such as marriage, child-rearing, and retirement. This consensus applies social pressure on individuals, pushing them to assume a particular role at an expected age. Age norms may suppress behaviours that are considered age inappropriate. Adults are conscious of existing norms regarding the timing of certain behaviours and evaluate their own behaviours as being appropriately ‘on time’, or ‘too soon’ or ‘too late’. What is important to consider is that “the social clock is constantly being reset as people confront the challenges, demands, and new structures of modern society” (Newman & Newman, 1999:388).

Côté and Brynner (2008:261) make the statement that sociologically there is a decline in clearly identifiable social markers of adulthood. This leads to a weakening of social norms which provide normative structures that guide people into adult roles. “Faced with the prospects of navigating their way into a society that provides fewer agreed-upon rules and a lower consensus regarding appropriate behaviour, young people must take up this void in meaning in their own way – through the individualization process...” (Côté & Brynner, 2008:261). Côté and Brynner (2008:262) is of the opinion that the transition to adulthood is probably most challenging for those with little guidance from their families of origin or an organised religion.

Two clearly identifiable markers of adulthood, namely the adult role and the married role, will now be discussed.

- **Adult role**

According to Rindfuss et al. (1987 in Newman & Newman, 1999:388) the social clock concept has been expanded to include norms for the sequencing, as well as the timing of transitions in social roles. Earlier, in the twentieth century there was much more agreement about the ideal timing of most transitions and about the normative order of transitions. In terms of the coordination of occupational and family careers, a normative path might have been to finish school, enter the labour market, get married and have children. Today there is much less consensus about the best age to make these transitions. There is also considerable diversity in patterns of change (Rosenfeld & Stark, 1987 in Newman & Newman, 1999:388). “As a result of divorce, both men and women enter and then leave their marital role, and of course, this change influences the school, work, and parenting transitions as well” (Newman & Newman, 1999:388). Newman and Newman (1999:390) caution that adulthood must be understood not only in terms of role learning and role change, but also in terms of the variety of individual motives that direct and sustain behaviour.

Plug, Zeijl and Du Bois-Reymond (2003:128) point out that since the 1960s adolescents, “both boys and girls - started to experience a significant extended period of education and

an apparent delay in the transition from youth to adulthood.” These authors refer to “the transition from education to labour” (Plug et al., 2003:127). The new demands imposed on young people lead to the need for lifelong learning, flexibility and employ-ability. In this context young adults need the abilities of “self-steering and reflectiveness” to cope with the opportunities and risks that arise in postmodern societies (Plug et al., 2003:127).

Plug et al. (2003:130) support Newman and Newman’s (1999) views above, on assuming and then leaving different roles. They refer to the young adult that “bounce[s] back and forth like a yo-yo” (Plug et al., 2003:130). It seems as if most of these transitions involve returning to full-time or part-time education. Walther et al. (2002) and Biggart and Walther (2006), as cited in Molgat (2007:496), refer to transitions between youth and adulthood becoming “increasingly de-standardized, reflecting more reversible, fragmented and uncertain ‘yo-yo transitions’.” Molgat (2007:496) states that transitions are not as permanent as they used to be for the Baby Boom generation. He refers to young adults returning to live with their parents after leaving home, as a result of going back to school, job losses, switching from one post-secondary programme to another. More young adults are living in the parental home – they are postponing marriage and parenthood (Molgat, 2007:496). Bynner (2005:368) states that with the postponement of full independence, adulthood gets pushed back. Maguire, Ball and Macrae (2001:198) refer to a ‘refusal of adulthood’. They make the statement that there is no straightforward transition from dependence to independence. What is emerging is a ‘new transitional stage’ characterised by “flexibility, manoeuvrability, postponement, delay and interruption. Post-adolescence as a form of semi-autonomy now extends into the early and in some cases the mid twenties” (Bynner et al., 1997 in Maguire et al., 2001:198).

Plug et al. (2003:130) researched “the simultaneous adoption of various social roles and ...the reversibility of status passages.” These researchers found that young adults from lower social classes aim to gain independence as soon as possible. This implies a short educational and youth phase, early entry into the job market and a family promptly being established. Molgat (2007:496) refers to this tendency in the following manner: “...leaving home to acquire independence followed quickly after employment was secured, and

marriage and a first child shortly thereafter.” Plug et al. (2003:130) found that youth from middle social classes aim to maintain or improve their social position. They therefore focus on good qualifications and jobs, with the implication of a relatively extended youth phase. Adulthood is therefore related to having and making a career. For the higher-class, youth is an extended phase, with a focus on experimentation and individual development. Plug et al. (2003:141) make the statement that there are drastic changes in young people’s life courses and accompanying perceptions, with an emphasis on both socialisation and individualisation in the form of reflexivity. Molgat (2007:496) supports this view and refers to “trends of increased individualism among youth and later completion of various life events.”

Krings et al. (2008:94) point out that young adults’ developmental tasks have changed and that this impacts the pursuit of personal goals. Traditional developmental tasks and goals were dictated by society and bound to specific ages. Havinghurst (1972 in Shulman & Ben-Artzi, 2003:217) suggested a list of demands (regarding developmental tasks) relevant in terms of transition to adulthood, namely the acquisition of a set of values and an ethical system to guide behaviour, preparing for marriage and family life, as well as selecting and getting ready for a career. According to Krings et al. (2008:94) changes have however occurred “in the goal content and processes of young adults from different historical time periods.” Krings et al. (2008:94) make the statement that individual development and norms about the attainment of happiness have therefore diversified. The young adult is confronted with new developmental challenges, such as the need to constantly realize themselves in a unique manner (Krings et al., 2008:94). The focus on success for these young adults is crucial, seeing that success or failure directs life gratification (Krings et al., 2008:103). The implication is that they have to create their own life courses and find their own way to personal happiness by choosing goals from a wide range of possibilities. They will have to make their own decisions on how to realise these goals. Goals of young adulthood are perceived as less socially shared than 50 years ago (Krings et al., 2008:102).

Plug et al. (2003:130) state that the grounds for being considered 'an adult' is not 'a point in time' or 'a social space'. "Young men and women appear to be 'somewhere' between youth and adulthood, varying between being *either* young *or* adult, being *both* young *and* adult or, being *neither* young *nor* adult" (Walther et al., 2002 in Plug et al., 2003:127). Molgat (2007:497) makes the statement that "reaching adulthood ...is a gradual and incremental process, takes years to complete and is not marked by the passing of one or other of the transitions many sosiologists use to frame the analysis of youth."

Westberg's (2004:49) view regarding transitions is that individual maturity of the young adult appears to be of greater importance than role transitions for the achievement of adult status. She bases this opinion on her own research as well as that of Arnett (1997). According to Westberg (2004:50) society regards the accumulation of suitable and relevant transitions as a symbol of adult status. Based on her research she concludes that young people who have completed key transitions do not define these transitions as important for adult status. She states: "...young people are likely to see completing a role transition as non-final; they may reconsider, reverse the transition and complete it again when the circumstances allow" (Westberg, 2004:50). Westberg (2004:50) does not only describe these transitions as reversible, but as increasingly unpredictable.

Westberg (2004:50-51) discusses 'existential adulthood' and emphasises the interrelatedness of events and accumulated experiences which cannot be separated from the attainment of adulthood. According to Westberg (2004:39) it is possible to remain a youth for ever if transitions necessary for adulthood never occur. In her definition of 'evidencing appropriate adult behaviour', she includes "independence and responsibility." Hutson and Jenkins (1989 in Westberg, 2004:39) describe responsibility as a particular way of responding to a difficult situation and as something one can accept at need or an attitude one can just have. Either way, they regard responsibility as a core component of adulthood. Beckett and Taylor (2010:113) concur with regard to responsibility and make the statement that when reaching adulthood; an individual must take responsibility for themselves as well as for others around them.

Arnett (2006:113) makes a strong case for the young adult enjoying the period of emerging adult freedom and independence beyond adolescence before they commit themselves to the responsibilities of adulthood. Therefore, there seems to be a social norm that emerging adulthood should be enjoyed for various years before full adulthood is reached (Arnett, 2006:113).

If the above depicts the 'adult role', the question arises as to how the '*young adult role*' can be described. Shulman and Ben-Artzi (2003:218) state that the young adult becomes increasingly more consistent in his behaviour and motivation and he starts to set realistic goals and plans for the future. His identity should stabilise, which should facilitate the process of introspection. Insight gained should "result in formulating a perspective on the past, present and future" (Shulman & Ben-Artzi, 2003:218).

However, before the young adult reaches this stage of stability and consistency, he experiences that the normative order of transition has changed. Individual motives often direct behaviour. This could be as a result of an extended period of education which delays the transition to adulthood. New demands on the young adult lead to a need for lifelong learning. As was discussed, contemporary society requires adults who are more educated and skilled than in previous generations. Transitions between youth and adulthood have become uncertain and reversible. In this process independence and adulthood are pushed back. Various roles are adopted by the young adult and status is often reversed.

- **Married role**

Newman and Newman (1999:390, 392) make the statement that in contemporary society, adulthood is experienced as several roles emerge, typically those already mentioned; worker, committed partner and parent. The age of entry into marriage has advanced over the last years, with the result that young people between the ages of 20 to 24 years are unmarried. An older age at marriage is coupled with a later age for first childbearing. According to Newman and Newman (1999:392) students take an average of 5 to 6 years to complete college, and young people seem to experiment with jobs for longer, before

settling into their occupational career. These factors make a strong case for advancing the approximate age of entry into adulthood. In terms of marriage, Arnett (2006:111) refers to a demographic shift that has taken place across industrialised countries. He states that “the median age at first marriage has risen steeply from the early twenties into the late twenties, even surpassing age 30... young people have waited longer for marriage but not necessarily for sex ...” According to Arnett (2006:112) premarital sex has become widespread with the result that sexual initiation and marriage are no longer closely linked.

Hughes (2005:70) states that young adults are the first generation to witness significant numbers of divorces, they are planning to have far fewer children than previous generations, their rates of marriage are low and they have a high rate of living alone. Hughes (2005:70) refers to Beck-Gernsheim (2002) and Gross and Simmons (2002) who state that “these are the demographic indicators of a gradual and unstoppable shift in intimate relationships that has marked late-modernity.”

Hughes (2005:70) is of the opinion that the assumption that marriage is a life-long commitment is no longer prevalent. Marriage is therefore consistently seen as ‘good until further notice’ (Jamieson, 1999 in Hughes, 2005:71). Beck-Gernsheim (2000 in Hughes, 2005:71) refers to ‘risk-diminishing’ strategies such as an aversion to marriage and to having children, seeing that both act as barriers to ending a marriage if the need should arise. She also proposes that the nuclear family will become a temporary life phase and that other lifestyle choices will exist alongside it, seeing that the nuclear family as an institution is viewed as flawed (Hughes, 2005:79, 83). In her research, Hughes’ (2005:83) participants predicted how they will live in the future, which was mainly outside the nuclear family, and in somewhat loose arrangements. These young adults therefore questioned the value of marriage and the nuclear family.

Kefalas, Furstenberg, Carr and Napolitano (2011:848) have found similar shifts in marriage patterns. They state that the age at which people marry has risen, there is a rise in cohabitation, the divorce rate has increased as well as the proportion of children born to unmarried mothers. “Societal transformations such as the significant increase in the

proportion of women in the workforce, the increase in participation in higher education, and access to contraception and abortion have profoundly altered the sociocultural landscape of marriage and family formation” (Kefalas et al., 2011:848). These researchers state that advocates of ‘marriage decline’ believe that such transformations are characteristic of a wider culture that honours individual happiness and devalues commitment to institutions. Advocates of ‘marriage resilience’ however interpret trends such as rising divorce rates in different ways – they argue that the easy access to divorce means that people can escape dysfunctional and abusive relationships with ease (Kefalas et al., 2011:848).

According to Kefalas et al. (2011:863) the fast pace of life, high housing costs, the demands resulting from completing an education, the challenges of the labour market and a social context according to which one can enjoy the benefits of marriage, without its obligations, delay the transition to marriage for young people in metropolitan areas. Young adults are apprehensive seeing that many marriages do not work out; they also set high standards for what a successful marriage is and they aim to attain personal maturity and have the resources to settle down before marrying and forming a family. Kefalas et al. (2011:867) refer to the ‘scenic route to adulthood’ which means that the young adult becomes an adult first, and then enters matrimony. Marriage therefore does not signify entry to adult status. Giddens (1993 in Kefalas et al., 2011:868) refers to “a new kind of intimacy, which manifests as a negotiated agreement between partners of equal standing, and where sexuality is emancipated from reproductive needs.” In contrast to Hughes’ (2005:830) findings, discussed above, Kefalas et al. (2011:868-869) did however find in their research that young people value marriage. Getting married does however require acquiring a marriage mentality, achieving economic stability and emotional maturity and having a stable relationship. Kefalas et al. (2011:870) refer to a:

...wait-and-see attitude that defines the extended transition to adulthood of the current era. ...getting married competes for their time and attention with the myriad adult milestones that define this stage of life: earning a degree, settling into a career, establishing a separate household. Marriage is a desirable outcome, but is one that does not happen simply because a relationship endures.

Kefalas et al. (2011:870) postulate that many educated young adults will delay marriage until personal and professional goals are achieved. “Most will cohabit and, to be sure, a minority will never make the transition to a formal marriage at all...” The transition to adulthood has therefore changed profoundly (Kefalas et al., 2011:870). For Westberg (2004:51) this transition to adulthood means taking responsibility for one’s decisions. This includes being partly responsible for another person in the household – this person could be a partner or a child.

As was seen under the above discussion of adult and married roles, the values and attitudes of young adults in contemporary society impact their perception of social roles. These values and attitudes will subsequently be discussed.

- **Social roles and postmodern values and attitudes**

In the section on cognitive development, the impact of lifestyle and level of education on cognitive development was discussed. It seems that social status, emotions, subjective factors, life circumstances and demands impact thinking (Gerdes et al., 1998:495, 496). When referring to ‘relativistic thinking’ Sigelman and Rider (2009:206) refer to the subjective perspective of the knower when acknowledging that a situation or problem can be viewed in many ways. Values and attitudes will impact these subjective perspectives.

Kirkpatrick Johnson and Monserud (2009:384) quote research by Marini (2000) and Hitlin and Piliavin (2004) which assumes that values are quite stable after crystallizing during adolescence. Kirkpatrick Johnson and Monserud (2009:384) point out that assumptions are made, but that little research tests these assumptions. These researchers hold the view that values *do* change with new roles and experiences. The transition to adulthood results in changes in roles, relationship networks and institutional ties, which may be a time of greater change in values than any other period of the life course. Values are regarded as motivational beliefs which shape attitudes and guide thinking which subsequently affects behaviour (Kirkpatrick Johnson & Monserud, 2009:385). Decisions made during young adulthood are believed to greatly affect the pathways individuals take

regarding education, work and family. Young adulthood is a time of planning and values guide thinking about type of job, having a partner and having children, staying on in a specific community and other issues that relate to this life stage (Kirkpatrick Johnson & Monserud, 2009:385).

Wernet, Elman and Pendleton (2005:342) state that individuals have embraced new values and attitudes, by a process of postmodern transformation. Postmodernity impacts attitudes and social norms. Wernet et al.'s (2005:359) research shows that satisfaction is related to postmodern attitudes. These researchers have also found that women and younger individuals have more postmodern attitudes than men and older individuals. "Women and men who live in pro-women states embrace more postmodern attitudes and values than individuals in states that are less egalitarian" (Wernet et al., 2005:360). Wernet et al. (2005:359) point out that personal fulfilment and visible female empowerment is associated with postmodern attitudes.

Kirkpatrick Johnson and Monserud (2009:385) hold the view that values and related beliefs are impacted by historical change. They state that the young emphasise what Easterlin and Crimmins (1991 in Kirkpatrick Johnson & Monserud, 2009:385) refer to as 'private materialism', which can also be described as "values reflecting the pursuit of one's own well-being." The 1970s, 1980s and 1990s saw increasing materialism and a declining concern for the welfare of the broader community. This 'welfare of the broader community' is specified as poverty, racial inequality and protecting the environment. Self-actualisation values, which were characteristic of the 1960s, for instance the importance of finding purpose and meaning in life and developing a meaningful philosophy of life, declined over time and levelled out during the 1990s (Astin et al., 2002; Easterlin & Crimmins, 1991 in Kirkpatrick Johnson & Monserud, 2009:385). Kirkpatrick Johnson and Monserud (2009:385) state that the importance of having a good marriage, a family life and work has remained reasonably stable over the last several decades.

In chapter 3 reference was made to the postmodern individual's emphasis on complexity, heterogeneity and diversity (Kirk, 1997:325). Melville et al. (1999 in Brummett, Wade,

Pronterotto, Thombs & Lewis, 2007:73) refer to a universal-diverse orientation. They define this concept in the following manner (Brummett et al., 2007:73):

Universal-diverse orientation is thus defined as an attitude toward all other persons that is inclusive yet differentiating in that similarities and differences are both recognized and accepted; the shared experience of being human results in a sense of connectedness with people and is associated with a plurality or diversity of interactions with others.

The importance of a universal-diverse orientation in terms of this research within a culturally diverse country like South Africa cannot be ignored. Brummett et al. (2007:80) link people with a “universal-diverse orientation to ...greater levels of psychological hardiness, psychosocial-interpersonal functioning, and self-esteem.” Having a multicultural personality disposition could be associated with “psychological health, physical health, and resilience to the development of psychological disorders” (Brummett et al., 2007:80).

4.3.5 Moral development

Moral development is described as the fifth area of development, with a specific emphasis on spirituality in young adulthood. According to Sigelman and Rider (2009:381) the essence of morality could be debated at length. Most people will however agree that it involves “the ability to distinguish right from wrong, to act on this distinction, and to experience pride when we do the right things and guilt or shame when we do not.” Sigelman and Rider (2009:381) list the three basic components of morality that have been of interest to developmental scientists:

- The affective or emotional component: This component consists of the feelings (guilt, concern for the feelings of others) that accompany right or wrong actions and that motivate moral thought or action.
- The cognitive component: This component relates to how we conceptualise right and wrong and make decisions about how to behave, drawing on social cognitive skills.
- The behavioural component: This component reflects on how we behave when, for example, we experience the temptation to be dishonest or cheat or are called upon to help a needy person.

Sigelman and Rider (2009:383) discuss Kohlberg's (1963, 1981, 1984) and Colby and Kohlberg's (1987) cognitive developmental theory of moral development. Kohlberg proposes three levels of moral reasoning. At level 1, preconventional morality, "rules are external to the self, rather than internalized. The child conforms to rules imposed by authority figures to avoid punishment or to obtain rewards." At level 2, conventional morality, "the individual has internalized many moral values" and "[h]e strives to obey the rules set by others (parents, peers, the government) ...to win their approval or to maintain social order." At level 3, postconventional morality, "the individual defines what is right in terms of broad principles of justice that have validity apart from the views of particular authority figures." At the highest stage of moral reasoning the individual defines right and wrong on the basis of self-generated principles that are broad and universal in application (Kohlberg in Sigelman & Rider, 2009:383-384).

Sigelman and Rider (2009:399) make the statement that *if* it emerges, postconventional moral reasoning appears to emerge only in the adult years. Colby et al. (1987 in Sigelman & Rider, 2009:399) mention Kohlberg's 20-year longitudinal study, which indicated that most adults in their 30s still reasoned at the conventional level. Sigelman and Rider (2009:399) therefore point out that there is opportunity for moral growth in early adulthood. In fact, older adults have a greater sense of having learned important lessons from moral dilemmas they have faced during their lives. According to Wink and Dillon (2002) in Sigelman and Rider (2009:399), spirituality is "a search for ultimate meaning in life that may or may not be carried out in the context of religion." Both postconventional moral reasoning and spirituality have been linked to the attainment of wisdom. Moral reasoning is therefore an aspect of social cognitive development that is more evident in later life. Advanced moral reasoning may be associated with increased spirituality and wisdom in adulthood (Sigelman & Rider, 2009:399).

Sigelman and Rider (2009:399) state that "[f]ollowing in Piaget's footsteps, Kohlberg argued that the two main influences on moral development are cognitive growth and social experiences, particularly interactions with peers." Sigelman and Rider (2009:399) acknowledge Walker (1980) who stated that reaching the conventional level of moral

reasoning and being concerned about living up to the moral standards of parents and society requires the ability to take other people's perspectives. Postconventional or 'principled' moral reasoning requires still more cognitive growth – "namely, a solid command of formal operational thinking, usually evident only in adulthood" (Tomlinson-Keasey & Keasey, 1974; Walker, 1980 in Sigelman & Rider, 2009:399). Sigelman and Rider (2009:399, 400) mention that Kohlberg stressed the need for social experiences that require the individual to take the perspectives of others, in order to appreciate that they are part of a larger social order and that moral rules are based on consensus.

Advanced schooling contributes to moral growth. Young adults who are involved in tertiary education and training and receive years of education think more complexly about moral issues (Pratt et al. in Sigelman & Rider, 2009:400). Participating in a complex, diverse and democratic society can stimulate moral development. Within a diverse democracy, the opinions of many groups must be weighed and laws reflect a consensus of the citizens. Sigelman and Rider (2009:400) provide the following summary of advanced moral reasoning: this type of moral reasoning is most likely if the individual has acquired the necessary cognitive skills (perspective-taking skills and abstract thinking). "Moreover, an individual's moral development is highly influenced by social learning experiences, including interactions with parents, discussions with peers, exposure to higher education, and participation in democracy" (Sigelman & Rider, 2009:400). What is evident from the above discussion is that a few adults progress from the conventional to the postconventional level of moral reasoning. Even though moral reasoning develops through the life-span, young adulthood seems to be an important stage in the development of postconventional moral reasoning, because of cognitive growth during this period and social experiences, especially interactions with friends and peers.

- **Spirituality and young adulthood**

According to Hanan (1999:254) it is unclear to many young people as they reach adulthood why they should demonstrate commitment, or make sacrifices to anything other than themselves. For Hanan (1999:255) the challenge of spiritual education is "to enable young people to acquire a vision of the good that is both emotionally and intellectually

satisfying, that embraces the best in contemporary postmodern culture, without being afraid to critique that which is dangerous or unworthy of our devotion.”

According to Schweitzer (2004:89) however, an interest in spirituality has increased, resulting in a spiritual hunger during postmodern times. Singleton, Mason and Webber (2004:249, 250) see spirituality as the basis of the distinctive human attributes of thought, language and rationality. In their opinion, spirituality defines humanity; “it is the attraction to the things of the Spirit rather than to earthly things”; it is “the conscious living of a Christian way of life.” Wuthnow (1998), as well as Marler and Hadaway (2002) in Singleton et al. (2004:250) however point out that in late modernity, spirituality begins to be understood as no longer necessarily linked to institutional religion, sometimes even standing in opposition to it. Singleton et al. (2004:250) ask what has taken the place of religion in providing life’s meaning and shaping the way it is lived. They ask questions about the cultural resources utilised by generation Y as “interpretive structures for their life journeys and life stories” (Singleton et al., 2004:250).

Singleton et al. (2004:250) define spirituality as “a conscious way of life based on a transcendent referent”, where ‘way of life’ means “a world view and an ethos”. For the young adult ‘my world’ means my place in it and my experiences, while ‘my ethos’ includes my feelings about myself, others and my world and is the foundation of my values, practices and commitments. Transcendent means “an ethical ideal toward which a person strives to shape their conduct, even when this ideal has no explicit religious foundation. At its simplest, it may just be the endeavour to live a decent life or to emulate an admired person” (Singleton et al., 2004:250). This way of life need not be religious, supernatural or other-worldly. It could be to live a virtuous life or a way of life modelled on that of an exemplary person, real or fictitious, perhaps a parent, relative or a teacher. “Even if they are not religious, ethical ideals are transcendent in the sense that they call on the individual to aspire to a manner of being and acting which is beyond or higher than his or her present level of existence” (Singleton et al., 2004:251).

Abbott-Chapman and Robertson's (2009:246) statement that young adults with a religious commitment, irrespective of faith, are less likely than their peers to engage in risky activities, seems to correlate with the abovementioned view. This opinion is voiced, despite declines in youth participation in organised religion (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2009:246).

According to Singleton et al. (2004:248), the current generation of youth and young adults has only ever known a society "characterised by the cultural plurality of postmodernity or high modernity, increasing anxiety about risk, rampant consumerism, dislocated families and a major shift towards gender equality." It is their view that this specific social context may mean that the spirituality of generation Y is unlike that of previous generations (Singleton et al., 2004:248).

Barry and Nelson (2005:115) discuss the role of religion in the transition to adulthood. They refer to Arnett's (2000) 'emerging adulthood' as a period characterised by heightened risk-taking behaviour and self-exploration of numerous domains, including their spirituality. Barry and Nelson (2005:115) state that "young people

- (a) question the beliefs in which they were raised,
- (b) place greater emphasis on individual spirituality than affiliation with a religious institution, and
- (c) pick and choose the aspects of religion that suit them best."

These researchers' study "points to the importance of ecological context (ala Bronfenbrener) as a soul-shaping force, even for this new age designation known as emerging adults" (Barry & Nelson, 2005:119). Barry and Nelson (2005:119) state that their research also represents the inability of 18 to 25 year olds to individuate beyond the beliefs and practices of their families and faiths of origin, and therefore further contributing to an unhealthy dependence on others for their beliefs and behaviour.

When discussing the adult role, several references were made to the importance of entering the labour market and the establishment of a career. Work, leisure and lifestyle

are key features in the life of the young adult and will be discussed in the following sections.

4.3.6 Work and career

Santrock (2009:436) observes that many children have naive and romantic fantasies about what they want to be when they grow up. In their late teens and early twenties career possibilities are explored more seriously. This means choosing a specialisation that will lead to work in a specific field. By early and mid-twenties, many young adults have completed their training and are starting to enter a full-time occupation. Young adults seek to establish themselves in a particular field in their careers during the mid-twenties and in the latter part of early adulthood.

It is Holland's view (in Santrock, 2006:455) that it is imperative to match an individual's personality with a particular career. Holland believes that if a career fits a personality, the individual is more likely to enjoy the work and stay in the job. "Holland proposes six basic career-related personality types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional" (Santrock, 2006:456). Individuals are, however, complex and most people are a combination of two or more types.

Another important aspect of choosing a career during late adolescence and early adulthood is that it also matches up with your values. Santrock (2006:456) believes that young adults can refine their career choice when they know what is important in life. Some of these values are working with people, working in a career with prestige, making money, being happy, not working long hours, being challenged mentally, having time for leisure, working in a specific geographical location, and working where physical and mental health are prioritised. Santrock (2006:457) emphasises that it is critical that young adults keep up with the occupational outlook in various fields.

Santrock (2006:456) has linked careers with personality types and values. Arnett (2006:118) makes a link between jobs and expression of identity. A job is therefore not just a way to earn money, but should be an activity that is personally fulfilling and enjoyable.

He ascribes the frequent job changes that occur during the twenties to the emerging adult's search for a job that matches his identity. Arnett (2006:118) states that "the clarification of one's identity is something that takes place primarily in emerging adulthood, not in adolescence." This is after the young adult is required to choose an occupational path. Furstenberg (2004:11) supports this view with his statement that early adulthood is when young people figure out what they want to do and how to achieve their goals. This leads to economic dependence on their families during this period of transition (Furstenberg, 2004:11; Jones, O'Sullivan & Rouse, 2006:375; Maguire et al., 2001:198).

Santrock (2006:473) makes the statement that the extent to which the young adult has begun to develop autonomy has important implications for early adulthood maturity. The young adult who finds it difficult to move away from parental ties may experience difficulties in interpersonal relationships, as well as in terms of a career. Santrock (2006:472) provides an example of a mother who overprotects her daughter, to clarify this point. The daughter may turn down a promotion if it involves more responsibility and the possibility of more stress.

According to Carter and McGoldrick (2005:216) young men have always been expected to work at cash-producing jobs to support first themselves and then their families. Since the 1960s, young women have also increasingly prepared to enter the workforce. Therefore, for both sexes one of the primary tasks of early young adulthood is learning how to work. This requires the young adult to form an interest in work for which others will pay. Sometimes "this can only be accomplished by trial and error, and may involve a great deal of disappointment, refocusing, and trying again" (Carter & McGoldrick, 2005:216). Bynner (2005:375) points out that in terms of gender there has undeniably been a narrowing of the gap between young men and young women in educational opportunities and achievement, with young women catching up with the males. Even though there is a reduction in gender inequality, a gap in earnings remains.

The young adult's work and career opportunities are being shaped by economic restructuring in postmodern times. Valentine (2003:40) provides the following scenario that

clarifies this statement: “since the late 1980s and early 1990s economic restructuring and related institutional changes have produced a transformation in labour markets.” As new technologies have destroyed as well as created jobs producing different labour markets, traditional skills have become obsolete. The outcome is that it has become increasingly difficult for young people to make an early transition to employment. Clark (2007) as cited in Côté and Brynner (2008:258) notes that ‘today’s’ young people face a labour market very different from that of their parents. This labour market includes “an increasing wage gap with older workers, earning instability, more temporary jobs, lower-quality jobs, fewer benefits, and more instability in employment, including the fast growth of part-time jobs” (Côté & Brynner, 2008:258).

As discussed under the ‘adult role’, the new demands imposed on young people lead to the need for lifelong learning, flexibility and employ-ability. Plug et al. (2003:129) also state that staying in the same job throughout the life cycle has become less evident. “[T]his demands of young people that they adopt a reflexive attitude, and obtain social, organizational and communication skills that enable them to make the best choices possible” (Plug et al., 2003:129). These researchers make the statement that young people can no longer expect education to be restricted to the period of secondary and tertiary education. Additional training and courses need to be attended to keep up to date. Plug et al. (2003:129) point out that a blurring of tasks that were formerly connected to youth (education) and adulthood (work), therefore takes place.

A blurring of tasks also takes place in what Brooks (2006:285) refers to as “the extent to which experiences of combining formal education and paid work while at school, college and university facilitate... the maintenance of these patterns post-graduation, during early adulthood.” Maguire et al. (2001:209) refer to an overlap or blurring of tasks when they refer to young people increasingly being involved in “‘mixed models’ of commitment and life patterns in which leisure and work overlap and complement one another.” Maguire et al. (2001:209) make the statement that what they (as researchers) refer to as ‘refusal of adulthood’, may be a refusal of older versions of ‘adulthood’, which does not “resonate with the desires, ambitions and experiences of young people in transition.”

Hawkins et al. (2009:90) refer to work and studies in early adulthood in the following manner: “young people need to start on the path to economic security by engaging in work or studies. They also need to have good health habits and healthy family and social relationships.” Bynner (2005:370) makes the statement that the phenomenon of the emerging adult is common across industrialised societies, especially where adulthood is postponed because of educational and occupational careers. This extension of adulthood could result in prolonged financial and material dependence (Hawkins et al., 2009:90).

According to Roberts (2009:18) the youth find themselves in a new condition (“youths new condition”) which resulted from a set of interrelated trends since the 1970s. These trends that lead to a shortage of entry jobs for statutory age school leavers, are “de-industrialization, economic and occupational restructuring, higher levels of unemployment”. The result of this ‘condition’ is that more young adults are continuing with tertiary education and consequently are adding to their qualifications, following training courses and gaining work experience in part-time and temporary employment. This leads to a prolongation of school-to-work transitions and “the individualization of youth biographies” (Roberts, 2009:18).

Heinz (2009:8, 9) makes the point that emerging adults’ decision-making about work is primarily identity-based, therefore self-reflexive action, when they find themselves on self-selected pathways with a specific destination in mind, for example law, engineering, medicine. The less privileged, in contrast, follow a step by step construction of an occupational identity. They have restricted opportunities and a higher risk of unemployment, compared to those who complete a university course. This author therefore implies that young adults with a tertiary education have a higher likelihood of employment. Many researchers support this view (Roberts, 2009:18; Bills, 2009:130, 131; Jones, 2009: 91, 178; Mills & Blossfeld, 2005:18).

Wyn (2009:101) is less optimistic with her statement that young people understand that gaining educational qualifications will not guarantee them a job. They must therefore “construct education and employment biographies that make them attractive in precarious

and changing labour markets” (Wyn, 2009:101). She emphasises the responsibility of the young adult to actively construct his own biography in order to create pathways through education and work. ‘Biography’ or ‘identity work’ has according to Wyn (2009:101) become a significant new dimension of learning in late modernity. In late modernity responsibility for learning shifts from the educator to the educated. Young people need to understand what is relevant, how to access information, how to learn and how to develop knowledge (Wyn, 2009:101). In order to be successful in terms of employment the young adult therefore needs knowledge, insight and the ability to direct his own life. Considering the lifestyle of the young adult is relevant seeing that it impacts his attitudes towards a career and employment, as well as various other aspects such as health, roles and relationships. The lifestyle of the young adult will subsequently be discussed.

4.3.7 Young adult lifestyle

There exists a strong correlation between lifestyle and health. Reference was made to research quoted by Gerdes et al. (1998:475) where recommendations were made for the maintenance of good health during early adulthood. Santrock (2009:421), however, points out that few individuals during early adulthood stop to think about how their personal lifestyles will probably affect their health later in their adult lives. Many young adults develop a pattern of not eating regular meals, snacking throughout the day, eating excessively and subsequently exceeding the appropriate weight range, smoking moderately or excessively, drinking moderately or excessively, not exercising and not getting enough sleep.

The tendency of many young adults to consume alcohol to attain a relaxed and uninhibited feeling was discussed under the subheading ‘substance abuse’. This tendency often leads to a lifestyle of ‘pubbing and clubbing’. In chapter 3 Valentine (2003:45) refers to ‘the emotional community generated through clubbing’. Parker and Williams (2003:362) refer to earlier research by Parker et al. (1998) where it was found that the going-out sector of young adults began drinking and recreational drug use in their early teens and continue, what they refer to as “poly-substance careers”, into their twenties. Parker and Williams (2003:362) make the statement that the going-out sector of young adults prioritise

socialising in pubs and bars and private social drinking. Parker and Williams (2003:362) quote research by Tombs et al. (1993) in the following manner: they “spend significantly more of their disposable income on ‘entertainment’, notably alcohol and, to a lesser extent, drugs. At the weekend, in particular, they go out ‘to town’ pubbing and clubbing where they enjoy intoxicated nights out.” Parker and Williams (2003:362) assign the motivation for this lifestyle to the wish to celebrate weekends as the end of the working or studying week with an emphasis on socialising, relaxing and de-stressing.

Miller-Tutzauer et al. (1991 in Parker & Williams, 2003:363) state that in postmodern times the longer transitions to maturing and the classic ‘protective’ factors – permanent home making, marriage and parenting – are being delayed. Eitle et al. (2010:298) also refer to these ‘protective factors’ with their statement that the association between marriage and heavy episodic drinking has produced consistent findings – “being married reduces the risk of heavy alcohol use among young adults.” This statement is based on research done by Bachman et al. (2002); Duncan et al. (2006); Paschall et al. (2005); Wechsler et al. (1995). In their own research on young adulthood and marriage, Eitle et al. (2010:311) found additional support for the conviction that marriage serves as a safeguard against engaging in heavy sporadic alcohol use. As mentioned above and by various authors in this chapter (Arnett, 2006:111; Hughes, 2005:70; Kefalas et al., 2011:863), marriage is however delayed.

Parker and Williams (2003:363) state that ‘intoxicated weekends’ are being facilitated and sustained by the drinks industry “as it opens up more large bars with dance floors, music, late licences and endless promotions of strong designer-drinks specifically targeted at the going out sector.” Parker and Williams (2003:364) support research by Calafat (2001) that the “‘night clubbers’ and the ‘go-outers’ are primarily conventional, generally law-abiding young adults.” The following description by Parker and Williams (2003:364) provides a vivid picture of their research findings:

Nearly all the things that go wrong on nights out lead back to the migration of hundreds of thousands of young people to pub/club land at the weekends to enjoy themselves. For better or worse, most see

heavy drinking and some see drinking and drug use as essential to maximizing the enjoyment of being in animated, crowded, same-age settings. Being with friends, engaging in romantic/sexual encounters, parading, dancing and experiencing altered states are all part of celebrating weekends and switching off from everyday realities. Most nights go well but some, as we have seen, end 'in tears'."

Parker and Williams (2003:365) state that the go-outers, with their excesses are here to stay. They incorporate binge drinking under these excesses and mention that Tuck (1989) referred to binge drinking as a historical and cultural tradition – therefore, not a tradition invented by today's young adult. Being legitimised through extended licensing, venues and settings are however tailor-made for the partying of young adults. The percentage of young adults who adopt this 'lifestyle' escalates and their going out careers extend (Parker & Williams, 2003:365). It is stated that these weekends are highly functional for the majority of the young adult population, who look forward to the weekend during their studying and working week motivated by the anticipation that going out on weekend evenings will make it all meaningful (Parker & Williams, 2003:365). In their research Maguire et al. (2001:203) refer to one of their research participants in the following way: "going out' is the highlight of her week and this involves having enough money to pay for cabs to and from clubs, pay admission charges and buy cigarettes and drinks."

An important aspect of lifestyle is DuBois and Miley's (2011:63) argument that optimal social functioning means "striving toward a lifestyle that meets basic needs, establishing positive relationships, and accentuating personal growth and adjustment." When considering the basic needs of the young adult, Arnett's (2006:113) case for the young adult enjoying the period of emerging adult freedom and independence before they commit themselves to the responsibilities of adulthood comes to mind. This implies enjoying the freedom and fun of emerging adulthood. Young adults are not only consumers of material goods and services, but also consumers of experiences. According to Douglass (2005 in Arnett, 2006:114) young people are of the opinion that marriage and child care would put a damper on their ability to go out and enjoy life.

Arnett (2006:14) refers to research by Nash (2005) who states that “[t]he lives of emerging adult ‘singles’ are romanticized in popular culture. The ‘singles phenomenon’ refers to men and women of marriageable age who choose, ...not to marry, but work and play.” They are rarely at home, they are uncommitted, but date. Douglass (2005 in Arnett, 2006:114) refers to “self-focused enjoyment as they pursue the pleasures of living in an affluent consumerist society while having few responsibilities to or restrictions by others.”

4.4 CONCLUSION

In summary, young adulthood has been described as the period between 18 and 25 years of age. Based on the literature reviewed, the young adult can be characterised by experimentation and exploration, specifically in terms of identity, career and lifestyle.

In terms of physical development, the body of the young adult is at its prime. Health impairing lifestyles which relate to eating and weight, exercise and substance abuse do however impact the physical condition of the young adult. Health, lifestyle and level of education impact cognitive abilities. However cognitive abilities also peak during young adulthood. The young adult is able to demonstrate reflective and relativistic thinking, which is the young adult’s understanding that knowledge is based on subjective perspectives.

Intimacy and attachment can be placed under either emotional or social development: emotional, because of the association with feelings; social, because of its focus on the interpersonal. Attachment occupies a central place in the development of the individual and forms part of personality development. Attachment to family members remains important in spite of differences in temperament and interests. Attachments to friends could however be even stronger, seeing that it is characterised by similarity, which is a powerful force of attraction. The emotional and social development of the young adult impacts his ability to develop relationships and social networks, to establish intimate relationships and to perform social roles. When exploring the adult role, the fact that

various roles are adopted by the young adult was discussed. The execution of these various roles results in status being reversed.

Participating in a complex, diverse and democratic society can stimulate moral development. It seems as if young adults who are involved in tertiary education are able to think more complexly about moral issues. An individual's moral development is influenced by social learning experiences which include interactions with parents and peers, exposure to higher education and participating in a democracy. Young adulthood seems to be a stage in the development of postconventional moral reasoning, because of cognitive growth and social experiences, especially interactions with friends and peers. An increased interest in spirituality has resulted in a spiritual hunger during postmodern times. This spirituality is not necessarily linked to institutional religion and can even stand in opposition to religion. The spirituality of generation Y is unlike that of previous generations, seeing that they have only known a society which is characterised by the cultural plurality of postmodernity, increased anxiety about risk, widespread consumerism, dislocated families and a major shift towards gender equality.

Young people also question the beliefs according to which they were raised; they value individual spirituality more than affiliation with a religious institution, they pick and choose the aspects of religion that suit them.

Newman and Newman (1999:390) make the statement that childhood is over. The impact of the abovementioned developmental areas confirms this fact. The young adult addresses life with great expectations and exhilaration. These authors state however that once the initial excitement of the period subsides, the young adult comes to realise that there is serious work to be done. Young adults are learning to engage in intense and meaningful relationships with intimate partners, friends and co-workers (Newman & Newman, 1999:390).

Arnett (2006:121) is of the opinion that "the median age of entering marriage and parenthood has risen to unprecedented heights and is now in the late twenties or beyond."

More young adults obtain some form of education after completing their secondary education than in the past. “People change jobs and love partners and residences more frequently in their twenties than in any later period of life” (Arnett, 2006:121). Plug et al. (2003 in Molgat, 2007:498) found that 24 to 28 year olds “still identify themselves partly as adults and partly as youth, despite having for the most part finished their education and entered the workforce.” This statement brings Brynner’s (2005:369) view that adulthood is delayed and pushed back to ever older ages, to mind.

This discussion of young adulthood as a stage in life-span development concludes the literature review for this research. The research methodology that applied to and was utilised in this study will be discussed in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

For the purpose of the research, the researcher regards postmodernism as a paradigm through which the world can be viewed. As was discussed, the relevance of this paradigm for social work lies in its impact on social functioning and its impact on the reciprocal interaction between systems. The researcher believes that social functioning should be considered within the transactional nature of a person-in-situation. Young adults' social functioning cannot be looked at separately from the transactions between themselves and their environments. In this study social functioning refers to the meeting of needs and fulfilment of roles within the interrelationships and interactions between the self and the social environment, thus, within the context of the larger social structure and its different systems (DuBois & Miley, 2011:63; Hepworth et al., 2006:6; *New Dictionary of Social Work*, 1995:58; Potgieter, 1998:27).

The researcher identifies with Arnett's (2006:111) description of emerging adulthood and defined the young adult as an individual between the ages of 18 and 25 years, characterised by experimentation and exploration in a broad sense, but also specifically in terms of identity, career and lifestyle.

These definitions of the core concepts of the research provide the context for considering the research methodology applicable to this study. Methodology in this sense can be defined as the framework that relates to the entire process of research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:4). According to Creswell (2005), as cited in Ivankova et al. (2007:254), research expands knowledge and broadens perspectives. The researcher therefore aimed to add new information and inform practice on the topic of postmodernism and the social functioning of young adults. The manner in which the research was viewed methodologically and the different processes and steps followed will subsequently be discussed.

5.2 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

5.2.1 Goal of the study

The **goal** of this study was:

to explore and describe the impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults, with particular emphasis on their roles and interaction from an ecological systems perspective.

5.2.2 Objectives of the study

The researcher aimed to reach the above goal by meeting the following objectives:

- to conceptualise and contextualise a theoretical framework regarding
 - ecological systems theory to analyse the complex variables for conceptualisation of young adults as persons-in-environment;
 - the social functioning of young adults within their social environment;
 - the general orientations, nature, characteristics and impact of postmodernism as a present-day paradigm;
 - young adulthood as a stage in life-span development;
- to explore and describe empirically the impact of postmodernism on the role function(s) of young adults;
- to explore and describe empirically the impact of postmodernism on the interaction(s) of young adults within their environment; and
- to reach conclusions and make recommendations regarding the impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults from an ecological systems perspective to make a contribution to the knowledge repertoire of social workers in order to enhance the quality of service to young adults.

5.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

Monette et al. (2002:8) advise researchers that the shaping of a question or concern should be specific. Questions should be narrowed down to specific issues for which

empirical data can be gathered. Bless et al. (2006:21) support this view in their statement that a research question must be formulated in such a way that it can be handled in a single study. These authors also state that the question must refer to empirical facts and must be answerable through the observation of reality. Subjective factors, such as moral and ethical judgements or cultural beliefs, should not be the basis of research questions (Bless et al., 2006:23).

The following main research question and sub-questions have been formulated to reach the goal of the proposed study:

Main question:

What is the impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults?

Sub-questions:

- What is the impact of postmodernism on the *role performance* of young adults?
- What is the impact of postmodernism on the *social interaction* of young adults in their environment?

The answer to these questions could provide insight into the social functioning of young adults and could contribute towards an advancement of knowledge in the field of social work. Bless et al. (2006:23) are of the opinion that any advancement of knowledge in a particular field of research which is useful for the further development of that field is relevant to theory.

5.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

According to Ivankova et al. (2007:255) there are three recognised approaches to conducting research – quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. The first two are well described and the third is growing in prominence. For Ivankova et al. (2007:255) the choice of an approach depends on “the researcher’s philosophical orientation, [the] type of

knowledge sought... and the methods and strategies used to obtain this knowledge.” In this study, the mixed methods research approach was utilised.

In 2007 Creswell and Plano Clark made the statement that mixed methods is a new approach to research. They point out that researchers had for many years collected both quantitative and qualitative data in the same studies. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:1) are however of the opinion that “to put both forms of data together as a distinct research design or methodology is new.” According to them the idea of mixing the data is a new feature that has emerged in the last decade. These researchers state that the “complexity of our research problems calls for answers beyond simple numbers in a quantitative sense or words in a qualitative sense. A combination of both forms of data can provide the most complete analysis of problems” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:1).

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:5) are of the view that “the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases of the research process” or the use of these approaches “in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:5). The value of the mixed methods approach to research is that it

- provides strengths that counterbalance the limitations of quantitative and qualitative research when used as separate approaches;
- provides more complete substantiation for studying a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative research alone;
- assists in answering questions that cannot be answered by qualitative or quantitative approaches alone;
- encourages quantitative and qualitative researchers to work in partnerships;
- encourages the use of various paradigms rather than the traditional paradigms specific researchers employ; and
- is practical seeing that the researcher is may use different methods to address a research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:9-10).

After considering the above, it is important to review Creswell's (2005) definition of mixed methods research (in Ivankova et al., 2007:261). He defines this approach to research as "a procedure for collecting, analysing and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data at some stage of the research process within a single study to understand a research problem more completely. Other definitions supplied are essentially similar, for example, the definition by the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* (2006 in Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:17).

When expanding on the definition of mixed methods research, Delport and Fouché (2011:435) make the statement that "[t]his form of research is more than simply collecting both quantitative and qualitative data; it indicates that data will be integrated, related or mixed at some stage of the research process." Ivankova et al. (2007:278) indicate that this integration within a mixed methods approach allows for quantitative and qualitative methods to complement each other and allows for a more complete analysis of the research problem.

As discussed, mixed methods research comprises both a qualitative and a quantitative component which, when mixed does not only corroborate, but expand understanding. In this study both forms of data were necessary. It is therefore important to consider these two components of the study, before discussing the stage and process of 'mixing the data'.

In the researcher's view, Leedy and Ormrod's (2005:134) statement that a qualitative study can help define what is important and what needs to be studied in cases where there is little information on a topic or where the relevant theoretical base is inadequate, applied to the study. Ivankova et al. (2007:257) quote Creswell's (2007) description of qualitative research as an enquiry process of understanding where a researcher develops a complex, holistic picture, analyses words and reports detailed views of participants. As has already been explained, the research problem was formulated as a lack of knowledge regarding the relationship between postmodernism and the social functioning of young adults. The relevant knowledge base on the construct (in this case, postmodernity and its impact on the social functioning of young adults) was therefore inadequate. An in-depth literature

study on postmodernism, social functioning and young adulthood supplied valuable information, but not an adequate knowledge base to construct a measuring instrument for the empirical measurement of these variables. This lack of knowledge prompted the investigation of these phenomena in the 'real world'. Young adults' experiences and views of postmodern society could be considered as phenomena in the 'real world' which necessitated a qualitative approach to this study. However, Leedy and Ormrod (2005:135) point out that as a general rule, qualitative studies do not allow for the identification of cause-effect relationships. The impact of postmodernism on social functioning could therefore not be determined by means of a qualitative approach. In the researcher's opinion, in order to claim scientific accuracy, the impact had to be quantified. This implied measurement in order to produce precise and generalisable statistical findings. "The quantitative researcher tests the theories about reality, looks for cause and effect, and uses quantitative measures to gather data to test the hypotheses (or questions)" (Ivankova et al., 2007:255). In this study the researcher related the variables mentioned to determine the extent and frequency of relationships (Ivankova et al., 2007:255). Conducting quantitative research enabled the researcher to determine the impact of postmodernism on social functioning of young adults. This impact was measured by using a quantitative data gathering instrument. Delpont and Roestenburg (2011a:172) state that measurement is one of the best means of creating objective scientific knowledge. This objective knowledge, obtained by means of empirical evidence, could enhance the professional knowledge base.

Various authors state that mixed methods research is not easy, seeing that it takes time and resources to conduct. It also requires specific skills to collect, analyse and mix both qualitative and quantitative data in one study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:79-83; Delpont & Fouché, 2011:436; Ivankova et al., 2007:266). The researcher was however of the view that using one research approach in this study might not be sufficient to explore the complexity of the research problem. Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches and using them together within one mixed methods study led to a more complete understanding of the research problem.

Both quantitative and qualitative data was therefore collected and analysed. The researcher believes that mixing the datasets, as proposed by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:7), provided a better understanding of the problem than if either dataset had been used alone. The mixing of the data therefore provided a more complete picture of the research problem. The precise manner, in which “mixing” and “connecting” of data took place, will be discussed under 5.6.1 Research design.

5.5 TYPE OF RESEARCH

Neuman and Kreuger (2003:23) distinguish clearly between what they refer to as the “two wings” of research:

Researchers in the two wings cooperate and maintain friendly relations... The difference in orientation revolves around how to use social work research. In simple terms some focus on using research to advance general knowledge, whereas others use it to solve specific problems. Those who seek an understanding of the fundamental nature of social reality are engaged in basic research... Applied researchers, by contrast, primarily want to apply and tailor knowledge to address a specific practical issue. They want to answer a policy question or solve a pressing social problem.

Research in the human services is more likely to be *applied research*, with a practical outcome and with the assumption that some group or society as a whole will gain specific benefits from the results of the study (Bless et al., 2006:43; Monette et al., 2002:5; Rubin & Babbie, 2001:116). Leedy and Ormrod (2005:43) regard research projects which inform human decision-making about practical problems as applied research. However, they mention that the line between basic research and applied research is somewhat blurred. Monette et al. (2002:5) refer to the distinction between the two types of research as ‘vague’; while Fouché and De Vos (2011:95) argue that the goals of pure and applied research overlap. Answering questions about basic theoretical issues can often inform current practice. Similarly answering questions about practical problems can enhance the theoretical understanding of phenomena. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:44) point out that

whether research is basic or applied, it takes time and effort. The research that is conducted should therefore be worth the time and energy, irrespective of what type of research is undertaken.

“Some social research is called basic or (pure) research in that its purpose is to advance knowledge about human behaviour... even pure research can have applications in the human service field” (Monette et al., 2002:5). In their discussion of basic research, Fouché and De Vos (2011:94, 95) refer to “the advancement of knowledge; ...answers to questions that could have an impact on thinking; ...foundation for knowledge and understanding.” As has already been indicated in the problem formulation for the proposed study, it seemed as if there is no useable knowledge base regarding the impact of postmodernism on social functioning in general and the social functioning of young adults in particular. It was therefore essential to advance basic knowledge before the practice can be informed.

Monette et al. (2002:6) suggest that enhancing people’s coping abilities, improving the operation of social systems and participating in the developing of social policy, “rest on the understanding of the behaviour of the people to whom services are provided and a comprehension of the social environment in which they function.” They state that social research can provide much of this knowledge. This description of applied research was particularly relevant in indicating the applied nature of the proposed study. The researcher sought to understand young adults’ social environment(s); particularly in relation to their social functioning in a postmodern society. Informing social workers and professionals in the helping professions about this environment and the impact of postmodernism could make a contribution towards enhancing knowledge and understanding and ultimately to improved service to young adults.

The overlap and the vague line between basic and applied research have been indicated above. In the opinion of the researcher, this overlap could also be noted in this research, therefore, within a single study. Elements of the goals of both basic and applied research apply to this research - the extension of a knowledge base implied basic research; the

findings of basic research could have implications for the practice in the social work profession. The goal and objectives of the research therefore, could contribute to the social work knowledge base, as well as impact on social work practice.

5.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Even though qualitative and quantitative approaches were integrated within the exploratory mixed methods design, the research was executed in two distinct phases. The qualitative and quantitative research designs and methods implemented in these two phases will be discussed in the following section.

5.6.1 Research design

Monette et al. (2002:8) state that once a researchable problem has been successfully identified, a research design must be developed. Babbie and Mouton (2001:74) describe a research design as “a plan or blueprint of how you intend conducting the research”, while Monette et al. (2002:9) refer to “a detailed plan outlining how observations will be made.” According to Monette et al. (2002:9), the research plan spells out in detail what will occur in the subsequent stages of the research process. Babbie and Mouton (2001:74, 75), however, distinguish clearly between a research design and research methodology. They state that a research design “focuses on the end product” (the kind of study, the kind of result that will be obtained), whereas research methodology “focuses on the research process and the kinds of tools and procedures to be used.” The point of departure for the choice of a research design is the research problem or question, while the point of departure for the choice of research methodology is the specific tasks (data-collection and sampling) at hand. A research design focuses on the logic of the study, while research methodology focuses on the steps and procedures to be followed in the research process (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:74, 75).

Fouché, Delport and De Vos (2011:143), however, view “research design” as a step in the research process. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:58) describe research designs as

procedures for collecting, analysing, interpreting and reporting data and also as models for doing research. The mixed methods design as a step in this research process and as a procedure or model will subsequently be discussed. After deciding on mixed methods research, seeing that it was the most effective approach to and design for addressing the research problem, the researcher had to decide on the specific design that will address the research problem most successfully.

The four basic mixed methods designs most frequently used by researchers are the exploratory mixed methods research design, the explanatory mixed methods research design, the triangulation mixed methods research design and the embedded mixed methods research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:59; Delpont & Fouché, 2011:441; Ivankova et al., 2007:263). In this study the lack of scientific knowledge on the relationship between postmodernism and the social functioning of young adults formed the basis of the research problem. This lack of knowledge implied a need for exploration (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95). Fouché and De Vos (2011:95) describe exploratory research (as an objective of professional research) as research to gain insight into a situation or phenomenon. The need for both a qualitative and a quantitative approach to this study was discussed under 5.4 Research approach. Using an exploratory mixed methods research design was therefore a logical next step in this research process.

According to Green et al. (1989), as cited in Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:75), “the intent of the two-phase Exploratory Design is that the results of the first method (qualitative) can help develop or inform the second method (quantitative).” Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:75) make the statement that this design is based on the principle that an exploration is needed for one of the following reasons: “Measures or instruments are not available, the variables are unknown, or there is no guiding framework or theory” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:75).

These authors therefore recommend this design in the following instances:

- Where a phenomenon needs to be explored and the exploration begins qualitatively;

- Where the researcher needs to develop and test an instrument because one is not available;
- Where the researcher needs to identify important variables to study quantitatively when the variables are unknown;
- When the researcher wants to generalise results to different groups;
- When the researcher wants to explore a phenomenon in depth and then measure its prevalence (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:75).

Almost all of the abovementioned instances were relevant in this study. Seeing that an instrument had to be developed, the phenomena of postmodernism and the social functioning of young adults had to be explored in depth (qualitatively) to identify important variables. The prevalence of these variables could then be measured quantitatively.

In an exploratory mixed methods research design Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:76) distinguish between the “Instrument Development Model (QUAN emphasized)” and the “Taxonomy Development Model (QUAL emphasized)”. The taxonomy development model applies when “the initial qualitative phase is conducted [to] identify important variables to develop a taxonomy or classification system.” According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:77) researchers use the ‘instrument development model’ when they need to develop and implement a quantitative instrument based on qualitative findings:

In this design, the researcher first qualitatively explores the research topic with a few participants. The qualitative findings then guide the development of items and scales for a quantitative survey instrument. In the second data collection phase, the researcher implements and validates this instrument quantitatively. In this design the qualitative and quantitative methods are connected through the development of the instrument items. Researchers using this variant often emphasize the quantitative aspect of the study.

Both Ivankova et al. (2007:265) and Delport and Fouché (2011:441) refer to the researcher exploring a topic qualitatively to identify themes to guide the quantitative exploration which in this study was to develop a data gathering instrument based on the qualitative results of the first phase of the study. Constructs for the design of the

measuring instrument were therefore determined during this first phase. Delpont and Fouché (2011:441) and Ivankova et al. (2007:265) refer to the sequential flow of the phases. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:77) state that this two-phase approach is referred to by writers as the “Exploratory Sequential Design”.

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:80) the choice of a research design relates to the timing of the use of collected data, the relative weight of the qualitative and quantitative approaches and the approach to mixing the two datasets. In this study sequential timing, with the qualitative data collected and analysed first, and then the quantitative data, the one dataset builds upon the other (Ivankova et al., 2007:269). The priority of the relative weight or emphasis of the two approaches were determined by the importance of the method that allowed for the answering of the study’s research goal and research questions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:81, 82). In this study the relative weight of the two approaches were not equal. A greater emphasis was placed on quantitative methods in order to address the research problem stated for this research (Delpont & Fouché, 2011:444). How data was mixed depended on the purpose of the study. The researcher connected the two data types during the development of a measuring instrument (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:83, 84). Ivankova et al. (2007:269) provide a detailed description of mixing, which was implemented in this study:

In the exploratory design, the purpose of which is to develop an instrument grounded in the qualitative data, mixing occurs at the qualitative data analysis stage... the data collected via interviews is analysed for codes and themes, which are then used to develop the items and scales of the survey instrument to be used in the second, quantitative phase of the study.

In their description of mixing, provided above, Ivankova et al. (2007:269) expand on Creswell and Plano Clark’s (2007:77) reference to the fact that the two methods are connected through the development of the instrument items. As suggested by Ivankova et al. (2007:271), categories revealed through qualitative analysis were used to develop the survey items.

In the discussion above, it has become clear that “[w]hen used in combination within a mixed method approach, quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other and allow for a more complete analysis of the research problem” (Ivankova et al., 2007:278). Even though the two traditional approaches, qualitative and quantitative, were blended from the inception of the research (Delport & Fouché, 2011:445), a distinct qualitative design phase and a quantitative design phase were utilised within the exploratory mixed methods design to conduct this research. These two phases will now be discussed.

- **Qualitative research design**

Reliable and valid data gathering instruments needed to be constructed to carry out the quantitative phase of the research. For such an instrument to measure what it claims to measure, in-depth knowledge and insight regarding the phenomenon to be studied was needed. A thorough literature study was augmented by qualitative research to collect rich data which portrayed the ‘real world’ as experienced by young adults. The research design appropriate to the implementation of the qualitative approach of the research which enabled the researcher to gather rich data by means of the lived experiences of respondents was the case study (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:321). Salkind (2006:206) maintains in this regard that “there is simply no way to get a richer account of what is occurring than through a case study.” Rubin and Babbie (2001:390, 391) see the chief purpose of a case study as ‘description’. They point out that the case might be an individual, a programme, a decision, an organisation, a neighbourhood or an event. “[D]etailed, in-depth data collection methods, involving multiple sources of information that are rich in context”, are used to explore and describe the ‘case’, resulting in an in-depth description of a case or cases (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:321).

Fouché (2005:272) states that the concept of a ‘collective case study’ is used where multiple cases are involved. Here the interest in the individual case is secondary to interest in a group of cases. Collective case studies provide insight into a social issue or a population. Salkind (2006:206) acknowledges Stake’s (2000) description of a collective case study, which “allows you to ‘investigate a phenomenon, population, or a general condition’”. A collective case study was appropriate for this research, seeing that the

population was young adults as a collective group and the phenomena or social issues under review were postmodernism and social functioning. According to Mark (1996 in Fouché & Schurink, 2011:322) cases are chosen to facilitate comparisons between the cases and concepts; which applied to this research.

- **Quantitative research design**

The research design that was most appropriate for the implementation of the quantitative approach of this study, which enabled the researcher to address the problem statement of the research, was a survey (Fouché et al., 2011:156). Rubin and Babbie (2001:361) argue that survey research is “the best method available to the social scientist interested in collecting original data to describe a population too large to observe directly.” Survey research is appropriate and suitable for determining attitudes and orientations in a large population. This design may be used for descriptive, explanatory and exploratory purposes. Fouché et al. (2011:156), however, point out that surveys are mainly used to describe a sample. Surveys can be used to collect data from large samples of people; surveys present respondents with a series of questions, which may explore “matters of fact, attitudes, beliefs, prejudices, preferences or opinions (Monette et al., 2008 in Fouché et al., 2011:156).

A survey design is chiefly used in studies that have individual people as the units of analysis. Whereas Rubin and Babbie refer to ‘individual people’ as the unit of analysis, Gravetter and Forzano (2003:168) refer to ‘individuals’ and to a ‘group’. They do, however, seem to imply that the unit of analysis is the individual when they say that the goal of the “survey research design is an accurate picture of the individuals to be studied.” They define survey research design as a research study that uses a survey to obtain a description of a particular group of individuals. Babbie (2004:243) expressed a similar view to Monette et al. (2008), above when he stated that “surveys are excellent vehicles for measuring attitudes and orientations in a large population.” This implied that young adults did not need to be observed in their day-to-day social functioning to determine the impact of postmodernism: their opinions could be asked via a survey. Gravetter and Forzano (2003:168) compare survey research to a ‘snapshot’ at a specific time of the group to be

studied. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:184) use a similar image to portray survey research when they refer to capturing a fleeting moment in time, as a camera would take a single-frame photograph of an ongoing activity.

The researcher therefore started the empirical study with the qualitative approach that yielded lived experiences in the 'real world'. In this manner, rich data could be obtained to assist in the compilation of suitable questions to construct a questionnaire. Sequential timing, within the exploratory mixed methods design, with the qualitative data collected and analysed first, and then the quantitative data, therefore allowed for the one dataset to build upon the other. This particular research design provided a plan or blueprint that ensured the kind of study (end product) which was envisaged by the researcher. Furthermore, it addressed the research problem of this particular study.

5.6.2 Research population, sample and sampling method

The universe and the population of the study will be discussed. This provides the background for a discussion of the qualitative and quantitative samples for the research and the specific sampling methods that were utilised in selecting these samples.

- **Research universe and population**

The concept of a 'research universe' is vague and is often not clearly defined. Arkava and Lane (1983), as quoted by Strydom (2011a:223), "draw a distinction between the terms *universe* and *population*." When they refer to a universe, they mean all potential subjects who possess the attributes that interest the researcher. They use the term 'population' to set boundaries on the study units; therefore, they refer to individuals in the universe that possess specific characteristics as members of the population.

According to Rubin and Babbie (2001:259, 260), "(a) *population* is the theoretically specified aggregation of study elements. A *study population* is that aggregation of elements from which the sample is actually selected." Monette et al. (2002:133) use a similar definition when they say that a sample is drawn from a population, which refers to all the possible cases that could be studied. The target population within the human

services is often people who have a particular characteristic in common. A good sample must be drawn from a clearly defined population. Bless et al. (2006:99) refer to a population as a 'target population'. They express the opinion that the target population should be described accurately, because the results that will be obtained can only be generalised to this target population. Salkind (2006:30) provides a simple description when he refers to a larger group as a 'population' and a smaller group drawn from that population as a 'sample'.

For the purposes of the study, the researcher regarded all the young adults living in South Africa as the **universe** of the study. Apart from the requirement of being literate in order to read and complete the survey questionnaire, being a major (in other words, at least 18 years of age) and between the ages of 18 and 25 years, no further distinctions were made or attributes were necessary.

The **population** of the study was envisioned to be young adults as described under the universe, but with the distinct requirement that they should frequent the Hatfield area in Pretoria. They need not be residents of Hatfield. The decision to select the Hatfield area was based on its metropolitan character, and because it is a very densely populated area. The area is cosmopolitan in nature, and is characterised by a blend of cultures and nationalities. The researcher initially regarded the population as literate young adults, between the ages of 18 and 25 years, who found themselves in the Hatfield area and who would be prepared to act as respondents if they were selected by the researcher at a particular point in time. The **population** of the study however had to be modified as a result of insights developed during the pilot testing of the data gathering instrument, utilised during the quantitative phase of the research. Feedback was received on various occasions during the process of pilot testing the data gathering instrument, that questions and/or concepts were ambiguous or unclear. To ensure comprehension the researcher modified the data gathering instrument and also made the decision to only recruit young adults who have completed grade 12 successfully to act as respondents. Seeing that a certain level of education was necessary for completion of the questionnaire, the researcher decided to only recruit young adults who were functioning on a tertiary level. As

a result, the population of the study was young adults, between the ages of 18 and 25 years, who were registered as students at a tertiary institution within the Hatfield area. The motivation for this decision will be elaborated on under pilot testing of the data gathering instrument, a subsection of 5.6.3 Data collection.

- **Sample and sampling method**

With regard to the selection of a sample, Leedy and Ormrod (2005:199) state that “[t]he sample should be so carefully chosen that, through it, the researcher is able to see all the characteristics of the total population in the same relationship that they would be seen were the researcher, in fact, to examine the total population.” They refer to samples as population microcosms. Gravetter and Forzano (2003:465) define a sample as follows: “A set of individuals selected from a population, usually intended to represent the population in a research study. ...and ...[t]he process of selecting individuals to participate in a research study. Also known as sampling procedures or sampling techniques.”

Strydom (2011a:226) discusses “two kinds of sampling available to researchers: probability sampling, which is based on randomisation; and non-probability sampling, which does not implement randomisation.” According to Rubin and Babbie (2001:252, 253, 259), a random sample is selected when probability sampling is implemented. This type of sampling is the primary method used to select large, representative samples for social science research. When this method is used, all the members of the population have an equal chance of being selected for the sample. However, social workers often face research situations where probability sampling is inappropriate, because it is not always feasible to select the kind of probability samples used in large-scale social surveys.

In the **qualitative phase** of the study, where focus groups were conducted, non-probability sampling was implemented. Greeff (2011:365) as well as Leedy and Ormrod (2005:145) suggest that purposive sampling be employed in focus group interviewing, because individuals are then selected that will yield the most information about the topic under investigation. The correct group composition and homogeneity tends to generate more free-flowing discussions. This will be determined by the purpose of the group (Greeff,

2011:366). Grinnell and Unrau (2008), as well as Monette et al. (2005) as quoted by Strydom (2011a:232) maintain that purposive sampling “is based entirely on the judgement of the researcher, in that a sample is composed of elements that contain the most characteristic, representative or typical attributes of the population that serve the purpose of the study best.”

Researchers need clear criteria for the selection of respondents and they need to provide a rationale for their decisions (Maree, 2007 in Strydom & Delpont, 2011:392). The criteria for the composition of the four focus groups (consisting of a total of 47 group members) used in the study were the following: young adults, between the ages of 18 and 25 years, who were registered as students at a tertiary institution within the Hatfield area, who were willing to participate in a focus group discussion on their social functioning in a postmodern era. As will be discussed under the feasibility of the study, the researcher obtained permission from the Registrar and the Dean of Students of the specific tertiary institution to recruit young adult students to participate in the research. This decision was based on the availability of suitable young adults on campus and the increased possibility of being able to conduct the research in settings familiar to the participants. Thus, a combination of purposive and availability sampling was used for the selection of the sample. A sample of 47 suitable young adult students for participation in four focus groups was recruited from a diverse group of students, representing different fields of study.

When considering sampling in the **quantitative part** of the study, it needs to be taken into consideration that non-probability sampling, specifically a combination of purposive and convenience/availability sampling was planned within the broader Hatfield area, which was chosen because of its cosmopolitan nature. Difficulties experienced by young adults, recruited during the pilot study, when completing the data gathering instrument, however, necessitated the sampling of young adults on a tertiary level of education. Seeing that the researcher conducted the research in a private capacity as a postgraduate student, non-probability sampling, based on factors such as ease and availability, was implemented in this study. The sample was therefore not representative of the specific tertiary institution, seeing that all the members of the population did not have an equal chance of being

selected for the sample. The researcher made use of a combination of purposive and convenience/availability sampling to select 1019 young adults, who were registered as students at a tertiary institution within the Hatfield area, to complete a questionnaire on their social functioning in the present postmodern era. Where arrangements could be made with lecturers with whom the researcher could establish contact, potential research participants were requested to participate in the study in their different classes on the campus of the tertiary institution. After explaining the goal and procedures of the research the researcher enquired whether students were willing to complete a questionnaire at that specific time and then hand it back to her after the completion thereof.

As will be discussed under the feasibility of the study, the researcher obtained permission from the Registrar and the Dean of Students from the specific tertiary institution to recruit young adult students to participate in the research.

The non-probability sampling methods most appropriate for selecting these respondents were a combination of purposive and accidental sampling (Strydom, 2011a:232), also referred to as availability sampling (Rubin & Babbie, 2001) or convenience sampling (Gravetter & Forzano, 2003). This means that the research participants were those individuals that were nearest and most easily available. Gravetter and Forzano (2003:125) add to availability the criterion of willingness to respond. Young adults, male and female, who were between the ages of 18 and 25 years, who were registered as students and who were willing to act as respondents and to whom the researcher could obtain access, were therefore selected as respondents for this study.

Strydom (2011a:232) states that in this type of sampling any case which happens to cross the researcher's path and relates to the phenomenon is included in the sample – until the desired number of respondents have been recruited. Strydom (2011a:232) points out that in a convenience sample, certain groups will be more abundant than other groups and “will therefore be over-represented in the sampling frame which is chosen by convenience.” This was the situation in this specific research. Even though the researcher attempted to select students with the demographic profile of the specific institution in mind, in some

departments and faculties access was easily granted, while in others not. The researcher only recruited students for the completion of the data gathering instrument, where access was granted on first request. This had an impact on gender and language representation, which will be discussed in chapter 7.

5.6.3 Data collection

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:6) mixed methods research involves both collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data are usually of a closed-ended nature, while qualitative data consist of open-ended information, supplied by participants in their own words (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:13). As indicated, qualitative and quantitative data were collected in two distinct phases and will therefore be discussed in the sequence according to which data was collected.

5.6.3.1 Qualitative data collection

A research design focuses on the logic of research, while research methodology focuses on the steps and procedures to be used in the research process (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:75). The qualitative approach was implemented in the study by means of a collective case study design. Focus group interviewing was used as a data collection method in the implementation of the collective case study. The researcher is of the opinion that focus groups yielded rich data regarding the perceptions of the respondents (young adults) on postmodernism and its impact on their social functioning, based on lived experiences. Greeff (2011:361) is of the opinion that focus groups function well when various points of view are needed on a particular topic. Focus groups provided an opportunity to learn from participants, which was what the researcher aimed to do. A new phenomenon that has not yet been satisfactorily researched and described was explored by means of the focus groups. The researcher found scientific support for this decision in a statement by Krueger and Casey (2000) cited in Greeff (2011:362) which indicates that focus groups should be used when a range of ideas or feelings are needed and factors that influence opinions, behaviour or motivations need to be uncovered. Glesne (2006:104) maintains that focus group interviewing makes efficient use of time, because it allows simultaneous access to the perspectives of a number of people in a limited amount of time.

The researcher conducted four focus groups with respectively 9, 11, 13 and 14 young adults each as participants. Purposive sampling was used and sufficient homogeneity ensured a free-flowing discussion of the focus group topic (Greeff, 2011:365). The interaction between the members of the group of young adults on an interesting and relevant topic stimulated ideas and encouraged group members to participate. With the permission of the participants, the researcher recorded the focus group sessions using a digital audio recorder. She also made field notes directly after the conclusion of each focus group session.

Monette et al. (2002:9) describe a **pilot study** as “a small-scale trial run of all the procedures planned for use in the main study.” This includes all procedures and not only the data-gathering instrument. They are of the opinion that this kind of care improves the validity of the data collected. Bless et al. (2006:60) state that a pilot study is used to evaluate and improve the methods and materials of a research programme. They propose that the actual programme is tested on a small sample taken from the intended research community. This will allow the researcher to identify the accuracy and appropriateness of the research method, as well as the community’s response to the research, when it is implemented. Strydom (2011c:237) claims that pilot studies are becoming standard practice, because they can be seen as a dress rehearsal for the main investigation. He points out that without a pilot study, the practical situation would remain unknown until it was entered at the time when the empirical research is done.

According to Greeff (2011:370), it is difficult to **pilot test** focus group questions. She supports her statement by explaining that it is difficult to separate the questions used in focus group interviews from the environment of the focus group. She sees the first focus group with the participants as the true pilot test. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:152), however, advise researchers to carry out a pilot test to familiarise themselves with the lack of structure in a qualitative research study. They advise researchers to do advance planning and to pay meticulous attention to detail when they perform a pilot test.

In this study, the researcher did not undertake a formal pilot test of the focus group interview. Greeff's (2011:370) view regarding pilot testing of focus group questions, where she sees the first focus group with the participants as the true pilot test, was applied to this research. Five young adults who fit the description of the research population were however recruited by the researcher for the purpose of providing feedback on the questions for the focus group sessions. This provided an opportunity to modify question formulation. After conducting the first focus group the researcher realised that the order of the questions should be rearranged. One question was moved to earlier during the focus group session. No other changes were necessary.

Trustworthiness or research validity is an important issue that should be considered during research design as well as during the process of data collection (Glesne, 2006:37). Lincoln and Guba (1985 in Leitz, Langer & Furman, 2006:444) state that trustworthiness is established when findings reflect the meaning as described by participants as accurately and faithfully as possible. The 'truth value' or 'soundness of qualitative data' (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011:419, 423) will be discussed in chapter 6.

5.6.3.2 Quantitative data collection

In order to implement the quantitative approach of this research, a survey was used. According to Monette et al. (2002:162) survey research involves presenting respondents with a series of questions to be answered in order to obtain a description of a particular group of individuals. In this study, the group of individuals was young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 years. According to Fouché et al. (2011:156) the questionnaire is one of the most frequently used data collection method for conducting survey research.

Delpont and Roestenburg (2011a:186) state that the objective of a questionnaire is to obtain facts and opinions regarding a particular phenomenon from individuals who are informed on the issue under investigation. Questionnaires contain questions with fixed wording and these questions are presented in a fixed sequence. The questions are presented to each respondent in exactly the same way to enable an objective comparison of the results afterwards (Bless et al., 2006:117). The construction of the questionnaire

was based on a thorough literature study regarding postmodernism, social functioning, ecological systems theory and young adulthood as a stage in life-span development. This knowledge was informed and enhanced by the qualitative data obtained from participants in the focus group sessions regarding their lived experiences of the impact of a postmodern lifestyle on their social functioning. This effort did, in the opinion of the researcher, in all probability produce a questionnaire that was effective and appropriate for the gathering of quantitative data of a high quality on the impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults.

Rubin and Babbie (2001:361) mention that in a typical survey the researcher selects a sample of respondents and administers a questionnaire containing a collection of questions to this sample. In this study, group-administered questionnaires were used to measure the attitudes and orientations of young adults regarding a postmodern lifestyle and the impact of such a lifestyle on their social functioning. This impact was therefore measured by using a quantitative data gathering instrument in the format of a group-administered questionnaire.

The questionnaire initially contained 156 questions and consisted of a Section A which covered personal details, for example age, gender, race, language and level of education. Section B was divided into subsections with different themes, for example authority, identity, lifestyle, communication and interaction, roles, norms and values. The researcher however realised that this concept questionnaire was too detailed and lengthy and then used this document as a basis to work from. The subheadings indicating different themes were omitted to eliminate bias on the part of respondents, who for example when completing questions on 'moral issues' might be prejudiced in providing answers on such an issue. Questions with complicated words or phrases were also omitted, especially where other questions were included that related to the specific issue. The following are examples of such words and phrases that were omitted: 'more than one truth in any given situation'; 'human worth'; 'manufacturing an image'; 'image you portray'; 'emotional well-being'; 'more radical views'; 'seek meaning in your life' and 'feelings of risk'. These omissions and changes resulted in a questionnaire with 120 questions in total.

At this stage, the questionnaire was subjected to an extended **pilot test**. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:192) suggest that the questionnaire can be completed in the course of the pilot study in order to study the kinds of responses that the questions elicit. This procedure could assist the researcher in eventually gathering high quality answers. Eight young adults who fit the description of the research population were therefore recruited for pilot testing. They were however not included in the main study. Delpont and Roestenburg (2011a:195) advise researchers to pilot test newly constructed questionnaires while they are still only in their semi-final form. This ensures that errors can be rectified. In this way, ambiguous, leading and vague questions can be identified. The researcher followed this strategy and requested the eight young adults to complete the questionnaire and provide comments where specific questions were unclear or irrelevant. Extensive feedback was received. Most of these young adults were of the opinion that the questionnaire was long but interesting and relevant in terms of their everyday lives. Comments provided on the questionnaires indicated that a number of questions were still unclear. The researcher refined the questionnaire and made several adjustments to the formulation of these questions to ensure quality data gathering. After careful consideration, nine questions were omitted and the unclear questions were rephrased. In terms of questions that were unclear, the focus was on editing to ensure clarity and comprehension. Thereafter the questionnaire was pilot tested for time.

Another five young adults, who fit the requirements for the sample, were requested to complete the questionnaire in order to pilot test specifically for the time taken to complete the questionnaire. Feedback was once again received that a few questions were ambiguous or unclear. For instance, it was commented on that two 'and' questions should be phrased 'and/or' to ensure accuracy. 'Focus on self' was still not clear and subsequently changed to read 'focus on yourself'. The majority of these young adults commented that they found the questionnaire interesting and relevant. They completed the questionnaire in either 10, 12 or 15 minutes respectively. At this stage of the pilot testing process it became clear to the researcher that this questionnaire is not as straight forward as she had imagined. Some concepts, even though related to the lived experiences of the young adult, were more difficult to comprehend than anticipated. It seemed that a certain

level of education was necessary for completion of the questionnaire. The pilot test however ensured that the reading level of the questionnaire was respondent friendly. Recruiting young adults in the greater Hatfield area, who have not matriculated might be problematic in terms of obtaining valid information. Therefore the decision to only recruit young adults on a tertiary level of education was made.

During a discussion with the statistician and the research supervisor, the decision was made to add two questions to Section A, Personal details, namely the field of study of the respondent and a question on the nature of the area where the respondent spent most of his childhood. The field of study might be of interest, while the nature of the area where the respondent spent most of his childhood will probably be significant when considering views on traditional structures, authority, values and norms and spiritual norms, to name only a few.

After the process of pilot testing was completed, and the necessary changes were made, the questionnaire consisted of a total of 113 questions. Section A, Personal details, consisted of eight questions, while Section B, with its focus on the research theme, consisted of 105 questions. The researcher felt confident that the questionnaire could be answered in 15 minutes or less and that it could be a valuable tool for gathering relevant research data. The questionnaire could now be presented to the full sample.

As indicated under qualitative data collection, research validity is a crucial aspect of measurement. Delpont and Roestenburg (2011a:172) state that validity and reliability are the two most important concepts in the context of measurement. Before implementing the study, the measurement instrument and procedures must contain acceptable levels of validity and reliability. In their discussion of the 'truth' of a measurement, Gravetter and Forzano (2003:87) ask whether the instrument used does indeed measure the variable that it claims to measure: "The validity of a measurement procedure is the degree to which the measurement process measures the variable that it claims to measure" (Gravetter & Forzano, 2003:87). There are several definitions of validity. Construct validity is an important consideration in the earlier stages of the research process, because it is

demonstrated when the scores obtained from a measure are directly related to the variable itself (Gravetter & Forzano, 2003:89). Delpont and Roestenburg (2011b:219) expand on this description of the validity of a measuring tool and include face validity, content validity and criterion validity. These authors point out that the different kinds of validity mutually support one another (Delpont & Roestenburg, 2011b:219, 220). The validity and reliability of the measuring instrument will be discussed in chapter 7.

5.6.4 Data analysis

Fouché and Bartley (2011:249) refer to the purpose of analysis as reducing data to an intelligible and interpretable form “so that the relations of research problems can be studied and tested, and conclusions drawn.” Answers to research questions are not found in the analysis, but by interpreting data and results. Royse (2008) as quoted by Fouché and Bartley (2011:249) refers to a process of translation when the researcher presents a meaningful picture of patterns and relationships from the raw data. The manner in which qualitative and quantitative data was analysed in this study will now be discussed.

5.6.4.1 Qualitative data analysis

Greeff (2011:373) states that the depth and intensity of data analysis where *focus group* sessions are conducted is determined by the purpose of the study. The data that is collected represents the reality of the experiences of the focus group members: “The aim of analysis is to look for trends and patterns that reappear ... The basis for analysis is transcripts, tapes, notes, and memory” (Greeff, 2011:373). Morgan and Krueger (1998), cited in Greeff (2011:373), are of the opinion that in analysing focus group data the researcher should consider the words used, the context, the frequency, extensiveness and specificity of comments, what was not said, as well as the dynamics of the group as a whole.

In the context of this study, the researcher analysed qualitative data according to an integration of Creswell’s (1998) analytic spiral and Marshall and Rossman’s (1999) process of data analysis, as described by De Vos (2005:334-339).

- The **managing of data** is described as the first step in *qualitative* data analysis away from the site. The researcher organised the data of each focus group discussion into file folders and computer files. In addition, files were converted to appropriate text units: words and sentences for analysis. This process of transcribing was the transition between data collection and analysis.
- According to De Vos (2005:337), **reading and writing memos** constitute the next step. In this step, the researcher obtained a ‘feel’ for the whole database. The researcher read the transcript of each focus group session over and over to become familiar with the field notes and to “clean up” data that seemed overwhelming and unmanageable. Writing down short phrases, ideas or key concepts (memos) in the margins of transcripts helped the researcher in this initial process of exploring the database.
- **Generating categories, themes and patterns** formed the heart of qualitative data analysis. Identifying themes, ideas and patterns of belief that link people and settings demands a heightened awareness of the data: “The process of category generation involves noting regularities in the setting or people chosen for study.” The researcher then had to “identify[ies] the salient, grounded categories of meaning held by participants in the setting” (De Vos, 2005:338). Creswell (in De Vos 2005:338) states that to classify means taking the text apart and looking for categories and themes. The researcher identified eight themes in order to form broader opinions.
- **Coding the data** means applying a coding scheme to categories and themes. Passages in the data were marked and circled, using key words, highlighters and a numbering system. The coding was changed and refined as new understandings emerged.
- **Testing emergent understandings** formed the next step in the process of data analysis. Developing understandings were evaluated for their usefulness and centrality.
- **Searching for alternative explanations** forced the researcher to challenge the patterns that seem obvious and evident. The researcher searched for alternative explanations to demonstrate why the explanation offered was the most plausible (Marshall & Rossman, 1999 in De Vos, 2005:336-339).

5.6.4.2 Quantitative data analysis

Leedy and Ormrod (2005:212) state that data in themselves are of little or no value. Therefore extracting meaning from *quantitative* data is all-important. This meaning is often referred to as the interpretation of data. The process of data analysis is, however, crucial and precedes the process of interpretation. According to Bless et al. (2006:163), quantitative data is often analysed using a range of descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. Salkind (2006:150) notes that descriptive statistics are used to describe the characteristics of the distribution of scores, such as average scores on variables and the degree of variation between scores. Inferential statistics were used to assist in making decisions about how data relate to original hypotheses and how data can be generalised (Salkind, 2006:150). Gravetter and Forzano (2003:394) refer to these two procedures as the organising and summarising of research results, and thereafter, generalising the results from a sample to a population.

Quantitative data was analysed by means of computer programs. A data capturer captured questionnaire responses electronically in Microsoft Excel. Thereafter responses were read into SAS (version 9.3) by the statistician and preliminary summaries were run. Captured data were checked for accuracy against questionnaire responses. The persons involved in the study, namely the two statistical consultants, the research supervisor and the researcher met on several occasions to make decisions regarding the statistical procedures, for example the factor analysis and General Linear models appropriate for analysis and presentation of the research data. Research findings were presented by means of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) in order to reduce the 105 questionnaire items to a few factors, each representing a group of related items. Further inferential statistical analysis of the data was done on the factor scores (Field & Miles, 2010:548). Research findings, based on completed questionnaires were presented according to exploratory factor analysis and ANOVAs of the eight research factors in terms of relationships with relevant demographic groups.

Kruger, De Vos, Fouché and Venter (2005:227) mention that “(t)he six principal types of graphic presentation are bar graphs, doughnut graphs, histograms, frequency polygons,

pie charts and pictograms.” Although these types of graphic display can be done manually, many computer packages include options for doing these displays. Based on the nature of quantitative data gathered, the researcher made use of the following graphic presentations; tables, histograms and pie charts in the final write-up of this study.

As indicated, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:75) stated that in the exploratory mixed methods design “the results of the first method (qualitative) can help develop or inform the second method (quantitative).” According to these authors, exploration is needed when measures or instruments are not available. As indicated by Delport and Fouché (2011:447), when discussing the mixed methods research process, data analysis in mixed methods research entails analysing the qualitative data using qualitative methods and procedures and analysing the quantitative data using quantitative methods and procedures. During the process of data analysis the researcher connected data by developing the data gathering instrument, based on the themes that were identified during the analysis of the qualitative data gathered during focus group interviewing. Categories identified by means of qualitative analysis were therefore used to develop the survey items.

5.7 FEASIBILITY OF THE STUDY

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:110), a “brief pilot study is an excellent way to determine the feasibility of your study.” As has already been indicated above, ascertaining the feasibility via a pilot study formed part of the researcher’s planning.

Strydom (2011c:238-239) refers to the relevant literature and to interviews with experts in his discussion of the feasibility of studies. He emphasises that it is important to obtain an overview of the actual, practical situation where the prospective research will be undertaken.

Rubin and Babbie (2001:119) point out that the financial costs of a study are easily underestimated. They have compiled a list of costs, but not all these costs were relevant to the study. The researcher foresaw that there would be costs in terms of data processing, printing and copying expenses, costs in terms of data collection instruments and professional editing. Allowance for unforeseen costs was made as well. All costs were personally covered by the researcher.

Time constraints were a major concern for the researcher, who works full-time in a time-consuming academic environment. Dedication and motivation were required to implement each additional phase of the research process. Careful planning and a strong motivation on the part of the researcher to do the research, however, made the research feasible.

According to Rubin and Babbie (2001:119), the need to obtain authorisation in advance for a study can influence its feasibility. As discussed under 'ethical considerations', the researcher obtained informed consent from the respondents selected for participation in the study. Young adult respondents were recruited from the campus of a tertiary institution. This decision was based on the availability of young adults on the campus and the possibility of conducting focus groups in a setting familiar to these young adults. Questionnaires could be administered with relative ease in this setting. Recruiting students for participation in the study involved a formal request for permission which was submitted by the Research/Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities to the Dean of Students of the tertiary institution. Approval to conduct the empirical study on the campus was granted by the Dean of Students as well as the Registrar of the tertiary institution (See appendix B).

5.8 CONCLUSION

The relevant knowledge base on the construct postmodernity and its impact on the social functioning of young adults was inadequate. An in-depth literature study on postmodernism, social functioning and young adulthood supplied valuable information, but

not an adequate knowledge base to construct a questionnaire for the empirical measurement of these variables. In the discussion of exploratory mixed methods research a rationale was presented for initiating the empirical study by starting with the qualitative approach. Conducting focus group interviewing with young adults yielded rich descriptions of lived experiences and perceptions within the 'real world'. In this manner rich data for questionnaire construction was obtained.

The qualitative empirical data obtained during the first phase of exploratory mixed methods research will be presented in chapter 6, while the quantitative data, gathered by means of quantitative methods will be presented in chapter 7. Ivankova et al. (2007:269) suggest that the results of the entire study should be integrated during the discussion of the study outcomes. This discussion will be presented in chapter 8.

CHAPTER 6

EMPIRICAL STUDY: QUALITATIVE DATA

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The research problem for this study has been formulated as a lack of knowledge regarding the relationship between postmodernism and the social functioning of young adults. This lack of knowledge prompted the investigation of young adults' experiences and views of postmodern society; phenomena in the 'real world', which necessitated a qualitative approach to this study. In the chapter on the research methodology applied in this study, reference was made to Leedy and Ormrod's (2005:135) statement that as a general rule, qualitative studies do not allow for the identification of cause-effect relationships. Therefore, to be scientific, the impact of postmodernism on social functioning needs to be quantified, which implies measurement. The dominant paradigm of the study, the quantification of data, which will produce statistical findings, will enable the researcher to answer the research question, namely: What is the impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults?

The relevant and available knowledge base on the variables, postmodernism and the social functioning of the young adult, which has been obtained by means of a literature study, is not adequate for the construction of a questionnaire. Valuable information for questionnaire construction could be obtained from the 'real world', which in this case would be the world as experienced by the young adult. To capture these experiences, focus group interviewing was conducted with young adults. The researcher was able to experience firsthand the relevance of Rubin and Babbies' (2001:45) statement that qualitative research could pave the way for quantitative studies of the same subject.

6.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.2.1 Research design

As was discussed in the previous chapter, a mixed methods approach does not only corroborate, but expands understanding (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:1). An exploratory mixed methods research design was used for the execution of the research. Within this design, sequential timing was implemented, with the qualitative data collected and analysed first (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:76). The lived experiences of participants could be considered rich data, portraying the 'real world' as experienced by young adults. Salkind (2006:206) is adamant when stating that there is no other way of obtaining a richer account of what is occurring than by means of a case study. The motivation for utilising a collective case study was presented in chapter 5. As was discussed, insight into a social issue or a population indicates the applicability of a collective case study. Both these variables are relevant to this research, where population refers to young adults and the social issues are postmodernism and social functioning.

6.2.2 Qualitative data collection

Focus group interviewing was used as data collection method in the implementation of the collective case study. The researcher was able to learn from research participants and to develop insight into their 'lived world'. Focus group interviewing as data collection method provided the young adults, involved in the research, with the opportunity to supply their views and feelings regarding various topics of interest to the researcher.

Four focus groups were conducted. The size of the focus groups varied between 9 and 14 participants per group. In total 47 participants were involved in the four focus groups. The focus groups were larger than intended, seeing that in all cases, all the prospective participants recruited for the groups turned up for the scheduled focus group discussions. This was unforeseen as a certain degree of disinterest was expected. The number of participants, adequate homogeneity (see demographics) and the discussion of a topic, which was of interest and relevant to the research participants, guaranteed lively and active participation. Focus group interviews were recorded by means of a digital voice

recorder. A research assistant was present during the four focus group sessions. She assisted with the seating arrangements and with the successful audio recording of the sessions. Her input regarding the most important themes that emerged during the respective focus group discussions was invaluable.

6.2.2.1 Research procedure utilised

- Research participants signed informed consent letters. They were offered refreshments in the form of something to drink. The participants were seated and the voice recorder was activated.
- Participants were welcomed and thanked for their attendance. The language of preference was clarified. Research participants could take part in either English or Afrikaans. The researcher undertook to translate very briefly, if necessary.
- The researcher introduced the research assistant, explained her role and then shortly introduced her research by means of sharing the title, the goal of the research and the fact that official permission from the tertiary institution and ethical clearance from the Faculty of Humanities of the tertiary institution have been granted.
- The utilisation of the focus group as a means of collecting qualitative data was shortly explained. The focus group interview schedule was handed out to participants (see appendix D). The researcher read through the focus group questions in order to orientate participants and to clarify the scope for discussion.
- Before commencing with the focus group discussion, the following was emphasised: all comments are valuable; not everyone will contribute equally – there is no pressure to participate; there are no correct answers; participants may differ from each other; no consensus is necessary. The fact that they will in no way be identified or linked to any specific comment was underlined.

6.2.3 Qualitative data analysis

The researcher's aim while collecting data on specific topics relevant to the research was to look for trends and patterns that reappeared during the four focus group interviews. Aspects like the specific content, how extensively it was presented and the context in which it was presented, were specifically noted. Omissions in the sense of what was not

said were of interest, as well as group dynamics that could possibly have inhibited or put emphasis on certain content. De Vos' (2005:334-339) description of the process of qualitative data analysis, which is an integration of Creswell's (1998) analytic spiral and Marshall and Rossman's (1999) process of data analysis were used by the researcher to analyse the data. The data analysis was conducted in the following manner:

- **Managing of data:** The managing of data was the first step in the process of qualitative data analysis. The researcher organised the data of each focus group discussion into file folders and computer files. Files were converted to words and sentences to present the contributions of participants in a verbatim manner. This process of transcribing was the link between the collection of the data and analysing the data in the sense that it made the data accessible for analysis.
- **Reading and writing memos:** According to De Vos (2005:337), reading and writing memos constitute the next step in the process of data analysis. The researcher familiarised herself with the whole database by reading the transcripts of each focus group session over and over. Field notes were consulted and read in conjunction with the transcripts. Writing down short phrases, ideas and key concepts (memos) in the margins of transcripts helped the researcher in this initial process of exploring the database. In this process the 'cleaning up' of data that was "... overwhelming and unmanageable" took place (Marshall & Rossman, 1999 in De Vos, 2005:336-339).
- **Generating categories, themes and patterns:** This step in the process formed the heart of qualitative data analysis. A heightened awareness of the data enabled the researcher to identify themes, ideas and patterns in the data that link the participants and their views regarding their worlds and the time in which they live. This process of category generation made the identification of regularities and irregularities between participants possible. By analysing the text, categories and themes emerged. The researcher identified eight general themes in order to form broader opinions.

- **Coding the data:** To code data, the researcher applied a coding scheme to categories and themes. Passages in the data were marked and circled, using key words, highlighters and a numbering system. The coding was adjusted as new understandings emerged.
- **Testing emergent understandings:** Testing emergent understandings formed the next step in the process of data analysis. The researcher evaluated the plausibility of her understandings and searched for negative instances of the patterns that emerged. Developing understandings were evaluated for their usefulness and centrality in illuminating the questions being explored (Marshall & Rossman, 1999 in De Vos, 2005:338-339).
- **Searching for alternative explanations:** To search for alternative explanations forced the researcher to challenge the patterns that seemed obvious and evident. To eliminate possible bias and the temptation to assume the obvious, the researcher searched for alternative explanations in order to demonstrate why the explanation offered is the most plausible (Marshall & Rossman, 1999 in De Vos, 2005:339).

6.2.4 Trustworthiness

The researcher took care not only in the actual application of techniques and procedures, but also in the manner of analysing qualitative data, to assure the trustworthiness of data (Schurink et al., 2011:422). A variety of strategies were followed “to describe research findings in a way that authentically represents the meanings as described by participants” (Creswell, 1998, 2003; Horsburgh, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Padgett, 1998 in Leitz et al., 2006:444). The application of reflexivity, audit trail, triangulation and peer debriefing to ensure trustworthiness was relevant in terms of the nature of data collected and analysed (Glesne, 2006:36; Leitz et al., 2006:446-456; Schurink et al., 2011:421, 422).

In this research the researcher applied *reflexivity* by acknowledging that her actions and decisions will inevitably impact on the “meaning and context of the experience under investigation” (Leitz et al., 2006:447). Reflexivity as a process occurred throughout the research. Reflection occurred in thought and through dialog with others, which

acknowledged own experience and perspectives (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004 in Leitz et al., 2006:447). The researcher constantly took her position and 'social location' into consideration when studying the views of research participants (Fawcett & Hearn, 2004 in Leitz et al., 2006:447). In the rationale for the study the researcher referred to her professional interest in the social functioning of contemporary young adults. This could be interpreted as an 'empathy' or emotional involvement with the young adult. The researcher's interest is however purely professional and stems from a desire to learn and develop insight that could have scientific value for the social work profession. Positives as well as negatives in terms of social functioning within our present paradigm can be discerned when studying the literature on 'postmodernism', as presented in chapter 3. By consciously reflecting on the research topic in as objective a manner as possible, the researcher attempted to remain unbiased. A sincere interest in the views of participants indicated an attitude of openness and willingness to learn. A personal view regarding own social functioning is however inevitable. A questioning approach as well as an awareness of own subjectivity and perspectives, compelled the researcher to be more diligent in the data analysis process (Leitz et al., 2006:449).

The researcher also "kept an audit trail throughout the data analysis process that clearly described the steps she took including a description of the reflexivity within each step" (Leitz et al., 2006:448, 449). The researcher therefore fully described the research decisions taken and procedures followed during the qualitative enquiry. An *audit trail*, by means of documenting research decisions made, allowed the researcher to follow research procedures consistently and in a transparent manner. The process of reflecting and fully describing research procedures allowed for critical thinking during the qualitative enquiry (Leitz et al., 2006:450; Schurink et al., 2011:422). Schurink et al. (2011:422) refer to the importance not only of *what* was discovered, but also *how* it was discovered. The researcher strived to be critical of own interpretations and of her authority as an interpreter in order to enhance the trustworthiness of findings.

The use of multiple data collection methods, also referred to as *triangulation*, contributed to the trustworthiness of the data. Data was not simply combined, but connected, seeing

that qualitative findings guided the development of a quantitative survey instrument (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:77; Glesne, 2006:36). The researcher therefore utilised a combination of techniques to collect research data, to ensure rich data and believable findings (Glesne, 2006:36). As proposed by Glesne (2006:37), the researcher also attempted to involve multiple sources in the form of multiple research participants during four focus group sessions. A maximum number of participants were included in each focus group discussion to ensure multiple views and the gathering of rich research data. Leitz et al. (2006:450, 451) refer to triangulation by observation as a strategy to increase the trustworthiness of research data. The research assistant, involved in the gathering and analysing of qualitative data, played an invaluable role to establish rigor in qualitative data collection and analysis by providing a perspective that increased understanding of the data. In triangulation by observation two observers (the researcher and research assistant) therefore analysed and discussed the data (Leitz et al., 2006:451). Consensus could be arrived at regarding the most important themes that emerged from the qualitative data gathered.

Peer debriefing as a strategy, whereby the researcher engages in dialog with colleagues outside the research project who have experience with the topic or research population, was also implemented to enhance trustworthiness (Leitz et al., 2006:451). A research seminar was held to introduce research findings to experts who provide therapeutic and preventative services to young adults who are troubled or at risk. The input provided by these experts led to further reflexivity and questioning that enhanced trustworthiness of data (Leitz et al., 2006:452).

Member checking allowed participants to review findings from the data analysis in order to confirm the accuracy thereof (Leitz et al., 2006:453). Member checking involved gaining the input of two research participants who formed part of the focus group discussions. One participant confirmed the accuracy of the transcription of the focus group discussion in which she participated. The other participant reviewed the research findings presented under different themes, while still in a semi-final format to ensure that views and ideas of participants were represented accurately. Positive feedback regarding accuracy was once

again received. This strategy established trustworthiness as it gave “authority to the participants’ perspectives [and] therefore managing the threat of bias” (Padgett, 1998 in Leitz et al., 2006:453).

Engaging in the strategies discussed above has greatly enhanced the development of rigor in this qualitative study. The perspectives of participants were presented by displaying their own voices as truthfully as possible. The researcher took the ethical responsibility within social work seriously “to uncover [the] voices” of young adults to bring awareness to their thoughts and experiences regarding their social functioning (Leitz et al., 2006:456).

6.3 PROFILE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The researcher will initiate the presentation of qualitative data with a discussion of the profile of research participants. Four focus group interviews were conducted with a total number of 47 research participants recruited from a diverse group of students, representing different fields of study. Demographic information will be graphically presented in the form of figures and tables.

6.3.1 Age of participants

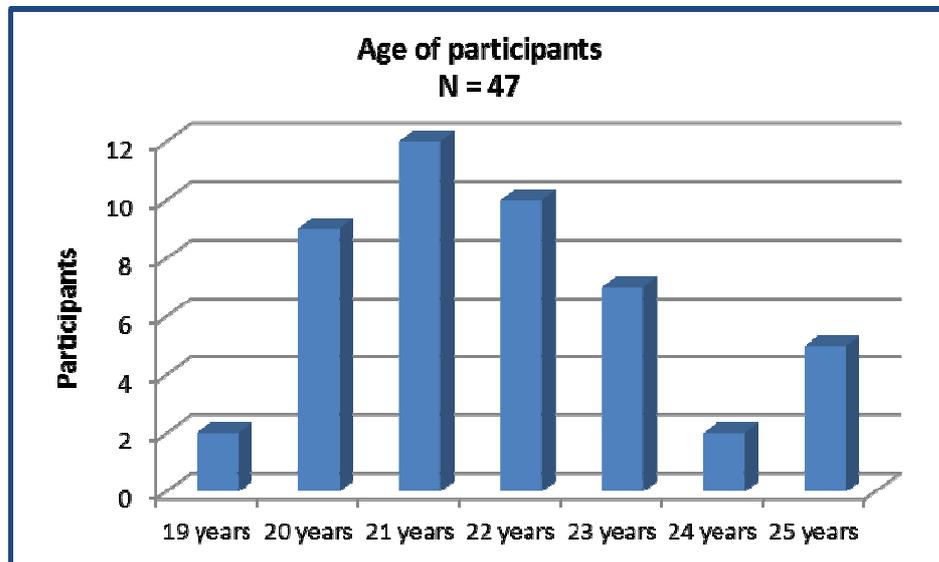


Figure 6.1: Age of participants

The ages of the 47 research participants ranged between 19 and 25 years. No particular age variation can be distinguished, except that most of the participants were between the ages of 20 and 23 years. The ages of participants were representative of the young adult life stage.

6.3.2 Gender of participants

Table 6.1: Gender of participants

GENDER OF PARTICIPANTS	DISTRIBUTION
FEMALES	42
MALES	5
TOTAL	47

Forty two research participants were female, with only five male participants. This can be considered a limitation. Researcher, however, is of the opinion that if the contributions of participants are viewed holistically, they seem androgynous and not gender specific.

6.3.3 Race of participants

Table 6.2: Race of participants

RACE OF PARTICIPANTS	DISTRIBUTION
BLACK	10
INDIAN	1
WHITE	36
TOTAL	47

Of the total number of 47 participants, 36 were white, ten were black and one participant was Indian. Race was considered during recruitment, but equal distribution according to race was not considered essential. Research participants between the ages of 18 and 25, who were willing to participate in a focus group discussion were the criteria considered for recruitment. The fact that there was variation in race was however important seeing that cultural background impacts views and beliefs. No comparisons or correlations regarding race or culture were however made.

6.3.4 Language of participants

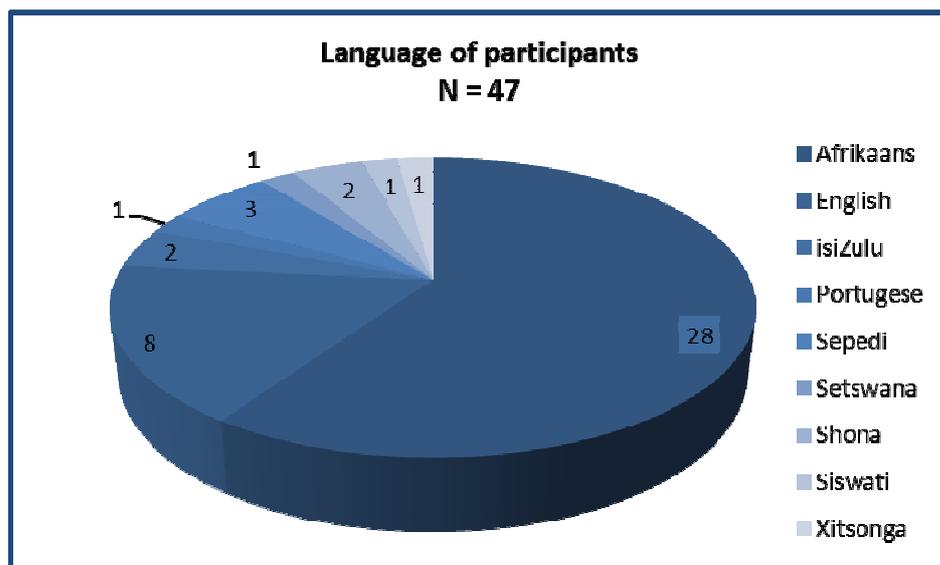


Figure 6.2: Language of participants

The majority of participants were Afrikaans (28), while eight participants were English speaking. Seven different languages constituted the home language of the remaining 11 participants. Language tends to be culture specific. The comment regarding culture in terms of impact on views and beliefs, made under 6.3.3 Race of participants, also applies to this demographic.

6.3.5 Highest level of education of participants

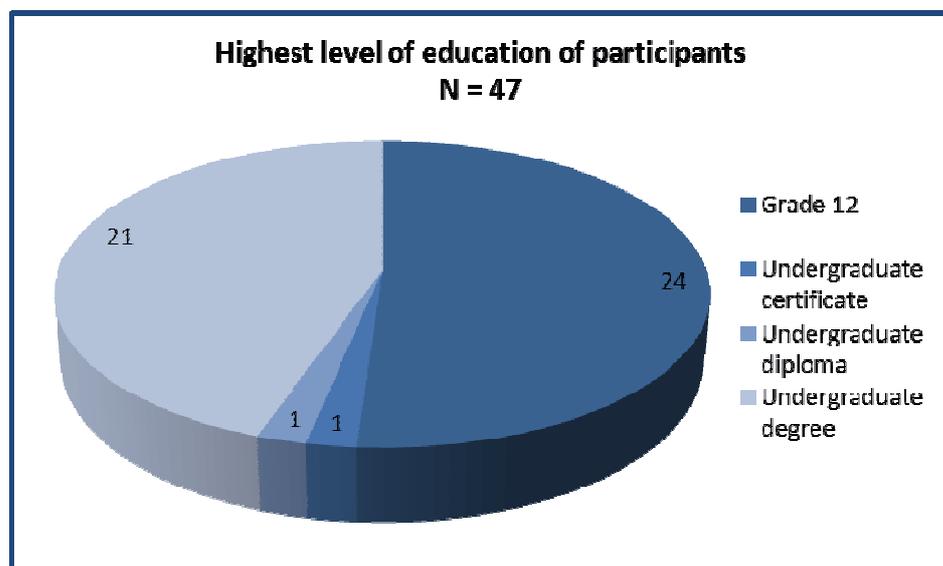


Figure 6.3: Highest level of education of participants

Grade 12 was the highest level of education for 24 of the participants. Twenty one participants had obtained an undergraduate degree, while an undergraduate certificate and an undergraduate diploma had been awarded to two participants respectively. The research topic could be considered as relatively intellectual and complex in nature. The researcher is therefore of the opinion that the fact that all participants completed a senior certificate was advantageous and conducive to meaningful discussion.

The researcher is of the opinion that the profile effectively portrays a true and clear representation of the research participants (young adults) who formed part of the focus group interviews.

6.4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Qualitative data is presented according to the themes and sub-themes that were identified during the process of data analysis. The themes identified corresponded to a large extent with the questions formulated for the focus group discussions. These questions, identified from the literature review presented in chapters 2, 3 and 4 were the researcher's point of departure. Some overlapping occurred where a specific theme emerged under more than one question. This was one manner in which themes and sub-themes could be identified. However, careful exploration and analysis of the data-base according to the integration of Creswell's (1998) analytic spiral and Marshall and Rossman's (1999) process of data analysis, (as described by De Vos, 2005:334-339) discussed under 6.2.3 allowed for a scientific manner to identify themes and sub-themes.

Eight themes and eight sub-themes were identified by means of the data analysis. These themes and sub-themes are illustrated in table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Themes and sub-themes

THEME	SUB-THEME
Theme 1: Participants' views on and the relevance of authority and traditional structures in their lives	
Theme 2: Participants' views on communication as a crucial aspect of their lives	<p>Sub-theme 2.1: Participants' views on the nature of their communication</p> <p>Sub-theme 2.2: Participants' views on the effect of communication on their interactions and relationships</p>
Theme 3: Participants' views of the significance of materialism in their lives	<p>Sub-theme 3.1: Participants' views on the concept 'consumerism' and the influence of consumerism on their lives</p> <p>Sub-theme 3.2: Participants' views on the influence of consumerism on their identities</p>
Theme 4: Participants' views regarding their own lifestyles	
Theme 5: Participants' views on the significance of their own values and norms	<p>Sub-theme 5.1: Participants' views on the acceptance of differences</p> <p>Subtheme 5.2: Participants' views on their personal needs versus the needs of others</p>
Theme 6: Participants' views on their different roles and their interaction within these roles	<p>Sub-theme 6.1: Participants' views on the 'adult role'</p> <p>Sub-theme 6.2: Participants' views on the 'married role'</p>
Theme 7: Participants' views on the here and now versus long-term planning	
Theme 8: Participants' views on the tendencies of our time	

6.4.1 Theme 1: Participants' views on and the relevance of authority and traditional structures in their lives

Participants had very specific views on authority and traditional structures, particularly on the relevance of authority and traditional structures in their lives. The overwhelming view seemed to be that young people are not in awe of authority and traditional structures. The opinion was voiced that in a modern world, authority and traditional structures are not important. This is illustrated by the following verbatim quotes:

- **“I think that traditions and cultures have faded into the background... everything is generalised and accepted.”**
- **“I think that there are certain structures that have become archaic and we cannot understand why we must still follow them.”**
- **“We are our own authority. We don't want anyone to constantly tell us what to do; we will challenge authority – so we do not regard authority that much.”**

These views correlate with Inglehart's (2000:215, 223) statement that “[a] growing body of evidence indicates that deep-rooted changes in world views are taking place. These changes seem to be reshaping economic, political and social life...” and are evident in the views of today's young adults. These opinions on authority and traditional structures emphasise self-expression instead of respect for authority. Du Toit (2000:54) agrees by stating that authoritative structures are suspect and therefore incompatible with the postmodern tendency not to make final conclusions, but to rather focus on personal experiences and on own interpretation.

When asked whether the young adult rebels against authority, the view was that they do not see it as rebellion. They simply say and do what they want to. In this regard Linares (2001:404) refers to a new way of thinking and highlights that the young adult wants to be heard without being sanctioned by traditional and formal structures.

The opinion that authority must be earned was however echoed in all the focus groups. The following statements are examples of how this view was voiced:

- ***“Ek voel nog altyd – outoriteit moet verdien word”*** (“I have always felt that authority must be earned”).
- ***“...daar is mense wat dit verdien om ‘authority’ te hê en jy kan dit nie van hulle af wegvat nie”*** (“there are people who deserve to have authority and you cannot take it away from them”).
- ***“Ek is ‘all for’ bevraagteken; ek dink dit is ‘awesome... maar ek voel ook dat jy respek moet hê vir iemand se titel, totdat hulle jou verkeerd bewys”*** (“I am all for questioning; I think it’s awesome... but I feel that you should have respect for someone’s title, until they prove you wrong”).

One participant mentioned that the questioning of authority is in contrast with moralistic views of the past where young people were told what was right and what was wrong. She voiced her opinion in the following manner:

- ***“Ek dink dat vroeëre was daar ‘n groter moralistiese denkwys; daar is vir ons gesê wat is reg en verkeerd... vandag is dit nie meer so duidelik nie”*** (“I think that there was a greater moralistic way of thinking in the past; we were told what was right and what was wrong... today it’s not that clear any more”).

For this participant the result of being told what was right and what was wrong, was that there was less confusion. Everyone could distinguish right from wrong. Today however, this distinction is not clear at all. Participants were of the opinion that there has been a shift and people do all kinds of things. The reference was to morality and a shift away from what was generally regarded as ‘right’ and what ‘was expected’. Williams et al. (2006:19) refer to a society that rearranged itself in terms of its world view, its key institutions and social and political structure.

The opinion was however also voiced that parents and upbringing are often the determining factors regarding the young adult’s view of authority and traditions. In homes like these, respect for others and for authority was enforced. This is illustrated in the following manner:

- **“I believe that it depends on the personality of your parents; if your parents believe in that tradition, then the tradition must be followed.”**

Another view was:

- **“I think it depends on how you were brought up.”**

Upbringing and culture were linked when participants mentioned that it is a cultural thing to always respect authority, to respect your elders and that nothing justifies you to go against that. One participant singled out the Afrikaner-family as an example where children are taught to have respect for all adults. The following statement illustrates this:

- **“...I will be respectful towards them, because it is tradition.”**

The impact of culture and traditions on views regarding authority and traditional structures was therefore of importance. Some participants voiced the opinion that within their culture you were encouraged from a very young age to challenge certain things and to think for yourself. The following comment illustrates this:

- **“*My ma het geglo dat ek ‘n stem moes hê*” (“My mother believed that I should have a voice”).**

A related view was:

- **“...from when you are young, you are encouraged to challenge certain things, and to think for yourself.”**

This view reminds of Zagorin’s (1997:300) opinion that there is an obvious relaxation of cultural standards. Cooper and Webb (1999:119) agree and state that a postmodern trend in social life is the suspension of traditional structures of culture, tradition and authority which leads to a lack of control or critical influence within a given situation.

Amongst the younger participants, who could still clearly recall an adolescent way of thinking, the view was that adolescents do not respect authority (“**When you are an adolescent, you despise authority...**”). A small group of participants who participated in the specific focus group with on average the youngest participants stated that now, as young adults, they look up to authority. They mentioned their lecturers as an example. As students, they want to gain knowledge; therefore they respect knowledge and expertise. The following illustrate these views:

- **“I think also because we want to gain knowledge, we look up to the people who have that knowledge.”**
- **“...for example, if our practical lecturer says we must do something, we will listen to her and not oppose her. A person who wants to give us that knowledge is almost honoured.”**

A need for appropriate authority was also voiced by participants, for example one participant said:

- ***“Ek het nie ‘n probleem met outoriteit nie, inteendeel, ek wil graag mense in my lewe hê na wie ek kan opkyk. Ek wil hê mense moet my kan uitdaag om beter te wees”*** (“I don’t have a problem with authority, to the contrary, I want people in my life whom I can look up to. I want people to challenge me to be better”).

The importance of teaching young children to have respect for authority and for rules was voiced.

- ***“...ek glo dat wanneer jy jonk is moet daar lyne wees, want dan word jy gevorm, en wanneer jy groot is dan kan jy jouself verder vorm en leiding neem”*** (“I believe that there should be boundaries when you are young, seeing that you are being shaped. When you grow up you can shape yourself and take the lead”).

The views mentioned above illustrate contrasting opinions by participants on the impact of authority and traditional structures in their lives. Many participants illustrated a lack of respect and tolerance for authority and for formal structures. They questioned the relevance of authority. According to Inglehart (2000:223) postmodern values emphasise self-expression instead of respect for authority. It was interesting to note that participants who questioned authority were also of the opinion that formal structures and authority provided clearer guidelines on what was right and what was wrong. They felt that the current lack of respect for authority leads to confusion and uncertainty. One assumes that these participants prefer the uncertainty over the rigidity of authoritative views and structures. Support for these views was found in the literature that was acknowledged above.

In contrast, as was illustrated, other participants look up to authority and acknowledge that they want people with authority in their lives to challenge them to be better than they are. This authority must however be earned.

Upbringing and the influence of culture was singled out by participants in all focus groups. Participants were either encouraged to think for themselves and question authority or they were taught to respect and obey authority without question. These contrasting views were not just random comments, but were supported by a significant number of participants.

The following is noteworthy: as facilitator, the researcher sought reactions on authority and on traditional structures. Participants were eager to talk about authority and give either their support or their rejection thereof. There seemed to be a reluctance to discuss traditional structures, for example church and other formal structures. Participants seemed not to have strong opinions or found these structures inconsequential in their lives. One participant seemed to sum this up when she said: “**Traditional structures are not that important.**” The only traditional structure that participants were eager to discuss was ‘marriage’ as an institution. Marriage will be discussed under theme 6.

6.4.2 Theme 2: Participants' views on communication as a crucial aspect of their lives

The ability to interact with and relate to others has been emphasised as crucial in terms of the social functioning of the young adult. The socially competent young adult is able to interact effectively and has closer and more satisfying relationships with family and friends (Smart & Sanson, 2003:8). Basic communication skills were highlighted as a prerequisite for successful interaction (Potgieter, 1998:228). The young adult's views on communication were obtained by exploring in terms of the nature of their communication and the effect of their communication on interaction and relationships.

Subtheme 2.1: Participants' views on the nature of their communication

Communication and access to friends are important to the young adult. Participants therefore had very specific views on the modes and nature of communication. The nature of communication and the manner in which young adults connect with others have changed radically. Electronic messaging, therefore instantaneous communication, was clearly preferred. A preoccupation with this mode of interaction was evident, in spite of limitations experienced when using this mode of communication. Almost all participants had similar views on how and why they communicate in this specific manner. They highlighted the following:

- **“Facebook, Mxit, cell phones, the Internet, e-mails.”**
- **“Mxit. Facebook. SMS'e. Nie altyd gesig tot gesig kommunikasie nie” (“...Not always face-to-face communication”).**

Baudrillard (1997:43, 45) refers to technical obsession and a preoccupation with instantaneousness, while Buschman and Brosio (2006:410) refer to the electronic media as postmodern communication technologies. Higham (2001:160) confirms that internet technologies via e-mail, chat rooms or other simulated environments substitute spoken conversation that previously required physical presence.

The fact that this type of communication is convenient and affordable was highlighted by the majority of participants. Higham (2001:164), as well as Smith (1999:156) pointed out that the attraction to the Internet and online discourses also relates to the fact that this mode of communication is convenient, immediate and economical. Participants also highlighted the fact that there is a down side to electronic modes of communication. They mentioned that they have friends who communicate in this manner all the time, to the point that they will even Mxit when they are in the same room with each other. They will also Mxit even though they see each other every day.

- **“Although we spend a lot of time face-to-face, we still Mxit a lot.”**

These modes of communication do however tend to be blunt, which could lead to miscommunication. The blunt nature of the communication, together with the absence of body language often leads to the intention behind the communication being misunderstood. All participants seemed to be in agreement. The following comments illustrate this:

- **“You cannot see; what you read is not specifically the way they intend it.”**
- **“But I think if you cannot hear their tone of voice, the pauses they use, then you can’t figure it out. I mean, people are too complex ...”**

Uncertainty and stress result from the miscommunication referred to above. One participant felt that her life is already stressful – further unnecessary stress is a complication.

- **“There is a whole level of miscommunication. You do not need the stress of thinking ‘Are they lying?’ ‘Are they not lying?’ ...You can’t pick up what they are actually feeling over an SMS.”**

A substantial number of participants noted the fact that another type of misunderstanding, due to the electronic mode of communication, often occurs. This is when the young adult

misunderstands a message because of a personal need or desire. This was voiced in the following manner:

- **“If I want someone to say something, I will read it in that manner... not in the manner in which the other person intended it, but rather what I want to hear.”**

This phenomenon was confirmed by Poster (in Higham, 2001:160) when he postulated that face-to-face interactions are influenced by the real-world characteristics of the participants (their sex, their voices and other visible cues), whereas online interactions are influenced by factors such as individual desires, ideas and feelings of the participants.

In spite of these misunderstandings, the use of electronic modes of communication is popular amongst young adults. Many participants admitted that they communicate in this manner constantly. A significant number of participants however use this type of communication only selectively: **“It helps with making arrangements and quick conversations.”** This group of participants prefer personal contact with friends:

- **“I still prefer to communicate with a person face-to-face.”**
- **“...I would rather prefer face-to-face communication because it is more personal.”**

These comments confirm Higham’s (2001:165) statement that physical presence remains an essential characteristic of direct human-to-human association and supports long-term warmth, loyalty and a sense of obligation.

Some participants referred to age and the fact that teenagers and even younger children are increasingly using electronic modes of communication. This was phrased in the following manner:

- **“I also think that the older you get the less need you feel to use it.”**

This statement was then challenged in the following manner:

- **“I think the age group varies; I know someone on Mxit and he is 29.”**

The popularity of communication modes like Mxit therefore seems to vary considerably and cannot simply be bracketed in terms of age group.

Sub-theme 2.2: Participants’ views on the effect of communication on their interactions and relationships

The effect of different types of communication on interaction and relationships were implied in the abovementioned sub-theme. This is an important aspect of communication that requires more in-depth discussion. Reference was made to miscommunication and misunderstandings which could impact relationships. In this regard participants mentioned that it is quite common to scrutinise someone’s Facebook profile before or after meeting them to decide whether you want to be friends with them. The following comment was echoed by more than one participant:

- ***“Kom ek kyk eers hoe is sy voordat ek verder met haar vriende is”*** (“let me see how she is before continuing to be friends with her”).
- ***“Kom ons sê ek het uitgevind jy hou van sjokolade, dan kan ek volgende keer vir jou sê dat ek ook hou van sjokolade”*** (“Let’s say I found out that you like chocolate, then next time I can tell you that I also like chocolate”).

Participants further mentioned that it is quite common to scrutinise someone’s Facebook profile to constantly update yourself on what is happening. This borders on or becomes an obsession in terms of a specific person or persons as illustrated by the following quote:

- **“I wonder if he changed his profile. Did he put new photos up? Are there any photos up of me?”**

An even greater impact on both interaction and relationships is the use of the Internet to not only decide whether you want to engage with a person, but also to skip the initial contact making and getting-to-know phase of a relationship by studying the person's Facebook profile.

- ***“...daai hele proses van ‘n mens leer ken versus ‘n 5 minute Internet ‘escapade’” (“that whole process of getting to know a person versus a 5 minute internet escapade”).***

A factor that complicates interaction and relationships even more is that this Facebook profile which is being scrutinised by all who wish to do so, is often not absolutely accurate or a sincere version of ‘the self’. A serious consequence of electronic communication and the use of cyberspace for engagement with others is the creation of a fake personality or the manipulation of events to make you seem more attractive and alluring to others. Most participants commented on this:

- ***“Jy kan jou eie persoonlikheid skep wat anders is as wat jy regtig is” (“You can create your own personality, which is different from your true self”).***

This applies to Facebook, as well as to SMS’ and Mxit:

- ***“Wie jy is oor ‘n SMS is anders as wie jy rêrig is, want jy skep ‘n nuwe tipe persoonlikheid” (“Who you are via a SMS is different from who you really are, seeing that you create a new type of personality”).***

Poster (in Higham, 2001:160) stated that online interactions introduce new possibilities for playing with identities. Higham (2001:162) elaborates by mentioning that within this framework, discourses online seem to be all-powerful, in the sense that the individual can recreate himself and his world by using different descriptions.

Just as a personality can be created, events can be manipulated and enhanced for ultimate effect. In this regard one participant said the following:

- ***“...op Facebook wat ek opgelet het is dat dit nie belangrik is of die partytjie lekker is nie. Wat belangrik is is dat die partytjie lekker moet lyk op die foto”*** (“...on Facebook, what I have noticed is that it’s not important whether the party is fun. What is important is that the party must seem like fun in the photograph”).

These are time-consuming, superficial online activities, described by Benokraitis (2008:25) as intrusive and as replacing close personal relationships.

In line with the above is the opinion that communication on Facebook is unreliable:

- ***“’n Partytjie... wanneer iemand op Facebook sê hulle kom, dan moet jy weet daar is ‘n 60% kans dat hulle gaan kom – jy moet dit glad nie vertrou nie”*** (“A party... when someone says on Facebook that they will attend, you must know that there is a 60% chance that they will – you must not rely on this at all”).

In contrast to the fakeness and superficiality described above, it was also noted that communication in cyberspace allows for discussion on a deeper level, which might not be possible when meeting face-to-face, for example one participant referred to the possibility of more ‘open’ communication in the following manner, when shyness is diminished because of the lack of proximity:

- ***“...dat mense soms dieper gesprekke het oor Mxit of MSN, en dan wanneer hulle gesig-tot-gesig is met mekaar, dan is hulle te skaam om daaroor te gesels. Jy kan dan nie wegkruip agter daai skerm nie”*** (“...people sometimes have deeper discussions via Mxit and MSN than when they are face-to-face with each other, then they are too shy to talk. Then you cannot hide behind that screen”).

Jansen van Rensburg (2009) as quoted by Botha (2009:13) agrees and refers to the phenomenon that Facebook users share much more information about themselves, than they would in real life situations.

Another impact on interaction and relationships is that a specific aspect of the dating behaviour of the young adult has changed since the use of electronic communication. Various participants pointed out that flirting has become easier:

- ***“...dit is makliker om met iemand oor SMS te flirt as wanneer hulle reg by jou staan. Dit het net verander en dit heeltemal anders gemaak”*** (“it is easier to flirt with someone via SMS than when they are standing next to you. It has just changed and become totally different”).

This type of communication has also changed the dating behaviour of young women:

- **“Girls can now actually SMS the guy and go to him. She doesn’t have to wait for him anymore. Now if you want to go out with a person you can.”**

It seems as if the effect on interaction and relationships can be summarised in the words of two of the participants:

- ***“Ek dink voor selfone het mense baie meer moeite gedoen om by mekaar uit te kom, maar vandag is dit net makliker om ‘n SMS te stuur...”*** (“I think that before cell phones, people put in more effort to meet with each other. Today it is just easier to send a SMS...”).
- ***“...veral met Facebook; jou verhoudings met mense, die veld is baie breër, die diepte van die vriendskap is nie meer soos dit altyd was nie. Jy het baie oppervlakkige verhoudings met baie meer mense...”*** (“...especially with Facebook; your relationships with people, the field is much wider, the depth of the relationship is not as it always was. You have many superficial relationships with more people”).

6.4.3 Theme 3: Participants' views on the significance of materialism in their lives

When exploring the topic of materialism amongst young adults the researcher observed two distinct sub-themes emerging, namely consumerism and identity, where identity is linked to materialism and consumption. Strong opposition to materialism also emerged.

Sub-theme 3.1: Participants' views on the concept 'consumerism' and the influence of consumerism on their lives

Initially participants discussed the concept 'materialism', before focussing more on consumerism. Without specifically requesting a definition of 'materialism', the following descriptions of this concept emerged:

- **“Things of this world.”**
- **“*Ek dink aan status*” (“I think of status”).**

Another opinion was:

- **“*Ek dink aan die tipe huis waarin jy gaan bly... watse kar jy gaan ry*” (“I think of the type of house you will live in... the type of car you will drive”).**

One participant linked image and status with race when she said:

- **“I think if you are a black, young upcoming person of around 23, then you have the pressure to look a certain way, to wear certain things, to have the right car.”**

These comments concur with Rattansi and Phoenix's (1997:112) view that Western societies are characterised as consumer societies where individuals distinguish themselves by their “public consumption of particular ‘designer’ labels, in the form of cars, clothes, accessories...”

The concept 'materialism' therefore presented images of worldly goods, houses, cars as well as status. Interest in this specific topic varied from mild interest to portraying obsession with having and owning more. This obsession was observed in comments like:

- **“Young adults will start selling their bodies in order to get those expensive things.”**
- **“I will think, ‘Wow, I want to look like that’, and it becomes... I think to a certain degree it does become an obsession because you want to look like someone else.”**

Most participants linked materialism to consumption, specifically of brands and clothing. Some of these comments will be provided to illustrate this:

- **“I have always been a brand person; I love a brand.”**
- **“You can’t show anything plain anymore, you got to have the name.”**
- **“I don’t care what it means, I want a Blackberry!”**
- **“*Ek dink dit is vrek belangrik; veral as ‘n mens hoor hoe baie mense ‘name brands’ in hul ‘daily conversations’ gebruik*” (“I think it is extremely important; especially when you hear how many people use brand names in their daily conversations”).**

Participants also referred to splashing on labels like ‘Guess’. These comments confirm the young adult’s preoccupation with consumption and image. It is clearly important to them how others view them. Rattansi and Phoenix’s (1997:113) description of a ‘fashion victim’ as “symptomatic of a popular and sociological view that regards label-obsession and the intense emotionality and pressures surrounding the possession of the latest ‘badges’”, comes to mind.

The prominence of materialism as part of the postmodern era was emphasised by participants admitting to comparing what they own to that of their peers:

- **“So, we compare our things and if mine is better than hers then I will start thinking I am better than her... these things form part of us in such a way that I will start looking down on others and know that we are not on the same level.”**

A significant number of participants admitted to the pressure amongst young adults to have new “stuff” and to own expensive things. This pressure is not just on acquiring new possessions, but also on fitting in.

The importance of fitting in and being ‘cool’ was observed when participants who could clearly not afford certain brand names pointed out that there is a new fashion trend where you wear a higher priced item together with a lower priced one

- **“...nou gaan dit oor meng; dit hang af of jy iets minder ‘cool’ met iets meer ‘cool’ kan meng en dit saam ‘cool’ kan maak” (“...now it has to do with mixing; it depends whether you will be able to mix something less cool with something more cool and together you make it cool”).**
- **“Baie mense trek goedkoop goed en duur goed tegelyk aan – dit gaan oor jou eie styl” (“Many people wear cheaper and more expensive stuff together – it has to do with your own style”).**

What these comments illustrated was that even if the budget is smaller, there is still an emphasis on buying and on image.

Many participants referred to the fact that peer pressure was even stronger in high school.

- **“Daar is baie groepsdruk op skool; mense kyk wie het die mooiste ‘girl’, wie se ouers ry die beste kar” (“There is a lot of peer pressure at school; people look to see who has the prettiest girl, whose parents drive the best car”).**
- **“Ek dink op Hoërskool is jou wêreld kleiner; die meisie langs jou se omstandighede is baie dieselfde as joune; so as sy ‘n sekere foon het, dan wil jy dieselfde foon hê” (“I think that your ‘world’ is smaller when you are in High**

School; the circumstances of the girl next to you is very similar to yours; so, if she has a certain phone, you want that phone as well”). “*Nou maak dit nie rêrig saak nie*” (“it is not that important now”).

It therefore seems that there is a slight change in emphasis placed on worldly goods and image when comparing the adolescent to the young adult.

A significant number of participants emphasised the impact of personality on consumerism. A participant referred to her brother who spends all his money on clothing and on commodities to enhance his appearance, while she herself shows no interest. Other views were in support: **“I think it differs from person to person.”** Researcher will use this comment to introduce the coin side of the opinions provided up to this point:

- **“I am not like that at all. I do not believe in labels and things like that. I do not care whether I have a Guess jean or a fancy phone, if it works, it works! ...it doesn't define your personality.”**
- **“I do not have any brand clothing in my closet, because I do not feel the need to wear any. There are some people who feel ashamed if they wear something without a brand name, but I feel ashamed if I wear something that has a brand name.”**
- **“I also do not care; I like my car, even though it is old. I will drive it until it falls apart.”**

What these strong opinions demonstrated was that views were at extreme ends of the scale. Participants were adamant in their views and were not open to persuasion. They were either consumer and image oriented or they were extremely critical and regarded consumerism as fake:

- **“I think it gives you a sense of faceless... it doesn't define you as an individual.”**

Sub-theme 3.2: Participants' views on the influence of consumerism on their identities

The desire to look good and portray a certain image links identity to materialism and consumerism. Various comments supported this view, one of which is listed below:

- ***“...almal wil aantreklik wees” (“...everyone wants to be attractive”). “Almal wil mooi lyk” (“everyone wants to look pretty”).***

Similar comments were made where participants voiced the opinion that young people are into consumerism in order to feel better about themselves – ***“...om sekere goed te dra en te besit laat jou beter voel” (“...to wear and own certain stuff makes you feel better”)***. Valentine (2003:45) links consumption and the construction of young people's identities when she states that material goods convey meanings about style and class. Rattansi and Phoenix (1997:111) emphasise the “increasing significance of consumption in identity construction” with their statement “...I shop therefore I am.” This statement seems to describe young people in the age of consumer culture, whose choice of clothes, music styles and speech are crucial to the construction of their identities. Lindholm (2001:757) concurs when he states that the individual finds value and identity through appetite and consumption.

One participant made an apt description of consumerism and then linked it to identity when she said: ***“...the ultimate accessory; the best MP3 player, the best cell phone, it is like the ultimate thing is not to get bored.”*** With this statement, it seems as if the participant admitted that possessions and the image it portrays link with the identity the individual wants to create. Material possessions become an external manifestation and extension of themselves. These possessions entertain them and make them feel good.

The message portrayed by participants was that what you own becomes part of your identity:

- ***“These things form part of us... things that portray who we are.”***
- ***“So, I think it forms part of your reality... the things that you watch and want.”***

Mason (2001:50) referred to unreflective consumerism and a preoccupation with *having* more rather than *being* more. This statement reminds of Bauman's comment (in Smith, 1999:156) that you are no longer what you *do* for a living, you are what you *buy*.

The above comments were made by participants who acknowledge the influence of material possessions and consumerism in their lives. There were however participants who openly criticised the need to boost yourself with commodities and possessions:

- **“For me, materialism is when people appropriate stuff when they have a lack of self-esteem or self-identity. You get those people who are constantly boasting that they have the newest and best stuff, but they do not work on their personalities.”**
- **“I feel sorry for them; why do they have to present themselves with things they own rather than with what they are?”**
- **“It is people with identity problems.”**

Those participants who were critical of their peers who spend time and money on their appearance and on material possessions felt that how you feel about yourself is important. The following is an example of such a view:

- ***“Dit maak nie saak hoe min of baie geld jy het nie, solank jy net goed voel oor jouself”*** (“It does not matter how little or how much money you have, as long as you feel good about yourself”).

This view has to be considered from the perspective of this specific participant. The perspective of the participant who needs the possessions to define him will be totally different.

6.4.4 Theme 4: Participants' views regarding their own lifestyles

Participants had a variety of views on the manner in which the young adult's lifestyle could be characterised in the postmodern era. In this regard they referred to eating habits, exercise, drinking and smoking and sexual behaviour as important elements.

It was clear that they knew the buzz words in terms of health and eating. Words like **“green and green watching, sustainability, healthy lifestyle, re-branding, organic and ‘trend of our time’”** were mentioned and elaborated on. Rattansi and Phoenix (1997:113) referred to postmodern young people's choices exercised in the sphere of consumption, in favour of healthier lifestyles and a cleaner environment.

The importance of health and healthy eating as part of the young adult's lifestyle were emphasised by the majority of participants. They specifically referred to the following:

- **“...everywhere you see organic food, everything is organic, organic, organic – but organic food is much more expensive.”**
- **“Well, eating healthier is a lot more expensive, so people cannot always afford to buy healthy foods; a mineral drink is much more expensive than coke...”**

Participants were conscious of the benefits of eating in a healthy manner, but said that it is too expensive to do so. There were however a few participants who make an effort to eat more healthily:

- ***“Dit is baie belangrik, want almal wil tog goed lyk, so jy sal probeer oefen en gesond eet...”*** (“It is very important, seeing that everyone wants to look good, therefore you will try to exercise and eat healthy...”).
- ***“Ons moet die sterkste wees, ons moet beter lyk, so op die ou einde kom alles terug na ‘image’ toe”*** (“We must be the strongest, we must look better, so in the end it all comes back to ‘image’”).

These comments confirm the young adults' preoccupation with image and the emphasis placed on how others view them.

Reference was made to healthy lifestyle as a subculture defined by health magazines, trendy Virgin Active clothing and Woolworths Foods.

- ***“Ek dink dit is ‘n subkultuur en nie ‘n algemene ding nie”*** (“I think it is a subculture and not a general thing”).
- ***“Ek glo nie daar is enigiemand wat 100% in ‘n subkultuur val nie”*** (“I don’t think that there is anyone who falls 100% into a subculture”).

The majority of participants felt that they, because of trying to be health conscious, would eat correctly at times and exercise a little, but then combined this with an healthier lifestyle. The following illustrate these views:

- ***“Ek dink ek is dalk een van daai mense waarvan jy praat... ek rook en hardloop”*** (“I think that I am one of those people whom you are referring to... I smoke and jog”).
- ***“Jy sal drink, maar nie soveel as om dronk te word nie, en dan miskien ‘n bietjie oefen die volgende dag. So baie mense kry maar ‘n balans”*** (“You will drink, but not so much that you become drunk and then perhaps exercise a little the following day. So, many people find a balance”).
- ***“Ons almal leef gesond, maar slaap rond”*** (“We all live in a healthy manner, but sleep around”).

In this last comment there was reference to sleeping around, combined with healthy eating. It did however seem as if the lifestyle of some participants did not include much of anything that could be described as healthy.

- ***“When you are 18 or 19 you can go out and still get drunk every night... but then you do not realise what you are doing and the possible consequences of***

those actions. The next morning you might wake up with a strange message on your phone and wonder, “Wow, what did I do?” I think that happens a lot.”

This view was confirmed:

- **“The others are drinking and smoking and then the next thing a random guy comes and then they leave with this random guy.”**

It seems as if pub-crawling, drinking and smoking are definitely part of the postmodern young adult’s lifestyle. Their comments to this effect were:

- ***“Ek dink dit is lekker, want nou kan jy dit nog doen. Jy kan nie as jy 30 is gaan staan en dronk word nie”*** (“I think it is great, because you can still do it now. You can’t get drunk when you are 30”).

Another similar view was that you can sit around in a pub the whole day long, seeing that you, as a student, have the time to do so. These comments remind of Malbon’s (1998, 1999) reference to the emotional community generated through clubbing (Malbon in Valentine, 2003:45). This way of life with its emphasis on having a good time, seems to postpone the process of growing up and of taking responsibility for your future.

As part of this lifestyle participants referred specifically to binge drinking by both males and females:

- **“I am a guy, and my girl-friends drink a lot more than I do! This one lady friend of mine orders those jam jars which contain twelve shots and mix. She will go through seven or eight of them in an evening.”**

The view of one of the female participants was:

- **“With me it is different; my guy friends drink a lot.”**

The views of these participants correlate with Santrock's (2009:424) research. He examined the extent of substance abuse amongst tertiary students and young adults and found that heavy drinking often increases during tertiary education, taking its toll on students. Santrock (2009:424) quotes research by Wechsler et al. (2002) that found an increase in binge drinking by females during emerging adulthood.

What did become clear to the researcher is that participants categorised two distinct groups amongst young adults in terms of lifestyle and responsibility, namely the younger and the older young adult. Participants bracketed the two groups which were referred to regarding lifestyle and responsibility in the following manner:

- ***“Ek dink jy kan vat vanaf 18 tot 21 as ‘n ouderdomsgroep en dan 22 tot 25”*** (“I think you can distinguish 18 to 21 as an age group and then 22 to 25”).
- ***“Ek het verskriklik baie gedrink in daai eerste tydperk en ek dink so rondom 23 en 24 verander jy heeltemal in daai sin. Jy fokus meer op wat saak maak”*** (“I drank a lot in that first period and then, at around 23 and 24 you change completely in that sense. You focus more on what is important”).
- ***“Die 18-jariges – hulle is nogals los”*** (“The 18 year olds – they are rather promiscuous”).

There seems to be a specific group who tend to be irresponsible in terms of certain lifestyle choices. The majority of participants agreed that the following apply to the older young adult, within the age range of 21 to 25 years:

- **“When you become older you become more responsible, and then you are aware that you must take care of your body. And then you also influence those around you. So, we do still occasionally go out for a drink and go partying, but not as often as when we were younger.”**
- **“I was at every party going ‘Woooooo!’, but now I actually look after my body really well.”**
- ***“Ons het baie gekuier in die begin, maar nou dat ons ouer is kuier ons minder. Soos, ek sal nog steeds gaan kuier, maar nie elke aand nie”*** (“We went out a lot

in the beginning, but now that we are older, we do so less often. Like, I will still go out, but not every night”).

This view was echoed by many of the older participants, who made reference to the fact that they will be starting to work soon and therefore they need to be more responsible in terms of what they eat and how much they drink.

One participant referred to the fact that maturity, growth and logical thinking comes into play in terms of the consequences of unprotected sex, pregnancy, STI's and HIV and AIDS. She summed this up by saying: **“There is no point to binge drinking; there is no point to smoking, because... there is no point.”**

Participants voiced the opinion that both these groups exist and that one can often distinguish them according to age in the sense that the older young adult is more responsible. Strong opinions to the contrary was also voiced, with support for the view that the younger group are actually the knowledgeable group regarding 'health, sex and drinking' – mainly because of life orientation (LO) classes at school. The older young adult did not necessarily participate in classes like these at school. An older participant said:

- **“*Ons is nie genoeg seksueel opgelei nie*” (“Our sex education was not sufficient”).**

The following comment also portrayed irresponsible behaviour amongst older young adults:

- **“I’ve got friends that are 29, and they go out much more than I do. They will come back late in the evenings without their cell phones or wallets. So they are older but not much more responsible.”**

What was clear is that there was no consensus regarding lifestyle and responsibility in terms of age group. There seemed to be support for all the contradictory opinions voiced.

A variety of opinions was also provided regarding the factors that influence lifestyle. Participants felt that their upbringing, values and goals in life, their personality, susceptibility to peer pressure, as well as the media and consumer influence impacted their lifestyle as young adults. In this regard some of the opinions voiced regarding the influence of their upbringing were:

- **“If you have a strong view of yourself, you will not do things that you might be against. Me for instance, I come from a very strict family – I will be too afraid to tell my mom that I am going to a pub...”**
- **“If you are Catholic then drinking too much and sleeping around and sex before marriage is prohibited... you will not do it.”**
- **“Yes, it depends on how you were raised, and what your perception of being healthy is.”**

A significant number of participants supported this view. They also felt that personality plays a role:

- **“...it depends on the type of person you are, what values you have, what goals you have.”**
- ***“Dit is maar absoluut iets wat afhang van jou persoonlikheid, van hoe jy grootgemaak is en hoe jy glo”*** (“It is absolutely something that depends on your personality, on how you were raised and what you believe”).

The above comments illustrate the positive influence of upbringing and the manner in which young adults were raised. Views to the contrary were also raised:

- **“I really think that it is a thrill, because you come from that very authoritative atmosphere that you have been in for 18 years, and now you are on your own... I wanted to experience everything that I wasn’t used to. So I think it is the thrill of it.”**

- **“I come from a dull place and have never been exposed to things like drugs and drinks and so many guys... and then I will go against how I was raised.”**

What these comments seem to portray is that there is a strong element of thrill-seeking amongst young adults. The freedom that they experience after leaving school provides the opportunity to indulge this feeling of being untouchable. Arnett (2006:113) supports the notion that the young adult should enjoy the “period of emerging adult freedom and independence beyond adolescence before they commit themselves to the responsibilities of adulthood.” Many of them also portrayed vulnerability in how impressionable they are and how susceptible they are to peer pressure (West, 2009:369).

The importance of peers and the influence of peer pressure were emphasised by a significant number of participants who admitted to the fact that their lifestyle is influenced by their peers:

- **“We young people are much focused on other people’s opinions.”**
- **“You want to be seen in that group... therefore, you have to conform to what other people do so you can be like them.”**
- **“Being in a black community, it is important to make friends with your peers and belonging in their group; which means that you have to adapt to them and the things they do.”**
- **“You are a first year, you must drink! There is so much pressure.”**

Participants further highlighted the extent to which their friends and they themselves can be influenced by peers:

- **“*Party mense kan baie vinnig beïnvloed word*” (“Some people can be influenced very quickly”).**
- **“...you can easily be persuaded to stay and have another drink.”**

Being easily persuaded seems to portray an inability to take responsibility for their future health and well-being. Santrock (2009:421) points out that few individuals during early adulthood stop to think about the manner in which their personal lifestyles will probably affect their health later in their adult lives.

Another important aspect in the context of lifestyle was the power of the media and how the media is able to influence young adults' perceptions. Some of these comments were:

- **“...because of the media; it plays an important role in the way in which they convey messages, for example that it is so cool to drink. You see someone that you look up to... they drink a lot, they partake in sexual relationships. So, to drink and use substances it is cool... you know?”**
- **“...you look at the media and how it portrays everything... and you think ‘Well, I should also do that.’”**

Benokraitis (2008:24, 25) considered the impact of technological innovation on the postmodern lifestyle. According to her, technological innovations have affected lifestyles. “Popular culture – which includes television, pop music, magazines, radio, advertising, sports, hobbies, fads, fashions and movies – is one of our major sources of information and misinformation about values, roles, and family life” (Benokraitis, 2008:24, 25).

A number of the older participants referred to the influence of consumerism on lifestyle. Reference was made to Discovery Health's marketing of fitness programs and healthier food options. One participant said:

- ***“Ek dink dit is ‘consumer-driven’... en hulle oortuig ons dat dit ‘n briljante idee is. Maar eintlik is jy besig om ‘n ‘consumer’ te word van ‘n sisteem wat groter is as die sisteme waaraan ons gewoond is”*** (“I think that it is consumer-driven... and they convince us that it is a brilliant idea. But you are actually becoming a consumer of a system which is much larger than the systems we are used to”).

In reaction to this statement, another participant voiced the opinion that everything is driven by capitalism and materialism,

- **“...want om gesonder te lewe is duurder as ‘n ‘chocolate bar” (“because living a healthier life is more expensive than a chocolate bar”).**

When considering the above it seems that many of the young adults living in the postmodern era are prone to risk-taking behaviour. They tend to combine a healthy and unhealthy lifestyle seeing that they incorporate aspects of both in their lives with regard to eating, drinking and exercise. They enjoy the freedom that graduation from school brings and wish to experience life. In this process they seem to still be susceptible to the influence of friends. The influence of consumerism and the media could clearly be discerned in the opinions of most participants.

6.4.5 Theme 5: Participants’ views on and the significance of their own values and norms

Values and norms were highlighted as an important issue for young adults in the postmodern era. Although participants found it difficult to single out specific values and norms, they referred to the influence of their family of origin on the development of their value system, the impact of their own personalities and their personal views regarding values, responsibility versus irresponsibility and spirituality and what this concept means to them. Their views on the acceptance of differences between people, as well as the importance of personal needs versus the needs of others, were specifically sought and will be presented in sub-themes.

Regarding the influence of parental values and norms on the development of the young adult’s personal value system, contradictory views were provided by participants. Most participants however felt that their parents and how they were raised, have an impact on them. This is illustrated by the following comments:

- ***“Ek dink ons ‘mimic’ ons ouers. So jou waardes word basies bepaal deur ‘n kultuur en jou geloof”*** (“I think that we mimic our parents. So, your values are basically determined by culture and by your beliefs”).
- **“I think there is still a sub-layer of things that your parents told you that will always be with you; which will be your own now.”**

More views were provided in support of these statements. A number of participants were of the opinion that you start to define your own personal values as you grow up, but you often retain the values and norms which your parents live by – **“...most people come back to it.”**

In contrast, many participants were of the opinion that young people consciously turn away from the norms and values which their parents live by. They are eager to experiment and define their own values. In the words of one of the participants: **“...because there are all these new things to try out.”** Similar views, indicating a tendency to question were raised by participants.

- **“I think you grow up believing everything your parents tell you. But then you get to High School and Varsity and you learn so many new things, that you start questioning what your parents told you. It is different; I am definitely more open than my parents.”**
- ***“Ek dink jy besluit wat is reg en wat is verkeerd... as dit nie saamstem met jou ouers s’n nie, dan is dit maar so”*** (“I think that you decide what is right and what is wrong... if this does not correlate with your parents’, then it has to be so”).

This last comment displayed an almost fatalistic attitude. Participants seem to prefer to rather define their own values and moral rules. Gray and Lovat (2006:207) places morals in the subjective realm when they refer to Habermas’ belief that our moral beliefs are deeply personal matters, seeing that only we can know whether or not we are being true to our values.

Those participants who were of the opinion that values and norms are a personal and individual matter and that values evolve from personal experiences and diverse influences, provided their views in the following manner:

- **“The more you grow up, ...the more you start to have your own values. Because now you can think for yourself, ...you can tell what is right for you... and not have somebody impose their values on you.”**

Other participants acknowledged the fact that the influence of other people impacts your values and norms:

- **“It varies from person to person and it can change. If I meet someone who has an influence in my life, an input in my life, it can really change your moral values. So what you thought was right becomes wrong; and what you thought was wrong becomes right.”**

Bertens (1995:32) raised a concern regarding the general onslaught on traditional values and motivations. Smith (1999:17) concurred in his discussion of Zygmunt Bauman’s view that in the postmodern world, the individual survives by drawing on whatever personal resources they happen to have. There is therefore no reassuring guidance of moral absolutes, enforced by higher powers. The young adult therefore has to choose for himself which rules of behaviour to follow within a particular life situation (Smith, 1999:18).

These comments seem to portray many young adults’ susceptibility to external influences and the fact that many are still very impressionable. Friends, the media and role models were singled out as examples of external influences. According to Williams et al. (2006:22) the media encourages conflicting values, where values are deeply held beliefs and attitudes about what is right and wrong, what is desirable and what is undesirable. The fact that people who are handsome or beautiful are better than those who are not, is mentioned as an example by Williams et al. (2006:22). This illustrates an image of role models as an

external influence in the life of the young adult. Participants also seem to adjust their values to the situation in which they find themselves:

- ***“Jy pas sekere waardes toe in sekere situasies” (“you apply certain values within certain situations”).***

The following comment by another participant seems to supply a motivation for this statement:

- ***“...daar is nie meer ‘n definitiewe reg en verkeerd nie. Daar is nie meer sulke duidelike morele waardes nie. Daar is nie meer ‘rules’ nie” (“...there is no longer a definite right and wrong. Clear moral values no longer exist. There are no longer rules”).***

This view correlates with the opinion of Rosenau (1992:54) that the postmodern individual is against rules and norms. One value or moral norm is not better than any other. Lindholm (2001:757, 758) refers to the collapse of all norms. Bland generalised statements were also made:

- ***“Ons het almal morele waardes tot ‘n sekere ‘extent’” (“We all have moral values to a certain extent”).***
- ***“Almal het ‘n idee wat reg en verkeerd is” (“Everyone has an idea about what is right and what is wrong”).***

Clearly participants decide for themselves what could be considered right or wrong. Here, the concept ‘relative’ comes to mind. Atherton and Bollard (2002:422) state that in the postmodern mind, “the whole idea of standards of any kind or under any circumstances comes into question and everything becomes relative.”

Participants found it difficult to identify specific values and norms applicable to their lives. Some participants provided their views, while others listened without making any

contribution. The following are however the opinions that participants specifically mentioned:

- **“The big ones, which are universal, like do not kill, do not steal. And then you get smaller, more specific ones which are not necessarily universal.”**

The following were also regarded as values: fairness, honesty, respect, sensitivity and how you treat other people. Related to attitude towards and treatment of others was propriety and ... **“*n Mens se hart moet reg wees*”** (“**a person’s heart should be in the right place**”). ‘Respect for the self’ was highlighted as a value to strive towards.

A number of participants indicated that your own personality and skills are crucial in the process of determining values and norms. In the words of one of the participants:

- **“I think it also comes down to being an independent thinker; thinking for yourself, ask yourself how it is going to benefit you in the long run. So, are you only going in the moment, or does it have a long term benefit?”**

It seemed as if there was a focus on own opinions and own judgements and that these formed the basis of what could be considered ‘own beliefs’, rather than values and norms, with an acknowledgement from some participants that some of the young adult’s values and beliefs originate from their parents and how they were raised. The focus on own opinions and own judgements confirmed a typical characteristic of postmodernism, namely individualism. Individualism is described by Kirkpatrick Johnson and Monserud (2009:387) as an orientation towards one’s own welfare. Krings et al. (2008:102) refer to the young adult constructing his own life course and finding his own way to personal fulfilment by choosing goals from a wide range of possibilities.

In two of the four focus group interviews, the exploring of values and norms lead to a discussion of irresponsibility and lack of accountability. A few participants referred to the

young adult as being passive and refusing to take responsibility. This was motivated by the following:

- ***“Sodra jy verantwoordelikheid neem, dan gaan jy ‘accountable’ gehou word vir iets wat jy gesê het, en dan gaan dit jou probleem word”*** (“As soon as you take responsibility, you will be held accountable for something you said, and then it becomes your problem”).
- **“Don’t take responsibility else you cannot do what you want or say what you want.”**

The researcher experienced something to this extent in the sense that many participants seemed unwilling to speak up and provide a decisive opinion on the values and norms of the young adult. The topic itself seemed to be a grey area.

The discussion of values and norms led to participants providing their views on religion and spirituality and the impact thereof on values and norms. The overall view was that the young adult is moving away from the traditional notion where you have to go to church and where specific guidelines determine behaviour.

- **“...and you have to do that and do this... we are more trying to figure out our own spirituality.”**
- **“Well, I go to church. But I think today’s adolescent is so busy; life is just too complicated. There is so much to figure out that they do not make time to go to church.”**

Once again the young adult’s tendency to question became clear:

- **“...you question your religion, you question your parents’ views on religion and how they impose their beliefs on you... and then you question different beliefs and traditions.”**

In Barry and Nelson's (2005:115) discussion on the role of religion in the transition to adulthood, they state that "young people question the beliefs in which they were raised", they "place greater emphasis on individual spirituality than affiliation with a religious institution", and they "pick and choose the aspects of religion that suit them best." This was evident from the above contributions made by participants.

The young adult's disenchantment with the church and with religion became clear. The statement was made that the church and the minister have lost their authority. Years ago ("*in die ou dae*") one used to consult the minister in times of crisis. He listened to you and tried to assist you.

- ***"So as jy 'n probleem gehad het het jy na die predikant toe gegaan. Maar deesdae gaan jy op Google en soek daar vir antwoorde, want jy het daar meer inligting beskikbaar"*** ("So, if you had a problem, you went to the minister. But nowadays you look for answers on Google, seeing that you will find more information there").

From this statement it seems that, in the context of moral guidance, for some young adults, technology has replaced the need for authority figures. This is confirmed by Benokraitis (2008:24, 25) and Williams et al. (2006:22) who describe the influence of technological innovation on the postmodern lifestyle. They state that popular culture and technological innovation such as television, advertising, fashion, movies and electronic communication are major sources of information and misinformation about roles, beliefs and values.

The young adult's sense of confusion and the need to challenge was evident in their statements regarding spirituality.

- **"I think that at this age people are so confused about who they are and what they believe... we want to challenge stuff, because we want to find out who we**

are, we want to challenge the beliefs that we were raised with, we want to understand... we are a group that want to challenge everything.”

According to Inglehart (2000:224) a postmodern worldview “has diminished the need for the reassurance that religion traditionally provided.” This worldview brought about a “declining acceptance of rigid religious norms ...and a diminishing need for absolute rules.” This could explain the young adult’s need to challenge the beliefs that they were raised with and their need to understand.

However, the need for some form of spirituality was voiced, as well as criticism of the concept ‘spirituality’. Criticism of spirituality was that one only becomes ‘spiritual’ about things that you feel comfortable with. Defining what exactly was meant by the concept ‘spirituality’ was however difficult for the participants. There was a reference to ‘New Age’, but the word, spirituality, seemed to be used in a vague manner to describe a source of guidance or enlightenment.

- ***“Mense is meer geneig om spiritueel te wees, en om oop te wees vir dinge. Mense aanvaar nou nie net meer wat hulle ouers vir hulle sê nie. Hulle is meer ‘open minded’”*** (“People tend to be more spiritual, and to be more open. People don’t just accept what their parents tell them. They are more open minded”).

Spirituality was also regarded as a ‘source of power’:

- **“I think that everyone has something that they draw on; some form of spirituality that gives them guidance.”**
- **“I think it is something very personal, and it also influences your morals.”**

Even though participants seem unsure about an exact description of the concept, ‘spirituality’, their contributions portray a spiritual need. Schweitzer (2004:89) referred to the fact that other forms of individual religion and a new interest in spirituality have

increased, conveying that a spiritual hunger seems apparent during postmodern times. The researcher is of the opinion that the participants' need for 'spirituality' portrays what Sigelman and Rider (2009:399) refer to as "a search for ultimate meaning in life that may or may not be carried out in the context of religion."

Even though contradictory views were supplied by participants, the influence of parental values and norms on the development of the young adult's personal value system was clearly detected. Values and norms as being 'personal' and which evolve from personal experiences, as well as from diverse influences, were also voiced by participants. Friends, the media and role models were listed as diverse influences that impact their values and norms. Own personality and skills, as well as spirituality (not religion as such) were singled out by participants as factors influencing values and norms.

Views on acceptance of differences between people, as well as the importance of personal needs versus the needs of others, were specifically sought because of their prominence within a postmodern society. These views will be presented in the following sub-themes.

Sub-theme 5.1: Participants' views on the acceptance of differences

The majority of participants regarded the acceptance of differences between people as an important value to live by. They combined diversity with uniqueness and singled out the young adult age group of between 18 and 25 as the time when you meet new people and expand your horizons – also in terms of people from different races and different cultural groups. One comment that illustrates this is:

- ***“Dit is baie belangrik; ons het ‘n wye kring vriendinne, ons het kleurling vriendinne, swart vriendinne; so dit is belangrik om die verskille van die kultuurgroepe in ag te neem”*** (“It is very important; we have a large circle of friends, we have coloured friends, black friends; so it is important to take the difference of the different cultural groups into consideration”).

This correlates with Inglehart's (2000:223) statement that postmodern values "are tolerant of other groups and regard exotic things and cultural diversity as stimulating, and interesting, not threatening."

Differences and uniqueness were discussed without necessarily considering race. Participants mentioned their ability to appreciate the uniqueness of their friends and the people they meet. The following comments illustrate this:

- **"Candice is Candice and I am myself, we are unique and I think we are both diverse individuals."**
- **"I agree with her, because if you walk around on campus people are more accepting."**
- **"But then you as a person realise that everyone is unique and that there is a lot of diversity amongst us, that a lot of people develop these norms."**

Acceptance of diversity seemed to be an overwhelming reaction amongst participants. One participant described this celebration of diversity as: **"Dit is vir my die coolste ding..."** ("For me, it is the coolest thing..."). These views confirm Kirk's (1997:325) statement that postmodernism places a premium upon difference, diversity and complexity. Inglehart (2000:223) holds a similar view with his statement that postmodern values emphasise tolerance of other groups and regard diversity as stimulating.

A minority of participants disagreed with the view that differences should be accepted and celebrated. They were of the opinion that 'tolerance' is restrictive and do not provide you with the option to disagree.

- **"Almal 'fake' dit want hulle kan nie rêrig sê wat hulle dink nie"** ("Everyone is faking it because that they cannot really say what they are thinking").

The opinion was voiced that we are tolerant and politically correct, seeing that we have no choice.

- ***“Ons is passief, want anders moet ons accountability vat” (“We are passive in order not to take accountability”).***
- ***“Jy moenie diskrimineer teen vrouens of wit of swart of bruin nie. Almal is bewus hiervan en ek dink mense inkorporeer dit in hul lewens, al stem hulle nie noodwendig saam nie” (“You must not discriminate against women or white or black or brown. Everyone is conscious of this and I think people incorporate this into their lives, even though they don’t necessarily agree”).***

The researcher’s impression was that there were passionate opinions on both ends of the spectrum regarding the acceptance of differences between people. The opinion of one of the participants who thought that she did not have any problems with diversity in terms of race, until her friend started dating a black man and she was really confronted with the differences between people, is worth considering. She felt that this taught her to be accepting of differences and other cultures in a real way.

Sub-theme 5.2: Participants’ views on their own personal needs versus the needs of others

Participants placed a high premium on their own personal needs. This was evident from the following comments:

- ***“I will put my happiness first...”***
- ***“I think we focus on our own needs, we think of our studies, our own careers; so it is in a sense more... personal, goal-oriented.”***
- ***“...I have so many goals, and so many plans, I have to be self-centred.”***

Participants referred to thinking about ‘me’ and not being left behind. Williams et al. (2006:20) discuss the philosophy of individualism where decisions made are based on individual concerns. They state that individualism has led to a search for personal fulfilment, exactly as described by these participants. According to Smith (1999:150) individualism is one of the characteristics of the postmodern lifestyle.

Some participants did however realise that other people are necessary in their lives. They were not equally enthusiastic about the importance of focussing on others:

- **“...like eating healthy foods, now you might not want to, but later you will see the consequences... it is the same with people, one day you will need them with you in your life, and their support.**

There seemed to be consensus amongst participants that the young adult is finding himself and sorting out his life. He will be responsible later in life – get married and have children and focus on others. According to Hanan (1999:253, 254) postponing a focus on others could result in fragmented social interactions.

Even though the above represents the majority of views, a few participants referred to the fact that the trend of our time, to be sustainable, green watching and have a social consciousness forces us to focus on others. A comment to illustrate these views are:

- ***“...meer gefokus is op ander, soos om minder petrol te verbrand sorg jy dat jy saam met ‘n groep iewers heen ry. Saam met die ‘trend’ is ook ‘n groot bewussyn van ‘charity’”*** (“...more focused on others, for instance, to burn less fuel, you see to it that you drive somewhere in a group. Together with the ‘trend’ there is also a consciousness of ‘charity’”).

These views are in support of Inglehart’s (2000:224) statement that a “change in world views has given rise to a wide range of new social movements, from environmentalist movements to the women’s movement, and to new norms concerning cultural diversity and growing acceptance of gay and lesbian lifestyles.”

The overwhelming impression that the researcher was however left with was the young adult’s need to focus on himself and his own needs, whether these needs were personal or career orientated. Rosenau (1992:53, 54) described the concern of the postmodern individual as with his own needs, his own life and his personal satisfaction. This was

clearly demonstrated by the views of the participants who live according to their own personal moral beliefs and values with a focus on the 'self'.

6.4.6 Theme 6: Participants' views on their different roles and their interaction within these roles

During the discussion of roles and interaction, participants identified the different roles that they assume, their interaction within these roles and factors that impact these different roles. The adult role and marriage were identified as sub-themes.

Typical of young adulthood the roles of student, daughter/son, friend and sister/brother were identified as the most important roles played by the participants. This correlates with James et al.'s (2006:54) statement that significant others in the life of the young adult could include family members, partners, friends, peers, fellow students and other close relatives. Most participants identified their role as a daughter or son as their most prominent role. Comments to this effect were:

- **“My roles towards my family are much more important than my roles toward my friends.”**

A comment in support was that your norms also impact your roles:

- **“*Ek dink die norme wat jy vir jousef gekies het... beïnvloed die hierargie van die belangrikheid van sommige verhoudings*” (“I think the norms which you chose for yourself... influence the hierarchy regarding the importance of some relationships”).**
- **“*Ek dink ek sal harder probeer om my ouers te ‘please’ as wat ek my vriende sal ‘please’*” (“I think that I will try harder to please my parents than my friends”).**

Gerdes and Van Ede (1993:487) mention the strong attachment that exists between family members, in spite of differences in temperament and interests.

It does however seem as if friends start to play a more prominent role in the life of the young adult. The following comments suggest this:

- **“There is a limit to the relationship you can have with your parents and siblings.”**
- **“When I was in High School, my family was my everything, but now my friends understand how I feel, they can help me through this. Whereas, my family do not necessarily know.”**

A participant referred to choosing other role models and other advisors in her life, therefore there are certain contexts where the roles that family members fulfilled, change. Another participant mentioned that she no longer lives at home, therefore she regards her friends as her new family – **“...so, you have to get used to these new people and different roles.”** Support for this view was provided in the following manner: **“So, you still care about them (family) and phone them, but not the same as when you were an adolescent.”** These comments support Santrock’s (2009:451) view that friends can in some cases provide a better buffer from stress and are a better source of emotional support than family members. A certain degree of ambivalence was noticed regarding the role of parents in the lives of participants.

- ***“Dit voel soms asof mens almal gelukkig wil hou, en dit raak partykeer moeilik”*** (“It sometimes feels as if you want to please everyone and it does become difficult at times”).

The influence of electronic communication, the lack of face-to-face communication and the influence thereof on relationships were highlighted. Many participants were of the opinion that electronic communication impacted negatively on the quality of communication, and eventually of relationships, especially with family members. One comment to this effect was:

- **“I think with the obsession now with cyberspace and the Internet, we lose the real importance of communicating face-to-face... with family. Because if you are always on your phone, how will you find time to talk to your sister... to talk to your mother and father? How will you find out whether they are happy or not?”**

Potgieter (1998:228) refers to problems that can be intensified by the dysfunctional communication patterns within a system, where in this specific case, the family is a microsystem.

In the same manner, television impacts face-to-face communication with family members. This was reflected on in the following manner:

- **“TV in my view destroys family relationships because you do not sit down and enjoy a meal and communicate and find out things. I mean, in my family when we eat, the TV goes on, that is how it is.**
- **“I have been brought up with eating in front of the TV and when I have a family one day I will refuse to let that happen, because I have seen the impact it has.”**

Many participants regard the roles that their parents play in their lives as extremely important. A significant number of participants were however of the opinion that friends play a more prominent role in their lives – especially in terms of being confidants and in providing emotional support. This could be indicative of a transition in terms of the needs of the young adult. Participants’ needs to make the transition to the adult role will subsequently be discussed.

Sub-theme 6.1: Participants’ views on the ‘adult role’

Participants varied in their views on whether they see themselves as adults or not. They either thought that they were adult, or that they were not adults at all, or that they felt like adults at certain times. The overwhelming majority of participants did not see themselves

as adults. They all echoed this in a similar manner, but provided different motivations for this statement:

- **“When you become constructive – that is when you become an adult.”**
- **“Being an adult comes with greater responsibilities.”**
- **“Dit is ‘n term wat my ma beskryf” (“It is a word that describes my mother”).**
- **“Ek dink ons is nog besig om onself te vind” (“I think that we are still in the process of finding ourselves”).**
- **“Dit is ‘n proses. Ek dink mens raak volwasse... wanneer jy wegbeweeg van jou ouers af. ...wanneer jy op jouself en jou eie ‘abilities’ begin staatmaak” (“It is a process. I think one becomes an adult... when you move away from your parents... when you begin to rely on yourself and your own abilities”).**

This comment reminds of Santrock’s (2009:417) statement that experimentation and exploration characterise the emerging adult. The young adult is still exploring which career path to follow, what they want their identities to be and which lifestyle they want to adopt.

Participants portrayed ambivalence about the adult role. Their own words provide a clear picture of this feeling of ambivalence:

- **“We cannot handle everything, but in certain situations we do take control. We take up the role of being independent.”**
- **“When I go home I depend on my mother, but when I am alone I am independent. Those are the different roles I take on.”**
- **“It depends on the situation. I will tell my parents that I am responsible, I make my own decisions, and I am my own person. But, when I am sick, the first thing I do is go home and wait for my parents to look after me.”**

Two participants voiced the opinion that they ‘feel’ adult or that they start to feel as if they are in this role. Comments to this effect were:

- ***“...omdat ek volgende jaar begin werk, begin ek meer volwasse voel”***
(“...seeing that I am starting to work next year, I am starting to feel more adult”).
- ***“Ek sien myself as ‘n ‘adult’, want ek het ‘n ‘adult’ se verantwoordelikheid”*** (“**I see myself as an adult, seeing that I carry the responsibilities of an adult**”).

One participant used the word ‘young adult’. Her comment however sums up the majority of views:

- **“I like the label ‘young adult’. I am not a child, I am not a teenager, I can make my own decisions, but I am not yet as adult.”**

Subtheme 6.2: Participants’ views on the ‘married role’

The topic of marriage and the married role elicited lively interaction and strong opinions that varied from positive to negative. The researcher was left with the impression that this is a topic that is often discussed and that participants have definite feelings about. During young adulthood romantic love and commitment is especially important. Research done by Bersheid, Snyder and Omoto, as quoted by Santrock (2006:474), found that more than half of their participants identified a romantic partner, rather than a parent, sibling or friend as their closest relationship.

The fact that participants felt pressured to get married at a certain age was a prominent view, provided by a large number of participants. Some comments to illustrate this are:

- **“...I think the impression that you get from the media is that you should be married by the age of 25.”**
- **“Everybody believes that by then you must be married; by 30 you must have kids.”**
- **“The pressure is so much that by 18 you must have a distinct life partner, someone that you know you want to marry. There is so much pressure.”**

Also part of pressure: reacting to a comment about the ideal time to get married, a participant said:

- **“I already passed mine. Mine was 21 because my mom married when she was 21. For me this adds so much unnecessary stress! So apart from worrying about tests and exams, you have to worry about whether there are any right ones out there.”**

The topic of pressure elicited many reactions. The following was the most vehement:

- **“...especially from the mothers, because she would be like ‘I expect you to be married by 25, and then roughly by 27 I expect to have my first grandchild, and from then on you must see how many babies you can have’”.**

Newman and Newman (1999:390, 392) make the statement that adulthood is experienced as several roles emerge. The age of entry into marriage has advanced over the last years, with the result that young people between the ages of 20 to 24 years are unmarried.

As part of the married role, the topic of divorce came up spontaneously. It seemed as if every participant referred to friends, parents or family members who are divorced or who are in the process of getting a divorce and it impacted negatively on most participants' perceptions of the married role:

- **“And then the major, major problems with the statistics of divorce – it puts me off! I mean, are they the right one or not?”**
- **“...two of my friends now are going through a divorce, and I see what they go through as individuals and the kind of impact it has on them.”**
- **“For me it gives a feeling of instability; my grandparents were married for 30, 40 odd years and they are getting a divorce; my aunt and uncle are getting divorced and they were married for 30 years.”**

In *The unexpected legacy of divorce: Report of a 25-year study*, Wallerstein and Lewis (2004:363) state that ‘children of divorce’ are haunted by the ghosts of their parents’ divorce. Their fear of divorce reaches a crescendo in young adulthood, when they become openly pessimistic about marriage and divorce and seek to avoid both. Some participants however seemed blasé regarding divorce and the married role:

- **“*Gaan vir ‘n jaar uit en trou dan... en skei dan oor ‘n jaar – dit is heeltemal ‘fine’*” (“Go out for a year and then get married ... and then get divorced a year later – it is fine”).**

Many participants agreed with supporting comments like – **“if it does not work out, they can still get a divorce.”** And also, **“...90% of them (friends) are divorced now.”** This lack of commitment came across strongly. Newman and Newman (1999:393, 394) refer to an underlying desire to marry and the readiness of two individuals for a long-term commitment. For many participants marriage does not seem to be a life long commitment. This view is supported by Wallerstein and Lewis’ (2004:366) statement that “[d]ivorce begets fewer marriages, poorer marriages, and more divorces.”

According to Newman and Newman (1999:392) young people seem to experiment with jobs for longer, before settling into their occupational career and into marriage. These authors mention that “the main change in the marriage pattern has been that more young adults postpone marriage until the end of their twenties.” In this regard participants’ views were:

- **“...I am so independent; I wouldn’t want somebody to tell me what to do. I want my own time... for me there is no pressure.”**
- **“*Vir sommige mense is dit belangrik om te trou, vir ander is dit glad nie*” (“For some people it is important to get married, for others not at all”).**

The view of a participant for whom marriage is very important was:

- ***“Trou is vir my baie belangrik; omdat ek ‘n man is, wil ek sorg dat ek reeds alles in plek het voordat ek iemand kry om mee te trou”*** (“For me, getting married is very important; because I am a man I want to get everything in place before getting married”).

Living together as partners evolved as an important topic with strong opinions for and against: Those participants, who were against, referred to the views of their parents.

- ***“My ouers is baie konserwatief, so ek sal glad nie saam met iemand bly voordat ek met hom trou nie”*** (“My parents are very conservative, therefore I will not live with someone before getting married to him”).
- ***“Ek glo ook nie ek sal saam met iemand intrek nie”*** (“I also don’t think that I will move in with someone”).
- ***“Ek dink om saam te bly voordat jy trou haal die ‘fun’ uit ‘n huwelik”*** (“I think that to live together before getting married takes the fun out of the marriage”).

Some don’t live together, but the boyfriend will stay over occasionally:

- ***“...my kêrel sal oorslaap nadat ons ‘n aand gekuier het”*** (“my boyfriend will sleep over after visiting with me during the evening”).

Some participants live with their partners. Their comments were the following:

- ***“...ek is verloof, maar ek glo vas dat ek nie hoef te trou behalwe as ek kinders wil hê nie... ek is verloof aan ‘n man wat glad nie glo in trou nie”*** (“...I am engaged, but I firmly believe that I don’t have to get married, except if I want children... I am engaged to a man that doesn’t believe in marriage at all.”).
- ***“Dit het meer ‘legit’ geraak om saam te bly”*** (“It has become more legit to live together”).
- ***“Ek bly al ‘n jaar en ‘n half saam met my kêrel en ek vind myself waar ek gereeld dink, ‘Ek gaan in elk geval nie met hom trou nie... hy is nie perfek nie”***

“I have now been living with my boyfriend for a year and a half and I often find myself thinking, ‘I’m in any case not going to marry him... he is not perfect’”.

This participant voiced the opinion that nothing will stop her from moving out once this is not working anymore.

“All my friends that are now married, lived together first.” This view was confirmed by many participants. Attitudes about sexual behaviour have changed dramatically over the years. The percentage of adolescents with sexual experience has increased steadily over the adolescent years. There has also been a decline in what is known as ‘the double’ standard. Therefore the sexual behaviour of females has changed even more than that of males (Sigelman & Rider, 2009:367).

Marriage as an institution was however still valued by some participants who voiced the following views:

- ***“Vir my is dit ‘n belofte gemaak voor... een of ander oppere wese; ...dit is ‘n sweer, ‘n verbond.”*** (“For me it is a promise made before... some or other higher being; ...it is a pledge, an oath.”)
- ***“Ek glo dat daar fisies dinge gaan verander wanneer ons gaan trou, emosioneel gaan dinge verander wanneer ons trou... alles verander wanneer jy trou. Daar is ‘n moerse verskil tussen trou en nie trou nie”*** (“I believe that there are physical things that will change when we get married, emotionally things will change... everything changes when you get married. There is a difference between married and not married”).
- ***“Ek kom uit ‘n geskeide huis... maar ek wil definitief trou”*** (“I come from a divorced home... but I definitely want to get married”).

The above illustrates an abundance of different opinions and views on the different roles the young adult assumes in society today. They differ in their opinions on which roles are more important to them, on whether they can be regarded as responsible, as adult, on

whether they want to get married eventually, live together, how they feel about commitment and divorce. Today's young adult's views are diverse and nonconformist.

6.4.7 Theme 7: Participants' views on the here and now versus long-term planning

The topic of the here and now versus long-term planning triggered a discussion of careers and possible future employment. Participants' expectations and their attitudes towards the present and the future also emerged.

Several participants who are students at a university referred to the fact that few young adults qualify themselves in one specific career, as was the norm in the past. They tend to feel unsure of which career path to follow. Even in their final year of study, they still feel unsure of their futures and express the desire to experience more than just one job. The following statements by participants illustrate their views:

- **“When you come to university you plan to study a certain degree; but when you get here you realise that this might not be for me.”**
- **“*Ek dink statistieke wys dat 85% van studente wat klaarmaak werk nie in die beroep waarvoor hulle eerste geswot het nie*” (“I think that statistics show that 85% of students that finish, don't work in the career which they studied for initially”).**

Even those participants who were students, studying a career oriented course, displayed no definite career plans.

- **“*Ek gaan hierdie jaar klaar 'swot' en dan hopelik 'n werk kry en dan die werk hou miskien vir twee jaar en daarna sal ek weer besluit*” (“I will finish my studies this year and then hopefully find a job for two years. After that I might decide differently”).**

The desire to diversify was expressed.

- ***“...vandag doen mense verskillende goed dieselfde tyd; jy hou nooit op met leer nie, want jy probeer verskillende ‘skills’ aanleer. So, mens kan baie meer suksesvol wees vandag as noodwendig iemand wat net een goeie graad geswot het”*** (“...today people do different things at the same time; you never stop learning seeing that you want to acquire different skills. So, one can be much more successful today than someone who studied for one degree only”).
- ***“Ons is meer, ‘ek dink ek gaan hierdie jaar sales doen en volgende jaar iets anders”*** (“We are more, ‘I think I’ll do sales this year and something else next year”).

Participants seemed to display ambivalence about their career plans. The researcher did however not sense feelings of anxiousness and desperation about their uncertainty – almost an attitude of ‘time will tell’. If one situation does not work out, something else will turn up. Newman and Newman (1999:392) mention that students take an average of five to six years to complete college and young people seem to experiment with jobs for longer, before settling into their occupational career.

When asked about their plans for the future, some participants indicated that they are starting to plan ahead. Some stipulated that they plan 6 months in advance. Phrases like ‘taking it step for step’ were mentioned. Other comments were:

- ***“Like now, I am doing my Honours, and after that I will find a job, and then after that I do not know.”***
- ***“My langtermynplanne is vir twee jaar, so, ek gaan my graad kry, dan moet ek ‘n werk kry”*** (“My long-term plans are for two years, so, I will get my degree and then I’ll have to find a job”).
- ***“I think people generally are starting to think about the future; finding the ‘one’, getting married, getting a job, getting children... well, maybe not getting children.”***

These comments indicated that participants were conscious of the fact that they need to make decisions in the future that will impact their lives. Therefore some participants were starting to plan ahead.

In terms of long-term planning the comment was made that long-term has become much shorter. This comment was not quantified or elaborated on. One specific participant compared her long-term planning to a fruit salad and then specified that she wants to tour through America, tour the world, and do this and do that, but she has no idea how to realise these plans. Two participants from two different focus groups indicated that they do long-term planning. Their comments were:

- **“I take it long-term, like saving money for pension; saving money for travelling one day... I will say ten to fifteen years.”**
- ***“Dit is vir my baie belangrik; ek dink elke dag aan my 10-jaar plan. So, wanneer ek iets doen dan dink ek wat gaan die resultate wees oor 5 jaar. Dinge wat ek nou doen moet help vir die toekoms”*** (“It is very important for me; I think about my 10 year plan every day. So, when I do something, I think about the outcome in 5 years’ time. Things I do now must be of help for the future”).

The above were comments made about careers, jobs and future planning, which was discussed under the topic ‘future-planning’. There was however overwhelming support for the fact that participants live in the here and now, focus on today and do not think about the future much. Lindholm (2001:757) refers to our age as the age of absence of goals. Comments to illustrate the focus on the present were:

- ***“Ons ouers het al ‘n aftreeplan gehad op 24; hulle het al ‘n stabiele werk gehad en planne vir die toekoms. Ons is meer... geen direkte toekomsplanne nie”*** (“Our parents had a retirement plan at 24; they already had a stable job and plans for the future. We are more... no direct future plans”).
- **“You must focus on what you must do today – you enjoy today and do not think of the consequences.”**

Many participants supported this view and referred to living in the 'now'; thinking of today; taking it one day at a time; planning is for tonight or tomorrow or future plans stretches as far as the submission of the next assignment. Even plans for the following week were not in place. Valentine (2003:40) states that a shift in thinking leads to young people finding themselves in a state of ambivalence, in the sense that they can no longer see where they are heading, and what futures await them.

Some participants placed the focus on the excitement of today. Their focus was on experiencing to the fullest and on enjoyment: **“You want to explore, experience new stuff.”** One participant referred to buying a couch today, rather than saving the money for a more worthwhile endeavour. This comment illustrates Bauman's (1997:179) portrayal of the postmodern consumer-oriented society, where individuals are pleasure-seekers with a present day focus. In terms of planning, this was illustrated by comments like: **“It is more short now, more immediate.”** A focus on self, on own experiences and feelings and personal satisfaction was depicted by participants. Mason (2001:51) refers to an emphasis on the individual's personal experiences and needs with a lack of responsibility and a lack of personal accountability.

6.4.8 Theme 8: Participants' views on the tendencies of our time

No in-depth discussion was conducted on this topic; participants provided phrases and words to describe their impressions of the most important tendencies of our time. The input received was probably contaminated by the preceding discussion. Their comments were however illuminating. The following comments were made:

- **“Money/wealth; safety; the media; the here and now, specifically to do new and shocking things in the here and now.”**
- **“Health, wealth and personal development.”**

'Exploring' was also singled out as an appropriate word to describe the young person living today. Support for this view was phrased as 'curiosity, experimentation and questioning'.

The experimentation could link to the participant's comment about doing new and shocking things. To be different and to make a difference was also mentioned.

'Instability' and 'insecurity' was highlighted by a few participants, who clarified these concepts in terms of a job and the family being restructured. Reference was made to everything being instant:

- ***“Omdat alles so ‘instant’ is, kan alles net so ‘instantly’ weggevat word”***
(“Seeing that everything is so ‘instant’, it can be taken away just as instantly”).

A focus on instant gratification, questioning, living for today and insecurity was evident in these comments. Smith's (1999:160) statement that the postmodern habitat is not quite what it seems is relevant here. He explains that this habitat conveys the image of being a pleasure park, a consumer's playground, a place where you can pick-and-mix life-styles and beliefs according to taste. Instability, loneliness and isolation is however more pertinent in this habitat.

6.5 DISCUSSION

Himmelfarb (1997:167) pointed out that postmodernism rejects the discipline of society and authority and undermines and challenges the structure of society. The challenging voice of the young adult was heard during focus group discussions. Participants do not follow blindly and do not respect authority and traditional structures unconditionally. Their rebellion against authority started during their adolescent years. Some were even taught by their parents to question and challenge the traditional and that which is expected. These views were clearly voiced. However, in direct contrast were those participants who look up to authority and acknowledge that they want people with authority in their lives to challenge them to be better than they are. This authority must however be earned.

When discussing communication, participants explained their preference in the following manner: The Internet (Facebook, e-mails), cell phones and Mxit were popular modes of communication because they are affordable and provide easy access in our present time of focus on instantaneousness.³ Potgieter (1998:228) refers to faulty self-expression, vagueness and inability to give and receive correct feedback. These problems are amplified by the use of modern technology used for communication, where misconceptions and misunderstandings regarding the content and manner of conveying content can occur. The Internet and online interaction do however have a tremendous attraction for the young adult. These modes of communication have revolutionised the communication and interaction styles of today's young adults. Face-to-face communication, which supports long-term warmth and loyalty and a very important sense of obligation not required in online interactions are unfortunately neglected. The conclusion arrived at is that postmodern virtual life has infiltrated interpersonal relationships (Heim in Higham, 2001:16).

Popular culture and the mass media are major sources of much of the information, both accurate and inaccurate, that is provided regarding roles, beliefs and values in the lives of young adults. Materialism was linked by participants to consumption, specifically of brands and clothing. The young adult's preoccupation with consumption and image came across strongly. A strong link between consumerism and the construction of identity became evident. The opposite of this was also observed. Participants were either consumer and image oriented or they were extremely critical and regarded consumerism as fake.

Institutions, secular and religious are losing their ability to ensure the moral conduct of individuals (Hölscher, 2005:239). According to Mason (2001:49) there is no moral responsibility that flows through all our actions. The collapse of traditional sources of guidance makes us uncertain of which ethical code to follow, resulting in no given source of right action. The young adult seems to be seeking guidance and making own rules and value judgements on right and wrong in the absence of traditional sources of guidance.

³ Since the researcher conducted the focus groups, certain modes of electronic communication, such as Mxit, have already become outdated and fallen into disuse. This demonstrates the rate at which the young adult's technological world evolves.

Participants conveyed the message that values and norms are personal and individual matters and that values evolve from personal experiences and diverse influences. These influences could have been attained from parents and their upbringing or by means of traditional structures, but not necessarily. Just as in the case of values and norms, morals seem to be personal matters.

What became clear was that the young adult is living in challenging times. He also does not accept blindly, but questions. He questions authority, values and norms. He does not accept and believe in the same manner in which his parents did. It seems to be in the nature of today's young adults to challenge the beliefs that they were raised with.

The young adult enacts many different roles. Germain (1991:271) emphasises the acquisition of new roles throughout the life course. Certain roles tend to have greater or lesser value (Stenius et al., 2005:182). Participants discussed their roles as sons/daughters, siblings, friends, fellow students and as romantic partners. According to Germain (1991:271) childhood socialisation does not prepare the individual for all the adult roles that are undertaken in an increasingly complex society. It therefore seems as if the young adult lacks commitment regarding the fulfilment of traditional roles and relationships. The impact of a changed morality and the virtual society we live in complicates the enactment of roles even further.

The young adult's view of the married role has undergone a transformation. Change in the marriage patterns relates to changing norms regarding sexual experimentation as a single person. This can be seen in attitudes regarding marriage, divorce and co-habitation.

6.6 CONCLUSION

The researcher was left with the distinct impression that the young adult living in postmodern times does not fit into a box. This young adult cannot be labelled and categorised as promiscuous, seeing that many seem not to be. The same statement

applies to the young adult being irresponsible, lazy and forever partying. These activities certainly characterise some young adults, but not all. Essential features of postmodernism that do seem to describe today's young adults are that they are thinking, feeling and questioning. A strong focus on self also characterises the young adult.

According to Singleton et al. (2004:248), the current generation of youth and young adults has only ever known a society "characterised by the cultural plurality of postmodernity or high modernity, increasing anxiety about risk, rampant consumerism, dislocated families and a major shift towards gender equality." Postmodernism affects views and lifestyles, which in turn affects the young adult's performance of roles and his interactions within all his different social systems.

To be scientific, the impact of postmodernism on social functioning needs to be quantified, which implies measurement. The themes identified from qualitative data gathered, namely authority and traditional structures; communication; materialism; lifestyle; values and norms; roles and interaction and long-term planning will guide the researcher in the process of designing a questionnaire for the gathering of quantitative data. This design process, the procedures followed during quantitative data gathering as well as the empirical findings will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 7

EMPIRICAL STUDY: QUANTITATIVE DATA

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The ecological systems perspective provides a 'person-in-environment' outlook which recognises the impact of environmental factors on human functioning (Hepworth et al., 2006:16, 17). The impact of postmodernism as a present-day paradigm on the social functioning of young adults was therefore explored within an ecological systems perspective. Consequently, the focus of the three literature chapters in this research was social functioning within an ecological systems perspective, postmodernism and young adulthood as life stage.

The goal and objectives of the research developed from the rationale and problem formulation, presented in chapter 1. The literature referred to above was presented in chapters 2 to 4. The research methodology which guided the research process was presented in chapter 5. Exploratory mixed methods research was motivated and discussed in this chapter. Themes identified while exploring and analysing the research topic qualitatively were presented in chapter 6. Identifying themes and categories was a prerequisite for the development of the quantitative data gathering instrument. The qualitative and quantitative research methods of the mixed methods research design were connected through the development of instrument items. This combination of the research methods complemented each other and allowed for a more complete analysis of the research problem (Ivankova et al., 2007:269).

The research question, 'What is the impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults?', will be addressed in this chapter by means of the quantification of data in the form of statistical findings. As was indicated in the conclusion of the previous chapter, the qualitative data on the 'real world' as experienced by the young adult gathered during focus group interviewing, as well as the literature study, provided the context and background for the design of a questionnaire on the research topic.

7.2 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

7.2.1 Research design

Rubin and Babbie (2001:361) argue that survey research is the best method available for collecting quantitative data to describe a population too large to observe directly. Survey research was appropriate and suitable for determining attitudes and orientations in a large population of young adults. The survey design and utilisation of a questionnaire as data collection instrument allowed the researcher to describe the social functioning of this particular group of individuals (Gravetter & Forzano, 2003:168).

7.2.2 Quantitative data collection

Group-administered questionnaires were used to measure the attitudes and orientations of young adults regarding a postmodern lifestyle and the influence of this lifestyle on their social functioning (See appendix E). The manner in which the questionnaire was developed and pilot tested was discussed in chapter 5. This was a time consuming process which could not be hurried in order to ensure clarity of the instrument items and the collection of appropriate quantitative data.

After invalid completed questionnaires were discarded, the sample for the study consisted of 1019 respondents. The sample, selected by means of non-probability sampling, based on a combination of purposive and availability/convenience was requested to complete a questionnaire on their social functioning in the present postmodern era (Gravetter & Forzano, 2003:125; Rubin & Babbie, 2001:245). Potential respondents were requested to participate in the study in their different classes on the campus of a tertiary institution. Young adults, male and female, between the ages of 18 and 25 years, who were registered as students at a tertiary institution within the Hatfield area, who were willing to act as respondents and to whom the researcher could obtain access, were therefore selected as respondents for this study. After explaining the goal and procedures of the research the researcher enquired whether students were willing to complete a questionnaire at that specific time. No unwillingness or opposition was encountered. It

seemed as if all the questionnaires distributed were completed and then returned to the researcher.

7.2.2.1 Research procedure utilised

The following procedure was utilised during the process of quantitative data gathering:

- After the goal and procedures of the research were discussed, questionnaires and informed consent letters were distributed. The researcher emphasised the anonymity of respondents as identifying details were not required on questionnaires (informed consent letters were distributed and submitted separately and therefore not attached to questionnaires, which prevented identification of respondents).
- All the relevant ethical considerations, discussed in chapter 1, were addressed before respondents started to complete the questionnaires. The right of respondents to decline to participate, as well as the right to withdraw from the study at any time, were especially emphasised. Permission to undertake the research, granted by the relevant authority figures at the tertiary institution, was conveyed to respondents.
- The format of the questionnaire, which requires an “X” in the appropriate shaded block on a four point scale that best describes the appropriate answer, was explained. The fact that there were no correct or incorrect answers was emphasised.

The following procedure was utilised after the process of data gathering was completed:

- Questionnaires were numbered and coded and submitted to the Department of Statistics of the relevant tertiary institution who provided support in analysing the quantitative data. Questionnaire responses were captured electronically in Microsoft Excel by a trained data capturer. Thereafter responses were read into SAS (version 9.3) by the statistician and preliminary summaries were run.
- The researcher then checked captured data for accuracy against questionnaire responses. Minor inaccuracies were subsequently corrected.
- The persons involved in the study, namely the two statistical consultants, the research supervisor and the researcher met on several occasions to make decisions regarding the statistical procedures, for example the factor analysis and General Linear models appropriate for analysis and presentation of the research data.

The research data will be presented in terms of (a) a demographic profile of the respondents and (b) a detailed analysis of the quantitative research findings. In order to provide a comprehensive profile of the sample, the researcher will thus commence with a presentation and discussion of the demographic information of respondents.

7.3 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Questionnaires were completed by a total number of 1019 respondents. Demographic information will be graphically presented in the form of figures and tables. The frequency of missing responses will be indicated as part of the discussion of each variable.

The following demographic variables were relevant in the context of this study: age, gender, race, home language, highest level of education, field of study, place of residence and the area where respondents spent their childhood.

7.3.1 Age of respondents

Figure 7.1 reflects the age range of respondents.

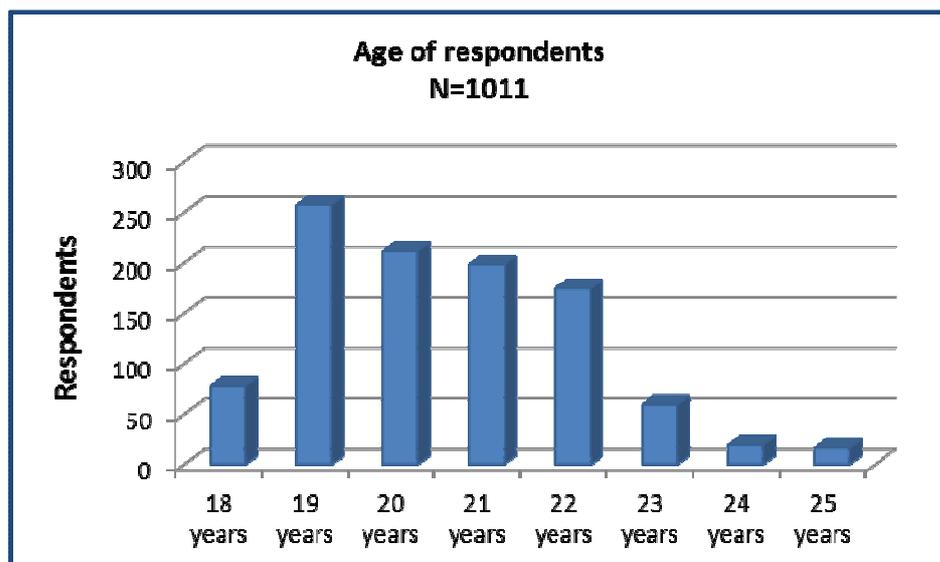


Figure 7.1: Age of respondents

One thousand and eleven (1011) respondents provided their ages when completing the questionnaire. The frequency of missing responses was therefore 8. The ages of the 1011 respondents ranged between 18 and 25 years. Most of the respondents, namely 840 (83.08%), were between the ages of 19 and 22 years of age. The ages of respondents were representative of the young adult life stage (Arnett, 2006:111; Santrock, 2009:417; Tanner & Arnett, 2009:4; Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2009:243).

7.3.2 Gender of respondents

The gender of respondents is graphically displayed in figure 7.2.

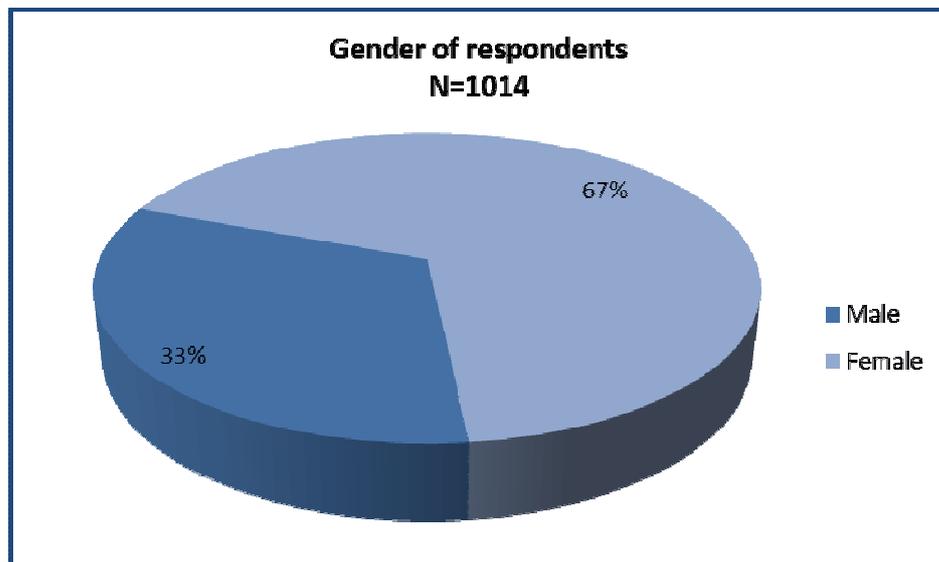


Figure 7.2: Gender of respondents

The frequency of missing responses in terms of gender was 8. Of the 1014 respondents who indicated their gender orientation on the questionnaire, 685 (67.55%) were female, with only 329 (32.45%) male respondents. This can be considered a limitation of the study. It was mentioned that respondents were recruited according to availability and convenience. As was discussed in chapter 5, this type of sampling could result in certain groups being over-represented in the sampling frame which is chosen by convenience (Strydom, 2011a:232). When considering the field of study of respondents, discussed

under 7.3.6 some of these fields of study are more likely to attract female students. Examples of these fields are Social Work, Communication Pathology and Consumer Science. This accounts for the larger number of female respondents. The impact that gender had in terms of the views of respondents will be addressed in section 7.4.3, analysis of research factors.

7.3.3 Race of respondents

Figure 7.3 indicates the race distribution of respondents. The frequency of missing responses was 3.

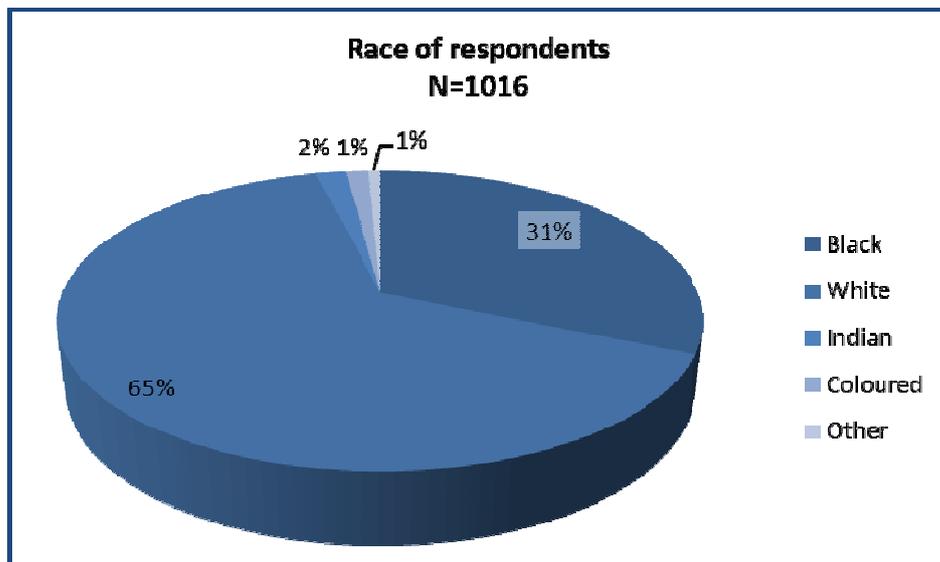


Figure 7.3: Race of respondents

Figure 7.3 shows that of the total number of respondents, 1016 indicated their race as follows: 658 (64.76%) were white, 319 (31.4%) were black, 18 (1.77%) were Indian and 14 (1.38%) respondents were coloured. In the category ‘other’ the respondents indicated Shona, German, Swahili, Portuguese, Serbian, Dutch, Herero, Arabic, Cantonese and Russian. Race was considered during recruitment, but equal distribution according to race was not feasible, when considering the manner in which non-probability sampling was performed. Respondents between the ages of 18 and 25, who were willing to participate in

the research and who were available and convenient to reach were the criteria considered for selection. The fact that there was variation in race was however important seeing that cultural background impacts views and beliefs. The impact that race had in terms of the views of respondents will be addressed in section 7.4.3, analysis of research factors.

7.3.4 Home language of respondents

Figure 7.4 indicates the home language distribution of respondents. The frequency of missing responses was 2.

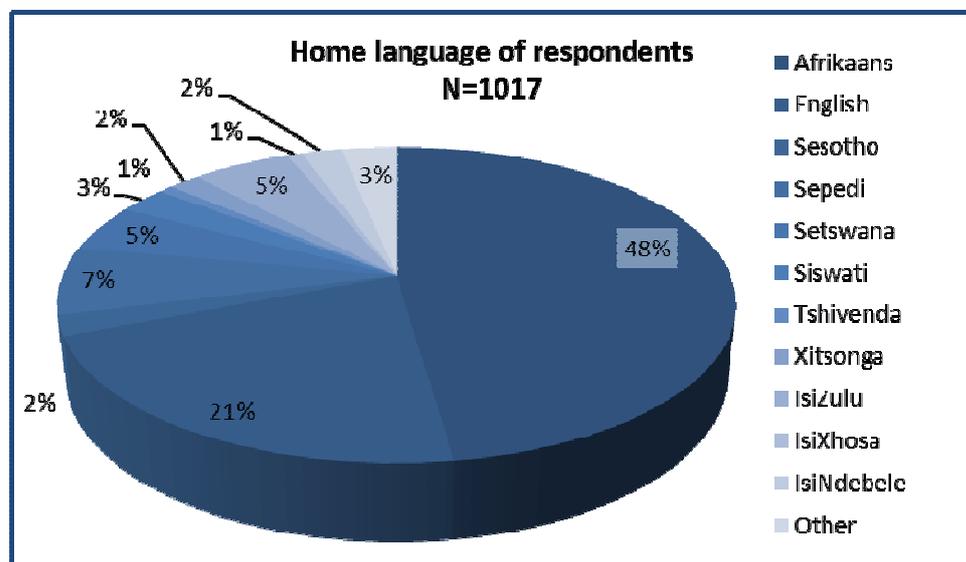


Figure 7.4: Home language of respondents

The majority of respondents were Afrikaans (47.79%), while 21.24% of respondents were English speaking. Nine different languages constituted the home language of the remaining 27.82% of respondents, namely Sepedi, IsiZulu, Setswana, Siswati, IsiNdebele, Sesotho, Xitsonga, IsiXhosa and Tshivenda. Only 3.15% of respondents indicated 'other'. In this category languages not regarded as indigenous were indicated, for example Portuguese. Language tends to be culture specific. The comment regarding race, in terms

of impact on views and beliefs made under 7.3.3 Race of respondents, therefore also applies to this demographic.

7.3.5 Highest level of education of respondents

Table 7.1 indicates the highest level of education of respondents. The frequency of missing responses was 2.

Table 7.1: Highest level of education of respondents

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF RESPONDENTS	DISTRIBUTION	
	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
GRADE 12	918	90.27
UNDERGRADUATE CERTIFICATE	13	1.28
UNDERGRADUATE DIPLOMA	10	0.98
UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE	70	6.88
POSTGRADUATE DEGREE	6	0.59
TOTAL	1017	100

Grade 12 was the highest level of education for 918 of the respondents (90.27%). This specific demographic was expected as most young adults selected for the study were approached in undergraduate classes. Seventy (70) respondents (6.88%) had obtained an undergraduate degree, while an undergraduate certificate or an undergraduate diploma had been awarded to 23 (2.26%) respondents. Six respondents who had already obtained a postgraduate degree were registered students, under the age of 26 years. This occurs in the experience of the researcher where students completed a postgraduate degree, for example an honours degree, and proceeded with a second postgraduate degree or changed course and decided to study in a related or unrelated field of study.

7.3.6 Respondents' field of study

Table 7.2 indicates the field of study of respondents. The frequency of missing responses was 21.

Table 7.2: Field of study

FIELD OF STUDY	DISTRIBUTION	
	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
BCOM	195	19.54
ENGINEERING	147	14.73
SOCIAL WORK	138	13.83
BA	107	10.72
GRAPHIC/INFO DESIGN & FINE ARTS	62	6.21
DRAMA	56	5.61
BSC	55	5.51
LAW (LLB AND BA LAW)	54	5.41
COMMUNICATION PATHOLOGY	52	5.21
CONSUMER SCIENCE	42	4.21
PSYCHOLOGY	33	3.31
CRIMINOLOGY	20	2
ARCHITECTURE	17	1.7
EDUCATION	10	1
MEDICINE	4	0.4
THEOLOGY	3	0.3
VETERINARY SCIENCE	3	0.3
TOTAL	998	100

The frequency of missing responses (21) was relatively high. This can be accounted for when considering that respondents were expected to indicate their field of study in writing. No option to select was therefore supplied. The result of this was that the question was not as prominent, seeing that it was not displayed with a variety of options to choose from. It seems probable that the question was overlooked (see layout of questionnaire, appendix E).

Variation in respondents' field of study was determined by the manner in which non-probability sampling was conducted. Where a specific field of study was well represented,

respondents were selected in a specific class situation. Examples of specific tertiary classes selected were BCom (19.54%), Engineering (14.73%), Social Work (13.83%), BA (10.72%), Information Design and Fine Arts (6.21%), Drama (5.61%), Communication Pathology (5.21%) and Consumer Science (4.21%). Where only a few respondents studied in a specific field, they were recruited in either a male or female residence or they were present in a class where the subject was taken as an elective module. Two male and two female residences were conveniently identified for the recruitment of respondents (see 7.3.7 Place of residence of respondents). These residences are not field or study specific, but house students from diverse fields of study.

The researcher aimed to not only select young adults studying in the Faculty of Humanities, but to attempt to create a balance by also recruiting young adults studying in other faculties. The result was that respondents were also selected from the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology and the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences.

Even though a variety of opinions were aimed at, it can be considered a limitation of the study that only young adults who are in the process of acquiring a tertiary qualification were recruited for this study. No illiterate young adults were selected. Respondents therefore represent a certain segment of young adults in society. Research findings will be interpreted within this specific frame of reference.

7.3.7 Place of residence of respondents

Figure 7.5 indicates the place of residence of respondents. The frequency of missing responses was 2.

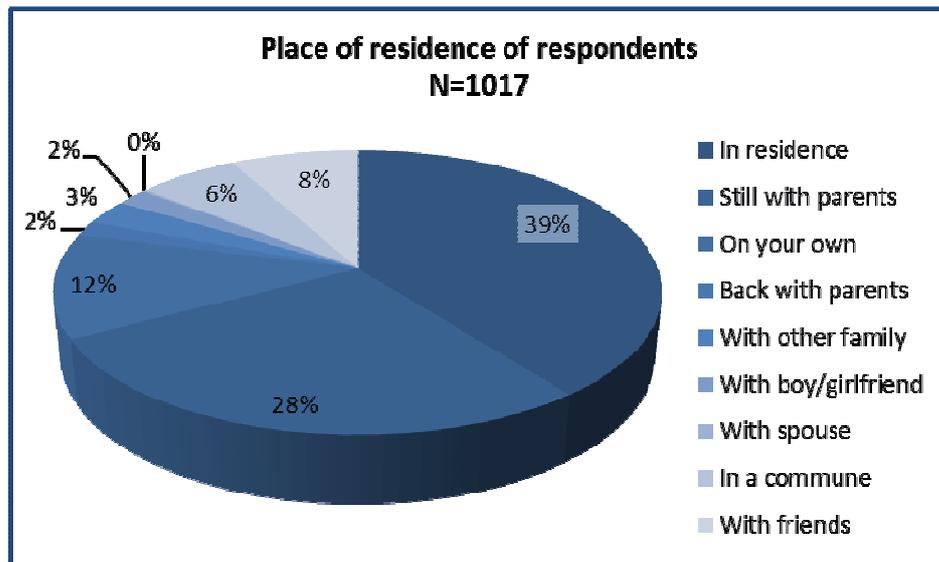


Figure 7.5: Place of residence of respondents

In order to select a sufficient number of respondents, two male and two female residences were approached for the recruitment of respondents. Seeing that respondents selected in a class/lecture environment may also live in a residence on campus, this impacted on the percentage of respondents who live in a university residence, with a total number of 402 respondents (39.53%) living in residence.

The number of respondents who live with their parents (27.63%) and who left home and are now back with their parents (1.67%) are relatively high, with a total of 298 respondents (29.3%). Respondents who live on their own, 121 (11.9%) make up for the next largest group in terms of place of residence. In terms of the literature on the tendency to leave home later, this was a surprising statistic. Various authors report that young adults leave home later, when adult roles are taken up (Molgat, 2007:496; Mulder, 2009:203, 205; Furlong, 2009:201). Mulder (2009:203) expands on these adult roles as making own financial and consumption decisions and taking responsibility for own life, without regular parental supervision.

Many respondents live either with friends (7.96%) or in a commune (6.29%), with a total of 14.25% of respondents therefore living with peers. Place of residence indicated as 'with

other family' (2.85%), 'with boyfriend or girlfriend' (1.97%) or 'with a spouse' (0.2%) represents the remainder of respondents' places of residence.

7.3.8 Area where respondents spent childhood

Figure 7.6 indicates the area where respondents spent their childhood. The frequency of missing responses was 24.

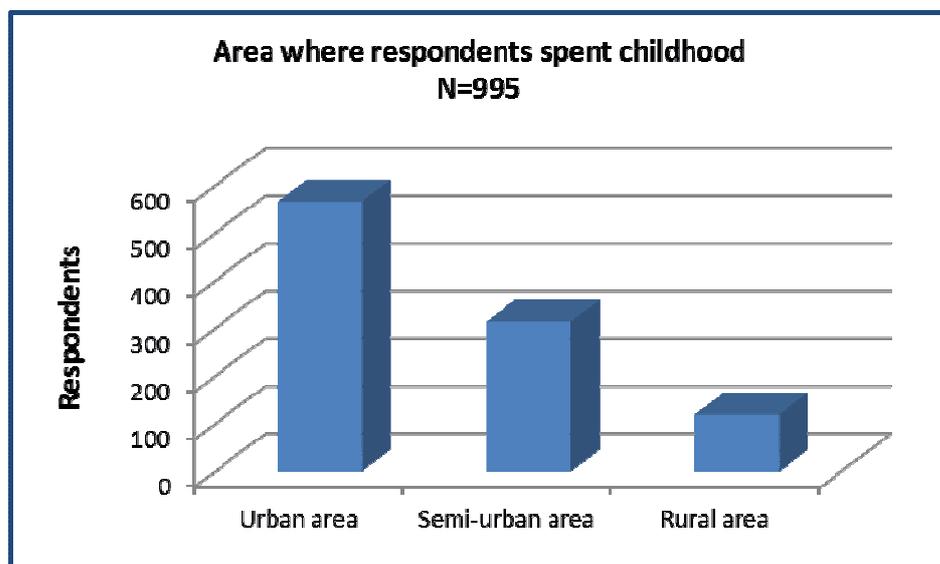


Figure 7.6: Area where respondents spent childhood

It is unfortunate that a frequency of 24 missing responses was identified in terms of this variable. When studying the questionnaire in retrospect it was noticed that this was the last question on 'personal details'. It was displayed at the top of page 2 with Section B, which formed the bulk of the questionnaire, starting directly under this question. It seems likely that this question could have been overlooked because of the questionnaire layout. This is therefore the second question likely to be impacted by the format of the questionnaire.

Most of the respondents (56.78%) spent their childhood in an urban area, with the remainder growing up in either a rural area (11.76%) or a semi-urban area (31.46%). These two groups make up for 43.22% of the sample. The impact of this demographic

characteristic on the perceptions and views of respondents will be discussed in section 7.4.3 of this chapter.

A detailed analysis of the quantitative research findings will be discussed in the following section.

7.4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research findings are presented by means of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) in order to reduce the 105 questionnaire items to a few factors, each representing a group of related items. The frequency distributions of all items in the questionnaires are attached as appendix F. Further analysis of the data was done on the factor scores (Field & Miles, 2010:548). Research findings based on completed questionnaires are presented according to the following:

- Description of exploratory factor analysis
- Process of EFA: first order EFA; second order EFA
- Analysis of eight factors in terms of distributions of responses and relationships with relevant demographic groups.

7.4.1 Description of exploratory factor analysis

The researcher will initiate the presentation of quantitative research data by utilising Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), which is a technique for identifying groups or clusters of variables. To motivate this and to clarify this technique, the researcher will briefly describe this technique. EFA is used “to reduce the data set to a more manageable size while retaining as much of the original information as possible” (Field & Miles, 2010:542). Ho (2006:203) refers to reducing the mass of numbers to a few representative factors, which can then be used for analysis.

In factor analysis the assumption is made that all variables (survey items) are correlated to a certain degree. The researcher aimed to indicate which variables shared similar

underlying dimensions and were therefore highly correlated and which variables measured dissimilar dimensions and therefore yielded low correlations (Ho, 2006:203). Field and Miles (2010:542) explain that the correlation between variables (or questions) can be arranged in what is referred to as an *R*-matrix. This is a correlation matrix, which is a table of correlation coefficients (numbers/figures) between variables. The relevance in terms of the analysis of the data in this study is that, in the words of Field and Miles (2010:542), “[t]he existence of clusters of large correlations coefficients between subsets of variables suggests that those variables could be measuring aspects of the same underlying dimension.”

The variables that cluster together to make up a factor can be plotted according to the extent to which they relate to that factor. The coordinates of a variable, known as factor loadings, represent its relationship to the factors. The conclusion that can be reached is that factor loadings clarify the relative contribution that a variable makes to each factor (Field & Miles, 2010:544, 545).

- **Determining the number of factors to be extracted**

Ho (2006:204) as well as Field and Miles (2010:552) point out that not all factors are retained in a factor analysis. The “two conventional criteria for determining the number of initial unrotated factors to be extracted [from the data] are the **Eigenvalues** criterion and the **Scree test** criterion” (Ho, 2006:204). Field and Miles (2010:552) clarify that by graphing the eigenvalues, “the relative importance of each factor becomes apparent.” Ho’s description (2006:205) provides a clear picture: “The scree test is derived by plotting the eigenvalues (on the Y axis) against the number of factors in their order of extraction (on the X axis). The initial factors extracted are large factors (with high eigenvalues), followed by smaller factors.”

The size of factor loadings is important for interpretation seeing that “...variables with large loadings indicate that they are representative of the factor, while small loadings suggest that they are not” (Ho, 2006:207). Field and Miles (2010:549) point out that it is important to understand variance within an *R*-matrix. A variable that has no specific variance would

have a variance (score) of 1, while a variable that shares none of its variance with any other variable would have a score of 0. Ho (2006:207) states that as a rule of thumb, “factor loadings greater than 0.33 are considered to meet the minimal level of practical significance.” This view is supported by Field and Miles (2010:557) who hold the view that researchers usually take a loading of an absolute value of more than 0.3 to be important. They however qualify this by stating that sample size impacts the significance of a factor loading. Stevens (2002), as quoted by Field and Miles (2010:557), provided guidelines for various samples which indicate that in large samples, smaller loadings can be considered statistically meaningful.

7.4.2 Process of EFA

Factor loadings are presented in a matrix (*R*-matrix or correlation matrix referred to above), where columns represent each factor and the rows represent the loadings of each variable on each factor. Factors with relatively large eigenvalues are retained while those with relatively small eigenvalues are disregarded (Field & Miles, 2010:547, 551). In determining the number of factors to extract, the researcher utilised the scree plot (See appendix G). This is advised by Field and Miles (2010:571, 573) in studies with more than 200 respondents. The scree plot in this research indicated a possible two, three, four, six and 12 factor solution. In deciding on the number of factors to extract to represent the data, the researcher examined the eigenvalues associated with the factors (Ho, 2006:219). Seeing that the scree plot indicated more than one option for the analysis of data, the items that loaded on the factors were studied. This then informed the decision regarding the number of factors to extract.

7.4.2.1 First order factor analysis

As mentioned above, the scree plot in this research indicated a possible two, three, four, six and 12 factor solution. The researcher studied the content of the variables that loaded on each of these factors to find communal themes. After careful consideration the 12 factor solution was selected.

These 12 factors can be described in terms of the variables measured and their relative significance for that factor (Field & Miles, 2010:547). The researcher studied the content of the variables that loaded on each factor to find communal themes. Field and Miles (2010:575) suggest that questions that load highly on a specific factor be labelled (a) according to the manner in which they relate and (b) by identifying the factor. By looking for common themes in the items that load onto the different factors the researcher was able to identify and name the 12 factors as:

- Religion, moral values and formal structures
- Consumerism, image and own needs
- Impact of electronic communication
- Roles and relationships
- Social movements and diversity
- Personal future
- Health
- Cyberspace and communication
- Authority and culture
- Lifestyle
- Values and norms
- Adult role and decision making.

Eigenvalues and the scree plot gave credence for focusing on the first two factors in this 12 factor solution. These two factors were identified as religion, moral values and formal structures (factor 1) and as consumerism, image and own needs (factor 2). These two factors are in strong contrast and represent a conservative (traditional, conventional) view versus a secular (materialistic, nonspiritual) view. These factors have relatively large eigenvalues (9.6 and 7.6). When considering a two factor solution in more detail, a similar pattern was observed, with a strong emphasis on consumerism, materialism, technology and a focus on 'self' in the first factor. A strong focus in the contrasting second factor was on conventional thinking in terms of religion, formal structures, values and norms, as well as in terms of family.

Some low and cross-loading variables however resulted in these 12 factors being contaminated and not being considered “clean”. According to Ho (2006:207, 219) the cross-loading of items across several factors make interpretation of the factors difficult and less meaningful. Data sets are often subjected to a series of factor analysis before the data is considered clean and interpretable. Items that loaded on the factors were studied, low and cross-loading items were omitted and the EFA re-run. Electing clear, strong factors subsequently lead to a final eight factor solution.

7.4.2.2 Second order factor analysis

When running an eight factor solution, variables that did not correlate with any of the others in the solution were eliminated (Field & Miles, 2010:566). The pattern matrix for the data indicated that eight factors once again emerged, similar to eight of the 12 factors in the 12 factor solution (Field & Miles, 2010:575). (See appendix H).

In this pattern matrix the eight factors identified in both this solution and the 12 factor solution, were 1) religion and formal structures; 2) image and consumerism; 3) impact of electronic communication; 4) roles and relationships; 5) healthy lifestyle; 6) personal future; 7) social movements and diversity; 8) cyberspace and communication. Authority and culture as a factor in the 12 factor solution disappeared as a separate factor. Three questions from this factor (B1, B2, B5) which relate to culture and authority were incorporated into factor 1, religion and formal structures in the eight factor solution. Lifestyle, as a factor in the 12 factor solution, disappeared with the exception of one item referring to drinking and/or smoking (B47), which was incorporated into factor 2, image and consumerism. One item under values and norms (in the 12 factor solution), concerning the meaning of own life (B69), was retained and merged with factor 4, namely roles and relationships. Adult role and decision making as a factor in the 12 factor solution, with all the items relating to it, disappeared in the eight factor solution. Long-term planning formed part of this factor. Items with higher factor loadings, which also relate to this specific theme, are incorporated in factor 6, ‘personal future’, a factor in the eight factor solution.

In total 52 items with double and low factor loadings were omitted in the eight factor solution. Only 53 of the original 105 items were therefore retained. This was a result of processing until the data could be considered 'pure', therefore promoting the measurement of the impact of postmodernism. The specific items aligned with each factor explain the characteristics of the factor. An analysis of the following eight factors will subsequently be discussed.

- Religion and formal structures
- Image and consumerism
- Impact of electronic communication
- Roles and relationships
- Healthy lifestyle
- Personal future
- Social movements and diversity
- Cyberspace and communication

7.4.3 Analysis of eight factors

Each of the abovementioned factors will be discussed according to content and relationships between variables. When discussing content the items retained will be examined in terms of the rotated factor loadings of items, the frequencies and percentages of responses and the factor Cronbach alphas.

Item responses were collapsed into two categories by combining the two lower and two upper responses, using the following process: the respondents were requested to answer 105 items on a four-point Likert scale. The scale ranged from 1 to 4 with '1' representing 'Not at all' and '4' representing 'To a large extent'. Most items were phrased in this manner. However there were variations, with 20 items phrased 'How important...' with '1' representing 'Not important' and '4' representing 'Extremely important' and nine items phrased 'How often...' with '1' representing 'Never' and '4' representing 'Often'. After an analysis of the responses was conducted, the ratings of 1 and 2 representing the lower end of the scale (not at all/not important/never) were combined into a new rating of '1' (representing low extent) and the ratings of 3 and 4 representing the higher end of the

scale (to a large extent/extremely important/often) were combined into a new rating of '2' (representing high extent). Religion and formal structures will be the first factor analysed as displayed in table 7.3.

Table 7.3: Factor 1 – Religion and formal structures

Variables	Item	Factor loadings	Frequency %	
			Low extent	High extent
To what extent do religious institutions guide your life?	B78	0.823	28.86	71.14
To what extent are religious structures important to you?	B4	0.81	14.57	85.43
To what extent do you need organised religion in your life?	B75	0.789	22.09	77.91
How important is it for you to attend regular religious meetings?	B79	0.784	34.46	65.64
To what extent do spiritual norms guide your behaviour?	B76	0.718	19.68	80.32
How important is guidance by formal structures (e.g. school, church) for you?	B70	0.526	14.1	85.9
To what extent do you value traditional views regarding sexual activity?	B42	0.508	31.19	68.81
To what extent are cultural structures important to you?	B5	0.449	31.52	68.48
To what extent does your cultural background guide your behaviour?	B1	0.403	21.8	78.2
To what extent are the views of people with authority important to you?	B2	0.305	14.78	85.22
Cronbach coefficient alpha: 0.87				
% of variance in data space explained by factor: 23%				

The Religion and formal structures factor contains ten items. The factor loadings indicate which items are most strongly aligned with this factor and therefore explain its characteristics. The first four items in this factor, therefore the items with the highest factor scores, relate directly to religion. This accounts for the title description of this factor. Formal structures were added to the title description seeing that the remaining items relate to formal and cultural structures and to authority.

Five of the ten items have a factor loading of above 0.7, while the next two items have a factor loading of above 0.5. The remaining three items have a loading of 0.3 or higher. These items share underlying dimensions and are measuring characteristics of this specific factor. The internal consistency for the factor 'Religion and formal structures' was high with a Cronbach coefficient alpha of 0.87. The high Cronbach's alpha confirmed reliability of this scale in terms of the measurement of this factor.

When the frequencies of specific items, indicating how respondents rated the items, were analysed, the following became evident: 715 respondents (71.14%) indicated that religious institutions guide their lives to a large extent; religious structures were important to 862 respondents (85.43%); organised religion was important to 783 respondents (77.91%); and the attendance of religious meetings was important to 660 respondents (65.64%). This indicated a strong tendency towards traditional and conventional religious norms and practices. Eight hundred and eight (808) respondents (80.32%) indicated that spiritual norms guide their behaviour to a large extent which correlates with the preceding items.

The remaining items that form part of this factor relate to formal and cultural structures and authority. Once again a strong traditional and conventional outlook was portrayed by respondents. Guidance by formal structures, for example school and church, was valued by 865 respondents (85.9%). It is however interesting to note that a number of respondents crossed out 'church' on the questionnaire and seemed to only favour 'school' in the context of this question. Traditional views regarding sexual activity was valued by 695 respondents (68.81%), while cultural structures and cultural background was important to respectively 691 respondents (68.48%) and 789 (78.2%) of respondents. Regard for the views of people with authority seemed to correlate highly with the items mentioned earlier, seeing that 859 respondents (85.22%) regarded the views of people with authority as important. The researcher found this very interesting seeing that participants in focus group discussions voiced opinions such as 'certain structures have become archaic', 'we are our own authority' and 'authority must be earned'. Harris (2009:304) is of the view that globalisation has loosened young people's traditional citizenship ties, especially their national identities and has undermined their belief in the

“efficacy of the nation-state” (Harris, 2009:304). She states that the impact of globalisation is felt as a result of increased migration, the Internet, the increase and ease of travel and the powerful impact of global youth consumer culture (Harris, 2009:304).

One of several uses of factor analysis is to utilise this smaller subset of variables for further analysis. The relationship between variables was investigated for each of the eight factors (research themes) identified. To determine these variables the researcher studied the demographic profile of respondents. The specific variables that were significant in terms of postmodernism were age, gender, race and the area where respondents spent their childhood (childhood home).

For each respondent their mean (average) rating on the original four-point scale for all of the items included in a factor was calculated, for each of the eight factors. These factor scores provided a measure of each respondent’s rating of each of the eight factors. These factor scores of the demographic groups of interest were compared, using General Linear Models, to see if there were statistically significant differences between the scores. Each demographic variable was analysed separately so that only the marginal effects were tested. P-values < 0.05 indicate statistically significant differences between the factor scores. A and B symbols indicate which groups (within each demographic variable) have significantly different scores. Scheffé’s test was used for pairwise comparisons between the three different groups in the ‘childhood home’ variable (Field & Miles, 2010:317, 318).

The religion and formal structures factor scores will subsequently be discussed in terms of age, gender, race and area where respondents spent their childhood.

Table 7.4: Religion and formal structures – relationship with demographic variables

Religion and formal structures					
Variable	N	Mean (std)	F statistic	P-value	Pairwise comparison
Age			0.22	0.6358	
18-20	545	3.08 (0.59)			A
Over 20	466	3.10 (0.63)			A
Gender			16.85	<0.0001	
Male	329	2.98 (0.65)			A
Female	685	3.15 (0.58)			B
Race			7.96	0.0049	
Black	319	3.18 (0.52)			A
White	658	3.06 (0.64)			B
Childhood home			9.65	<0.0001	
Rural	117	3.24 (0.51)			A
Semi-urban	313	3.17 (0.51)			A
Urban	565	3.03 (0.66)			B

In table 7.4 the relationships between the variables, age, gender, race and area where respondents spent most of their childhood (childhood home) and the factor, religion and formal structures, are indicated. The P-values indicate whether there is a significant difference between the factor scores of groups of respondents, where $p < 0.05$ indicates statistically significant differences between the factor scores. The A and B symbols under pairwise comparison in table 7.4 indicate which groups; (within each demographic variable) have significantly different scores.

‘Age’ as variable was subdivided into two categories, 18 to 20 years and over 20 years, which implies 21 to 25 years. No significant relationship between ‘age’ and religion and formal structures as a factor was found ($p = 0.6358$).

'Gender' as a variable was portrayed as male and female. Gender was significantly related to religion and formal structures as a factor in this study ($p < 0.0001$). When comparing the means of the factor scores of females (3.15) and males (2.98), females scored religion and formal structures higher than males, indicating that this factor has greater significance for females. The differences between the means of the factor scores are not great and must be seen in the context of ratings on a scale of 1 to 4 and the large sample size ($n = 1014$) which makes the statistical test sensitive to small differences. A similar finding applies to 'race', where Indian (1.77%) and coloured (1.38%) were combined with black (31.4%) to form two categories, namely black and white. Here the relationship was significant ($p = 0.0049$). Black respondents scored religion and formal structures higher than white respondents did, which indicates that religion and formal structures are more important to black respondents than to white respondents.

'Childhood home' refers to the area where respondents spent their childhood. This variable was subdivided into rural area, semi-urban area and urban area. A significant relationship between 'childhood home' and religion and formal structures as a factor was found and Scheffé's test was used for pairwise comparisons between the different groups in this variable (Field & Miles, 2010:317, 318). Childhood home was significantly related to religion and formal structures ($p < 0.0001$). Rural (3.24) and semi-urban (3.17) respondents rated religion and formal structures as more important than urban (3.03) respondents.

Image and consumerism is the second factor identified by means of factor analysis. The factor loadings, frequencies of items and relationships within this factor are subsequently discussed.

Table 7.5: Factor 2 – Image and consumerism

Variables	Item	Factor loadings	Frequency %	
			Low extent	High extent
To what extent do material possessions influence your social relationships?	B36	0.582	78.8	21.2
To what extent does quality of life in general depend on material possessions?	B33	0.542	55.14	44.86
To what extent do you spend energy on building your own image?	B39	0.53	47.29	52.71
To what extent are designer 'labels' important to you?	B34	0.523	75.37	24.63
How important is being popular?	B104	0.516	72.15	27.85
How important is wealth to you?	B101	0.511	29.01	70.99
How important is the image of the friends that you associate with to you?	B35	0.504	58.14	41.86
How important is your own physical attractiveness to you?	B41	0.466	14.33	85.67
To what extent do you follow trends set by VIPs and public figures?	B37	0.463	85.64	14.36
To what extent is your identity linked to what other people think of you?	B38	0.433	61.38	38.62
How important is the fulfilment of your own needs?	B14	0.38	7.72	92.28
To what extent do compliments make you feel good?	B40	0.312	11.14	88.86
To what extent does 'having a good time' mean drinking and/or smoking?	B47	0.269	71.7	28.3
Cronbach coefficient alpha: 0.81				
% of variance in data space explained by factor: 22%				

The factor, image and consumerism as presented in table 7.5. contains 13 items. These items relate to the image of respondents, consumerism and the fulfilment of own needs. As was discussed in Chapter 3 there seems to be a strong link between consumerism and identity/own needs (Valentine, 2003:45; Williams et al., 2006:22). Best (2009:261) refers to 'the consumer market where meaning is created' and to 'spending that forges identities', which highlights the interrelatedness of these aspects in the lives of young adults.

The two items in this factor with the highest factor scores, which signify strong alignment with this factor, relate to material possessions. These two factors have a factor loading of above 0.54. Most of the items in this factor (ten items) relate to image of respondents; this accounts for the title description of the factor. The factor scores of these ten items vary between 0.53 and 0.312, with one score of 0.269. This lower score could also be regarded as significant, as it was discussed under 7.4.1 that researchers usually regard a loading of 0.3 to be important, but a loading of greater than 0.162 is suggested for a sample size of 1000 (Stevens, 2002 in Field & Miles, 2010:557). The remaining item in this factor related to the fulfilment of own needs, with a factor loading of 0.38. All these items share underlying dimensions and are measuring characteristics of the factor, image and consumerism. If consumption and image are important to respondents they are likely to focus on own needs. This will be discussed when item frequencies are examined. The internal consistency for the factor 'Image and consumerism' was high with a Cronbach coefficient alpha of 0.81. The high Cronbach's alpha confirmed reliability of this scale in terms of the measurement of this factor.

When the frequencies of specific items, indicating how respondents rated the items, were analysed, the following became evident: 799 respondents (78.8%) indicated that material possessions influenced their social relationships to a small extent, while in terms of whether quality of life in general depended on material possessions, once again more respondents, namely 558 (55.14%), indicated to a low extent only. This means that 44.86% of respondents were of the opinion that material possessions were important in terms of their quality of life in general. When asked directly how important wealth is, 717 respondents (70.99%) indicated that wealth was important to them. Even though the percentages were lower when impact of material possession on relationships and on quality of life was measured, respondents clearly regarded wealth as important.

Most of the items in this factor relate to image. A total of 534 respondents (52.71%) indicated that they do spend energy on building their own images and 867 respondents (85.67%) were of the view that their own physical attractiveness is very important to them. Image seemed therefore to be important in terms of the 'self' of the respondents. When

considering image in terms of 'others' there was a more balanced view or even in terms of certain items, image seemed not to be important. Regarding the image of people around them, 589 respondents (58.14%) indicated that the images of the friends they associate with are not important or important to a low extent only. For most respondents, 623 (61.38%) identity is also not linked to what other people think of them. The view expressed by 728 respondents (72.15%) that being popular is not important or only important to a lesser extent was therefore not surprising.

'Designer labels' were only important to 250 respondents (24.63%), while to the majority (75.37%) this item, which could be regarded as characteristic of consumerism, was ranked to be important to a lower extent. The extent to which respondents felt that trends set by VIPs and public figures was important was ranked by 565 respondents (85.64%) as 'to a low extent', which correlates with their views on designer labels. A similar trend was seen in terms of whether 'having a good time' is equal to drinking and/or smoking. Only 289 respondents (28.3%) regarded these components of consumerism as descriptive of their lifestyles.

As indicated above, image seemed to be important in terms of the 'self' of respondents. Responses to the item 'To what extent do compliments make you feel good?', confirms this statement as 901 respondents (88.86) indicated that compliments made them feel good to a large extent. This focus on 'self' was confirmed by the 933 respondents (92.28) who rated the fulfilment of their own needs as important to extremely important.

The image and consumerism factor scores will subsequently be discussed in terms of age, gender, race and area where respondents spent their childhood.

Table 7.6: Image and consumerism – relationship with demographic variables

Image and consumerism					
Variable	N	Mean (std)	F statistic	P-value	Pairwise comparison
Age			0.00	0.9495	
18-20	545	2.44 (0.47)			A
Over 20	466	2.44 (0.44)			A
Gender			19.27	<0.0001	
Male	329	2.53 (0.49)			A
Female	685	2.39 (0.44)			B
Race			16.93	<0.0001	
Black	319	2.53 (0.47)			A
White	658	2.40 (0.44)			B
Childhood home			3.88	0.0209	
Rural	117	2.54 (0.45)			A
Semi-urban	313	2.44 (0.48)			A B
Urban	565	2.41 (0.44)			B

In table 7.6 the relationships between the different variables and the factor, 'Image and consumerism' are indicated. The P-values indicate a significant difference between the factor scores of groups of respondents, where ($p < 0.05$) indicates statistically significant differences between the factor scores. The A and B symbols under pairwise comparison in table 7.6 indicate which groups (within each demographic variable) have significantly different scores.

In terms of 'age' as a variable (with its two subcategories), no significant relationship between 'age' and image and consumerism as a factor was found ($p = 0.9495$).

'Gender' was significantly related to image and consumerism as a factor ($p < 0.0001$). A similar finding applies to 'race', as a significant relationship between 'race' and image and consumerism as a factor was found ($p < 0.0001$). When comparing the factor scores of

females and males, males scored image and consumerism higher than females, indicating that this factor has greater significance for males. Similarly, black respondents scored image and consumerism higher than white respondents, which indicates that this factor is more important to black respondents than to white respondents.

A significant relationship between 'childhood home' and image and consumerism was found ($p=0.0209$). Scheffé's test was used for pairwise comparisons between the different combinations in this variable. Rural (2.54) respondents rate 'Image and consumerism' as significantly more important than urban (2.41) respondents. Semi-urban (2.44) respondents' ratings do not differ significantly from either the rural or the urban respondents.

'Impact of electronic communication' is the third factor identified by means of factor analysis. The factor loadings, frequencies of items and relationships within this factor are subsequently discussed.

Table 7.7: Factor 3 – Impact of electronic communication

Variables	Item	Factor loadings	Frequency %	
			Low extent	High extent
To what extent has e-communication replaced close personal relationships in your life?	B25	0.631	77.09	22.91
To what extent do you prefer electronic communication to face-to-face communication?	B24	0.589	82.78	17.22
To what extent do you make use of e-communication to meet new people?	B26	0.582	81.32	18.68
To what extent do you change who you are when using electronic modes of communication?	B22	0.552	82.46	17.54
How often does your use of the Internet interfere with commitments towards other people?	B31	0.509	80.37	19.63
To what extent are you more open and honest during e-communication than during real life situations?	B23	0.482	62.50	37.50
To what extent does e-communication affect the quality of your relationships?	B28	0.457	67.06	32.94
How often does your use of the Internet interfere with your work/studies?	B32	0.378	61.40	38.60
Cronbach coefficient alpha: 0.8				
% of variance in data space explained by factor: 10%				

The factor, 'Impact of electronic communication' as presented in table 7.7. contains eight items. Seven of the eight items in this factor relate to electronic communication (e-communication) and its impact on the lives and relationships of respondents. Five of these items have a factor loading of above 0.5, while the next two items have loadings of 0.482 and 0.457 respectively. All these items share an underlying dimension and are representative of this factor.

The remaining item in this factor determined how often electronic communication interfered with work and studies, with a factor loading of 0.378. The assumption was made that if electronic communication is important and is used to a large extent, it might have an

impact on the work/studies of the young adult. The internal consistency for the factor 'Impact of electronic communication' was high with a Cronbach coefficient alpha of 0.8. The high Cronbach's alpha confirmed reliability of this scale in terms of the measurement of this factor.

When the frequencies of specific items, indicating how respondents rated the items, were analysed, the following became evident: even though electronic communication has become integrated into the lifestyle of young adults (Benokraitis, 2008:25), 841 respondents (82.78%) indicated that they either did not prefer electronic communication to face-to-face communication or only preferred it to a lesser extent. A total of 635 respondents (62.5%) were not, or were only to a small extent, more open and honest during e-communication than during real life situations, which means that 37.5% of respondents admitted that they were more open and honest during e-communication. This item closely related to item B22, where the extent to which respondents changed who they are when using e-communication was explored. A similar tendency was found, with 837 respondents (82.46%) indicating that they do not change who they are when using electronic modes of communication, but if they do, they do so only to a small extent.

Most of the remaining items in this factor relate to the impact of e-communication on relationships and commitments towards other people. A total of 682 respondents (67.06%) indicated that e-communication does either not affect the quality of their relationships, or does so only to a small extent. However, 32.94% of respondents did indicate an effect on the quality of their relationships. A larger percentage of respondents (77.09) indicated that e-communication did not replace close personal relationships in their lives, or did so only to a small extent. A similar view was found regarding commitments towards other people. A total of 815 respondents (80.37%) were of the view that their use of the Internet does not interfere with commitments towards other people, or does so only to a small extent. Only 189 respondents (18.68%) make use of e-communication to meet new people, with the effect that 81.32 respondents do not or only rarely use this method to meet new people.

The assumption was made that if electronic communication is important and is used to a large extent, it might have an impact on the work/studies of the young adult. Responses to this item (B32) were that 622 respondents (61.4%) indicated low interference with work/studies, while 38.6% of respondents admitted interference to a large extent.

The impact of electronic communication factor scores will subsequently be discussed in terms of age, gender, race and area where respondents spent their childhood.

Table 7.8: Impact of electronic communication – relationship with demographic variables

Impact of electronic communication					
Variable	N	Mean (std)	F statistic	P-value	Pairwise comparison
Age			0.80	0.3724	
18-20	545	1.97 (0.56)			A
Over 20	466	1.94 (0.56)			A
Gender			4.55	0.0331	
Male	329	2.01 (0.60)			A
Female	685	1.92 (0.54)			B
Race			83.25	<0.0001	
Black	319	2.18 (0.56)			A
White	658	1.84 (0.53)			B
Childhood home			12.38	<0.0001	
Rural	117	2.18 (0.59)			A
Semi-urban	313	1.95 (0.55)			B
Urban	565	1.91 (0.54)			B

In table 7.8 the relationships between the different demographic variables and the factor, impact of e-communication, are indicated. The P-values indicate whether there is a significant difference between the factor scores of groups of respondents, where $P < 0.05$

indicates statistically significant differences between the factor scores. The A and B symbols under pairwise comparison in table 7.8 indicate which groups (within each demographic variable) have significantly different scores.

As indicated, 'age' as a variable was subdivided into two categories. No significant relationship between 'age' and impact of e-communication as a factor was found ($p=0.3724$).

'Gender' as a variable was significantly related to impact of e-communication as a factor in this study ($p=0.0331$). Male (2.01) respondents scored impact of e-communication higher than female (1.92) respondents. A similar finding applies to 'race', where the relationship was significant ($p<0.0001$). Black (2.18) respondents scored this factor higher than white (1.84) respondents. Male respondents and black respondents therefore respectively rated the impact of e-communication higher than white and female respondents.

A significant relationship between 'childhood home' and impact of e-communication as a factor was found ($p<0.0001$). Scheffé's test for pairwise comparisons indicated that rural (2.18) respondents rated the impact of e-communication as significantly higher than both semi-urban (1.94) and urban (1.91) respondents.

'Roles and relationships' is the fourth factor identified by means of factor analysis. The factor loadings, frequencies of items and correlations within this factor are subsequently discussed.

Table 7.9: Factor 4 – Roles and relationships

Variables	Item	Factor loadings	Frequency %	
			Low extent	High extent
How important is your commitment towards family members?	B86	0.764	6.16	93.84
How important is your role as a son/daughter in your family?	B85	0.667	11.43	88.57
How important is family?	B102	0.576	2.97	97.03
To what extent would you rather please your friends than your parents?	B88	-0.45	74.68	25.32
How often do you consult your parents before you make decisions?	B6	0.321	30.34	69.66
How important is your role as a friend?	B87	0.319	4.57	95.43
To what extent is caring for others important to you?	B74	0.298	3.87	96.13
To what extent do you think about the meaning of your own life?	B69	0.251	8.34	91.66
Cronbach coefficient alpha: 0.69				
% of variance in data space explained by factor: 7%				

‘Roles and relationships’ as a factor, presented in table 7.9 contains eight items. These items relate to roles and relationships within the family and towards friends and in more general terms, towards others.

The three items in this factor with the highest factor scores, which signify strong alignment with this factor, relate to respondents’ views regarding family. These three items have a factor loading of above 0.576. Most of the items in this factor (6 items) relate to roles and relationships towards family and friends. The factor scores of these 6 items vary between 0.764 and 0.319. The remaining items in this factor related to caring for others, with a factor loading of 0.298. With a loading of 0.251, the last item related to meaning of own life. These items share underlying dimensions and are measuring characteristics of the factor, roles and relationships. If family and commitment and therefore a focus on others are important to respondents they are likely to cherish basic values. Kirkpatrick Johnson and Monserud (2009:385, 386) express the view that “values guide thinking.” They continue by stating that family is where children learn and internalise values related to

major life concerns. Therefore, thinking about the meaning of their lives can be regarded as characteristic of this factor which contains a strong focus on family. The internal consistency for the factor 'Roles and relationships' was high with a Cronbach coefficient alpha of 0.69. This Cronbach's alpha confirmed reliability of this scale in terms of the measurement of this factor.

When the frequencies of specific items, indicating how respondents rated the items, were analysed, the following became evident: 980 respondents (97.03%) indicated that family is important to extremely important. The importance of commitment towards family members was rated high as well; with 945 respondents (93.84%) indicating that commitment towards family is important to extremely important to them. Their role as son/daughter was also important with 891 respondents (88.57%) rating this item as important to extremely important. The percentage of respondents for whom family, commitment and roles as son or daughter was not important, was only 2.97%, 6.16% and 11.43% respectively. When asked how often respondents consulted their parents before making decisions, 705 respondents (69.66%) indicated relatively often to often. A study of the questionnaire data frequencies indicates that of these 705 respondents, 298 consult their parents often and 407 rated their response at a 3 on the 4-point scale, which indicates relatively often.

The following two items in this factor explored respondents role as a friend. For 960 respondents (95.43%) their role as a friend was important to extremely important. However, when asked to what extent they would rather please their friends than their parents, 749 respondents (74.68%) indicated not at all or seldom. This resulted in a negative factor loading of -0.45, which was important in terms of the factor roles and relationships, seeing that it indicated a strong alliance towards family. Regarding the extent to which caring for others is important, 968 respondents (96.13%) indicated to a large extent, with only 39 respondents (3.87%) who do not regard others as important.

As mentioned, the extent to which respondents think about the meaning of their own lives formed part of this factor. A total of 359 respondents think about the meaning of their lives, while 564 respondents indicated that they think about the meaning of their own lives to a

large extent. Therefore this item was rated high by 923 respondents (91.66%), with only 8.34% of respondents not thinking about the meaning of their lives.

The roles and relationships factor scores will subsequently be discussed in terms of age, gender, race and area where respondents spent their childhood.

Table 7.10: Roles and relationships – relationship with demographic variables

Roles and relationships					
Variable	N	Mean (std)	F statistic	P-value	Pairwise comparison
Age			1.97	0.1613	
18-20	545	3.42 (0.41)			A
Over 20	466	3.46 (0.37)			A
Gender			48.32	<0.0001	
Male	329	3.32 (0.44)			A
Female	685	3.50 (0.36)			B
Race			16.17	<0.0001	
Black	319	3.35 (0.40)			A
White	658	3.40 (0.38)			B
Childhood home			0.33	0.7176	
Rural	117	3.46 (0.41)			A
Semi-urban	313	3.45 (0.38)			A
Urban	565	3.43 (0.39)			A

In table 7.10 the relationships between the different variables and the factor, roles and relationships are indicated. A statistically significant difference between factor scores is evident where the P-values are indicated as $P < 0.05$. The A and B symbols under pairwise comparison in table 7.10 indicate which groups (within each demographic variable) have significantly different scores.

As indicated, 'age' as a variable was subdivided into two categories. No significant relationship between 'age' and roles and relationships as a factor was found ($p=0.0520$).

Females (3.36) regarded roles and relationships as more important than males (3.23). The greater significance which this research factor has for females is based on a P-value of $p<0.0001$. 'Gender' as a variable was therefore significantly related to roles and relationships as a factor in this study. In terms of 'race', white students regarded roles and relationships as more important than black students ($p<0.0001$).

Regarding 'childhood home', no significant relationship between 'childhood home' and roles and relationships as a factor was found. Roles and relationships was the first factor where no statistically significant relationship was found between the research factor and childhood home ($p=0.1343$).

The items in table 7.9 which share underlying dimensions and are measuring characteristics of the factor, roles and relationships portray the importance of family, commitment towards family and friends and the importance of social roles in the microsystem. Apart from females, who regarded roles and relationships as more important than males, no significant differences in factor scores in terms of age, race of childhood home were found.

Healthy lifestyle is the fifth factor identified by means of factor analysis. The factor loadings, frequencies of items and relationships within this factor are subsequently discussed.

Table 7.11: Factor 5 – Healthy lifestyle

Variables	Item	Factor loadings	Frequency %	
			Low extent	High extent
How important is healthy eating in your life?	B44	0.816	20.83	79.17
To what extent do you opt for a healthy lifestyle?	B43	0.779	12.66	87.34
How important is exercise in your life?	B45	0.711	28.85	71.15
Cronbach coefficient alpha: 0.78				
% of variance in data space explained by factor: 6%				

The factor, 'Healthy lifestyle' as presented in table 7.11 contains three items. These items relate directly to this topic. One of these items has a factor loading of 0.816, while the other two items have loadings of 0.779 and 0.711 respectively. All these items share underlying dimensions and are representative of healthy lifestyle. The internal consistency for the factor 'Healthy lifestyle' was high with a Cronbach coefficient alpha of 0.78. The high Cronbach's alpha confirmed reliability of this scale in terms of the measurement of this factor.

When the frequencies of specific items, indicating how respondents rated the items, were analysed, the following became evident: 883 respondents (87.34%) indicated that they opted for a healthy lifestyle to a large extent. The assumption is made that if a healthy lifestyle is not important, then healthy eating and exercise will also not be important. These respondents' responses to healthy eating and exercise were the following: 802 respondents (79.17%) rated healthy eating as important, while 720 respondents (71.15%) regarded exercise as important. Even though exercise and healthy eating do not necessarily coincide, responses indicated that a healthy lifestyle is important to the majority of respondents. Healthy eating was not important to 20.83% of respondents, while exercise was not important to 28.85% of respondents.

The healthy lifestyle factor scores will subsequently be discussed in terms of age, gender, race and area where respondents spent their childhood.

Table 7.12: Healthy lifestyle – relationship with demographic variables

Healthy lifestyle					
Variable	N	Mean (std)	F statistic	P-value	Pairwise comparison
Age			1.20	0.2734	
18-20	542	3.16 (0.66)			A
Over 20	465	3.11 (0.70)			A
Gender			12.42	0.0004	
Male	327	3.25 (0.67)			A
Female	682	3.09 (0.67)			B
Race			0.09	0.7623	
Black	314	3.14 (0.70)			A
White	658	3.15 (0.67)			A
Childhood home			0.29	0.7505	
Rural	116	3.18 (0.66)			A
Semi-urban	312	3.12 (0.70)			A
Urban	563	3.13 (0.68)			A

In table 7.12 the relationships between the variables, age, gender, race and area where respondents spent most of their childhood (childhood home) and the factor, healthy lifestyle, are indicated. A statistically significant difference between factor scores is evident where the P-values are indicated as $P < 0.05$. The A and B symbols under pairwise comparison in table 7.12 indicate which groups (within each demographic variable) have significantly different scores.

As indicated, 'age' as a variable was subdivided into two categories. No significant relationship between 'age' and healthy lifestyle as a factor was found ($p=0.2734$). Similarly, in terms of 'race', no significant relationship between race and healthy lifestyle as a factor was found ($p=0.7623$). 'Gender' as a variable was significantly related to healthy lifestyle as a factor in this study ($p=0.0004$), seeing that males (3.25) regarded healthy lifestyle as more important than females (3.09).

Regarding 'childhood home', no significant relationship between 'childhood home' and healthy lifestyle as a factor was found. As in the case of roles and relationships as a research factor, no statistically significant relationship was found between this research factor and childhood home ($p=0.7505$).

Apart from males, who regarded healthy lifestyle as more important than females, no significant differences in factor scores in terms of age, race or childhood home were found.

Personal future is the sixth factor identified by means of factor analysis. The factor loadings, frequencies of items and relationships within this factor are subsequently discussed.

Table 7.13: Factor 6 – Personal future

Variables	Item	Factor loadings	Frequency %	
			Low extent	High extent
To what extent do you feel uncertain about your personal future?	B98	0.809	41.84	58.16
To what extent are you worried about a future career?	B99	0.676	38.58	61.42
To what extent do you feel uncertain about your future roles?	B84	0.659	37.65	62.35
Cronbach coefficient alpha: 0.77				
% of variance in data space explained by factor: 5%				

The factor, 'Personal future' as presented in table 7.13 contains three items. These items relate to personal future generally and then specifically to a future career and future roles. The item that measured personal future has a factor loading of 0.809, while the other two items have loadings of 0.676 and 0.659 respectively. All these items share underlying dimensions of personal future and focus specifically on feelings. The internal consistency for the factor 'Personal future' was high with a Cronbach coefficient alpha of 0.77. The high Cronbach's alpha confirmed reliability of this scale in terms of the measurement of this factor.

When the frequencies of the specific items were analysed, the following became evident: 588 respondents (58.16%) indicated that they felt considerably uncertain about their personal future in general. In terms of future roles, 626 respondents (62.35%) indicated their uncertainty. The frequency for being worried about a future career was similar, with 621 respondents (61.42%) indicating that they were worried about a future career. These frequencies are confirmed by Swartz and Obrien (2009:217) who link uncertainties experienced by the young adult to broader structural shifts in the economy, the government and the family. Young adults are spending more time in education, they experience challenges in terms of finding a job and launching a career. Marriage and parenthood are unvaryingly delayed (Swartz & Obrien, 2009:217). These views are confirmed by Heinz (2009:7, 11) who emphasises labour market uncertainties and the impact of globalisation and social structural changes.

The personal future factor scores will subsequently be discussed in terms of age, gender, race and area where respondents spent their childhood.

Table 7.14: Personal future – relationship with demographic variables

Personal future					
Variable	N	Mean (std)	F statistic	P-value	Pairwise comparison
Age			2.37	0.1244	
18-20	541	2.64 (0.77)			A
Over 20	462	2.72 (0.72)			A
Gender			1.49	0.2231	
Male	325	2.63 (0.74)			A
Female	684	2.69 (0.75)			A
Race			11.42	0.0008	
Black	314	2.56 (0.78)			A
White	658	2.73 (0.73)			B
Childhood home			3.06	0.0473	
Rural	116	2.52 (0.79)			?
Semi-urban	311	2.71 (0.75)			?
Urban	563	2.69 (0.73)			?

In table 7.14 the relationships between the demographic variables and the factor, personal future, are indicated. Both statistically significant differences and no significant differences were found between different factor scores of the variables in this research factor. No significant relationship was found between the two subgroupings of age as demographic variables and personal future as a factor ($p=0.1244$). Similarly, no significant relationship was found between male and female as variables and personal future ($p=0.2231$). It is interesting to note that there were statistically significant differences between the factor scores of males and females in all the previous research factors, but no significant differences were found in terms of gender and personal future as a factor.

When comparing factor scores of black and white as variables of race, whites scored personal future higher than blacks, indicating that this factor has greater significance for whites than for blacks ($p=0.0008$). As was indicated in table 7.13, items relate to personal

future generally and also specifically to a future career and future roles. The scores of white respondents therefore indicated uncertainty and anxiousness about future careers and roles to a higher extent than black respondents.

There were statistically significant differences in the personal future factor scores of respondents from different childhood home areas ($p=0.0473$). However, Scheffé's test could not indicate which pairs of groups were different. It is likely that the extremes (rural and semi-urban) are different seeing that these are the lowest and the highest.

'Social movements and diversity' is the seventh factor identified by means of factor analysis. The factor loadings, frequencies of items and relationships within this factor are subsequently discussed.

Table 7.15: Factor 7 – Social movements and diversity

Variables	Item	Factor loadings	Frequency %	
			Low extent	High extent
To what extent do you regard social movements as important?	B54	0.735	52.52	47.48
To what extent do you value new norms regarding lifestyle? (e.g. diversity, gay, lesbian)	B56	0.715	51.53	48.47
To what extent do you find different cultural opinions stimulating?	B12	0.482	34.09	65.91
To what extent is it acceptable to you that people may have different perspectives?	B8	0.378	5.43	94.57
To what extent is freedom of choice important to you?	B9	0.369	1.68	98.32
Cronbach coefficient alpha: 0.67				
% of variance in data space explained by factor: 5%				

The factor, 'Social movements and diversity' as presented in table 7.15 contains five items. Four of the five items relate to opinions and perspectives regarding new social movements, diversity and different views held by people. The last item in this factor is related, but focuses on the respondent him/herself. The first two items have a factor

loading of above 0.715, while the next three items have loadings that vary between 0.482 and 0.369. In this research all these items are characteristic of social movements and diversity. The internal consistency for the factor 'Social movements and diversity' is moderately high with a Cronbach coefficient alpha of 0.67. This Cronbach's alpha confirmed reliability of the scale in terms of the measurement of this factor.

When the frequencies of specific items, indicating how respondents rated the items, were analysed, the following became evident: 532 respondents (52.52%) did not regard social movements as important. A total of 521 respondents (51.53%) either did not value new norms regarding lifestyle (diversity, gay and lesbian) or did so only to a low extent. The researcher found it interesting that various respondents crossed out the words 'gay and lesbian' on the questionnaire and therefore indicated that they are responding in terms of diversity only. A total of 665 respondents (65.91%) indicated that they found different cultural opinions stimulating. When questions were phrased more broadly, respondents reacted more favourably. For instance, 957 respondents (94.57%) indicated that they found the fact that people have different opinions acceptable to a large extent. In terms of the last item, a great majority of respondents (98.43%) regarded freedom of choice as important.

The social movements and diversity factor scores will subsequently be discussed in terms of age, gender, race and area where respondents spent their childhood.

Table 7.16: Social movements and diversity – relationship with demographic variables

Social movements and diversity					
Variable	N	Mean (std)	F statistic	P-value	Pairwise comparison
Age			7.14	0.0077	
18-20	545	2.95 (0.52)			A
Over 20	466	3.04 (0.54)			B
Gender			66.39	<0.0001	
Male	329	2.80 (0.53)			A
Female	685	3.08 (0.51)			B
Race			1.31	0.2523	
Black	319	3.01 (0.53)			A
White	658	2.96 (0.53)			A
Childhood home			8.54	0.0002	
Semi-urban	313	2.89 (0.52)			A
Rural	117	2.97 (0.56)			A B
Urban	565	3.05 (0.53)			B

In table 7.16 the relationships between the variables age, gender, race and childhood home and the factor social movements and diversity are presented. Only in terms of race, no significant relationship was found between the two subgroupings black and white as variables, and social movements and diversity as a factor ($p=0.2523$).

In terms of age, gender and childhood home, the relationships were meaningful as there were significant statistical differences between the variables and this research factor.

There was a significant relationship between age and social movements and diversity as there were significant differences between the two age variables (18 to 20 years and 21 to 25 years) and social movements and diversity as a factor ($p=0.0077$). Respondents between the ages 21 to 25 years (3.04) rated social movements and diversity as more

important than respondents between the ages of 18 and 20 years (2.95). For the older subgrouping of respondents social movements, new norms regarding lifestyle, and freedom to choose and have different perspectives was more important than for the younger subgroup. Age as a variable was not significantly related to any of the factors previously discussed. Social movements and diversity was the only factor in terms of which age as a variable indicated a significant relationship.

Similarly, a significant relationship was found between male and female as variables and social movements and diversity ($p < 0.0001$). For female respondents social movements, new norms regarding lifestyle, and freedom to choose and have different perspectives was more important than for males.

A significant relationship between 'childhood home' and social movements and diversity was found ($p = 0.0002$). Scheffé's test indicated that urban (3.05) respondents rated 'Social movements and diversity' as significantly more important than semi-urban (2.89) respondents. Rural (2.97) respondents' ratings do not differ significantly from either the semi-urban or the urban respondents.

'Cyberspace and communication' is the eighth factor identified by means of factor analysis. The factor loadings, frequencies of items and relationships within this factor are subsequently discussed.

Table 7.17: Factor 8 – Cyberspace and communication

Variables	Item	Factor loadings	Frequency %	
			Low extent	High extent
How important is cyberspace for you (e.g. your Facebook profile)?	B21	0.74	44.15	55.85
To what extent do you communicate electronically?	B20	0.518	11.41	88.59
How often do you use Facebook to update yourself on what is happening in someone else's life?	B27	0.502	51.08	48.92
Cronbach coefficient alpha: 0.67				
% of variance in data space explained by factor: 4%				

Cyberspace and communication as a factor contains three items. The first item in this factor has a factor loading of 0.74. This item, as well as the other two items relate to cyberspace and Facebook profile, which provided the title description of this factor. The other two items have factor loadings of 0.518 and 0.502 respectively. These items share underlying dimensions and are measuring characteristics of this specific factor. The internal consistency for this factor is moderately high with a Cronbach coefficient alpha of 0.67. This Cronbach's alpha confirmed reliability of this scale in terms of the measurement of cyberspace and communication.

The frequencies of the specific items were the following: 568 respondents (55.85%) indicated that cyberspace, specifically their Facebook profiles, were important to them. A much larger percentage of respondents, namely 88.59% (901 respondents), indicated that they communicated electronically either often or constantly. The impact of electronic communication was portrayed in table 7.7. A preference for face-to-face communication was clearly communicated, as well as the view that e-communication does not impact the quality of relationships, does not interfere with commitments towards people or replace close relationships. A total of 61.40% of respondents indicated that e-communication does not interfere with work/studies. Of the 88.59% of respondents mentioned in table 7.17 above, 34.32% often communicate electronically, while 54.28% admitted to constantly communicating electronically (See item B20 of appendix F: Questionnaire data –

frequency distributions). The positive portrayal of the impact of e-communication is therefore questioned by the researcher.

The third item in this factor related to the need to update yourself on what is happening in someone else's life. Views were almost split in terms of this item; 520 respondents (51.08%) indicated seldom to never and 498 respondents (48.92%) indicated frequently or often. What is however clear is that cyberspace / Facebook / e-modes of communication and interaction is extremely important and has become part of the lifestyle of respondents.

The cyberspace and communication factor scores will subsequently be discussed in terms of age, gender, race and area where respondents spent their childhood.

Table 7.18: Cyberspace and communication – relationship with demographic variables

Cyberspace and communication					
Variable	N	Mean (std)	F statistic	P-value	Pairwise comparison
Age			0.07	0.7958	
18-20	545	2.85 (0.67)			A
Over 20	466	2.86 (0.69)			A
Gender			3.65	0.0563	
Male	329	2.79 (0.70)			A
Female	685	2.87 (0.66)			A
Race			0.38	0.5354	
Black	319	2.83 (0.71)			A
White	658	2.86 (0.66)			A
Childhood home			6.90	<0.0011	
Rural	117	2.69 (0.71)			A
Semi-urban	313	2.80 (0.68)			A B
Urban	565	2.91 (0.65)			B

No significant relationship was found between the two subgroupings of age as variables and cyberspace and communication as a factor ($p=0.7958$). Similarly, no significant relationship was found between male and female as variables, as well as in terms of race and this specific factor ($p=0.0563$ and $p=0.5354$ respectively).

A significant relationship between 'childhood home' and cyberspace and communication was found ($p<0.0011$). Scheffé's test indicated that urban (2.91) respondents rated cyberspace and communication as significantly more important than rural (2.69) respondents. Semi-urban (2.80) respondents' ratings did not differ significantly from either the rural or the urban respondents.

7.5 DISCUSSION

During quantitative data analysis the eight factors identified by means of factor analysis were discussed utilising descriptive statistics. Thereafter correlation analysis, which was done on the factor scores, was presented. The quantitative data presented mostly confirms qualitative findings, but nuance differences were found in the analysis of the quantitative data.

The sample for this research was drawn from a single tertiary institution and comprised of students who passed grade 12 and who were in the process of acquiring a tertiary education. Diverse views and often directly opposing views were found even though the sample could be considered homogenous. This aspect will be elaborated on in this section.

7.5.1 Religion and formal structures

Eigenvalues and the scree plot gave strong credence for focusing on religion and formal structures as a factor in this research. Quantitative findings indicated a tendency towards valuing traditional and conventional religious norms and practices. Pearce and Denton (2009:413) propose a renewed interest in the social importance of religion. They claim a

growing acknowledgement that religion is important for global, local and individual identity, for social relationships and for general well-being (Pearce & Denton, 2009:413). This seems to be reflected by the majority of respondents in this research, despite what Pearce and Denton (2009:418) refer to as “past generations’ predictions of the waning importance of religion to social life.” Pearce and Denton (2009:415) quote research by Regnerus et al. (2003) and Mason et al. (2007) which claims that the most commonly cited source of religiosity amongst youth is parental religiosity. According to socialisation theories, parents teach and set examples in ways that reinforce religiosity. Barry and Nelson (2005:115), however, state that young people question the beliefs according to which they were raised and pick and choose the aspects of religion that suit them. Regard for family and specifically for parents and their views was important to respondents. This finding will be discussed under 7.5.4 Roles and relationships. Socialisation and regard for the views of parents could therefore impact the views of young adults. This regard could have bearing on the young adult’s attitude towards religion.

The need for religion, indicated by most respondents, did not necessarily include a need to attend regular religious meetings. This supports Barry and Nelson’s (2005:115) view that young adults choose aspects of religion that suit them.

However, an even higher percentage of respondents (80.32%) indicated that spiritual norms guide their behaviour. Schweitzer (2004:89), as well as Steyn and Lotter (2006:547) refer to an increase in spirituality in postmodern times, but state that it is not necessarily linked to institutional religion. This tendency seemed to be evident in this research. The researcher found it interesting that several respondents crossed out ‘church’ on the questionnaire, signifying that they favour guidance by formal structures, but that these structures do not necessarily refer to ‘church’. Steyn and Lotter (2006:548) confirm this finding with their statement that there has been a dramatic decrease in the impact of the church and of moral leaders and role models on young people.

Regarding ‘spirituality’, the following was found: during qualitative data gathering (focus group discussions) ‘spirituality’ as a concept was explored. It became apparent that exactly

what is meant by this concept is unclear. A 'source of guidance or enlightenment'; 'something to draw on'; 'a search for meaning'; 'open-mindedness'; 'something very personal that influences your morals', was some of the terminology used by focus group members to describe this concept. This supports Singleton et al.'s (2004:248) view that the spirituality of generation Y is unlike that of previous generations. It was clear that not all participants referred to spirituality in the context of religion (Barry & Nelson, 2005:115). A 'spiritual hunger' and an interest in spirituality were however projected by respondents in both the qualitative and quantitative phases of the research (Schweitzer, 2004:89; Sigelman & Rider, 2009:399). Steyn and Lotter (2006:548) quote Van Huyssteen (1995) who refers to a vague spirituality and a search for a transcendence that is larger and more than "*die ervaring self*" (the experience itself).

Wessels and Müller (2013:6) investigated the association of spirituality and meaningful living and came to the conclusion that "...there exists a vast corpus of research linking spirituality to meaning." These authors refer to Seifert (2002) who states that discourses like religiousness and religiosity seem to be replaced by a focus on spirituality. It is suggested that spirituality could be "...an attempt to escape the uncertainties and insecurity of the postmodern era" (Nolan, 2006 in Wessels & Müller, 2013:2).

Correlation analysis on the factor scores of quantitative data indicated that gender was significantly related to religion and formal structures as females scored religion and formal structures higher than males, which indicated that religion seems to be more important to the young females who participated in this study. This finding supports Pearce and Denton's (2009:416) statement that females report higher religious involvement than males. These authors also report that youth who are more extroverted and 'less risk averse' are drawn to religion and tend to remain involved in religion (Pearce & Denton, 2009:416). Patel, Ramgoon and Paruk (2009:267) quote research by Gauthier et al. (2006) which indicates that their female sample indicate higher levels of life satisfaction and religiosity, compared to much lower levels in the male sample. Their own research indicated a similar finding. Differences in socialisation and women's roles in society explained the variations in their research (Patel et al., 2009:271). Kirkpatrick Johnson and

Monserud (2009:388) report that young females also hold stronger pro-social values and regard purpose and meaning in life as more important than males.

Black respondents in this research scored religion and formal structures higher than white respondents did, which indicates that religion and formal structures are more important to black respondents than to white respondents. In their research, Patel et al. (2009:272) found that black and Indian students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal reported higher levels of religiosity than the white students. These researchers made the statement that they can only speculate on the reasons for these variations in their findings: “Black students are more likely to use spirituality as a resource that they can fall back on to make sense of and deal with lives that they perceive as less privileged and less satisfactory” (Patel et al., 2009:272). In this research the researcher did not explore reasons for the black/white differences that were found by means of correlation analysis.

Childhood home was also significantly related to religion and formal structures as rural and semi-urban respondents rated religion and formal structures as more important than urban respondents. Respondents who grew up in rural and semi-urban areas possibly had a more conventional upbringing, with an emphasis on traditional values and norms which was reflected in their views on formal structures and religion.

Additionally, attitudes regarding formal and cultural structures and authority were explored within this factor. Mention was made above of ‘guidance by formal structures’, which was regarded as important by respondents. Similarly, they portrayed regard for the views of people with authority. This regard was qualified within the focus group discussions when it was clearly stated that authority must be earned and that respect is given, if deserved. This finding is supported by Steyn and Lotter (2006:546) who state that power and respect must be earned, based on genuineness, integrity and acceptance. Knowledge and expertise especially were highly regarded by participants in focus groups. However, the following views were also clearly stated: “We are our own authority” ... “we are a group that want to challenge everything.” These views are consistent with the postmodern values of self-expression instead of respect for authority (Inglehart, 2000:223). Du Toit (2000:54)

holds a similar view when he states that pure knowledge is an illusion and authoritative structures are incompatible with the postmodern tendency not to think in absolutes, but to focus on personal experiences and on own interpretation. This tendency was confirmed in the quantitative study when respondents were questioned on the extent to which choice is based on personal experience (B11). An overwhelming percentage of respondents (95.85%) indicated that for them, choice is largely based on personal experience. A similar tendency in favour of choice and personal experience was portrayed when questioned about making own rules (65.31% make own rules to a large extent) and the influence of life experiences (89.73% of respondents indicated that their values develop from life experiences).

During focus group discussions respect for authority was linked to culture and tradition. “I will be respectful towards them, because it is tradition”, was one of the comments made regarding the manner in which cultural practices impact respect for authority – in this case, respect for parents. In the quantitative phase of the study, cultural structures and a cultural background were important to respectively 68.48% of respondents and 78.2% of respondents. The link between authority and culture was further expanded to include values. This is illustrated in the following manner: “I think we mimic our parents. So, your values are basically determined by culture and by your beliefs.”

Although the main focus of this factor was on religion, authority, formal structures and cultural beliefs, views regarding sexual activity were also included in this factor, because of its link to morality, as well as to cultural and traditional practices. A large percentage of respondents (68.81%) valued traditional views regarding sexual activity. What exactly was meant by ‘traditional views’ was however not explored or clarified in the questionnaire. These views were echoed when asked about the acceptability of sexual activity without commitment to a partner (B51). Further clarification of these views was provided during the focus group discussions. Both conformist, more conservative views, as well as liberal views were voiced regarding commitment within sexual relationships and cohabitation versus marriage. Sigelman and Rider (2009:369) make the statement that delaying the age of marriage has resulted in changing norms regarding sexual experimentation, leading

to varied adult sexual lifestyles. Mills, Blossfeld and Klijzing (2005:431) also reported on the “shift from more permanent unions to non-marital cohabitation.” These authors found support for their ‘flexible-partnership’ hypothesis which argued that a sensible reaction for youth is to choose a relationship that has less of a binding commitment. The married role and cohabitation will be discussed further under 7.5.4 Roles and relationships.

Cognisance needs to be taken of the fact that even though the majority of respondents portrayed a more conservative view regarding religion, spirituality, authority and formal structures, a considerable number of respondents in both the qualitative and quantitative phases of the research did not hold conventional views. (See Table 7.3 Religion and formal structures in this chapter, as well as Theme 1: Authority and traditional structures and Theme 5: Values and norms, in chapter 6). The following verbatim quote by a participant illustrates this: “...you question your religion, you question your parents’ views... and how they impose their beliefs on you.”

Kirkpatrick Johnson and Monserud (2009:386) quote research by Inglehart and Welzel (2005) which found that rankings of traditional values, regarding religion, nationalism, obedience and leading a ‘clean and moral life’ declined among young people. These values are replaced by “secular-rational values as nations develop economically” (Kirkpatrick Johnson & Monserud, 2009:386). Traditional survival values are replaced by self-expression values. Views and values therefore seem person-specific and based on emotions and experiences (Jones, 2009:69).

Kirkpatrick Johnson and Monserud (2009:387) state that in general “young adults who are more religious are less materialistic, report more concern and responsibility for the well-being of others, and attach more importance to finding purpose and meaning in their lives.” It therefore can be assumed that the views and attitudes discussed above will have an underlying impact on other factors identified in this research. Subsequently ‘Image and consumerism’ will be discussed.

7.5.2 Image and consumerism

France (2007:115) refers to consumerism in the following manner: “One of the major characteristics of late modernity is the growth of consumption and consumer culture.” Quantitative findings did however not indicate an overwhelming predisposition towards consumerism, referred to by Maxine Green (1988) in Mason (2001:50) as “unreflective consumerism” and “a preoccupation with *having* more rather than *being* more.” The consumer market does however seem to create meaning for many young adults (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2009:261). More respondents (55.14%) indicated that their quality of life in general only depended on material possessions to a small extent. The balance of respondents (44.86%) indicated that the quality of their lives in general largely depends on material possessions and this pattern was also apparent in focus group discussions, where these contrasting views were evident. Some participants expressed the significance of consumerism in their lives by referring to commodities and brands which they *must* have. Comments to this effect were: “I have always been a brand person; I love a brand”; “I want to look like that... it becomes an obsession” and “...the ultimate accessory; the best MP3 player, the best cell phone, it is like the ultimate thing is not to get bored.”

Quantitative findings also revealed that wealth was important to 70.99% of respondents. This was echoed in focus group discussions when participants referred to the significance of “...type of house you will live in... the type of car you will drive.” Contrasting views provided in focus groups illustrated an irritation with the views mentioned: “I am not like that at all. I do not care whether I have a Guess jean or a fancy phone, if it works, it works! ...I feel ashamed if I wear something that has a brand name” ... “I like my car, even though it is old. I will drive it until it falls apart.” These views on both sides of the spectrum were strongly voiced by participants who seemed unwavering in their convictions.

In this factor, most of the items related to image and how image links with consumerism. Slightly more than half of the respondents (52.71%) indicated that they do spend energy on building their own images and a pronounced majority of respondents (85.67%) were of the view that their own physical attractiveness is very important to them. Image seemed therefore to be important in terms of the ‘self’ of the respondents. This was confirmed by

the large majority of respondents (88.86%) who indicated that compliments made them feel good. When analysing the items relating to 'building own images' mentioned above, the researcher found the split in views noteworthy. A similar split of opinions was found in the qualitative study, where views such as "These things form part of us... things that portray who we are" and "...it forms part of your reality... the things that you watch and want." These views also refer to more than just image and consumerism. The reference to 'identity' can clearly be detected in references to "form part of us... portray who we are... part of our identity." These views represent one end of the scale. There were also those participants who were extremely critical of the views of fellow focus groups members and who voiced this criticism as follows: "...materialism is when people appropriate stuff when they have a lack of self-esteem or self-identity... why do they have to present themselves with things they own rather than with what they are?" In this comment the participant also linked image to identity. The link between consumerism, image and identity has been researched extensively. Jones (2009:67) discusses the sign-value (wealth, power) and the use-value of commodities and then concludes that individuals gain status and identity through conspicuous consumption. "The outward is all there is and we are seduced by it" (Jones, 2009:67). She quotes Miles' (2000) view that consumption plays an important role in the construction of young people's lifestyles, within which their identities are constructed. Consumption allows young people to 'fit in', which provides a sense of individuality and stability (Miles, 2000 in Jones, 2009:74). 'Fitting in' and a form of stability is confirmed by Barthes (in Jones, 2009:185) with his statement that society asserts its values by manipulating signs, for example through fashion; where fashion is a badge of inclusion and validation of identity.

A focus on 'self' was confirmed by 92.28% of respondents who rated the fulfilment of their own needs as important to extremely important. This sentiment was shared by participants in focus group discussions. They referred to the importance of their own happiness, goals and plans. The general view was summarised by a participant in the following manner: "...I *have* to be self-centred." Williams et al.'s (2006:20) philosophy of individualism, where decisions made are based on individual concerns and a search for personal fulfilment, were illustrated by respondents. Own needs and satisfactions were paramount in their

lives. With regards to own needs, Hölscher (2005:239) holds the view that the focus in late modernity is on self and away from ideas of self-sacrifice and accountability to morals and values.

When considering image and identity in terms of 'others' there was a more balanced view. Most respondents (61.38%) held the view that identity is only linked to what other people think of them to a limited extent. Miles (2000) in Jones (2009:74) essentially holds a similar view with his statement that young people are no longer as dependent on peer subcultures for identity construction, but that their lifestyles, even though fragmented or unstable, can provide a way of stabilising their lives. Regarding the image of people around them, a slight majority of respondents (58.14%) indicated that the images of the friends they associate with are not important or important to a lesser extent only. When considering the impact of consumerism and material possessions on relationships, the majority of respondents (78.8%) indicated that material possessions only influenced their social relationships to a limited extent. This is in strong contrast to the opinion of Giddens (1991) quoted by Jones (2009:64) that the individual's preoccupation with self-image leaves him unable to form caring relationships.

As mentioned, diverse views were found despite the fact that the sample for the research was drawn from a single tertiary institution. These diverse views can be linked to different biographical variables. Correlation analysis of data indicated that 'Gender' was significantly related to image and consumerism as a factor. When comparing the factor scores of females and males, males scored image and consumerism higher than females, indicating that this factor has greater significance for males. This finding is in agreement with a statement by Kirkpatrick Johnson and Monserud (2009:388) who point out that studies support the idea that females hold weaker materialistic values than males. They also hold stronger pro-social values and regard purpose and meaning in life as important.

'Race' was also significantly related to image and consumerism, as a significant relationship was found. Black respondents scored image and consumerism higher than white respondents, which indicates that this factor is more important to black respondents

than to white respondents. The following comment made in a focus group discussion supports this finding: “I think if you are a black, young upcoming person of around 23, then you have the pressure to look a certain way, to wear certain things, to have the right car.” This comment and the quantitative findings could be interpreted within a post-apartheid framework, where the previously suppressed and disadvantaged young black adult strives to enhance his socio-economic standing.

A significant relationship was also found between ‘childhood home’ and image and consumerism. Rural respondents rated ‘Image and consumerism’ as significantly more important than urban respondents. If the assumption is made that respondents who spent their childhood in rural areas have a more humble and disadvantaged background, the fact that these respondents rated consumerism and their own images as more important is understandable. It may further be assumed that a desire for upliftment and improvement of basic living conditions might be a driving force behind such views. Jones (2009:114, 115) asserts that even though there has been an overall increase in affluence since the Second World War, a ‘wealth divide’ exists, which means that wealth is not evenly spread and has led to polarisation. This polarisation is evident in terms of the accumulation of wealth, housing, property and jobs. This ‘underclass’ and the ‘socially excluded’ are clustered geographically, as well as clustered in families.

7.5.3 Impact of electronic communication

During this research it has been found that personal contact and face-to-face communication remains important to research participants, despite the fact that electronic communication has become integrated into the lifestyle of young adults (Benokraitis, 2008:25). An overwhelming majority of respondents (82.78%) indicated that they either did not prefer electronic communication to face-to-face communication, or only preferred it to a lesser extent. This sentiment was also convincingly voiced in focus group discussions with comments like “...I would rather prefer face-to-face communication because it is more personal.”

The majority of respondents (62.5%) indicated that they were not, or were only to a small extent, more open and honest during e-communication than during real life situations, which means that 37.5% of respondents admitted that they were more open and honest during e-communication. During focus group discussions participants voiced opinions that correlated much more with the views of the 37.5% than with the 62.5% of respondents in the quantitative phase of the study. They felt that communication in cyberspace allows for discussion on a deeper level, which might not be possible when meeting face-to-face. Even though you are behind a screen, you do not have to hide or be shy. Jansen van Rensburg (2009) as quoted by Botha (2009:13) confirmed the phenomenon that Facebook users share more information about themselves, than they would in real life. Gould et al. (2002) and Nicholas et al. (2004) in Collin and Burns (2009:285) report that young people report feeling more confident online, seeing that they are able to talk about sensitive topics.

In a related item a distinct majority of respondents (82.46%) indicated that they do not change who they are when using electronic modes of communication, and if so, only to a small extent. This finding is in direct contrast to what was found during the qualitative phase of the research. Focus group members admitted to the fact that Facebook profiles are not always absolutely accurate. A personality can be created that is not authentic and events can be manipulated to make you seem more attractive and alluring to others. This was supported by comments such as – "...it's not important whether the party is fun. What is important is that the party must seem like fun in the photographs." This phenomenon fits with Heim's comment (in France, 2007:125) that young people are able to become someone else and to create multiple identities which he described as "stepping out of their 'real identity' and creating a 'new' virtual identity through play."

Most of the remaining items in this factor relate to the impact of e-communication on relationships and commitments towards other people. A majority of respondents (67.06%) indicated that e-communication only affects the quality of their relationships to a limited extent. 32.94% of respondents therefore indicated an effect on the quality of their relationships. Similar tendencies were found in terms of whether e-communication has

replaced close personal relationships in their lives (77.09% indicated to a low/small extent) and has interfered with commitment towards other people (80.37% indicated to a low/small extent). In a similar vein, only 18.68% of respondents made use of e-communication to meet new people, with the effect that 81.32% of respondents rarely use this method to meet new people or do not use it at all. These views were surprisingly conservative when compared to overall views of participants in focus group discussions regarding the impact of e-communication.

As mentioned, an impact on relationships was however found during focus group discussions. Participants were of the opinion that since being active on Facebook, they have more friends, but the depth of the relationships is not what it was before Facebook: “You have many superficial relationships with more people.” Electronic communication has an impact on the effort taken to meet with people – “...it is just easier to send an SMS.” It also seemed as if the initial getting-to-know phase of relationship building has undergone a transformation due to the tendency to study a person’s Facebook profile – “...that whole process of getting to know a person versus a five minute internet escapade.” Benokraitis (2008:25) refers to these superficial online activities as intrusive and as replacing close personal relationships.

According to focus group members dating behaviour has also changed seeing that it is easier to flirt with someone via SMS than when that person is standing next to you. Females admitted to no longer waiting for males – “Girls can now actually SMS the guy and go to him. She doesn’t have to wait for him anymore.”

Miscommunications and misunderstandings due to personal needs and desires of recipients and the abbreviated electronic mode of communication were discussed in focus groups. “...I will read it... not in the manner in which the other person intended it, but rather what I want to hear.”

‘Gender’ and ‘race’ as variables were significantly related to impact of e-communication as a factor in the research. Male respondents scored impact of e-communication higher than

female respondents. Livingston et al. (2005) in France (2007:119) make the statement that even though the difference between boys' and girls' electronic usage is getting smaller, the "quality of use and amount of time on the Internet are greater for boys than girls." A similar finding applies to 'race', where black respondents scored this factor higher than white respondents. Male respondents and black respondents therefore respectively rate the impact of e-communication higher than white and than female respondents.

A significant relationship between 'childhood home' and impact of e-communication as a factor was also found. Rural respondents rated the impact of e-communication as significantly higher than both semi-urban and urban respondents. Respondents who are from rural areas are now living as students in an urban area and have access to electronic communication and social networks. This exposure is relatively new and can be both positive and negative if the views of Williams et al. (2006:20), discussed under 3.4.3 Virtual society, are taken into consideration.

7.5.4 Roles and relationships

Young adults acquire the traditional role markers of adulthood in a more variable and individualised sequence. These role markers refer to completing an education, leaving the parental home, obtaining a full-time occupation, marrying and becoming a parent (Shanahan, 2000 in Mortimer, 2009:149). Abbott-Chapman and Robertson (2009:243) are of the opinion that despite the process of individualisation taking place in postmodern, globalised societies, most young people remain attached to their families and their homes.

Abbott-Chapman and Robertson (2009:261) make the following statement: "...many social roles are less appealing than they once were." According to these authors this has led to alternative forms of social existence, largely influenced by the 'individual as consumer'. Lives are therefore increasingly structured by consumption, where the multitude of lifestyle choices influences traditional roles (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2009:261). Traditional roles and the certainty of marriage, children, buying a home and holding down a permanent job, belong to a different era than the one in which today's young adult is

becoming an adult. “It is as consumers that young people claim and affirm membership in the larger community” (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2009:261).

Young adults are targeted by developers and by leisure and cultural industries as consumers (Valentine, 2003:46). Being consumers therefore impact roles (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2009:261). Swartz and O’Brien (2009:219) point out that although the transition to adulthood is characterised by choice, exploration and experimentation, material resources are required to cover living expenses and to cover the costs of “trying out different pathways.” As a consumer, the young adult is therefore dependent on parents and other family members. Mulder (2009:207) confirms this statement with her view that the impact of resources, mainly income of the family of origin, plays an important part in the decision to leave home or not. “Closeness to parents” is regarded by Mulder (2009:208) as an important determining factor in terms of whether young adults remain in their parental home for an extended period. Material and emotional resources provided by parents therefore impact the young adult’s decision to leave the parental home, or stay on.

Attachment to family and home, referred to above, was evident from the quantitative findings. For 97.03% of respondents family was important to extremely important. Commitment towards family members was rated high as well; with 93.84% of respondents indicating that commitment towards family is important to extremely important. The percentage of respondents for whom family, commitment and their roles as son or daughter was not important, was 2.97%, 6.16% and 11.43% respectively. Biggart (2009:117) refers to “[t]he reassertion of the family” and claims that the family has “gained greater prominence” as a “site of influence” in the lives of young adults. Swartz and O’Brien (2009:217) discuss the role of parents in the protracted transition to adulthood. This extended transition is made possible by parents and other family members who support young adults and who provide them with substantial resources. The protracted transition is made possible by the “joint enterprise” of parent and young adult who combine efforts and resources. The uncertainty of postmodern times has led to the strategy of parents providing a safety net and “scaffolding their adult children” (Swartz & O’Brien, 2009:218). When discussing the young adult, Furlong (2009:201) refers to them being

“increasingly reliant on resources from their families for protracted periods of time.” Parment’s (2012:xv) view is that “many Gen Ys look for parental support.” This is supported by Jones (2009:156) who points out that adults are often vulnerable and afraid of losing their children.

A significant relationship between females and roles and relationships as a factor was found. Females therefore regarded roles and relationships as more important than males. Kirkpatrick Johnson and Monserud (2009:388) make the statement that females hold stronger pro-social values that concern the well-being of others, than males. The items in this factor focussed mainly on roles and relationships with parents. The assumption might therefore be made that females regard roles and relationships with parents as more important than males. In spite of the bond with their parents, Mulder (2009:206) has found that women leave the parental home a year or two earlier than men, to live with a partner or to live alone. This is attributed to the fact that they reach maturity earlier than men.

An additional factor is mentioned by France (2007:150) with his statement that “we fail to recognise old processes and practices that are still influential in late modernity.” Cultural and structural influences still remain important and cannot be ignored as powerful shaping forces in the process of identity formation of young people. Swartz and O’Brien (2009:221) emphasise the importance of these cultural and structural influences. Instrumental and emotional support extends beyond the adolescent years. In this process of providing support parents convey cultural values and expectations.

Role as a friend was also explored. For 95.43% of respondents their role as a friend was important, however 74,68% of respondents indicated a strong alliance towards family when they indicated that they would rather please their parents than their friends. This sentiment was also voiced in focus group discussions: “My roles towards my family are much more important... I will try harder to please my parents than my friends.” Qualitative findings also indicated ambivalence when participants admitted that it becomes hard to please everyone. A tendency in favour of friends was also found: “...they can help me through this, whereas my family do not necessarily know...” In this regard Santrock

(2009:451) states that friends can in some cases “provide a better buffer from stress and be a better source of emotional support than family members.”

Mills et al. (2005:430, 436) examined the micro level or individual response to the impact of globalisation and uncertainty experienced by young people. These researchers found the development of “various strategies, such as postponement of life events, remaining in school, engaging in flexible relationships, or taking on multiple roles...” (combining educational enrolment and part-time employment), to smooth entry into the labour market. These economic and employment uncertainties enter into their decision to marry and form a family. McCarthy, Williams and Hagan (2009:233) mention that in the past 30 years many of the demographic markers that signify adulthood have become delayed and for some young people will be realised only in their late twenties or early thirties. These researchers point out that the sequence of key transitions has changed: “fewer youth now follow traditional patterns in which the completion of one’s education is followed by full-time work, marriage and childbirth” (McCarthy et al., 2009:233). According to Fussell and Furstenburg (2005) in McCarthy et al. (2009:233) the period between late adolescence and mid-twenties has replaced adolescence as the “most turbulent” for young people. This turbulent period is characterised by multiple role performance, changes in the sequence of key transitions and delayed adulthood.

These characteristics were evident in this research. As was discussed, young adults acquire the traditional role markers of adulthood in a more variable and individualised sequence. Cohabitation as a phenomenon of late modernity was discussed by participants. They regarded serial monogamy as a new pattern of partnership, which allows for a greater element of choice (Jones, 2009:93). Comments such as “I have now been living with my boyfriend for a year and a half and I often find myself thinking ‘I’m in any case not going to marry him...’” and “All my friends that are now married, lived together first”, demonstrate the emphasis placed on choice. Mills et al. (2005:431) state that young adults tend to choose unmarried cohabitation as opposed to marriage, seeing that “less of a binding obligation” tends to be a more favourable option for many young

adults. Heath (2009:212) also points out that cohabitation “has emerged as an alternative living arrangement prior to or instead of marriage.”

Inequalities in youth lead to polarisation in education, work, health, family formation, civic participation and income. Brynner and colleagues have found increasing polarisation in the occupations, qualifications and earnings of young adults. These differences can be ascribed to young adults being on extended transitions to adulthood and young adults without the opportunity to postpone adulthood (Brynner et al. in Jones, 2009:96).

7.5.5 Healthy lifestyle

The young adult reaches his peak performance during early adulthood; he is also the healthiest during this period of his life. Health impairing lifestyles which relate to eating, weight, substance abuse and generally abusing your body may only show later in early adulthood or during middle adulthood (Santrock, 2009:420-425, 437).

Health and lifestyle are closely related (Parker & Williams, 2003:363; Santrock, 2009:421). Many young adults do not eat regular meals; they snack throughout the day (Santrock, 2009:421). West (2009:362) refers to this as the ‘grazing’ approach to meals, which is the consuming of snacks with high sugar content rather than eating ‘proper meals’. West’s (2009:341) view is that youthful healthfulness has always been more myth than reality. In this study, 79.17% of respondents rated healthy eating as important in their lives. Even though they rated healthy eating as important, the researcher questions the extent to which they comply with healthy eating habits. During focus group discussions two general points of view surfaced. Some participants were of the view that healthy eating is too expensive. Comments to this effect were: “...everywhere you see organic food... organic food is much more expensive; ...eating healthier is much more expensive, so people cannot afford to buy healthy foods.” There were also references to health consciousness being a subculture of which not everyone forms a part. There were however those participants for whom healthy eating is a priority. They related eating to ‘image’ and the importance of looking good: “We must be the strongest, we must look better, so in the end it all comes back to ‘image’”; “...trendy Virgin Active clothing and Woolworths Foods.”

West (2009:364) refers to the development of health behaviours which are influenced by global capitalism, the media and advertising. He emphasises the influence of social class, which he describes as the class position of the family of origin. He points out that this may involve direct influences which could be health-enhancing or health-inhibiting. Indirect influences are associated with schooling, peer groups activities and youth subcultures (West, 2009:365).

The items in the questionnaire related to healthy eating, a healthy lifestyle and the importance of exercise. West (2009:364) refers to the poor dietary habits of young people and singles out females who tend not to have breakfast (which is a widely used indicator of 'good' nutritional practice). West (2009:364) reports on research done in England by Craig and Mitchell (2008) on the age group of 16 to 24 years, which indicated a much lower level of physical activity amongst females, with the gender gap widening even more after leaving school. In this research, 'gender' as a variable was also significantly related to healthy lifestyle as a factor, seeing that males regarded healthy lifestyle as more important than females. However, overall 71.15% of respondents regarded exercise as important.

West (2009:364) states that the phenomenon of 'binge' drinking has increased and now appears to be widespread. It is prevalent in both sexes (although higher in males) in the 16 to 24 year age group, which incorporates the age group of the respondents in this research. Participants in the focus groups admitted to drinking quite heavily. The following comments were made: "I think it is great, because you can still do it now. You can't get drunk when you are 30"; "...I wanted to experience everything that I wasn't used to. So I think it is the thrill of it"; "...you can easily be persuaded to stay and have another drink." Santrock (2009:421) confirms that many young adults smoke and drink moderately to excessively and do not sleep sufficiently.

Even though 89.34% of respondents indicated that they opted for a healthy lifestyle to a large extent, several participants in the qualitative phase of the research reported ambivalence and contrasts in their lifestyle behaviour. They reported that they combine healthy and unhealthy habits. The following explains this phenomenon: "I smoke and jog";

“...you become intoxicated and then perhaps exercise a little the following day” ... “We all live in a healthy manner, but sleep around.” Participants seemed very aware of what could be considered healthy and unhealthy and were striving to maintain what they referred to as a ‘balance’. They admitted to the impact of peer pressure, which was illustrated by comments such as “...you want to be seen in that group... therefore you have to conform... you must adapt to them and the things they do”; “...you are a first year, you must drink! There is so much pressure.” These views were voiced by various participants; however there were also strong sentiments in favour of conformist, low risk behaviour. Values of the family of origin were strongly emphasised: “...it depends on how you were raised, and what your perception of being healthy is” ... “it depends on what type of person you are, what values you have, what goals you have... on how you were raised and what you believe.”

Tanner and Arnett (2009:42) refer to the fact that the young adult is relatively healthy seeing that fitness peaks and rates of disease and disability are low. Even though the young adult sees himself as healthy, risky behaviours among some young adults make them susceptible for unintended sub-optimal health outcomes. These risky behaviours are often substance use and sexual risk-taking.

Classic ‘protective factors’ – home making, marriage and parenting – are being delayed which can impact negatively on the lifestyle of the young adult (Parker & Williams, 2003:363; Eitle et al., 2010:311). Arnett (2006:113) explains that the young adult enjoys the period of independence and freedom, seeing that they are not just consumers of material goods and services, but also of experiences. The responsibilities of marriage and raising children would place a damper on their ability to enjoy their lives (Douglass, 2005 in Arnett, 2006:114).

7.5.6 Personal future

France (2007:152) makes the statement that global and economic restructuring impacts national economies – particularly labour markets and career or employment patterns. The result of this restructuring is that young people’s transitions from school to work collapse.

Employability, educational exclusion and underachievement cause anxiety amongst young adults. Social change is impacting on the lives on young adults. They find themselves coping with complex problems and multiple challenges.

Heinz (2009:5) refers quite aptly to Bob Dylan's song about 'the times they are changing' when stating that young generations in post-industrial service society are expected to "self-direct their decisions regarding education, training and employment in order to become more flexible participants in volatile labour markets." He elaborates on this by stating that they must themselves identify the most promising pathways to adult independence and "navigate multiple transitions with uncertain outcomes" (Heinz, 2009:5). Heinz (2009:7) comes to the conclusion that young people therefore become "their own scouts of opportunities" and that they are forced to accept the fact they might hold temporary engagements in many spheres of their lives.

It seems that the links between education and employment are complex (Dwyer et al., 2005 in Wyn, 2009:101). Wyn (2009:101) points out that even where young adults graduate with a professional degree, they often do not expect to work in their field of training or to do so for a short period of time only. In item B100 respondents were asked to what extent they saw themselves working in one career throughout their lives. Half of respondents saw themselves working in one career (50.44%), while the other half (49.56%) did not. A total of 61.42% of respondents were worried about a future career. Participants in focus groups also displayed ambivalence about their career plans. Comments to this effect were: "I will finish my studies this year and then hopefully find a job for two years. After that I might decide differently" ... "I think I'll do sales this year and something else next year." The fact that no career planning needs to be finalised and definite, came across strongly. Wyn (2009:101) mentions that young adults often scout for options to re-train and then enter different fields of work. The young adult's ability to self-navigate and the extent of their mobility depends on their ability to "understand the nature of the social, economic and political world in which they are living. [T]heir relationships with others, locally and globally...", are also crucial. Jones (2009:90) states that changes need to be seen in a broader context of a wider social shift from modern to late modern society.

Wyn (2009:101) describes the young adult who is successful in his search of employment in the following manner:

Being good navigators requires a more conscious approach to personal development so that all young people have the capacity to see how their personal biography (past) has developed and how it may be constructed (in the present) to maximize their options (for the future).

Young adults (school leavers, graduates and skilled young workers) often experience discontinuities between education and work. This and a variety of “pathway options” lead to uncertainty. What could seem like deliberate delays in terms of career and marriage commitments reflect an accurate assessment of labour market uncertainties (Heinz, 2009:6, 11). A total of 62.35% of respondents indicated their uncertainty about their future roles. This uncertainty was echoed in focus group discussions where participants voiced their uncertainty in terms of roles in the following manner: “...starting to think about the future; finding the ‘one’, getting married, getting a job... well maybe not children.”

In the quantitative study 58.16% of respondents indicated that they felt considerably uncertain about their personal future in general. During focus group discussions the following opinions were voiced: “Our parents had a retirement plan at 24... we are more... *no* direct future plans” ... “...you enjoy today and do not think of the consequences.” In reference to future planning participants placed an emphasis on exploring, experiencing, short-term, and immediate, with a focus on self and personal satisfaction. This finding is confirmed by Swartz and O’Brien (2009:217) who make the statement that the prolonged transition from adolescence to adulthood is characterised by exploration and experimentation in terms of work, relationships, lifestyles and worldviews. Eckersley (2009:356) emphasises pessimism amongst young people regarding global conditions and futures.

Wyn (2009:102) emphasises the impact of social change on how young people experience and manage their lives in late modernity. They need to be able to negotiate both the uncertainty associated with personal transition into adulthood and with wide social,

economic and political change. She accentuates the fact that young people still value formal education, seeing that it offers the possibility of future success and security. Therefore, educational qualifications are increasingly a prerequisite for employment (Wyn, 2009:103). Swartz and O'Brien (2009:217) support these views and point out that young adults are spending more time in tertiary education to meet educational demands. They are experiencing more challenges in finding adequate work and in establishing careers. In this process they are delaying marriage and parenthood.

Jones (2009:92) makes the statement that staying-on rates in education and training have increased and that the percentage of young people entering higher education has escalated. Access to the benefits of education is however not evenly spread with the result that the most vulnerable may not be granted access to education (Jones, 2009:92).

In the research factors discussed up to this point, statistically significant differences were found between the factor scores of males and females. However, no significant differences were found between personal future and gender, which could signify that the majority of *both* male and female respondents were concerned about their future careers, roles and their future in general. This concern is confirmed by Jones (2009:91) who refers to 'a core' of youth unemployment and an inability to integrate into the labour market.

The significant difference in the factor scores of white and black respondents indicate that white respondents, in the South African context, experienced more concern and uncertainty regarding their personal future. Jones (2009:121) quotes research by the Social Exclusion Unit in London which indicates that unemployment rates are "two to three times higher for young people aged 16 to 24, from ethnic minority backgrounds, regardless of educational attainment." White young adults in South Africa are a minority group, however they benefitted historically from a political and an economic system that excluded other racial groups. These complex issues are however beyond the scope of this research. Factor scores indicated that white respondents are more concerned and uncertain regarding their personal futures. Patel et al.'s (2009:271) research indicated a similar trend with the following statement: "...whites are generally satisfied with their lives but have

negative perceptions of the future while blacks express dissatisfaction with their lives yet are more optimistic about the future.”

As indicated, the exact manner in which rural, semi-urban and urban in terms of childhood home differed is unclear. The fact that rural and urban scores varied the most (lowest and highest) could indicate that urban respondents were more concerned about their personal futures. As was discussed under ‘childhood home’, France (2007:159) is of the view that class impacts outcomes. MacDonald and March (2005) as quoted by France (2007:159) refer to class divisions between geographical regions where local circumstances determine life outcomes. Urban respondents probably experience uncertainties regarding their personal future, future career and future roles much more acutely than participants from rural areas, where the pace is slower and pressure in terms of life outcomes is not as acute.

7.5.7 Social movements and diversity

Pole, Pilcher and Williams (2005:197, 198) refer to political apathy to describe the political involvement of the young adult. Jones (2009:52) expresses a similar view when she states that interest in political parties and ‘traditional politics’ amongst young people have decreased. She does however state that interest in ‘issue politics’ appears to be increasing.

Melucci (in Jones, 2009:50) is of the view that motivation for joining *social movements* stems from self-interest and personal gain. Youth culture, women’s movements and ecological protests often take place by means of direct action, outside political systems. When referring to new social movements Giddens, as quoted by Jones (2009:51), refers to the emancipatory politics of modernity and life politics of late modernity. He describes emancipatory politics as ‘politics of life chances’ and life politics as ‘politics of lifestyle’ (Giddens in Jones, 2009:52). Social movements can therefore be regarded as ‘politics of lifestyle’. Harris (2009:304) supports this view when she states that individualisation has replaced collective identification; therefore personal and lifestyle issues have become more important to young people than party-based politics.

Social movements are often globalised and issue based, for example anti-poverty, anti-capitalist and the Green movement (Jones, 2009:52). Harris (2009:305) confirms these views with her statement that young people have become more focused on quality of life issues such as the environment, peace, HIV and AIDS and animal rights. Harris (2009:305) describes the manner of involvement by young people as new, more individualised forms of activism. She mentions the following as examples of this form of activism: “computer hacking, culture jamming, brand boycotts and recycling” (Harris, 2009:305). She states that “individualization has led to new socialities and communities” ... “‘neo-tribes’, ‘lifestyles’ and ‘scenes’ describe loose networks that young people create in their leisure activities such as clubbing or online social networking” (Harris, 2009:305).

France (2007:119) views young people as the driving force of social change, who are able to adopt and integrate new technologies into their lives with great ease. According to Collin and Burns (2009:287) the Internet can reinforce existing social and political awareness among young people. Online petitioning, blogging and SMS contacting are new forms of individualised participation. The Internet is a vehicle to stimulate debate between young people and decision-makers.

The respondents in this study were decidedly less enthusiastic about social movements. Of the respondents, 52.52% did not regard social movements as important, while 51.53% did not value new norms regarding lifestyle (diversity, gay and lesbian orientation) or did so to a low extent only. As mentioned previously, gay and lesbian intolerance was portrayed by numerous respondents. Similarly, no specific interest was communicated by participants in the focus groups in terms of social movements. ‘Green’, ‘green watching’, sustainability and re-branding was mentioned in passing only, without any discussion. Very little support for Valentine’s (2003:47) view that there has been a rise in new social movements and various forms of identity politics, for example Greens, anti-racism, lesbian and gay politics, has therefore been found.

Diversity and sexual orientation as new lifestyle norms were however valued by participants in focus groups. Comments to this effect were: “But then you as a person

realise that everyone is unique and that there is a lot of diversity amongst us, that a lot of people develop these norms.” One participant described celebration of diversity in the following manner: “For me, it is the coolest thing...” Just as in the quantitative study, intolerance was also found among some focus group members, who expressed the view that they are tolerant and politically correct, but “...everyone is faking it seeing that they cannot really say what they are thinking”... “We are passive in order not to take accountability” ... “people incorporate this [no discrimination] into their lives, even though they don’t necessarily agree.” The almost 50/50 split in the views of respondents obtained by means of questionnaires was however not observed in focus groups. Passionate views in terms of acceptance and appreciation were voiced in favour of diversity, while strongly voiced intolerance and prejudice were also evident. Within focus groups postmodern values regarding tolerance towards diversity and regarding diversity as stimulating and not threatening, was therefore mostly found (Inglehart, 2000:223).

A more favourable response was received when questions regarding diversity were phrased more generically. A total of 65.91% of respondents found different cultural opinions stimulating, while 94.57% indicated that they found the fact that people have different opinions acceptable. Some degree of openness and of a broader tolerance was therefore evident.

A great majority of respondents (98.43%) regarded freedom of choice as important. Beck and Beck-Gernshein (2002), as quoted by France (2007:61), are of the view that the requirement to take control is thrust upon young people; normal biographies therefore become reflexive, do-it-yourself biographies. In late modernity individuals have to rely on their own biographies and personal skills. France (2007:61) refers to a number of studies that highlighted patterns of ‘choice’ being made by young people. They have a strong belief in commitment towards choice, seeing that it provides independence and control over their lives. As was discussed in chapter 2, within an ecological framework, the young adult’s life is shaped by the choices he makes. The environment shapes these choices. Choices in turn determine the manner in which the young adult interacts in his

environment. This establishes reciprocal interaction between the individual and the environment (Ambrosino et al., 2008:64).

There was a significant relationship between age and social movements and diversity. Respondents between the ages 21 to 25 years rated social movements and diversity as more important than respondents between the ages of 18 and 20 years. For the older subgrouping of respondents social movements, new norms regarding lifestyle, and freedom to choose and have different perspectives, was more important than for the younger subgroup. Similarly, a significant relationship was found between male and female as variables and social movements and diversity. For female respondents social movements, new norms regarding lifestyle, freedom to choose and have different perspectives was more important than for males. Wernet et al. (2005:359) have found that women and young individuals have more postmodern attitudes than men and older individuals. Kirkpatrick Johnson and Monserud (2009:388) highlight the stronger pro-social values of young females and emphasise that they are more committed to egalitarian gender roles and same-sex relationships. These quantitative findings therefore support the views of Kirkpatrick Johnson and Monserud (2009:388) as well as those of Wernet et al. (2005:359).

France (2007:159) makes the statement that class does make an impact on outcomes. MacDonald and March (2005) as quoted by France (2007:159) refer to the deep-rooted class divisions between geographical regions where local circumstances shape life outcomes. The significant relationship between 'childhood home' and social movements and diversity, where urban respondents rated this factor as significantly more important than semi-urban respondents, could therefore be ascribed to greater exposure to social movements and to diversity issues by urban respondents. The ratings of rural respondents did not differ significantly from either the semi-urban or the urban respondents.

In support of these findings, Wyn (2009:100) reports on research by McLeod and Yates (2006) and by White and Wyn (2008). These researchers found that new forms of inequalities based on class and gender have emerged. The imperative to 'make and re-

make oneself' and to 'be your own person' has a stronger impact on girls than on boys. Young men from low socio-economic backgrounds are the least likely to be open to change with new times and continue to rely on 'ways of being' that served men from their communities well under different economic conditions.

7.5.8 Cyberspace and communication

France (2007:152) states that new technology and media are becoming more influential in the day to day lives of the young. "One significant difference between the experience of people born after 1980 and their parents (and grandparents) is the role of new media and information communication technologies (ICT) in everyday life" (Collin & Burns, 2009:283). Parment (2012:108) points out the social media platforms offer opportunity for "information sharing, communication and relationship building and maintenance." Education, work and interpersonal relationships are facilitated by ICT, which implies meaning-making through technology. This technology refers to the Internet, mobile phones and online practices like 'blogging', 'mashing', chat rooms and gaming (Collin & Burns, 2009:284).

Cyberspace provides an opportunity to escape. Abbott-Chapman and Robertson (2009:247) refer to an element of social separation provided by cyberspace. They regard a quick SMS to a friend, whether on the other side of the world or sitting in the seat alongside, as a mental escape. France (2007:119) views young people as the driving force of social change, who are able to adopt and integrate new technologies into their lives with great ease. Collin and Burns (2009:287) support this view by stating that the Internet reinforces existing social and political awareness among young people. Digital technology has brought about a 'net generation' "who are skilled practitioners and consumers of the new media" (Geraci et al., 2000 in France, 2007:119). On a similarly positive note France (2007:12) refers to research by Brown (2005) which highlights how new media technology increases methods of interaction and involvement in family life, with peers and friends and in social activities. New media and technology does not seem to destroy family life and isolate young people. The majority of young people understand and manage the dangers and risks associated with the Internet (Livingston in France, 2007:122).

“Individuals born between 1981 and 1995 and thereafter form the first generation born within the digital age” (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2009:243). This age span includes the young adults involved in this research. As mentioned by Abbott-Chapman and Robertson (2009:244) ‘local’ and ‘global’ are becoming blurred. Social networking by means of digital media is independent of time and space. ‘Digital natives’ are plugged in 24/7, irrespective of context and surroundings. These authors also refer to the ‘always-on’ imperative of generation Y and state that ‘traditional linear notions’ that separate play, leisure and work are no longer relevant (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2009:244, 247). Parment (2012:1) confirms that virtual networking, new communication technologies and intensive feedback have become natural parts of everyday life for today’s young adult.

Quantitative findings confirm the above as 55.85% of respondents indicated that cyberspace was important to them. A total of 34.32% of respondents indicated that they often communicated electronically, while 54.28% admitted that they constantly communicated electronically. This implies that 88.59% of respondents communicated electronically to a large extent, which suggests that cyberspace and e-communication has become part of their lifestyles. Parment (2012:101) confirms that social networks are essential to make a career, carry out work and to fill leisure time with meaningful and enjoyable activities. “A person with a great social network is more likely to be able to solve problems that emerge and to find input and inspiration for dealing with tricky issues” (Parment, 2012:101).

Correlation analysis on the factor scores of quantitative data indicated that childhood home was significantly related to cyberspace and electronic communication as urban respondents rated this factor as significantly more important than rural respondents, with semi-urban respondents’ ratings indicating no significant variance. Lack of exposure could possibly play a significant role in terms of this finding. If the assumption is made that urban participants are generally from more middle-class environments, internet ownership and easier access creates internet literacy and confidence (France, 2007:119). This author stipulates that it is not necessarily “a question of the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’” (France, 2007:119). Given the socio-economic inequality within the South African context certain

groups could however be regarded as the 'have nots' and are excluded from access to technology. Even though social networks are online, open and international, the young adult has to be knowledgeable and must have access to take advantage of the opportunities that social networks provide (Parment, 2012:99)

Collin and Burns (2009:284) report that ICT is changing the boundaries between public and private. They quote research by Harris (2004) and Livingston (2006) which indicates that the Internet is making young people's private lives progressively more public. Harris (2004) mentions "authoring oneself online is manifest in 'confessional lifestyles' that transform intimate details and experience into material for popular consumption... the distinction between private and public is blurred". This author states that by 'living large online', young people "construct and claim new, legitimate spaces in the public sphere" (Harris, 2004 in Collin & Burns, 2009:285). Collin and Burns (2009:285) conclude that conversations that used to be private are now held in new public spaces.

As was mentioned under 7.5.3 Impact of electronic communication, focus group members admitted to scrutinising the Facebook profiles of the people they meet, before deciding to be friends with them. In the same manner they constantly update themselves on what is happening in someone else's life by viewing their Facebook profiles. This is illustrated by the following comment: "I wonder if he changed his profile? Did he put new photos up? Are there any photos up of me?" These comments illustrate the prominence of cyberspace in the lives of young adults and the impact of living online and in the public domain. In this regard Collin and Burns (2009:284) state that ICT has profoundly influenced the experiences of youth all over the world.

As was mentioned, diverse views and often directly opposing views were found even though the sample could be considered homogenous. The researcher cannot make the statement that opposing views can only be ascribed to the diversity (different biographical variables) discussed above. It is of significance that diverse views were held within focus group discussions by participants from the same gender and the same racial group. A

variety of factors seem to influence views and attitudes (socialisation, values, exposure, past experiences and personality characteristics).

To summarise, the impact of postmodernism on the young adult's lifestyle, specifically on his roles and interactions (which were specified as objectives of the research), was apparent in the above discussion. The multitude of lifestyle choices in a postmodern globalised society with its emphasis on consumerism influences traditional roles and the manner in which the young adult interacts within these roles. Consumption of material goods and of experiences play an important role in the construction of the young adult's lifestyle. The link between consumerism, image and identity, which impacts roles and interaction is evident in the young adult's focus on 'self' and fulfilment of own needs. This focus on self within a turbulent period of the life cycle is characterised by multiple role performances, changes in the sequence of key transitions and delayed adulthood. Many of the demographic markers that signify adulthood have become delayed, seeing that young adults acquire the traditional role markers of adulthood in a more variable and individualised sequence. Globalisation and uncertainty has led to the development of strategies such as postponement of life events, remaining in school, engaging in flexible relationships, taking on various roles (for example, combining extended studies and part-time employment) to ensure eventual entry into the labour market.

Interaction within the different roles performed by the young adult has undergone a transformation. Even though traditional face-to-face interaction remains important, cyberspace and electronic communication have become part of the contemporary young adult's lifestyle. Virtual networking and new communication technologies have become part of the everyday life of the young adult and impacts communication and interaction. Young adults are involved in more relationships, but many of these relationships are not as in-depth. Social media platforms and more superficial relationships therefore seem to impact and replace close personal relationships and interactions.

The impact of social, economic and political change can be observed in how young adults manage their lives in late modernity. The young adults in this study experienced concern and uncertainty about their future careers, their future roles and their future in general.

7.6 CONCLUSION

Emerging adulthood is different from other life stages seeing that it is historically recent and culturally based. The historical changes underlying this life stage have taken place world-wide across many economically developed and developing countries (Tanner & Arnett, 2009:43). The findings of this research indicate that this life stage is similarly evolving and changing within the South African context.

Eckersley (2009:353) makes the statement that “[y]oung people reflect best the tenor and tempo of the times because they are growing up in them.” In this research “the times” were described as ‘postmodern’. The researcher identified eight factors that emerged from the quantitative data, as indicators of postmodernism. It seemed plausible to explore this paradigm from an ecological perspective, seeing that “[e]cology is the science that studies relations between organisms and their environments” (Germain, 1991:15, 16). In order to obtain a holistic view of people and their environments, systems need to be understood in the context of their relationships to each other. These relationships are “characterised by continuous reciprocal exchanges, or transactions, in which people and environments... change each other” (Germain, 1991:16). The systems with which the individual interact include the individual’s family and extended family; social networks, public institutions, personal service providers and a religious or spiritual belief system (Hepworth et al., 2006:195).

Different environmental factors in the social environment affect quality of life and opportunities available for growth and development. These factors are geography, climate and resources. Economic and political forces determine the availability of opportunities and resources, for example, unpredicted economic trends may result in loss of jobs;

discrimination limits opportunities for development; and pollution contributes to health problems (Ambrosino et al., 2008:26). Eckersley (2009:356) is of the view that “[e]nvironmental degradation, [includes] widespread toxic chemical pollution, which affects neurological development and immune function.” Environmental changes, especially global warming, hold a risk to health, including mental health. “[T]he growing exploitation of ecosystems and their generally declining condition are unsustainable” (Eckersley, 2009:357). The environment therefore provides opportunities or creates challenges. The young adult is involved in dynamic and reciprocal transactions within this environment, where he has to adjust to and adapt within this environment. These dynamic and reciprocal transactions occur on different **levels of interaction**.

Within the chronosystem, as discussed by Bronfenbrenner (in Keenan & Evans, 2009:37), all aspects of time impact on development within the ecological system, seeing that all the embedded systems change over time. The chronosystem is particularly relevant in terms of postmodernism and *this* research as all aspects of time impact on development within the ecological system, seeing that all the embedded systems change over time. Parment (2012:6) makes the following statement: “A substantial body of research suggests that individuals are highly influenced by the external events that were happening when they were coming of age (generally between the years 17 to 23...)” This author points out that some events are global, while other events are local. “[A]ll events may have a varying impact across geographical areas, cultures, generations and individuals depending on their character” (Parment, 2012:6).

The impact of global issues, such as postmodernism as a present day paradigm can be observed within the macrosystem. The postmodern lifestyle does however have an impact on the young adult within all his different systems and his social functioning in these systems, seeing that it affects his views and lifestyles, which in turn affect how he adjusts in his different systems.

According to Ambrosino et al. (2008:63) the young adult’s **macrosystem** consists of ideologies, societal factors such as cultural attitudes and values, legislation, social policies,

belief systems, ethnicity and socio-economic status. Raffe (2009:111) refers to 'wider social forces', global influences and policy decisions.

Global and economic restructuring has an impact on economies. This impact is evident in labour markets as well as in career and employment patterns. Challenges in terms of personal future are experienced due to wide social, economic and political change (Wyn, 2009:103). This uncertainty was indicated in both the qualitative and quantitative research findings, seeing that most participants felt uncertain about their future roles and their personal future in general.

The macrosystem also comprises of the young adult's belief systems. Eckersley (2009:356) emphasises patterns and trends that impact well-being: the decline of religion, spiritual meaning, a coherent belief system and a clear moral code. The research findings did however indicate an increase in a need for spirituality in postmodern times, which was not necessarily linked to institutional religion. Consensus on what is meant by 'spirituality' however, proved to be problematic.

Social policies and legislation are macrosystem influences. In this research, specific views were obtained on authority as a concept. Most respondents in the quantitative study conveyed regard for authority. These views were not supported by participants in focus group discussions. The explanation provided by Harris (2009:304) is that globalisation has loosened young people's traditional citizenship ties, especially their national identities and has undermined their belief in the effectiveness of government.

The impact of global issues, such as postmodernism, can be observed in the macrosystem from where it affects all the ecological systems, seeing that development in the macrosystem filters down to the level of the young adult in the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:265). Global issues therefore impact the young adult. This impact is demonstrated in his social functioning.

Ambrosino et al. (2008:63) make the statement that the macrosystem consists of societal factors such as cultural attitudes, values towards women, diversity, the poor and violence.

Social movements are often globalised and focused on quality of life issues such as the environment, peace, HIV and AIDS and animal rights (Harris, 2009:305; Jones, 2009:52). Personal and lifestyle issues have therefore become more important to young people than party-based politics. Views on values, social movements and diversity were obtained in this research. Very little support for Valentine's (2003:47) view that there has been a rise in new social movements and various forms of identity politics has been found. Approximately half of respondents had regard for social movements. Pole et al. (2005:197) comment that 'engaged cynicism' rather than 'political apathy' describes young people's dissatisfaction with conventional political processes. This could be regarded as an apt description of respondents' views on social movements in this study.

A similar finding was reported in terms of tolerance versus prejudice regarding diversity. Strong views on both sides of the spectrum were voiced. Passionate views in terms of acceptance and appreciation were voiced in favour of diversity, while strongly voiced intolerance and prejudice were also evident from responses. When diversity issues were phrased more generically, most of the respondents found different cultural opinions stimulating and were tolerant regarding differences in opinions.

The young adult is not an active participant in the **exosystem**, but events occurring in this system affect the social functioning of the young adult. Beyer et al. (2007:25) refer to interconnections between the micro- and mesosystems which may affect the experience of the individual. These interconnections take place on the exosystem level and are described as the community-environment level (Beyer et al., 2007:25; Ambrosino et al., 2008:63). Community and workplace policies, community attitudes and values, economic and social factors within the community are factors that impact the young adult in this level of interaction (Ambrosino et al., 2008:63).

Economic and social factors, community values, as well as attitudes are portrayed within the exosystem. West (2009:365) refers to wider influences, such as capitalism (for example the tobacco industry), national cultures (for example dietary habits) and policies on smoking, drinking and drugs.

Beyer et al. (2007:25) clarify the community-environment level as medical, educational and recreational resources. Ambrosino et al. (2008:63) state that factors in this level may not relate directly to the individual but affect the way he functions. Community attitudes, values, as well as economic and social factors within the community therefore impact the social functioning of the young adult. An example of a recreational resource can be observed in Bronfenbrenner's (1979:242) description of television viewing as an illustration of interaction within the exosystem.

West (2009:369) mentions that advertising and the media cuts across class boundaries. Eckersley (2009:356) points out that young people are exposed to "[i]ncreasing media use and changing media content, linked to violence, consumerism, loss of community and social cohesion, vicarious life experiences, invidious social comparisons, and pessimism about global conditions and futures." Just as television viewing described by Bronfenbrenner (1979:242) influences by means of an external source which impacts a microsystem across ecological borders, the media, advertising and consumerism influence the young adult by means of interaction within the exosystem.

Consumerism as a research factor, with related economic, social, recreational and value implications, impacts the young adult. Diverse views on consumerism were found in this research, despite the fact that the sample for the research was drawn from a single tertiary institution. Wealth, the image portrayed by respondents and a focus on own needs were important to most respondents. A focus on and the influence of consumerism and specifically material possessions seemed to be a matter of contention, with strong pro-consumerism and anti-consumerism sentiments amongst respondents. What became clear was that consumerism and the impact thereof reached respondents via exosystem interaction and resulted in strong reactions for or against.

Mesosystem participation can be regarded as multisetting participation. It involves engaging in activities in more than one setting. Mesosystems serve as channels for transmitting information or attitudes about one setting to the other. Interactions in one microsystem therefore influence interactions in others (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:209-210).

Mesosystem participation also takes place by means of a third party who serves as an intermediate link between persons in two settings. Such second order connections can be remote, involving two or more intermediate links in the network chain. Intersetting communications are transmitted from one setting to the other by means of face-to-face interaction or indirectly via chains in the social network. Communications may be one-sided or interactive (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:210).

Intersetting knowledge refers to information or experience that exists in one setting about the other. This type of knowledge may be obtained by means of intersetting communication or from external sources, for example different types of media. The most important mesosystem function of social networks is that they serve as channels for transmitting information or attitudes about one setting to the other (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:210).

In this research, electronic communication can be regarded as a channel for transmitting information or attitudes about one setting to the other. This mode of communication is widely used by the participants in this research. Contrasting views regarding the effect of e-communication on interaction and on the quality and commitment in relationships were found.

West (2009:365, 369) emphasises the important effect of the peer group and friends on the individual. Peer group activity and youth subcultures also influence the young adult via mesosystem interaction. Role as a friend was explored in this research. For an overwhelming majority of respondents their role as a friend was important to extremely important, which emphasises the relevance of mesosystem interactions in the lives of respondents.

West (2009:365) regards 'social class' as a key social structure within which such influences are transmitted. Education, employment and friends are some of the systems on the mesolevel that the young adult interacts with on an on-going basis (Kirst-Ashman &

Hull, 2009:17). Transactions within the mesosystem could therefore be regarded as crucial in terms of the social functioning of the young adult.

The **microsystem** incorporates the individual's level of functioning, his intellectual and emotional abilities, his motivation and the interactions between him and others in his immediate environment (Ambrosino et al., 2008:63). Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2009:17) view personal characteristics and experiences as micro events, while Ambrosino et al. (2008:63) describe the microsystem as the level which includes the individual and all persons and groups that incorporate the individual's day-to-day environment. Beyer et al. (2007:25) emphasise personal interaction in a direct way; which includes the interpersonal relationships that the individual experiences within these settings.

The young adult's microsystem level incorporates his culture and gender, his interactions and relations in his intimate and immediate setting, with his friends, parents, family members, fellow students, peers and teachers. The young adult's personal experiences, activities and roles in his immediate setting constitute his microsystem level (Ambrosino et al., 2008:63; Beyer et al., 2007:25; Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2009:17).

The young adult performs multiple roles and responsibilities imposed by each of the social systems he belongs to (Germain & Gitterman, 1980:90). A multitude of lifestyle choices influence traditional roles (Abbott-Chapman & Robertson, 2009:261). The certainty of marriage, children, buying a home and holding down a permanent job belongs to a different era than the one in which today's young adult is becoming an adult.

For an overwhelming majority of respondents family, commitment towards family and roles as sons or daughters were important to extremely important. The family has "gained greater prominence" in the lives of young adults (Biggart, 2009:117). Furlong (2009:201) points out that young adults are increasingly reliant on resources from their families for extended periods of time.

According to Germain and Gitterman (1980:90) the young adult has to balance the diverse status and role responsibilities imposed by the different social systems he belongs to. His different social systems have distinctive properties, which include power distribution, role descriptions, rules, norms and networks of communication, which impact role performance (Hepworth et al., 2006:37, 38).

In the view of the researcher, the two research factors, healthy lifestyle and cyberspace and communication could be regarded as interacting on various levels of interaction within the ecological systems framework. The young adult adopts new technologies into his life with ease. He uses these technologies to interact and communicate on all levels of interaction as described within the ecological systems framework. Communication in cyberspace is used to interact within the immediate microsystem with friends, parents and family members. Social networks and communication via cyberspace occur by means of interesting knowledge and communication within the mesosystem. The media, advertising and consumerism are examples of interaction within the exosystem, which by virtue of their nature makes interaction on a virtual level accessible. Within the macrosystem, the young adult implements new technologies to effect social change. The Internet reinforces and expands social and political awareness among young people.

Similarly, healthy lifestyle impacts on all levels of interaction. Health promoting and health impairing lifestyles which relate to eating, weight and substance abuse transpires within the microsystem. The individual's level of functioning, his intellectual and emotional abilities, his motivation and the interactions between him and others in his immediate environment will impact his lifestyle. West (2009:369) indicates that exposures in the family of origin impacts health behaviours; lifestyles developed in youth. Health behaviours are chosen activities linked to lifestyles. Within mesosystem interaction peer groups, friends and youth subcultures influence the lifestyle of the young adult. Community attitudes and values, economic and social factors impact the young adult's lifestyle within the exosystems level of interaction (Ambrosino et al., 2008:63).

The macrosystem includes the young adult's belief system. The decline of religion, spiritual meaning, a coherent belief system and a clear moral code impacts attitudes towards a healthy lifestyle. Capitalism, national cultures and policies on smoking, drinking and drugs impact the young adult on a macro level (West, 2009:365).

According to Jones (2009:88) life events which constituted developmental social tasks are losing much of their meaning in the shift to late modernity. 'Adulthood' that used to be a destination is becoming less stable in terms of jobs, marriage and parenthood. The "normative linear timetable of events" (leaving school, starting to work, marriage and parenthood) are out of date and may have belonged to a "mythical golden age" (Jones, 2009:88). She points out that transitions research has therefore shifted towards a "more holistic and socio-biographical (rather than event-mapping) approach to young people's lives... [this] approach requires that the lives of the young are seen as an integrated whole" (Jones, 2009:89).

A summary, as well as conclusions and recommendations based on research findings will be presented in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Parment (2012:xv) refers to tensions among generations. To support his view, he provides the following quote by Socrates:

Our youth now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for their elders and love chatter in place of exercise; they no longer rise when elders enter the room; they contradict their parents, chatter before company; gobble up their food and tyrannize their teachers.

This description by Socrates has in all probability been echoed by many generations of older people. Parment (2012:xv) describes a negative bias in older people's way of describing young people – whether referring to them as a generation, as colleagues or in whichever role they are performing. Presently generation Ys tend to be dependent on parental support and they are facing very tough job markets. He describes them as “coddled and entitled and can't pay attention for more than 140 characters at a time!” France (2007:1) confirms these negative prejudices with his statement that a range of fears and anxieties has constantly shaped the ‘youth question’ and influences the question ‘what is to be done about young people?’ Parment (2012:xvi) however, after working with millennials for eight years, describes them as optimistic, innovative and courageous. After exploring the social functioning of young adults, the researcher has found that young adults today face challenges unique to the postmodern era, but equally also new opportunities and prospects, provided by a postmodern time frame.

These challenges and opportunities will become evident in the conclusions derived at based on the research findings. In this concluding chapter, the researcher will indicate whether the goal and objectives of the study were achieved. This process will be followed by providing answers to the research questions, which will provide insight into the social

functioning of young adults and might contribute towards an advancement of knowledge in the field of social work (Bless et al., 2006:23).

8.2 RESEARCH GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

As was previously discussed, the goal of this study was to explore and describe the impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults, with particular emphasis on their roles and interaction from an ecological systems perspective.

The researcher achieved this goal by the accomplishment of the following four objectives:

- **Objective 1:** To conceptualise and contextualise a theoretical framework regarding
 - ecological systems theory to analyse the complex variables for conceptualisation of young adults as persons-in-environment;
 - the social functioning of young adults within their social environment;
 - the general orientations, nature, characteristics and impact of postmodernism as a present-day paradigm; and
 - young adulthood as a stage in life-span development.

An **ecological systems framework** was reviewed by recognising the social worker's systems perspective when working with clients, whether as individuals, families, groups or communities. Both systems theory and an ecological perspective emphasise the relevance of systems and the interaction among various levels of systems. Exposure to a variety of systems by virtue of different roles and responsibilities results in constant reciprocal transactions. The different levels of interaction, namely the micro, meso, exo and macro levels in which the young adult functions within the ecological perspective were explored.

The researcher made the assumption that a postmodern lifestyle has an influence on the **social functioning** of young adults in their different systems. Roles and interactions as

the two indicators of social functioning were explored. The link between role behaviour and interaction was explored and discussed.

Based on a thorough literature review, **postmodernism** was conceptualised and described, with a specific focus on the postmodern individual, who mainly focuses on 'self' and own experiences. Consumerism and materialism and the impact on identity were explored. When discussing a postmodern lifestyle, a philosophy of individualism and postmodern values were discussed. The connection between technological innovation, globalisation and economic trends within a postmodern society was explored. A general moral decline, which impacts the values and motivations of young adults, was reported on. The influence of traditional religious institutions has declined, but a new interest in spirituality has increased.

Young adulthood as a stage in the life-span was conceptualised. This life stage was described with specific focus on physical, sexual, cognitive, emotional and social, as well as moral development. The social development of the young adult was discussed by focussing on relationships, social networks and intimate relationships. The social roles of the young adult, with its two identifiable markers, namely the adult role and the married role, were discussed. Work and career and the young adult lifestyle were singled out as important features of young adulthood.

- **Objective 2 and 3:** To explore and describe the impact of postmodernism on the role function(s) and interaction(s) of young adults within their environment.

In this research understanding was expanded by means of a **mixed methods research approach**, seeing that it comprised both a qualitative and a quantitative component. The mixing of datasets provided a more complete picture of the research problem. Using an **exploratory mixed methods research design** was therefore appropriate in this research. Sequential timing within the exploratory mixed methods design, with the qualitative data collected and analysed first, followed by the quantitative data therefore allowed for the one dataset to build upon the other. This particular research design addressed the research

problem of this particular study. Conducting qualitative research enabled the researcher to gather rich data which portrayed the social functioning of young adults based on lived experiences in the 'real world'. Conducting quantitative research enabled the researcher to determine the impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults. Seeing that measurement is one of the best means of creating objective scientific knowledge, this impact was measured by using a quantitative data gathering instrument. This objective knowledge, obtained by means of empirical evidence, could determine the impact of postmodernism on the role functions and interactions of young adults within their social environments.

- **Objective 4:** To reach conclusions and make recommendations regarding the impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults from an ecological systems perspective to make a contribution to the knowledge repertoire of social workers in order to enhance quality service to young adults.

Objective 4 is addressed in the following section of this chapter by means of the presentation of conclusions and recommendations.

8.3 RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions were arrived at based on the literature review and based on the empirical study. These conclusions will be presented in this section.

8.3.1 Research conclusions based on literature review

Chapter 2: Theoretical foundation for study: The ecological systems framework

- Various theoretical foundations are applicable to the social work discipline, for example psychological, economic and political, sociological, as well as various developmental theories.

- The social work profession deals with problems in social functioning and therefore focusses on the interface between person and environment.
- Social work aims to enhance social functioning by addressing relationships, interactions and interdependence between people and environments.
- A broad framework that accounts for individual differences, cultural diversity and growth, as well as change at the individual, family, group, organisational, community and societal levels is recommended.
- An ecological perspective is useful for understanding social welfare problems seeing that the individual, group or community's lives are shaped by the choices they make; the environment shapes their choices, while their choices shape the way they interact in their environment. Individuals therefore develop and adapt through transactions with many systems in their environments.
- The social environment involves the conditions, circumstances and human interactions that surround human beings. Human beings are dependent on effective interactions with the environment in order to survive and grow.
- Environmental factors, economic and political forces, as well as availability of opportunities and resources impact the social environment.
- The ecological concepts, *habitat* and *niche* are relevant to social work. For the individual the physical and social settings of community, workplace and school constitute the habitat. Niche refers to statuses or roles occupied by the individual.
- The social environment is the human environment, which consists of other people and relationships, which range from social networks to social institutions. The physical environment consists of the built world and the natural world. Influenced by culture, the social and physical environment interacts with and shapes each other.
- The ecology of human development is based on a concentric arrangement of systems, where the microsystem is the smallest and most direct system that the person experiences and the macrosystem represents the wider social policy and socio-cultural setting. This wider system influences all the other levels of the environment.
- Within an ecological framework, the developing person is viewed as a growing, dynamic entity; the interaction between person and environment is two-directional and characterised by reciprocity; the environment is not limited to a single setting, but

incorporates interconnections between settings and external influences from the larger surroundings.

- The ecological environment consists of a structure of systems, each contained within the next. These structures are the micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystems.
- The individual's social functioning as a system and as a subsystem takes place within these various levels of interaction, also referred to as levels of the environment on the micro, meso, exo and macro levels.
- Role performance and mutual interaction between the individual and his environment are the aspects of social functioning that are the concern of the social work profession.
- Social systems have unique properties which include role definitions, rules, norms, channels of communication and interactional patterns.

Chapter 3: Postmodernism as a present-day paradigm

- Postmodernism has been referred to as a condition, a period or a historical era. It can however be described as a present-day paradigm; therefore, the way in which the world is viewed.
- The nature of postmodernism can be depicted by the following: relativism, challenging of convention, an emphasis on pluralism, diversity, acceptance of innovation and change, as well as an emphasis on new social movements.
- Postmodern thinking accentuates that meaning is supplied by the experiencer and that a multitude of truths exist; thinking, feeling and choosing describe the postmodern individual. The focus is on personal experiences and own interpretation.
- The youth is equated with an absence of goals and limits, the collapse of norms and a moral base and the prominence of self-centeredness.
- Postmodern communication technologies attract the young adult for various reasons: it provides for a wide range of online activities; it introduces possibilities for playing with identities; space and distance becomes irrelevant in cyberspace; and it is convenient, immediate and economical.
- Online activities impact human interaction seeing that it replaces close personal relationships and social activities necessary for the maintenance of healthy social relationships.

- Postmodernism does not only result in a new type of social life, it also brought about a new economic order, referred to as a consumer society. This consumer society represents new consumption patterns, high turnover, ever-present advertising and the media.
- Consumption is linked to construction of identity seeing that material goods convey meaning and significance and distinguishes the 'self'.
- A postmodern lifestyle is characterised by a philosophy of individualism, with a focus on personal fulfilment and individual concerns.
- The postmodern habitat is stratified, with the rich who have access to credit and expertise, at the top. The middle stratum also has access to the postmodern culture, while in South Africa the poor form a broad lower strata and are marginalised, without the money for a free existence within the postmodern habitat.
- Globalisation and economic trends in a postmodern society has resulted in uncertain economic futures, with young adults moving back in with their parents and thus being regarded as a vulnerable group. This extended period of dependency postpones the achievement of adulthood.
- Postmodernism rejects and challenges authority and the structures of society. Standards of any kind have become relative and morality has declined. This leads to ethical dilemmas where individuals have to choose for themselves which rules of behaviour to follow.
- Postmodernism has infiltrated interpersonal relationships. Diminished moral responsibility has resulted in relationships that are no longer nurtured.
- Virtual interaction has resulted in superficial communication which has subsequently infiltrated interpersonal relationships.
- Young adults occupy multiple roles. These different roles are not easily differentiated. An uncertain future and choices between lifestyles, sub-cultures and identities impact the roles of young adults.

Chapter 4: Young adulthood as a stage in life-span development

- In Western industrialised societies the life-span is visualised as a straight line that extends from birth to death, divided into age periods. Role, status and responsibility according to age group are assigned in a diverse manner in different societies.
- Young adulthood is one of the major periods of the life-span. Changes in family cycle patterns due to socio-economic, gender and cultural factors create nuances that impact life-span development. The impact on young adulthood is especially evident.
- Based on the literature, the young adult in terms of this research is defined as an individual between the ages of 18 and 25 years, characterised by experimentation and exploration, especially in terms of identity, career and lifestyle.
- Physically the young adult reaches his peak during early adulthood. Depending on lifestyle, he enjoys good health.
- During early adulthood sexuality and emotional intimacy begin to coincide. A delay in the age of marriage leads to varied sexual lifestyles. Postmodern society is moving towards sexual norms that provide wider opportunities for sexual gratification and individual self-expression.
- Cognitive functioning peaks during early adulthood, seeing that the young adult is able to consolidate formal operational thinking. He is also able to demonstrate reflective and relativistic thinking and to understand that knowledge depends on a subjective perspective.
- Early adulthood is the time for dealing with the psychosocial conflict of intimacy versus isolation. The young adult must attain a sense of individual identity before being able to commit himself to a shared identity with another person. Intimacy implies the ability to establish close relationships with others and to be able to give and receive friendship and love.
- Patterns that young adults bring into intimate relationships during early adulthood are developed in the relationships they have within the family of origin. The young adult explores the forming of relationships that combine emotional closeness, shared interests as well as sexual intimacy.
- Social role is a concept commonly used for understanding adulthood. Adults assume multiple roles that provide a variety of social demands. The roles of adulthood give

structure to adult identity and meaning to life. The young adult conforms to role expectations, revises or rejects them. New roles imply new patterns of interaction.

- Social class groups agree on the appropriate age for important life events, such as marriage, child-rearing and retirement. The social clock is constantly being reset as a result of the challenges and demands of a postmodern society.
- A decline in identifiable social markers of adulthood leads to diminished social norms which provide structures that guide young adults into adult roles. Transition to adulthood is the most challenging for young adults with little guidance from their families of origin or from organised religion.
- The simultaneous adoption of various social roles and the reversibility of status lead to drastic changes in the young adult's life course. Increased individualism result in later completion of life events.
- Young adults are confronted with new developmental challenges which lead to a necessity to repeatedly realise themselves due to the changes in goal content and processes of young adults from different historical time periods.
- Reaching adulthood is a gradual process which takes years to complete and is not marked by a specific transition.
- The normative order of transition has changed. Individual motives direct behaviour. An extended period of education based on new demands, which lead to lifelong learning, often delays this transition to adulthood.
- A democratic shift has taken place across industrialised countries which has resulted in the median age of first marriage to rise steeply to the late twenties or passing the age of 30 years; this results in a later age for first childbearing. The young adult waits longer for marriage, but not for sex; sexual initiation and marriage are no longer closely linked.
- Young adults witness significant numbers of divorces, they plan to have fewer children, their marriage rate is low and they have a high rate of living alone – once they leave the parental home.
- Societal transformation has altered the sociocultural landscape of marriage and family formation: there is a rise in cohabitation, access to contraception and abortion,

increase in the participation in higher education and a significant increase in the proportion of women in the workforce.

- Marriage as institution is however still valued; acquiring a marriage mentality, achieving economic stability and emotional maturity and having a stable relationship are however prerequisites for marriage. Marriage is therefore delayed until personal and professional goals are achieved.
- The transition to adulthood results in changes in roles, relationship networks and institutional ties, which may be a time of greater change in values than any other period of the life course. Young adulthood is a time of planning; values guide thinking about issues that relate to this life stage.
- Postmodernity impacts attitudes and social norms. Women and younger individuals have more postmodern attitudes than men and older individuals; young people emphasise values that reflect the pursuit of one's own well-being.
- The two main influences on moral development are cognitive growth and social experiences, particularly interactions with peers.
- Reaching the conventional level of moral reasoning and living up to the moral standard of parents and society requires the ability to take the perspectives of other people. Postconventional moral reasoning requires more cognitive growth, namely a command of formal operational thinking – evident only in adulthood.
- Advanced schooling and participating in a complex, diverse and democratic society can stimulate moral development.
- An interest in spirituality has increased during postmodern times. Spirituality is no longer linked to institutional religion; it sometimes even stands in opposition to religion. Various definitions of spirituality exist; it could however be viewed as ethical ideals that are transcendent, therefore that call on the individual to aspire to a manner of being and acting which is beyond his present level of existence.
- In choosing a career, the young adult should match his personality, his values and the expression of his identity with a particular career.
- There is a narrowing of the gap between young men and young women in educational opportunities and achievement, with young women catching up with the males.

- Economic restructuring in postmodern times have shaped work and career opportunities. Young people today face an increasing wage gap with older workers, earning instability, more temporary jobs, lower-quality jobs, fewer benefits, instability in employment and a fast growth of part-time jobs.
- Remaining in one career and job has become less evident; a need for lifelong learning, flexibility and employability is emphasised.
- A blurring of tasks takes place as formal education and paid work are combined; leisure and work overlap. This is not as much a 'refusal of adulthood', but could be regarded as a refusal of older versions of adulthood.
- Across industrialised societies, adulthood is postponed because of educational and occupational careers, resulting in prolonged financial and material dependence.
- Since the 1970s a set of interrelated trends, for example de-industrialisation, economic and occupational restructuring, and higher levels of unemployment have led to a shortage of entry jobs for school leavers. The result is that more young adults are continuing with tertiary education and adding to their qualifications – therefore a prolonged school-to-work transition.
- In late modernity the responsibility for learning has shifted from the educator to the educated. The young adult therefore needs to understand what is relevant, how to access information and how to develop knowledge in order to direct his own life.

8.3.2 Research conclusions based on empirical findings

Research conclusions based on empirical findings will be presented according to the eight research factors identified in the empirical study. These factors are regarded by the researcher as indicative of the postmodern paradigm.

Religion and formal structures

- Respondents indicated a tendency towards valuing traditional and conventional religious norms and practices. This does not necessarily include a need to attend regular religious meetings.

- According to respondents spiritual norms guide their behaviour. What is meant by the concept 'spirituality' is unclear, seeing that descriptions provided were indistinct and vague.
- Guidance by formal structures was valued; these structures did not necessarily include the church. Regard for the views of people with authority was also expressed. This regard was however qualified within focus groups, as only provided if earned and that respect must be deserved. A tendency by respondents to challenge authority and towards 'own authority' was also evident.
- Personal experience was highly valued and influenced choices made by respondents. These personal experiences also influenced the development of values. The majority of participants indicated that they make their own rules.
- Cultural structures and a cultural background were important to the majority of respondents, who were also able to link a cultural background to values. Regard for parents and their views were therefore important to respondents.
- The majority of respondents expressed traditional views regarding sexual activity without commitment to a partner. Commitment to a partner was valued, but not necessarily marriage as an institution. Views on marriage versus cohabitation were divided, with strong views in favour of both.
- Correlation analysis of data indicated that gender was significantly related to religion and formal structures as females scored religion higher than males, which indicated that religion was more important to the young female than to the young male.
- Race was also significantly related to religion and formal structures as black respondents indicated religion and formal structures as more important than white respondents.
- Similarly childhood home was significantly related to religion and formal structures as rural and semi-urban respondents rated religion and formal structures as more important than urban respondents.

Image and consumerism

- Even though the consumer market creates meaning for many young adults, this research did not find an overwhelming predisposition towards consumerism and materialism.
- Contrasting views on the significance of consumerism in their lives were found in both the qualitative and the quantitative findings of the research. References were made to both: commodities and brands that were 'must haves', as well as to an irritation with such views. Wealth was however important to a majority of respondents.
- An overwhelming majority of respondents regarded their own physical attractiveness as very important. More than half of respondents also regarded spending energy on their own images as important.
- A strong link between consumerism, with its impact on image and identity was made, with a split in views regarding the significance of materialism and wealth in terms of self-esteem and personal identity. This link existed for some respondents, but not for others. Opposing opinions therefore exist.
- An overwhelming tendency to focus on 'the self' and on own needs and satisfactions was found in this research. Views were however more balanced when considering image and identity in terms of 'others'. What other people thought of them and the images of friends around them were only important to a limited extent. The majority of respondents also indicated that consumerism and material possessions do not influence their social relationships. The influence of peer subcultures on identity construction therefore seemed to be diminishing.
- Correlation analysis of data indicated that gender was significantly related to image and consumerism as a factor, seeing that males place greater significance on image and consumerism. This finding leads to the conclusion that females hold weaker materialistic values than males.
- Black respondents have a higher regard for image and consumerism than white respondents. Rural respondents also rated this research factor as more important than urban respondents. This conclusion should be interpreted within a post-apartheid framework, where the previously suppressed and disadvantaged young black adult strives to enhance his socio-economic standing.

Impact of electronic communication

- Electronic communication has become integrated into the lifestyle of young adults. A majority of respondents however indicated that personal contact and face-to-face communication remains important.
- The majority of respondents agreed that they, to a limited extent, were more open and honest during e-communication than during real life situations. A smaller percentage of participants admitted that they, to a large extent, were more open and honest during e-communication. The latter view was supported during qualitative findings, with views that communication in cyberspace allows for discussion on a deeper level.
- The majority of respondents indicated that they do not change who they are, or only slightly so, when using electronic modes of communication. Contrasting views were found in the qualitative findings, with participants admitting that personalities can be created and events can be manipulated to make you seem more attractive and alluring.
- The majority of respondents indicated that e-communication has a limited effect on their relationships and commitments towards others. A similar view was expressed in terms of influence on quality of relationships and on replacing close personal relationships. Qualitative findings however, indicated superficial relationships with more people and miscommunications and misunderstandings due to the personal needs and desires of recipients.
- Gender and race as variables were significantly related to the impact of e-communication seeing that male respondents and black respondents respectively scored impact of e-communication higher than female respondents and white respondents. A similar finding applies to rural respondents, who regarded e-communication as more important than both semi-urban and urban respondents.

Roles and relationships

- An overwhelming majority of respondents indicated their attachment to family and home by rating family, family members and roles as sons and daughters as important to extremely important.

- Role as a friend was equally important as respondents rated this role as important to a high extent. The majority of respondents would however rather please their parents than their friends.
- Cohabitation as an important phenomenon of late modernity surfaced under roles and relationships as well (see religion and formal structures above). Cohabitation, also described as serial monogamy, was regarded as a new pattern of partnership which allows for a greater element of choice in romantic unions.
- Correlation analysis of data indicated that gender was significantly related to roles and relationships as a factor, seeing that females place greater significance on roles and relationships than males. This finding leads to the conclusion that females hold family and relationships with parents and family members in higher regard than males.

Healthy lifestyle

- An overwhelming majority of respondents rated healthy eating as important. This view was supported by qualitative findings, seeing that participants regarded their image and the importance of 'looking good' as important. These findings were also qualified by views that healthy eating is expensive and tends to be a subculture of which not everyone forms a part. Respondents therefore know that healthy eating is important but knowing and doing seemed not to coincide.
- A healthy lifestyle was also rated as important by a large majority of respondents. During focus group discussions where participants could elaborate, they voiced the importance of a healthy lifestyle but elaborated on often combining healthy and unhealthy and subsequently striving for a balance in lifestyle. Peer pressure impacts negatively on healthy lifestyle, while values of the family of origin on the other hand influenced a more conformist, low risk lifestyle.
- Similarly the majority of participants regarded exercise as important. This was also qualified during focus group discussions where participants admitted to both smoking and jogging; becoming intoxicated and then exercising the following day; living in a healthy manner, but sleeping around.

- Correlation analysis of data indicated that gender was significantly related to healthy lifestyle as a factor, seeing that males regarded healthy lifestyle as more important than females. This was supported by literature findings.

Personal future

- A majority of respondents indicated that they were worried about a future career, their personal future and future roles. During focus group discussions it did however seem as if young adults plan as they go along. Future planning is therefore not rigid and final; plans evolve and change constantly, depending on social, economic and political factors.
- A significant difference between the factor scores of white and black respondents indicates that white respondents experienced more apprehension and insecurity regarding their personal future than black respondents.

Social movements and diversity

- Strong support for social movements and for new norms regarding lifestyle was not found. Half of respondents were in support, while the other half was not.
- A certain degree of ambivalence were also found in qualitative findings, seeing that some participants felt that they were obliged to act in a politically correct manner or were passive in order not to be accountable. A majority of participants did however express appreciation for diversity, for non-traditional sexual orientation and for uniqueness. Some measure of tolerance towards more postmodern values was therefore found.
- Appreciation for different perspectives and for different cultural views was expressed by the majority of respondents. A great majority of respondents found the fact that people have different opinions acceptable. Freedom of choice was similarly regarded as important.
- Correlation analysis of data indicated significant relationships between variables, seeing that the respondents between the ages of 21 and 25 years regarded social movement and diversity as more important than the younger age group of 18 to 20, and female respondents regarded social movements and new norms regarding

lifestyle as more important than males. Similarly urban respondents also regarded this factor as significantly more important than semi-urban respondents.

Cyberspace and communication

- Most of the respondents regarded cyberspace as important, with an overwhelming majority of respondents reporting that they often communicated electronically. This indicates that e-modes of communication are extremely important to young adults and have become part of their lifestyle.
- A significant relationship exists between cyberspace and communication and childhood home, seeing that urban respondents rated this factor as significantly more important than rural respondents.
- Young people's private lives are becoming more public and therefore open for popular consumption. Private conversations are therefore held in public spaces.

It became clear that general assumptions based on age, race, gender or childhood home cannot be made. Respondents, who could be considered homogeneous to a large extent, provided varied opinions and beliefs. This became clear during focus group discussions where it was evident that views were often not culture or race specific. This emphasises the fact that the young adult is a 'postmodern individual' who regards choice, free expression and autonomy highly.

Views supplied during quantitative data gathering were verified during focus group discussions, but when elaborating on these views, different nuances, contradictions and inconsistencies became clear. More detailed and reliable data therefore seemed to be collected during the qualitative phase of data gathering. A more comprehensive view was provided when the opportunity to elaborate was provided. The questionnaire however provided an opportunity for the gathering of information regarding postmodernism on a much broader scale.

8.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on research findings, recommendations are made for application in social work practice and in terms of future research.

8.4.1 Recommendations for practice application

Therapeutic intervention with the young adult holds unique challenges when considering their inclination towards choice, their focus on own needs and their desire for instantaneous solutions. However, certain basic intervention steps remain crucial in terms of practice application and these will now be highlighted.

- In order to determine the nature of the young adult's social functioning, his role functioning and interaction on different levels of the environment should be assessed. The young adult assumes multiple roles (for example, combining tertiary education with part-time employment). These multiple roles result in a variety of social demands. In order to relate to the young adult, an in-depth understanding of the challenges and demands relating to the specific life stage and the role performances required are necessary.
- Practitioners should acknowledge the young adult's need to focus on himself, his own well-being and on his perceptions of reality. The young adult needs to be accepted as a unique and worthy individual who esteems his own abilities to make rules for himself. During intervention with the young adult, his focus on himself, his own needs and satisfactions, the importance of his image and his own personal experiences, should therefore be incorporated.
- Intervention should focus on the young adult's uncertainty and indecision regarding his personal future, future roles and future career. These crucial aspects provide a vantage point for connecting with him. Practitioners should focus on the young adult's attachments to his family and his home, as well as his relationships with friends. These role players are resources to draw on during the intervention process.
- As indicated in the study, formal structures and organised religion do not provide the guidance sought by young adults. Values guide thinking about crucial issues. Postmodern values reflect a pursuit of own well-being. Social workers and other key

role players specialising in young adulthood need to address this need by providing creative guidance to accommodate the young adult's postmodern views of religion, spirituality and formal structures.

- Young adults acquire the traditional role markers of adulthood in a more variable and individualised sequence. Demands placed on young adults and changes in the sequence of key transitions delay the transition to adulthood, for example the extended period of education, which results in lifelong learning. This extended period necessitates careful planning. Without guidance from family members, this transition is demanding. Parents are often not equipped with the knowledge or access to relevant resources to assist in this vital planning process. Parent training is recommended in order to equip parents in understanding and guiding their young adult children in terms of the challenges faced during this life stage.
- Practitioners should familiarise themselves with the latest information communication technologies (ICT) if young people (adolescents and young adults) are their target for intervention. Social workers should therefore become familiar with how young adults think and communicate.

8.4.2 Recommendations for future research

This research focuses on early adulthood as life stage within a postmodern time frame. The following research themes can have value for social work and related disciplines:

- **Transition to adulthood**

The transition to adulthood is delayed in postmodern times. This delay implies prolonged financial and emotional dependency on parents and family. The impact of this delay on the young adult's self-esteem and general well-being is of concern. Psychosocial factors that enhance successful transition to adulthood could be a valuable research topic. Exploring factors that have long-term implications for successful adult outcomes is recommended.

- **Roles**

Various aspects influence the social roles of the contemporary young adult in South Africa. These are: social change and its impact on traditional role markers of adulthood; the

impact of new socialisation agents on traditional social roles; the impact of occupying multiple roles on the social functioning of the young adult; the impact of young adult values and beliefs on social roles and behaviour; the impact of information communication technology (ICT) on the young adult's relationships, roles and interaction patterns within his social context. Results obtained from the study have indicated changes in social roles. In-depth research on the specific aspects mentioned will provide insight into a turbulent period in the life cycle, characterised by multiple role performances and changes in the sequence of key transitions.

- **Sosio-economic status, class and diversity**

Diversity and variation in sosio-economic status and class within the South African context impact young adult outcomes. This diversity provides opportunities for relevant research on young adult outcomes. Various aspects related to diversity could be researched within the South African context:

- The impact of social class / gender / race / ethnicity in South Africa on the young adult's social context and on the young adult's psychosocial functioning;
- The impact of de-culturalisation on the social functioning of the African young adult;
- The impact of geographical area and socio-economic status on transitions to adulthood in the South African context;
- Socioeconomic challenges experienced by young adults, especially those in rural areas, and the influence thereof on their psychosocial functioning within a postmodern era.

8.5 ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The goal of this study was to explore and describe the impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults, with particular emphasis on their roles and interaction from an ecological systems perspective.

The researcher achieved this goal by the accomplishment of the objectives, briefly discussed in table 8.1.

Table 8.1: Accomplishment of the study objectives

No	Objectives	Achievement
1	To conceptualise and contextualise a theoretical framework regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ecological systems theory • social functioning of young adults • the impact of postmodernism as a present-day paradigm • adulthood as a life stage 	This objective was achieved as reflected in the literature review presented in chapters 2, 3 and 4
2	To explore and describe the impact of postmodernism on the role function(s) of young adults	This objective was accomplished by means of the presentation of qualitative findings in chapter 6 and quantitative findings in chapter 7. An integration of all findings were presented in chapter 7
3	To explore and describe the impact of postmodernism on the interaction(s) of young adults within their environments	This objective was accomplished by means of the presentation of qualitative findings in chapter 6 and quantitative findings in chapter 7. An integration of all findings were presented in chapter 7
4	To reach conclusions and make recommendations regarding the impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults from an ecological systems perspective	This objective was achieved by means of a summarise presentation of findings, conclusions and recommendations in this concluding chapter

8.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The above goal and objectives provided the framework for the main research question, namely: What is the impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults? In order to answer this question, the following sub-questions were formulated:

- What is the impact of postmodernism on the *role performance* of young adults?
- What is the impact of postmodernism on the *social interaction* of young adults in their environment?

The research results addressed the research question and sub-questions. The research clearly indicated that the eight research factors, namely religion and formal structures; image and consumerism; impact of electronic communication; roles and relationships; lifestyle; personal future, social movements and diversity, as well as cyberspace and communication, explored and discussed as characteristic of postmodernism, have an impact on the social functioning of young adults. The impact on roles and interaction as components of social functioning was indicated in the previous chapter where the researcher discussed the manner in which the multitude of lifestyle choices in a postmodern globalised society, with its emphasis on consumerism, influences traditional roles and the manner in which the young adult interacts within these roles.

Based on the above, the researcher believes that the research questions have been addressed by the research and that the answers to these questions have provided insight into the social functioning of young adults. The nature of the social functioning of young adults from an ecological systems perspective is relevant for the social work profession and to social work practitioners working with young adults.

An improved understanding of the impact of postmodernism on young adults' social functioning has provided knowledge about and insight into the postmodern paradigm, as well as into a life stage often described as 'troubled' and 'at-risk'. This research has highlighted issues, explored problems, raised additional questions and enhanced critical reflection (Dominelli, 2005:226). The ecological perspective provided a context for considering the influence of postmodernism on the social functioning of the young adult. Environmental factors on the different levels of interaction impact the young adult's role performance and interaction, and therefore influence his social functioning. Postmodernism affects views and lifestyles, which in turn impacts the young adult's performance of roles and his interactions within all his different social systems.

The contemporary young adult between the ages of 18 and 25 years explores and experiments in terms of his identity and lifestyle. Thinking, questioning, feeling and a

strong focus on 'self' characterise this young adult. Views and values seem to be person-specific and based on emotions and experiences.

“Young people have been seen as a social barometer, as indicators of the state of the society they live in...” (Jones, 2009:182). As indicated in chapter 3, postmodernism captures the spirit of our contemporary age. When considering this statement by Jones, the social functioning of the young adult could also be regarded as indicative of the spirit of our contemporary age. This highlights the relevance of research on young adulthood.

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APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT

Principal Investigator:

Ms H Bauling – DPhil: Social Work student
Department of Social Work & Criminology
University of Pretoria
PRETORIA
0002

INFORMED CONSENT

1. Title of the study

The impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults.

2. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study to explore and describe the impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults, with particular emphasis on their roles and interaction from an ecological systems perspective.

3. Procedures

Research participant/respondent will be required to:

€ complete a questionnaire pertaining to the purpose of the study (duration: 30 min)

€ participate in a focus group discussion pertaining to the purpose of the study. This focus group discussion will be recorded by using an audiotape recorder (duration: 60 min).
(Researcher will indicate the applicable procedure)

Data obtained by means of this research will be utilised for a research report and articles in scientific journals and will be kept in a safe place for 15 years as dictated by the university, thereafter it will be destroyed.

4. Risks and discomforts

No risks and discomforts/emotional harm are foreseen. Any emotional discomfort prompted by the reflection of social functioning could, however, be followed up with Dr M Nolte, a counsellor at the Student Support Centre.

5. Benefits of the study

Research participant/respondent understands that this study has no immediate benefit to himself/herself. However, the results of the study will make a contribution to the social work profession in order to enhance quality service to young adults.

6. Participant's rights

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and participants/respondents can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without stating a reason.

7. Financial compensation

The research participant/respondent understands that he/she will receive no financial compensation for their participation in the study.

8. Confidentiality

All information obtained will be treated confidentially. Data and conclusions that may be reported will not include any information which may lead to the identification of any participant/respondent in the study. All signed letters of informed consent will be kept in a confidential file. Only the researcher will have access to this information.

9. Contact details of researcher

Ms H Bauling can be contacted at (012) 420 4932 during office hours or on (012) 346 5805 after hours if there are any questions or concerns.

I, the undersigned participant/respondent, understand my rights as a research subject. I voluntarily consent to participate in this study. I understand what the study is about and how and why it is being done.

To be completed by the investigator and the participant

Participant/respondent's name:

Participant/respondent's signature:

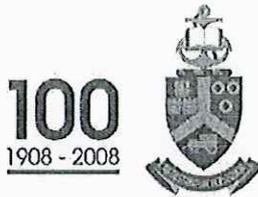
Date:

Investigator's name:

Investigator's signature:

Date:

APPENDIX B: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Research Ethics Committee

15 October 2009

Dear Prof Lombard,

Project: The impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults
Researcher: H Bauling
Supervisor: Prof CSL Delport
Department: Social Work and Criminology
Reference: 82517462

I have pleasure in informing you that the Registrar and Student Dean have formally given **approval** for the above study to be conducted at the University of Pretoria. The approval is subject to:

- the candidate abiding by the principles and parameters set out in her application and research proposal in the actual execution of the research;
- the letter of informed consent must include information on the participants be able to withdraw from the project at any stage.

The Committee requests you to convey this approval to Ms Bauling.

We wish you well in the completion of this research project.

Sincerely



Prof. Elsabé Taljard
Acting Chair: Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail: elsabe.taljard@up.ac.za

APPENDIX C: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

100
1908 - 2008



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Research Ethics Committee

12 October 2009

Dear Prof Lombard

Project: The impact of postmodernism on the social functioning of young adults
Researcher: H Bauling
Department: Social Work and Criminology
Reference: 82517462

Thank you for your response to the Committee's letter of 5 September 2007.

I have pleasure in informing you that the Research Ethics Committee formally **approved** the above study on 8 October 2009. The approval is subject to the candidate abiding by the principles and parameters set out in her application and research proposal in the actual execution of the research.

Due to the nature of the study, the permission of the Registrar and the Student Dean are required. The Chair will submit the documentation to the aforementioned and you will be notified of their decision. Please note that data collection may not commence prior to final approval.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

Prof. Elsabé Taljard
Acting Chair: Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail: elsabe.taljard@up.ac.za

APPENDIX D: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. What are the preferred modes of communication of young adults?
2. How important is a healthy lifestyle for young adults?
3. How important is the issue of materialism for young adults?
4. How important is the 'here-and-now' versus long term planning for the young adult?
5. How important is the personal needs of young adults versus the needs of others?
6. Which values and norms guide the behaviour of young people?
7. How do these values and norms impact the roles, interactions and relationships of young adults?
8. How important is the acceptance of differences between people for the young adult?
9. What is the view of the young adult regarding authority and formal traditional structures?
10. Do you see yourself as an adult?
11. What do you regard as the most important tendencies of the time in which we are living?

APPENDIX E: QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE

For Office Use

Dear research participant,
Please note that the content of your completed questionnaire will be kept confidential.
Your participation in this research project is highly appreciated.

INSTRUCTIONS: SELECT ONE ANSWER FOR EACH QUESTION BY MARKING WITH AN "X" IN THE APPROPRIATE **SHADED** BLOCK

SECTION A: PERSONAL DETAILS

1. What is your age in years?

..... years

A1

2. What is your gender?

Male	1
Female	2

A2

3. What is your race?

Black	1
White	2
Indian	3
Coloured	4
Other (Specify)	5

A3

4. What is your home language?

Sesotho	1
Sepedi	2
Setswana	3
Siswati	4
Tshivenda	5
Xitsonga	6
IsiZulu	7
IsiXhosa	8
IsiNdebele	9
English	10
Afrikaans	11
Other (Specify)	12

A4

5. What is the highest level of education obtained?

Grade 12	1
Undergraduate certificate	2
Undergraduate diploma	3
Undergraduate degree	4
Postgraduate degree	5

A5

6. What is your field of study?

.....

A6

7. Where do you live?

Still with parents	1
Back with parents	2
With other family member(s)	3
With boyfriend or girlfriend (romantic partner)	4
With spouse (husband or wife)	5
In a commune	6
With friends (in a room/ flat/house)	7
On your own in either flat, house	8
In residence	9

A7

8. Where was most of your childhood spent?

Rural area	1
Semi-urban area (town, e.g. Bela Bela)	2
Urban area (city, e.g. Johannesburg)	3

A8

SECTION B: POSTMODERNISM AND THE SOCIAL FUNCTIONING OF YOUNG ADULTS

INSTRUCTIONS: SELECT ONE ANSWER FOR EACH QUESTION BY MARKING WITH AN "X" IN THE APPROPRIATE SHADED BLOCK ON THE FOUR POINT SCALE THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR ANSWER. REMEMBER THAT THERE ARE NO INCORRECT ANSWERS.

1. To what extent does your cultural background guide your behaviour?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all

To a large extent

B1

2. To what extent are the views of people with authority important to you?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all

To a large extent

B2

3. To what extent are political structures important to you?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all

To a large extent

B3

4. To what extent are religious structures important to you?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all

To a large extent

B4

5. To what extent are cultural structures important to you?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all

To a large extent

B5

6. How often do you consult your parents before you make decisions?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Never

Often

B6

7. How often do you consult with friends before you make decisions?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Never

Often

B7

8. To what extent is it acceptable to you that people may have different perspectives?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all

To a large extent

B8

9. To what extent is freedom of choice important to you?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all

To a large extent

B9

10. To what extent are you able to express yourself freely without pressure from other people?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all

To a large extent

B10

11. To what extent are your choices based on personal experiences?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all

To a large extent

B11

12. To what extent do you find different cultural opinions stimulating?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all

To a large extent

B12

13. To what extent is respect for all people important?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all

To a large extent

B13

14. How important is the fulfilment of your own needs?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not important

Extremely important

B14

15. To what extent do you place society's rules above your own needs?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B15

16. To what extent will you place the needs of loved ones above your own needs?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B16

17. To what extent do you place the needs of other people around you, above your own?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B17

18. How important are relationships with other people in your life?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not important Extremely important

B18

19. To what extent does a focus on yourself lead to a lack of commitment towards others?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B19

20. To what extent do you communicate electronically?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Selectively Constantly

B20

21. How important is cyberspace for you (e.g. your Facebook profile)?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not important Extremely important

B21

22. To what extent do you change who you are when using electronic modes of communication?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B22

23. To what extent are you more open and honest during e-communication than during real life situations?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B23

24. To what extent do you prefer electronic communication to face-to-face communication?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B24

25. To what extent has e-communication replaced close personal relationships in your life?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B25

26. To what extent do you make use of e-communication to meet new people?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B26

27. How often do you use Facebook to update yourself on what is happening in someone else's life?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Never Often

B27

28. To what extent does e-communication affect the quality of your relationships?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B28

29. To what extent does the lack of body language in e-communication hamper the quality of your interactions?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B29

30. How often do you ask friends to stop sending SMS's or Blackberry messages while in your company?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Never Often

B30

31. How often does your use of the internet interfere with commitments towards other people?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Never Often

B31

32. How often does your use of the internet interfere with your work/studies?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Never Often

B32

33. To what extent does quality of life in general depend on material possessions?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B33

34. To what extent are designer 'labels' important to you?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B34

35. How important is the image of the friends that you associate with, to you?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not important Extremely important

B35

36. To what extent do material possessions influence your social relationships?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B36

37. To what extent do you follow trends set by VIP's and public figures?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B37

38. To what extent is your identity linked to what other people think of you?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B38

39. To what extent do you spend energy on building your own image?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B39

40. To what extent do compliments make you feel good?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B40

41. How important is your own physical attractiveness to you?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not important Extremely important

B41

42. To what extent do you value traditional views regarding sexual activity?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B42

43. To what extent do you opt for a healthy lifestyle?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B43

44. How important is healthy eating in your life?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not important Extremely important

B44

45. How important is exercise in your life?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not important Extremely important

B45

46. To what extent do you combine a healthy and unhealthy lifestyle – e.g. exercising or dieting plus drinking and/or smoking?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B46

47. To what extent does 'having a good time' mean drinking and/or smoking?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B47

48. To what extent does 'having a good time' mean dancing and/or clubbing?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B48

49. To what extent does your upbringing impact your lifestyle?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B49

50. To what extent is being sexually active at a young age acceptable to you?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B50

51. To what extent is being sexually active without commitment to a partner acceptable to you?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B51

52. To what extent do you sometimes regret your lifestyle choices?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B52

53. To what extent do you value the opinions of your friends regarding sexual activity?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B53

54. To what extent do you regard social movements, like the 'green movement', equality, lesbian and gay rights as important?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B54

55. To what extent do your values and norms differ from those of your parents?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B55

56. To what extent do you value new norms regarding lifestyle? (e.g. diversity, gay, lesbian)

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B56

57. How often do you think about your own values and norms?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Never Often

B57

58. To what extent do your values develop from your life experiences?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B58

59. Do you value traditional gender roles?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B59

60. To what extent do mass media devices (television, music, advertising, movies, fashion and magazines) influence your values?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B60

61. To what extent are your roles (e.g. son/daughter, friend, romantic partner) influenced by the mass media?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B61

62. To what extent do role models in society influence your values?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B62

63. To what extent is your behaviour influenced by the expectations of others?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B63

64. To what extent does society need rules and principles?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B64

65. To what extent do you agree with the lifestyle of the times we live in?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B65

66. To what extent do you agree with what society expects of you?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B66

67. To what extent do you agree with a less rigid/informal society?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B67

68. To what extent do you see yourself as a person with specific life principles?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B68

69. To what extent do you think about the meaning of your own life?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B69

70. How important is guidance by formal structures (e.g. school, church) for you?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not important Extremely Important

B70

71. How often do you make decisions without assistance?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Never Often

B71

72. How often do you find it difficult to choose which rules of behaviour to follow?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Never Often

B72

73. To what extent do you like making your own rules?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B73

74. To what extent is caring for others important to you?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B74

75. To what extent do you need organised religion in your life?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B75

76. To what extent do spiritual norms guide your behaviour?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B76

77. To what extent do you take responsibility for your actions?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B77

78. To what extent do religious institutions guide your life?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B78

79. How important is it for you to attend regular religious meetings?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not important Extremely important

B79

80. To what extent are you satisfied with your own personal spirituality?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B80

81. How important is commitment in your personal relationships?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not important Extremely important

B81

82. To what extent is technology more important than the people in your life?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B82

83. How important is the fulfilment of your roles in society?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not important Extremely important

B83

84. To what extent do you feel uncertain about your future roles?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B84

85. How important is your role as a son/daughter in your family?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not important Extremely important

B85

86. How important is your commitment towards family members?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not important Extremely important

B86

87. How important is your role as a friend?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not important Extremely important

B87

88. To what extent would you rather please your friends than your parents?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B88

89. To what extent do you see yourself as an adult?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B89

90. To what extent would you consider yourself as 'an adult' when you are financially independent?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B90

91. To what extent does moving out of your parent's home, make you 'an adult'?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B91

92. To what extent do you experience pressure to get married?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B92

93. How important is it for you to be married before the age of 28 to 30?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not important Extremely important

B93

94. To what extent does the high divorce rate make you feel anxious about marriage?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B94

95. To what extent do you consider marriage to be a lifelong commitment?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B95

96. To what extent does living with a partner provide an alternative to marriage?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B96

97. To what extent do you believe in long-term planning?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all To a large extent

B97

98. To what extent do you feel uncertain about your personal future?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all

To a large extent

B98

99. To what extent are you worried about a future career?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all

To a large extent

B99

100. To what extent do you see yourself working in one career throughout your life?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not at all

To a large extent

B100

101. How important is wealth to you?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not important

Extremely important

B101

102. How important is family?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not important

Extremely important

B102

103. How important is living for today only?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not important

Extremely important

B103

104. How important is being popular?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not important

Extremely important

B104

105. How important is being entertained?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Not important

Extremely important

B105

APPENDIX F: QUESTIONNAIRE DATA - FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTIONS

Questionnaire data - frequency distributions

The FREQ Procedure

What is your age in years?				
A1	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
18	77	7.62	77	7.62
19	257	25.42	334	33.04
20	211	20.87	545	53.91
21	198	19.58	743	73.49
22	174	17.21	917	90.7
23	59	5.84	976	96.54
24	19	1.88	995	98.42
25	16	1.58	1011	100

Frequency Missing = 8

What is your gender?				
A2	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Male	329	32.45	329	32.45
2 Female	685	67.55	1014	100

Frequency Missing = 5

What is your race?				
A3	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Black	319	31.4	319	31.4
2 White	658	64.76	977	96.16
3 Indian	18	1.77	995	97.93
4 Coloured	14	1.38	1009	99.31
5 Other	7	0.69	1016	100

Frequency Missing = 3

What is your home language?				
A4	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Sesotho	21	2.06	21	2.06
2 Sepedi	71	6.98	92	9.05
3 Setswana	48	4.72	140	13.77
4 Siswati	28	2.75	168	16.52
5 Tshivenda	8	0.79	176	17.31
6 Xitsonga	18	1.77	194	19.08
7 IsiZulu	57	5.6	251	24.68
8 IsiXhosa	9	0.88	260	25.57
9 IsiNdebele	23	2.26	283	27.83
10 English	216	21.24	499	49.07
11 Afrikaans	486	47.79	985	96.85
12 Other	32	3.15	1017	100

Frequency Missing = 2

What is the highest level of education obtained?				
A5	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Grade 12	918	90.27	918	90.27
2 Undergraduate certificate	13	1.28	931	91.54
3 Undergraduate diploma	10	0.98	941	92.53
4 Undergraduate degree	70	6.88	1011	99.41
5 Postgraduate degree	6	0.59	1017	100

Frequency Missing = 2

What is your field of study?				
A6	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Social Work	138	13.83	138	13.83
2 BCom	195	19.54	333	33.37
3 Drama	56	5.61	389	38.98
4 Law (LLB and BA Law)	54	5.41	443	44.39
5 Criminology	20	2	463	46.39
6 Consumer Science	42	4.21	505	50.6
7 Grafic/Info design & Fine Arts	62	6.21	567	56.81
8 Psychology	33	3.31	600	60.12
9 Engineering	147	14.73	747	74.85
10 BSc	55	5.51	802	80.36
11 Medicine	4	0.4	806	80.76
12 BA	107	10.72	913	91.48
13 Theology	3	0.3	916	91.78
14 Architecture	17	1.7	933	93.49
15 Veterinary Science	3	0.3	936	93.79
16 Education	10	1	946	94.79
18 Communication Pathology	52	5.21	998	100

Frequency Missing = 21

Where do you live?				
A7	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Still with parents	281	27.63	281	27.63
2 Back with parents	17	1.67	298	29.3
3 With other family	29	2.85	327	32.15
4 With boy/girlfriend	20	1.97	347	34.12
5 With spouse	2	0.2	349	34.32
6 In a commune	64	6.29	413	40.61
7 With friends	81	7.96	494	48.57
8 On your own	121	11.9	615	60.47
9 In residence	402	39.53	1017	100

Frequency Missing = 2

Where was most of your childhood spent?				
A8	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Rural area	117	11.76	117	11.76
2 Semi-urban area	313	31.46	430	43.22
3 Urban area	565	56.78	995	100

Frequency Missing = 24

To what extent does your cultural background guide your behaviour?				
B1	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	42	4.16	42	4.16
2	178	17.64	220	21.8
3	448	44.4	668	66.2
4 To a large extent	341	33.8	1009	100

Frequency Missing = 10

To what extent are the views of people with authority important to you?				
B2	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	17	1.69	17	1.69
2	132	13.1	149	14.78
3	556	55.16	705	69.94
4 To a large extent	303	30.06	1008	100

Frequency Missing = 11

To what extent are political structures important to you?				
B3	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	143	14.17	143	14.17
2	432	42.81	575	56.99
3	334	33.1	909	90.09
4 To a large extent	100	9.91	1009	100

Frequency Missing = 10

To what extent are religious structures important to you?

B4	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	61	6.05	61	6.05
2	86	8.52	147	14.57
3	221	21.9	368	36.47
4 To a large extent	641	63.53	1009	100

Frequency Missing = 10

To what extent are cultural structures important to you?

B5	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	46	4.56	46	4.56
2	272	26.96	318	31.52
3	496	49.16	814	80.67
4 To a large extent	195	19.33	1009	100

Frequency Missing = 10

How often do you consult your parents before you make decisions?

B6	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Never	57	5.63	57	5.63
2	250	24.7	307	30.34
3	407	40.22	714	70.55
4 Often	298	29.45	1012	100

Frequency Missing = 7

How often do you consult with friends before you make decisions?

B7	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Never	79	7.82	79	7.82
2	377	37.33	456	45.15
3	397	39.31	853	84.46
4 Often	157	15.54	1010	100

Frequency Missing = 9

To what extent is it acceptable to you that people may have different perspectives?

B8	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	5	0.49	5	0.49
2	50	4.94	55	5.43
3	347	34.29	402	39.72
4 To a large extent	610	60.28	1012	100

Frequency Missing = 7

To what extent is freedom of choice important to you?				
B9	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	3	0.3	3	0.3
2	14	1.39	17	1.68
3	213	21.09	230	22.77
4 To a large extent	780	77.23	1010	100

Frequency Missing = 9

To what extent are you able to express yourself freely without pressure from other people?				
B10	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	11	1.09	11	1.09
2	86	8.51	97	9.6
3	525	51.98	622	61.58
4 To a large extent	388	38.42	1010	100

Frequency Missing = 9

To what extent are your choices based on personal experiences?				
B11	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
2	42	4.15	42	4.15
3	497	49.11	539	53.26
4 To a large extent	473	46.74	1012	100

Frequency Missing = 7

To what extent do you find different cultural opinions stimulating?				
B12	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	40	3.96	40	3.96
2	304	30.13	344	34.09
3	504	49.95	848	84.04
4 To a large extent	161	15.96	1009	100

Frequency Missing = 10

To what extent is respect for all people important?				
B13	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	4	0.39	4	0.39
2	21	2.07	25	2.47
3	160	15.79	185	18.26
4 To a large extent	828	81.74	1013	100

Frequency Missing = 6

How important is the fulfilment of your own needs?				
B14	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not important	2	0.2	2	0.2
2	76	7.52	78	7.72
3	437	43.22	515	50.94
4 Extremely important	496	49.06	1011	100

Frequency Missing = 8

To what extent do you place society's rules above your own needs?				
B15	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	63	6.2	63	6.2
2	390	38.39	453	44.59
3	490	48.23	943	92.81
4 To a large extent	73	7.19	1016	100

Frequency Missing = 3

To what extent will you place the needs of loved ones above your own needs?				
B16	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	5	0.49	5	0.49
2	64	6.31	69	6.8
3	401	39.51	470	46.31
4 To a large extent	545	53.69	1015	100

Frequency Missing = 4

To what extent do you place the needs of other people around you, above your own?				
B17	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	29	2.85	29	2.85
2	285	28.05	314	30.91
3	570	56.1	884	87.01
4 To a large extent	132	12.99	1016	100

Frequency Missing = 3

How important are relationships with other people in your life?				
B18	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not important	2	0.2	2	0.2
2	26	2.55	28	2.75
3	262	25.74	290	28.49
4 Extremely important	728	71.51	1018	100

Frequency Missing = 1

To what extent does a focus on yourself lead to a lack of commitment towards others?

B19	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	111	10.98	111	10.98
2	477	47.18	588	58.16
3	335	33.14	923	91.3
4 To a large extent	88	8.7	1011	100

Frequency Missing = 8

To what extent do you communicate electronically?

B20	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Selectively	14	1.38	14	1.38
2	102	10.03	116	11.41
3	349	34.32	465	45.72
4 Constantly	552	54.28	1017	100

Frequency Missing = 2

How important is cyberspace for you (e.g. your Facebook profile)?

B21	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not important	109	10.72	109	10.72
2	340	33.43	449	44.15
3	405	39.82	854	83.97
4 Extremely important	163	16.03	1017	100

Frequency Missing = 2

To what extent do you change who you are when using electronic modes of communication?

B22	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	481	47.39	481	47.39
2	356	35.07	837	82.46
3	139	13.69	976	96.16
4 To a large extent	39	3.84	1015	100

Frequency Missing = 4

To what extent are you more open and honest during e-communication than during real life situations?

B23	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	288	28.35	288	28.35
2	347	34.15	635	62.5
3	254	25	889	87.5
4 To a large extent	127	12.5	1016	100

Frequency Missing = 3

To what extent do you prefer electronic communication to face-to-face communication?

B24	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	459	45.18	459	45.18
2	382	37.6	841	82.78
3	116	11.42	957	94.19
4 To a large extent	59	5.81	1016	100

Frequency Missing = 3

To what extent has e-communication replaced close personal relationships in your life?

B25	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	390	38.35	390	38.35
2	394	38.74	784	77.09
3	183	17.99	967	95.08
4 To a large extent	50	4.92	1017	100

Frequency Missing = 2

To what extent do you make use of e-communication to meet new people?

B26	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	519	51.28	519	51.28
2	304	30.04	823	81.32
3	141	13.93	964	95.26
4 To a large extent	48	4.74	1012	100

Frequency Missing = 7

How often do you use Facebook to update yourself on what is happening in someone else's life?

B27	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Never	170	16.7	170	16.7
2	350	34.38	520	51.08
3	294	28.88	814	79.96
4 Often	204	20.04	1018	100

Frequency Missing = 1

To what extent does e-communication affect the quality of your relationships?

B28	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	249	24.48	249	24.48
2	433	42.58	682	67.06
3	259	25.47	941	92.53
4 To a large extent	76	7.47	1017	100

Frequency Missing = 2

To what extent does the lack of body language in e-communication hamper the quality of your interactions?

B29	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	133	13.06	133	13.06
2	258	25.34	391	38.41
3	346	33.99	737	72.4
4 To a large extent	281	27.6	1018	100

Frequency Missing = 1

How often do you ask friends to stop sending SMS's or Blackberry messages while in your company?

B30	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Never	231	22.69	231	22.69
2	288	28.29	519	50.98
3	271	26.62	790	77.6
4 Often	228	22.4	1018	100

Frequency Missing = 1

How often does your use of the internet interfere with commitments towards other people?

B31	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Never	395	38.95	395	38.95
2	420	41.42	815	80.37
3	164	16.17	979	96.55
4 Often	35	3.45	1014	100

Frequency Missing = 5

How often does your use of the internet interfere with your work/studies?

B32	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Never	191	18.85	191	18.85
2	431	42.55	622	61.4
3	288	28.43	910	89.83
4 Often	103	10.17	1013	100

Frequency Missing = 6

To what extent does quality of life in general depend on material possessions?				
B33	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	142	14.03	142	14.03
2	416	41.11	558	55.14
3	381	37.65	939	92.79
4 To a large extent	73	7.21	1012	100

Frequency Missing = 7

To what extent are designer 'labels' important to you?				
B34	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	434	42.76	434	42.76
2	331	32.61	765	75.37
3	199	19.61	964	94.98
4 To a large extent	51	5.02	1015	100

Frequency Missing = 4

How important is the image of the friends that you associate with, to you?				
B35	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not important	231	22.8	231	22.8
2	358	35.34	589	58.14
3	314	31	903	89.14
4 Extremely important	110	10.86	1013	100

Frequency Missing = 6

To what extent do material possessions influence your social relationships?				
B36	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	357	35.21	357	35.21
2	442	43.59	799	78.8
3	185	18.24	984	97.04
4 To a large extent	30	2.96	1014	100

Frequency Missing = 5

To what extent do you follow trends set by VIP's and public figures?				
B37	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	556	55.05	556	55.05
2	309	30.59	865	85.64
3	117	11.58	982	97.23
4 To a large extent	28	2.77	1010	100

Frequency Missing = 9

To what extent is your identity linked to what other people think of you?				
B38	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	206	20.3	206	20.3
2	417	41.08	623	61.38
3	309	30.44	932	91.82
4 To a large extent	83	8.18	1015	100

Frequency Missing = 4

To what extent do you spend energy on building your own image?				
B39	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	116	11.45	116	11.45
2	363	35.83	479	47.29
3	401	39.59	880	86.87
4 To a large extent	133	13.13	1013	100

Frequency Missing = 6

To what extent do compliments make you feel good?				
B40	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	8	0.79	8	0.79
2	105	10.36	113	11.14
3	423	41.72	536	52.86
4 To a large extent	478	47.14	1014	100

Frequency Missing = 5

How important is your own physical attractiveness to you?				
B41	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not important	19	1.88	19	1.88
2	126	12.45	145	14.33
3	499	49.31	644	63.64
4 Extremely important	368	36.36	1012	100

Frequency Missing = 7

To what extent do you value traditional views regarding sexual activity?				
B42	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	95	9.41	95	9.41
2	220	21.78	315	31.19
3	322	31.88	637	63.07
4 To a large extent	373	36.93	1010	100

Frequency Missing = 9

To what extent do you opt for a healthy lifestyle?				
B43	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	14	1.38	14	1.38
2	114	11.28	128	12.66
3	438	43.32	566	55.98
4 To a large extent	445	44.02	1011	100

Frequency Missing = 8

How important is healthy eating in your life?				
B44	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not important	38	3.75	38	3.75
2	173	17.08	211	20.83
3	461	45.51	672	66.34
4 Extremely important	341	33.66	1013	100

Frequency Missing = 6

How important is exercise in your life?				
B45	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not important	51	5.04	51	5.04
2	241	23.81	292	28.85
3	352	34.78	644	63.64
4 Extremely important	368	36.36	1012	100

Frequency Missing = 7

To what extent do you combine a healthy and unhealthy lifestyle?				
B46	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	205	20.24	205	20.24
2	313	30.9	518	51.14
3	326	32.18	844	83.32
4 To a large extent	169	16.68	1013	100

Frequency Missing = 6

To what extent does 'having a good time' mean drinking and/or smoking?				
B47	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	443	43.69	443	43.69
2	284	28.01	727	71.7
3	201	19.82	928	91.52
4 To a large extent	86	8.48	1014	100

Frequency Missing = 5

To what extent does 'having a good time' mean dancing and/or clubbing?				
B48	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	227	22.39	227	22.39
2	306	30.18	533	52.56
3	335	33.04	868	85.6
4 To a large extent	146	14.4	1014	100

Frequency Missing = 5

To what extent does your upbringing impact your lifestyle?				
B49	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	15	1.48	15	1.48
2	91	9	106	10.48
3	339	33.53	445	44.02
4 To a large extent	566	55.98	1011	100

Frequency Missing = 8

To what extent is being sexually active at a young age acceptable to you?				
B50	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	493	48.67	493	48.67
2	297	29.32	790	77.99
3	173	17.08	963	95.06
4 To a large extent	50	4.94	1013	100

Frequency Missing = 6

To what extent is being sexually active without commitment to a partner acceptable to you?				
B51	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	705	69.87	705	69.87
2	165	16.35	870	86.22
3	97	9.61	967	95.84
4 To a large extent	42	4.16	1009	100

Frequency Missing = 10

To what extent do you sometimes regret your lifestyle choices?				
B52	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	178	17.66	178	17.66
2	544	53.97	722	71.63
3	218	21.63	940	93.25
4 To a large extent	68	6.75	1008	100

Frequency Missing = 11

To what extent do you value the opinions of your friends regarding sexual activity?				
B53	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	246	24.43	246	24.43
2	386	38.33	632	62.76
3	283	28.1	915	90.86
4 To a large extent	92	9.14	1007	100

Frequency Missing = 12

To what extent do you regard social movements as important?				
B54	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	232	22.9	232	22.9
2	300	29.62	532	52.52
3	278	27.44	810	79.96
4 To a large extent	203	20.04	1013	100

Frequency Missing = 6

To what extent do your values and norms differ from those of your parents?				
B55	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	174	17.26	174	17.26
2	433	42.96	607	60.22
3	307	30.46	914	90.67
4 To a large extent	94	9.33	1008	100

Frequency Missing = 11

To what extent do you value new norms regarding lifestyle? (e.g. diversity, gay, lesbian)				
B56	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	216	21.36	216	21.36
2	305	30.17	521	51.53
3	325	32.15	846	83.68
4 To a large extent	165	16.32	1011	100

Frequency Missing = 8

How often do you think about your own values and norms?				
B57	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Never	15	1.48	15	1.48
2	155	15.3	170	16.78
3	442	43.63	612	60.41
4 Often	401	39.59	1013	100

Frequency Missing = 6

To what extent do your values develop from your life experiences?				
B58	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	12	1.18	12	1.18
2	92	9.08	104	10.27
3	529	52.22	633	62.49
4 To a large extent	380	37.51	1013	100

Frequency Missing = 6

Do you value traditional gender roles?				
B59	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	139	13.74	139	13.74
2	328	32.41	467	46.15
3	348	34.39	815	80.53
4 To a large extent	197	19.47	1012	100

Frequency Missing = 7

To what extent do mass media devices influence your values?				
B60	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	207	20.47	207	20.47
2	488	48.27	695	68.74
3	261	25.82	956	94.56
4 To a large extent	55	5.44	1011	100

Frequency Missing = 8

To what extent are your roles influenced by the mass media?				
B61	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	253	24.95	253	24.95
2	481	47.44	734	72.39
3	234	23.08	968	95.46
4 To a large extent	46	4.54	1014	100

Frequency Missing = 5

To what extent do role models in society influence your values?				
B62	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	233	22.98	233	22.98
2	430	42.41	663	65.38
3	276	27.22	939	92.6
4 To a large extent	75	7.4	1014	100

Frequency Missing = 5

To what extent is your behaviour influenced by the expectations of others?				
B63	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	115	11.34	115	11.34
2	375	36.98	490	48.32
3	419	41.32	909	89.64
4 To a large extent	105	10.36	1014	100

Frequency Missing = 5

To what extent does society need rules and principles?				
B64	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	9	0.89	9	0.89
2	79	7.84	88	8.73
3	314	31.15	402	39.88
4 To a large extent	606	60.12	1008	100

Frequency Missing = 11

To what extent do you agree with the lifestyle of the times we live in?				
B65	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	108	10.7	108	10.7
2	467	46.28	575	56.99
3	383	37.96	958	94.95
4 To a large extent	51	5.05	1009	100

Frequency Missing = 10

To what extent do you agree with what society expects of you?				
B66	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	100	9.97	100	9.97
2	476	47.46	576	57.43
3	391	38.98	967	96.41
4 To a large extent	36	3.59	1003	100

Frequency Missing = 16

To what extent do you agree with a less rigid/informal society?				
B67	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	133	13.31	133	13.31
2	476	47.65	609	60.96
3	319	31.93	928	92.89
4 To a large extent	71	7.11	999	100

Frequency Missing = 20

To what extent do you see yourself as a person with specific life principles?				
B68	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	6	0.6	6	0.6
2	76	7.56	82	8.16
3	467	46.47	549	54.63
4 To a large extent	456	45.37	1005	100

Frequency Missing = 14

To what extent do you think about the meaning of your own life?				
B69	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	14	1.39	14	1.39
2	70	6.95	84	8.34
3	359	35.65	443	43.99
4 To a large extent	564	56.01	1007	100

Frequency Missing = 12

How important is guidance by formal structures (e.g. school, church) for you?				
B70	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not important	41	4.07	41	4.07
2	101	10.03	142	14.1
3	304	30.19	446	44.29
4 Extremely important	561	55.71	1007	100

Frequency Missing = 12

How often do you make decisions without assistance?				
B71	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Never	42	4.17	42	4.17
2	245	24.33	287	28.5
3	424	42.11	711	70.61
4 Often	296	29.39	1007	100

Frequency Missing = 12

How often do you find it difficult to choose which rules of behaviour to follow?				
B72	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Never	185	18.39	185	18.39
2	438	43.54	623	61.93
3	298	29.62	921	91.55
4 Often	85	8.45	1006	100

Frequency Missing = 13

To what extent do you like making your own rules?				
B73	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	56	5.57	56	5.57
2	293	29.15	349	34.73
3	427	42.49	776	77.21
4 To a large extent	229	22.79	1005	100

Frequency Missing = 14

To what extent is caring for others important to you?				
B74	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	7	0.7	7	0.7
2	32	3.18	39	3.87
3	237	23.54	276	27.41
4 To a large extent	731	72.59	1007	100

Frequency Missing = 12

To what extent do you need organised religion in your life?				
B75	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	100	9.95	100	9.95
2	122	12.14	222	22.09
3	321	31.94	543	54.03
4 To a large extent	462	45.97	1005	100

Frequency Missing = 14

To what extent do spiritual norms guide your behaviour?				
B76	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	64	6.36	64	6.36
2	134	13.32	198	19.68
3	360	35.79	558	55.47
4 To a large extent	448	44.53	1006	100

Frequency Missing = 13

To what extent do you take responsibility for your actions?				
B77	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	7	0.7	7	0.7
2	50	4.97	57	5.66
3	329	32.67	386	38.33
4 To a large extent	621	61.67	1007	100

Frequency Missing = 12

To what extent do religious institutions guide your life?				
B78	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	116	11.54	116	11.54
2	174	17.31	290	28.86
3	393	39.1	683	67.96
4 To a large extent	322	32.04	1005	100

Frequency Missing = 14

How important is it for you to attend regular religious meetings?				
B79	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not important	137	13.6	137	13.6
2	210	20.85	347	34.46
3	328	32.57	675	67.03
4 Extremely important	332	32.97	1007	100

Frequency Missing = 12

To what extent are you satisfied with your own personal spirituality?				
B80	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	38	3.78	38	3.78
2	216	21.49	254	25.27
3	480	47.76	734	73.03
4 To a large extent	271	26.97	1005	100

Frequency Missing = 14

How important is commitment in your personal relationships?				
B81	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not important	4	0.4	4	0.4
2	34	3.37	38	3.77
3	197	19.54	235	23.31
4 Extremely important	773	76.69	1008	100

Frequency Missing = 11

To what extent is technology more important than the people in your life?				
B82	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	643	63.92	643	63.92
2	245	24.35	888	88.27
3	86	8.55	974	96.82
4 To a large extent	32	3.18	1006	100

Frequency Missing = 13

How important is the fulfilment of your roles in society?				
B83	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not important	38	3.78	38	3.78
2	269	26.79	307	30.58
3	540	53.78	847	84.36
4 Extremely important	157	15.64	1004	100

Frequency Missing = 15

To what extent do you feel uncertain about your future roles?				
B84	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	97	9.66	97	9.66
2	281	27.99	378	37.65
3	466	46.41	844	84.06
4 To a large extent	160	15.94	1004	100

Frequency Missing = 15

How important is your role as a son/daughter in your family?				
B85	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not important	15	1.49	15	1.49
2	100	9.94	115	11.43
3	338	33.6	453	45.03
4 Extremely important	553	54.97	1006	100

Frequency Missing = 13

How important is your commitment towards family members?				
B86	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not important	7	0.7	7	0.7
2	55	5.46	62	6.16
3	252	25.02	314	31.18
4 Extremely important	693	68.82	1007	100

Frequency Missing = 12

How important is your role as a friend?				
B87	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not important	6	0.6	6	0.6
2	40	3.98	46	4.57
3	306	30.42	352	34.99
4 Extremely important	654	65.01	1006	100

Frequency Missing = 13

To what extent would you rather please your friends than your parents?				
B88	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	305	30.41	305	30.41
2	444	44.27	749	74.68
3	198	19.74	947	94.42
4 To a large extent	56	5.58	1003	100

Frequency Missing = 16

To what extent do you see yourself as an adult?				
B89	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	14	1.39	14	1.39
2	116	11.52	130	12.91
3	516	51.24	646	64.15
4 To a large extent	361	35.85	1007	100

Frequency Missing = 12

To what extent would you consider yourself as 'an adult' when you are financially independent?				
B90	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	36	3.57	36	3.57
2	134	13.29	170	16.87
3	383	38	553	54.86
4 To a large extent	455	45.14	1008	100

Frequency Missing = 11

To what extent does moving out of your parent's home, make you 'an adult'?				
B91	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	112	11.12	112	11.12
2	282	28	394	39.13
3	385	38.23	779	77.36
4 To a large extent	228	22.64	1007	100

Frequency Missing = 12

To what extent do you experience pressure to get married?				
B92	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	524	52.14	524	52.14
2	274	27.26	798	79.4
3	148	14.73	946	94.13
4 To a large extent	59	5.87	1005	100

Frequency Missing = 14

How important is it for you to be married before the age of 28 to 30?				
B93	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not important	222	22.07	222	22.07
2	162	16.1	384	38.17
3	287	28.53	671	66.7
4 Extremely important	335	33.3	1006	100

Frequency Missing = 13

To what extent does the high divorce rate make you feel anxious about marriage?				
B94	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	363	36.12	363	36.12
2	189	18.81	552	54.93
3	235	23.38	787	78.31
4 To a large extent	218	21.69	1005	100

Frequency Missing = 14

To what extent do you consider marriage to be a lifelong commitment?				
B95	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	20	1.99	20	1.99
2	40	3.97	60	5.96
3	115	11.42	175	17.38
4 To a large extent	832	82.62	1007	100

Frequency Missing = 12

To what extent does living with a partner provide an alternative to marriage?				
B96	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	490	48.71	490	48.71
2	235	23.36	725	72.07
3	185	18.39	910	90.46
4 To a large extent	96	9.54	1006	100

Frequency Missing = 13

To what extent do you believe in long-term planning?				
B97	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	19	1.88	19	1.88
2	115	11.41	134	13.29
3	391	38.79	525	52.08
4 To a large extent	483	47.92	1008	100

Frequency Missing = 11

To what extent do you feel uncertain about your personal future?				
B98	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	111	10.98	111	10.98
2	312	30.86	423	41.84
3	420	41.54	843	83.38
4 To a large extent	168	16.62	1011	100

Frequency Missing = 8

To what extent are you worried about a future career?				
B99	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	132	13.06	132	13.06
2	258	25.52	390	38.58
3	398	39.37	788	77.94
4 To a large extent	223	22.06	1011	100

Frequency Missing = 8

To what extent do you see yourself working in one career throughout your life?				
B100	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	170	16.85	170	16.85
2	330	32.71	500	49.55
3	323	32.01	823	81.57
4 To a large extent	186	18.43	1009	100

Frequency Missing = 10

How important is wealth to you?				
B101	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not important	53	5.25	53	5.25
2	240	23.76	293	29.01
3	504	49.9	797	78.91
4 Extremely important	213	21.09	1010	100

Frequency Missing = 9

How important is family?				
B102	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not at all	3	0.3	3	0.3
2	27	2.67	30	2.97
3	115	11.39	145	14.36
4 To a large extent	865	85.64	1010	100

Frequency Missing = 9

How important is living for today only?

B103	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not important	127	12.6	127	12.6
2	354	35.12	481	47.72
3	363	36.01	844	83.73
4 Extremely important	164	16.27	1008	100

Frequency Missing = 11

How important is being popular?

B104	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not important	304	30.13	304	30.13
2	424	42.02	728	72.15
3	231	22.89	959	95.04
4 Extremely important	50	4.96	1009	100

Frequency Missing = 10

How important is being entertained?

B105	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1 Not important	97	9.62	97	9.62
2	260	25.79	357	35.42
3	445	44.15	802	79.56
4 Extremely important	206	20.44	1008	100

Frequency Missing = 11

APPENDIX G: INITIAL EFA SCREE PLOT

INITIAL EFA SCREE PLOT

HISTOGRAM OF INITIAL EIGENVALUES

EIGENVALUE	HISTOGRAM
1 9.56694	*****
2 7.58771	*****
3 3.92561	*****
4 2.51605	*****
5 2.04587	*****
6 1.96952	*****
7 1.61707	*****
8 1.56704	*****
9 1.37583	*****
10 1.19617	*****
11 1.07995	*****
12 1.00510	*****
13 0.962842	*****
14 0.874417	*****
15 0.833078	*****
16 0.811868	*****
17 0.718629	*****
18 0.705978	*****
19 0.583236	*****
20 0.570717	*****
21 0.553056	*****
22 0.517794	*****
23 0.498625	*****
24 0.476716	*****
25 0.444640	*****
26 0.436598	*****
27 0.414679	****
28 0.376746	****
29 0.362107	****
30 0.346682	****
31 0.344796	****
32 0.317929	***
33 0.296425	***
34 0.269619	***
35 0.247151	***
36 0.243633	***
37 0.217454	**
38 0.206084	**
39 0.200903	**
40 0.175946	**
41 0.175131	**
42 0.158794	**

INITIAL EFA SCREE PLOT (CONTINUE)

43 0.148735 **
44 0.134034 *
45 0.124054 *
46 0.119090 *
47 0.116627 *
48 0.102308 *
49 0.899103E-01 *
50 0.847424E-01 *
51 0.594880E-01 *
52 0.535307E-01 *

REMAINING EIGENVALUES ARE TOO SMALL TO APPEAR. THEY ARE--

0.433589E-01 0.345126E-01 0.307859E-01 0.185982E-01 0.154671E-01 0.130221E-01
0.283937E-02-0.222070E-02-0.110747E-01-0.241598E-01-0.331143E-01-0.404203E-01
-0.439012E-01-0.502466E-01-0.647135E-01-0.742365E-01-0.788587E-01-0.907194E-01
-0.944560E-01-0.993341E-01-0.108857 -0.111006 -0.123948 -0.129709
-0.131519 -0.137681 -0.144499 -0.150129 -0.154585 -0.156738
-0.169376 -0.187050 -0.193976 -0.196723 -0.200053 -0.202789
-0.214282 -0.227234 -0.238398 -0.241529 -0.244481 -0.245512
-0.251737 -0.268415 -0.271450 -0.274283 -0.289014 -0.289431
-0.305164 -0.311577 -0.332804 -0.337682 -0.347561

APPENDIX H: FINAL EFA 8 FACTOR SOLUTION

Final EFA 8 Factor solution

ROTATED FACTOR LOADINGS

To what extent do religious institutions guide your life
 To what extent are religious structures important to you
 To what extent do you need organised religion in your life
 How important is it for you to attend regular religious meetings
 To what extent do spiritual norms guide your behaviour
 How important is guidance by formal structures (e.g. school, church) for you
 To what extent do you value traditional views regarding sexual activity
 To what extent are cultural structures important to you
 To what extent does your cultural background guide your behaviour
 To what extent are the views of people with authority important to you

To what extent do material possessions influence your social relationships
 To what extent does quality of life in general depend on material possessions
 To what extent do you spend energy on building your own image
 To what extent are designer 'labels' important to you
 How important is being popular
 How important is wealth to you
 How important is the image of the friends that you associate with, to you
 How important is your own physical attractiveness to you
 To what extent do you follow trends set by VIP's and public figures
 To what extent is your identity linked to what other people think of you
 How important is the fulfilment of your own needs
 To what extent do compliments make you feel good
 To what extent does 'having a good time' mean drinking and/or smoking

To what extent has e-communication replaced close personal relationships in your life
 To what extent do you prefer electronic communication to face-to-face communication
 To what extent do you make use of e-communication to meet new people
 To what extent do you change who you are when using electronic modes of communication
 How often does your use of the internet interfere with commitments towards other people
 To what extent are you more open and honest during e-communication than during real life situations
 To what extent does e-communication affect the quality of your relationships
 How often does your use of the internet interfere with your work/studies

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
B78	0.823	-0.051	0.062	0.002	-0.004	-0.119	-0.063	0.018
B4	0.81	-0.004	-0.047	-0.014	0.014	-0.023	-0.117	0.031
B75	0.789	-0.009	-0.001	0.044	-0.011	-0.078	-0.103	0.04
B79	0.784	-0.055	0.05	0.002	0.02	-0.102	-0.117	-0.022
B76	0.718	-0.063	-0.024	0.042	0.003	-0.129	-0.06	0.026
B70	0.526	0.021	0.032	0.21	0.079	-0.082	-0.113	-0.004
B42	0.508	-0.01	-0.067	0.005	0.008	0.104	-0.082	0.004
B5	0.449	0.036	0.026	-0.052	0.03	0.096	0.177	-0.026
B1	0.403	0.125	0.016	-0.002	0.072	0.085	0.077	-0.018
B2	0.305	0.09	-0.012	0.087	0.034	0.135	0.015	0.003

B36	0.001	0.582	0.242	-0.082	0.037	0.013	-0.052	-0.107
B33	-0.147	0.542	0.094	0.001	-0.072	0.074	-0.075	-0.059
B39	0.127	0.53	0.084	0.027	0.018	-0.028	0.116	-0.002
B34	-0.051	0.523	0.191	-0.09	0.081	-0.012	-0.133	-0.095
B104	0.077	0.516	-0.025	-0.149	-0.031	0.104	-0.083	0.119
B101	-0.182	0.511	-0.032	0.123	0.002	0.012	-0.119	0.069
B35	0.132	0.504	0.128	0.023	0.035	-0.046	-0.043	-0.076
B41	0.026	0.466	-0.146	0.061	0.089	0.003	0.048	0.142
B37	0.101	0.463	0.277	-0.127	-0.007	0.005	0.06	-0.084
B38	0.064	0.433	0.125	-0.038	-0.065	0.135	0.003	-0.005
B14	0.014	0.38	-0.021	0.07	-0.013	-0.081	0.125	0.059
B40	0.07	0.312	-0.181	0.102	0.001	0.107	0.061	0.198
B47	-0.22	0.269	0.014	-0.183	-0.045	0.119	0.057	0.114

B25	0.009	-0.025	0.631	0.042	-0.016	0.086	-0.011	0.067
B24	-0.037	-0.003	0.589	0.049	-0.038	0.004	0.022	0.019
B26	0.017	0.079	0.582	-0.008	0.063	-0.055	0.014	0.027
B22	-0.019	0.092	0.552	-0.045	-0.005	0.036	0.021	0.017
B31	0.088	0.115	0.509	-0.022	-0.031	0.065	-0.039	0.087
B23	-0.016	0.039	0.482	0.101	-0.039	0.025	0.043	0.1
B28	0.006	0.083	0.457	-0.064	0.014	0.044	0.03	0.205
B32	-0.017	0.029	0.378	0.014	-0.05	0.114	-0.073	0.238

How important is your commitment towards family members
 How important is your role as a son/daughter in your family
 How important is family
 To what extent would you rather please your friends than your parents
 How often do you consult your parents before you make decisions
 How important is your role as a friend
 To what extent is caring for others important to you
 To what extent do you think about the meaning of your own life

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
B86	-0.071	0.027	0.025	0.764	0.019	0.046	0	-0.001
B85	-0.001	0.067	0.092	0.667	0.002	-0.005	-0.02	-0.048
B102	0.091	0.041	-0.033	0.576	-0.021	0.021	-0.045	0.046
B88	-0.013	0.017	-0.066	-0.45	0.001	0.219	-0.01	0.185
B6	0.118	-0.042	0.102	0.321	0.06	0.077	0.069	-0.011
B87	-0.036	-0.036	-0.168	0.319	0.129	0.15	-0.012	0.161
B74	0.096	-0.106	-0.156	0.298	0	0.067	0.154	0.128
B69	0.157	0.034	-0.049	0.251	0.057	-0.018	0.151	0.074

How important is healthy eating in your life
 To what extent do you opt for a healthy lifestyle
 How important is exercise in your life

B44	0.009	-0.034	0.083	-0.013	0.816	-0.04	0.063	-0.039
B43	0.03	-0.004	-0.014	0.03	0.779	0.003	-0.018	0.009
B45	-0.058	0.019	0.007	-0.087	0.711	0.006	-0.069	0.006

To what extent do you feel uncertain about your personal future
 To what extent are you worried about a future career
 To what extent do you feel uncertain about your future roles

B98	0.012	-0.05	0.025	-0.034	-0.039	0.809	0.038	-0.002
B99	0.033	-0.001	0.047	0.063	-0.011	0.676	-0.013	-0.101
B84	-0.081	-0.006	0.075	0.002	-0.002	0.659	-0.009	-0.042

To what extent do you regard social movements as important
 To what extent do you value new norms regarding lifestyle (e.g. diversity, gay, lesbian)
 To what extent do you find different cultural opinions stimulating
 To what extent is it acceptable to you that people may have different perspectives
 To what extent is freedom of choice important to you

B54	-0.18	0.021	0.092	-0.051	-0.017	-0.019	0.735	-0.009
B56	-0.161	-0.005	0.188	-0.066	-0.055	0.027	0.715	-0.028
B12	0.063	-0.031	0.058	-0.009	-0.019	0.041	0.482	-0.051
B8	-0.075	-0.025	-0.186	0.06	0.012	-0.012	0.378	-0.006
B9	-0.01	0.013	-0.08	0.061	0.027	-0.021	0.369	0.062

How important is cyberspace for you (e.g. your Facebook profile)
 To what extent do you communicate electronically

B21	-0.003	0.056	0.182	-0.066	-0.038	-0.047	-0.03	0.74
B20	0	-0.018	0.123	0.027	0.072	-0.065	-0.013	0.518
B27	0.02	-0.003	0.195	-0.068	-0.096	-0.029	0.02	0.502

How often do you use Facebook to update yourself on what is happening in someone else's life

VARIANCE EXPLAINED BY THE FACTOR

4.397	3.005	2.792	2.16	1.88	1.844	1.833	1.434
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CUMULATIVE PROPORTION OF VARIANCE IN DATA SPACE

PERCENTAGE OF VARIANCE IN DATA SPACE EXPLAINED BY FACTOR:

0.234	0.4576	0.5573	0.6295	0.693	0.7452	0.7933	0.8355
0.234	0.2236	0.0997	0.0722	0.0635	0.0522	0.0481	0.0422

CRONBACH ALPHA

0.87	0.8089	0.7958	0.6909	0.7833	0.7695	0.6707	0.6656
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