



The Role of Facebook in the lives of Australian Teenagers

What Happens When Facebook Takes Over Your Social Life?

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ABC

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1 Introduction

When I got in touch with CertiLingua for the first time in February 2009, I had no idea what that label was about. During a presentation of CertiLingua, held by my coordinator I learned that it was about foreign languages and cultures. I was excited to participate in the program, especially since I was really curious about getting to know other cultures. Another argument why I really wanted to do CertiLingua was that I always loved to learn foreign languages because I think they are part of a country's culture. I had been on a school trip to London once, where I learned that British English represents characteristics of the British culture, for example the British politeness. Great Britain had been the only foreign country I had ever visited before because my parents only arranged holidays within Germany. As I was informed that an exchange program was necessary for the program, it seemed to be the perfect opportunity to finally get out of Germany and learn more about another culture and of course to improve my English.

Soon I talked to my coordinator again and she organised a host family in Australia for me. I got in touch with my exchange student and we arranged the time and duration of my stay in Melbourne. When I got to know that I would actually be going to Australia in the summer of 2010, I started reading about the Australian lifestyle and I wondered if the Australians would be as open-minded and easy-going as everyone said. If they are, would it be easy for me to make new friends?

The first contact with my exchange student gave me the idea for the topic of my project. She wrote me an e-mail saying she was really excited to meet me and asking if I had a Facebook account, so we could exchange messages via the social network. Moreover I could already take a look at her friends, her school and her life, since she had published quite a lot of photos online. As I negated that question, she also explained to me that it was an absolute necessity to have such an account in Australia. That was the point where I started to wonder which role social networks, especially Facebook, played in the everyday life of Australian teenagers.

When my stay for the duration of three months in Australia drew closer, I started contemplating my life on the other side of the world. I wanted to understand the Australian mentality, the culture, but I also wanted to establish long-lasting

friendships. I was wondering if I would personally change during that time and was quite anxious and nervous about being for without my family and friends and on a completely different continent for the first time in my life.

1.1 Description of my Project

The question guiding me throughout my stay was: *How much influence can a social network have on teenagers and in how far is it already controlling their lives?*

I intended to make a survey about the use of Facebook and free time activities of teenagers, in order to find out the importance of the social network. My goal was to detect if Facebook had become a “hobby” by then. In order to achieve that, I planned to hand out questionnaires to 20 teenagers in my year level at school, who were of my age, and to compare the results with teenagers in Germany later on.

Furthermore, I wanted to have personal conversations with the people and ask them about their point of view on the results. I began to develop the idea to not only talk to people, but also observe their behaviour online and the influence Facebook had on conversational topics and relationships between people. Therefore I created Facebook account for myself, so I could actively participate in the “virtual world” and get personal impressions. I also started to keep a diary in order to be able to remember everything that appeared special to me later on.

1.2 Personal View on my Project

I have chosen this project because I had heard a lot about the famous social network in the media, but I had neither any personal friends who used Facebook nor had I ever tried it myself. In 2010 it was not popular at all at my school or among my friends. We used small social networks like “schuelervz”¹ or local communities on the internet. I was unfamiliar with this international online network and not sure how much I could trust it.

When I set up my own account and received about 50 friendship requests in the course of 24 hours from people I did not know by then, I began to wonder how much influence a social network can have on your personal and social life. Is it

¹ www.schuelervz.net is a German social network only used by students who are more than 12 years old.

only used for communication purposes? Is it like a computer game you can get addicted to or does Facebook use a clever strategy with which it can attract people? Another striking question was why it seemed to be so popular in Australia, and from what I had learned from the news, also in the United States of America, but not at all in Germany? Could its use have an impact on “real” life and on relationships between people? Can a simple picture or a Facebook post manipulate someone?

1.3 Educational Context of my Project

The project was of interest to me because of two topics I dealt with in school: We talked about Australia in my English course, dealing with the history of the continent and the co-existence of Aborigines and immigrants. I knew nothing about the topic of everyday life or hobbies of Australian kids. From the TV soap “H2O” I assumed that surfing was a big part of their sportive activities. Since I did not know much about their everyday life, I was curious to learn about it first hand.

In Politics we talked about the dangers of Facebook, like for example the problem of data security. We learned that it was possible for the company to collect the personal data of the people using Facebook and selling it for commercial purposes. This topic influenced the choice of my project as well. Moreover I was curious if the thesis of the “vitreous man”² could really be true.

My project has also helped me with my English advanced course this year, when we worked on the topic of globalisation. The Internet and especially social networks contribute to the image of a shrinking world, in which you can communicate very quickly with people from the other side of the world.

2 My Project

I started to work on my project in collaboration with my exchange student. I interviewed her about the things that had attracted my special attention during the

² “Vitreous man” is often used to describe the fear that people have, when they think about the Internet making everything about them public. This way everyone can find all the information he or she wants to have about you on the Internet. One can “see inside” of you, like you can see inside a house through a glass window.

first days of my stay in Australia. Afterwards I created a survey with the help of her answers and information, which I distributed to different teenagers from different social groups at my school, XXX College.

A total of 20 people participated in my survey: 10 girls and 10 boys between 15 and 16 years of age. I decided to question the same amount of boys and girls to find out whether there is a gender specific “user” behavior as well. Having evaluated the questionnaires, I confronted several of the participants with the results, presented in Chapter 2.1, in order to develop a deeper comprehension of their lifestyle. I started my project by asking the participants about how they spent their free time.

2.1 Conducting the interviews

1) Do you see your friends during the week after school?

Only 10% of the boys said they met their friends more than three times a week during school days. In comparison, only 20% of the girls answered the same. 70% of the girls and 50% of the boys do something with friends at the weekends.

2) How much time do you spend on doing homework or studying for school?

The majority of 80%, both boys and girls, said they did not spend more than 30 minutes for school work during the week. 10% of the girls and 20% of the boys said they sometimes even studied an hour. In comparison to Germany, where most of the students I know, are spending between 30 and 90 minutes on homework, this seemed to me to be very little time. I asked a girl from my English class and she answered she did not think that neither teachers nor students take homework or class itself that seriously. As a consequence most people are studying more intensively the days before the semester exams to compensate what they have missed during school time.

3) What are your hobbies?

5 out of the 10 questioned girls indicated that they did free time activities after school. The most popular sport is netball³, other activities being mentioned, are

³ Netball is a very popular ballgame in Australia and predominately played by women. It is derived from the early forms of basketball. <http://www.netball.asn.au> (13.3.2013).

basketball, dancing, tennis, playing instruments and participating in the art club. In contrast, 60% of the interviewed boys do sports after school. Many of them also play basketball, some football, tennis and AFL⁴. When I was back in Germany, I asked 20 people in my year level about their hobbies and every one of them has at least one hobby.

The most popular sport practiced by girls and boys is football, followed by volleyball and handball. Many people also play instruments. So far one can see that about half of the teenagers do not have as much free time activities as teenagers in Germany do.

4) How often do you watch TV?

Five boys said they turned on the television every day, 90% of them to watch movies or comedy shows. In contrast to this result, seven girls watched soaps every day. Another 50% of them stated that they also watched movies and reality shows. Since my exchange student watched about two hours of soaps and reality shows every day after school, I was wondering about the comparatively low percentage of the survey. When I asked three of the boys about it, they replied the television was turned on most of the afternoons, but was just running in the background, so they were not watching TV “actively”.

5) Do you have a part time job?

Even though I had learned that in Australia you are legally allowed to work by the age of 15, only two of the girls and three of the boys I asked, had a part time job. That was striking to me because after two days, I learned from my new friends that it was an absolute taboo to wear an outfit or a dress twice to a party. Moreover I learned that 80 % of all the people I interrogated met their friends in local shopping malls, in order to buy new outfits for the next social event, like for example a birthday party. Thereupon I wondered how they could finance that kind of lifestyle.

⁴ AFL is the abbreviation for the “Australian Football League”. Australian Football is influenced by Irish and Aboriginal games and only played in Australia, it is also one of the most popular sports watched on TV. <http://www.australia.com> (12.3.2013).

6). How do you spend your free time (except from hobbies/ jobs mentioned above)?

Three of the boys and two of the girls indicated they did sports in their spare time. The others answered they either relaxed or went out with friends. I was not sure, if they meant the same “relaxation” that I meant, so again I got together with different people who had answered the questionnaires and inquired them how they spent their afternoons. Taking everything together, they told me that relaxing for most of the teenagers my age meant watching TV and following the news on Facebook. A few of them read books, but that is out of fashion and since so much social interaction takes place online, it is important to keep on track and be up to date in order to be able to participate in the latest gossip the next day. They also confirmed what my exchange student had pointed out to me: If you want to be someone, you have to make others notice you on Facebook. Commenting on people’s pictures and statuses, sending friend requests and somehow “advertising yourself” is important. A close friend of mine described how she experienced Facebook: “It is a huge pressure, to be informed about everything your friends have recently done and to post every random thing so they don’t forget you are still there as well. But it has its good sides as well, even if you do not look pretty on some days, you can post pictures on Facebook, which prove the opposite. If you are bored, you can just look at other people’s profiles, their holiday pictures or their relationship status and you can try to define their character by them.”

7) How do you contact your friends when you are not seeing them?

Since there are various ways to keep in touch with other people, everyone I asked used at least 3 ways to do that. Everyone uses Facebook as a mean of communication, since it has obvious advantages: You can send messages all around the world and communicate quickly with people. All of the teenagers that took part in my project still have relatives in Europe, Asia, America and some even in Africa. So Facebook, as well as the popular messenger Skype, with which you can also do video phone calls, are the cheapest and easiest way to talk to people abroad.

Mobile phones are used by 60% of the questioned girls and 50 % of the boys mostly for texting or calling their parents. But those who I personally know told me that they sent about 2000 text messages per month. I learned that Facebook

was used for “public” messages, those that everyone can read and know about. It is also used to stay in contact with people you like and are acquainted with, but texting is used for your best friends and your most private messages to them. My host sister told me, that when someone started texting you, you knew you had found a really good friend and it raised the status of your friendship to a new level.

Calling friends at home on the phone is not as popular as the other options. Only 30 % of the boys call their friends and 50% of the girls. The simple reason for that is that it is more convenient to call them on their mobile phones, since most teenagers always have theirs with them. It is harder to reach them at home.

I also talked about the ways of communication with my host family and they told me that their communication behaviour had changed a lot over the past few years. Both of my host parents own a mobile phone and text with their children when they are out of the house in order to know where they are and when they should get picked up. The older generations, the grandparents for example, mostly do not own a mobile phone. My family called or simply visited them spontaneously. Furthermore, I inquired if they used Facebook, they neither have an account nor do they know parents that have one. I was told that it was inappropriate for parents to use Facebook, because it would seem to your friends as if they controlled your online activities. Social networks online are exclusively used by people between 14 and 30 years of age.

8) How many Facebook friends do you have?

This is a really important question, since I observed that the number of friends you have on Facebook has an impact on how popular you seem to be. You do not have to know the people in the contact list. The decisive factor is that they can see what you are doing and the more people can see that, the more you can promote yourself.

My Survey shows that the quantity of friends is varying. Two girls I asked about that had 390 Facebook contacts, others around 450. One of them even had 679 friends in her list. The same I observed with the boys: the one with the most friends had 977, the others had between 500 and 350 friends. But there was not a single person I was friends with on Facebook who had less than 300 “Facebook

friends”. These numbers have probably changed by now because as soon as you get to know someone knew, you “add” him to your contact list.

9) How many pictures do you have on Facebook?

Another factor which has an impact on your social appearance is the amount of your pictures published online. Are you “tagged” on many pictures taken on popular events? Do you look pretty in those pictures?

I noticed that my exchange student was very focused on keeping her photo albums on Facebook up to date. She told me, she wanted to make people see her in another way than they did at school and maybe become more popular.

The number of photos people have on their account often changes. “After one or two years, you usually delete the old pictures which might show you in awkward clothes or something”, my host sister explained to me. So the quantity reached from 174 at least up to 956 pictures which girls posted online and it ranges from 260 up to 365 pictures the boys published on their profile in 2010. By now the numbers have probably shifted again.

2.2 Personal Experiences during my Project

What I greatly experienced is the open-mindedness that I had heard about before my exchange. Everyone I asked to participate in my survey was immediately willing to fill out the questionnaire. If I had questions afterwards, which were sometimes quite personal, they had no problem answering them. Many of them were really curious about Germany. The people at school all welcomed me very friendly, so I was never alone or felt that I was not part of the group during my stay. All in all, I would say that the new friends I made helped me a lot to realise my project because they always supported me and offered their help when I needed it.

During the first weeks I spent in Australia I collected a lot of new impressions. After only one day I had been in school, I received around 60 friend requests on Facebook and people started sending me messages.

Furthermore, I noticed that my exchange student and also my host sister did not have any hobbies after school. The first thing they did was turning on the computer and see if something important had occurred online. Afterwards we

usually watched TV together but my exchange student was also constantly checking her profile and her messages on Facebook.

Throughout my stay I was invited to many birthday parties, which took place at the weekends. It was very conspicuous that taking photos seemed to be one of the most important parts of a party. People were talking to friends, getting to know new people and some were also dancing but there was always someone to take a picture of that moment. The next day those pictures could already be found on Facebook. Everyone checked if he or she looked good in them and had people commenting or “liking” the photos.

Sadly, I also experienced the other side of social networks: A good friend in Australia was bullied by some girls shortly after I left the country. They started to post pictures of her, that were not intended to go on Facebook, and to write her messages that she told nobody about. She committed suicide some months later. Even her best friend and her family did not know about those messages until after her death, when the administrators of Facebook granted them access to her account. She was very popular in school and her friend assumed that she was ashamed of being bullied. She did not want anyone to know that she was not as happy as she always seemed to be.

3 Reflection and Retrospection

3.1 Does Facebook really take over the social life of Australian teenagers?

I can answer this guiding question of my project only with regard to the answers I received both in my survey and in the personal interviews I made. Nevertheless, I think that I got quite a good impression of the influence of Facebook in the lives of Australian teenagers, since I could collect experiences online myself as well. Even though my paper can only give the information that I received from teenagers at my school, I think that the results show to a certain level the impact that Facebook has on them.

The students that filled out the survey had a lot of similarities in how they spent their free time. Most of them do not meet their friends during the week, which is different to Germany, where most teenagers also meet their friends after school, for example to study. Moreover, they do not seem to have as many hobbies as people in Germany do; only about half of them have free time activities after

school at all. I learned that hobbies are not as common as in Germany. Instead most of the teenagers see their families, like aunts and cousins, more often than people in Germany do. The family still has to give permission to the teenagers to go out, for example. Their attitude towards political and cultural issues is strongly influenced by the opinion of members of the family as well. It seemed to me that family has a higher significance for teenagers in Australia than for German teenagers. They are not as independent and do not have as many liberties as young people in Germany do, however the solidarity within the family is stronger, at least I experienced it that way with my host family. But even though Australian teenagers do not have much personal contact to their friends after school, they have found a convenient way to participate in social life.

Facebook seems to be everywhere: When you go somewhere with friends, you “post” it on Facebook. If you do not understand something in school, you can just go online, where people establish “groups” of their different classes, and someone will explain it to you. Moreover, in public places like shopping centers you can find free internet access so that you can go online with your phone.

The omnipresence of facebook has as many advantages as disadvantages: You can contact people very easily and you know where they are almost all the time. Furthermore, if you need help in school, like I mentioned above, someone can explain it to you spontaneously. You do not need to arrange a personal meeting, in order to show something you can just take photos or make a short video and publish it. Despite that, it is more anonymous than meeting someone in person. You do not get to know someone via Facebook because you cannot see his or her reactions and facial expressions. It is much easier to pretend to be someone else on the Internet than in “real” life. In addition to that, many people are always distracted. I met several people in a local shopping centre, but they were not only shopping or talking to their friends, they always had an eye on their Facebook “notifications”.

But does Facebook really influence people? Can it control their social lives? Obviously, I cannot tell if it can control people’s minds, since no one would admit that, but evaluating my survey and looking at my personal experiences I would say that it can. Rumors can be spread easily via online communities. If someone has a picture of you in which you do not look good, some people will laugh about you and you will get less self-confident. Of course, Facebook is very convenient

for keeping contact with people from all over the world because it is free, anyone can register and messages are received instantly by the addressee.

But that is just one side of the popular social network; it has a huge impact on people's perception of others and of themselves as well. If someone has a lot of pictures on popular parties, he or she seems to have a lot of friends. Advertising yourself is important, because if people think you are liked by many people, they will think of you that way and therefore treat you differently.

On the other hand, if you are not careful enough and someone holds a grudge against you, they can literally start up a campaign proclaiming you did or said something and thus ruin your reputation. As my personal experience shows, Facebook also makes cyberbullying a huge problem in Australia.

Taking everything into account I can say that Facebook has a huge impact on the social lives of teenagers, and even though friendships are still based on personal meetings, Facebook is able to support or destroy them.

From my point of view Facebook has successfully gained a major role in organising people's social life, but not completely taken it over yet. Nevertheless, I believe that it is important to try to prevent it from doing so. Social networks have advantages in global communication but as many disadvantages in privacy issues and influencing people and especially teenagers psychologically.

3.2 Reflection on my personal experiences in the course of my Project

Looking back on all the experiences I made during my stay in Australia, it has definitely given me a different perspective on certain things. The realisation of my project gave me an insight into the private lives of many teenagers which could be very moving sometimes. I found really good friends during that time and with some of them I am still in contact, mainly via Facebook. But I am also very shocked that one of my friends, who participated in my project and told me all about advertising yourself, is now dead because of being cyberbullied on Facebook.

Most importantly, I learned that keeping personal contact to your friends is very important. Personal meetings and conversations cannot be replaced by any photos

on Facebook or even an e-mail. The only way you can really get to know a person and build up a relationship is talking to him or her directly; online messages cause too many misunderstandings. If you forget to add a smiley at the end of a message, for example, some people will think you are mad at them or they did something wrong.

Furthermore, I think that my friends learned a lot in the course of my project as well and came to realise some dangers of Facebook. They did not think about the privacy of their photos before. Some of them even admitted that relying on Facebook as a mean of communication could alienate you from your friends. So all in all, I think that some people gained a different perspective on Facebook and the addiction many young people have to it.

For me, personally, the project was really efficient as well. While I was staying with my host family and had no free time activities I realised for the first time how stressful my everyday life in Germany was and how serious I took certain things. Moreover, I received a deeper insight on the power of social networks. Now, that Facebook has become popular in Germany as well I am very careful what I share with the world since I experienced how much damage a single picture can do.

In addition to that I learned that even though I love the Australia laid-back culture and the country itself, I also like my home country. In Germany many people take punctuality and order very seriously, but in Australia it is important that you take your time for something, even for doing “nothing”. Nevertheless, I sometimes got bored in Australia because I was not used to having no appointment to go to.

Before my exchange I thought that Germany was boring and not much liked in the world because of prejudices and German history, but in many conversations people envied me for living there and having the possibility to access a foreign country within a couple of hundreds of kilometers, for example. It was self-evident for the Australians that today’s Germany has nothing to do with the “Third Reich” and anti-semitism any more. But what astonished me the most was that the German and the Italian people were always referred to as “the Europeans”.

The whole exchange has influenced my personal development a lot: I am more fluent in the English language now and I am able to understand some accents as

well. Furthermore, I got a different point of view on the German as a European culture and most importantly, I am much more attentive to the influence on social networks and the internet in general.

4 Outlook

My project as well as my stay in Australia as a whole, still has influences me as a person and my attitude towards other cultures.

Over the entire course of my project I predominantly learned that nothing can replace the personal contact to a friend, relative or acquaintance. You have to be very careful not to lose the quality of the relationship by getting alienated because of social networks. I would have never guessed how much time one can spend on Facebook and how much damage it can cause in people's lives. I believe that it is very important to employ topics like Facebook and its influence in the education of children so that they are more attentive from the very beginning. In addition to that, I am trying to be more sensible to the posts and pictures on the internet now because some people do not only try to look popular but also publish quotes, for example, which show that they have problems in their lives. In that case I try to contact them personally or, if that does not work, I tell a close friend of them. I do not want another person to be harmed as bad as my friend was.

My experiences also taught me that it is wrong to make rash judgments. Most people are not who they pretend to be on their Facebook profile and in their pictures. Many are just trying to cover up something they do not want the world to see and know. In order to look behind the "façade" it is inevitable to get to know them and their character personally. First impressions gained online are almost always deceiving.

Aside from that, I learned that open-mindedness concerning other cultures and their point of view is essential in order to get into conversations with people. You have to put yourself in the other one's shoes to apprehend a different mentality completely. Those direct encounters can enlarge your horizon and change you as a person.

Working on my project also gave me a lot more practice in working on papers such as CertiLingua. Furthermore, I still deal with the topic of Facebook every day, not only in private, but also in my academic paper in history, which is about the "Facebook-Revolution" in Egypt. In my English advanced course we dealt

with the topic of globalisation and in this context discussed the role of social networks within that process, especially in connection with the “shrinking world”, which may lead to the much discussed “global village” where everyone can get to know everyone via the Internet.

My exchange also encouraged me and my family to give other exchange students the opportunity to make new experiences in Germany and get to know more different cultures ourselves, too. In 2011 we had an exchange student from the United States of America staying for six months and we were all very happy that we shared so many good moments. In the summer of 2012 I went to visit her and her family for three weeks in return, which gave me the possibility to gain more impressions of foreign cultures.

All in all, I am very glad that I have made the decision to spend three months in Australia. I am still in contact with some of my Australian friends and also with our American exchange student. I would recommend an exchange like that to any student who has the possibility to live in another country for some time because you can profit from many experiences and impressions, on a private as much as on a professional level.

5. References

Internet Sources:

<http://www.netball.asn.au> (12.3.2013) What is Netball?

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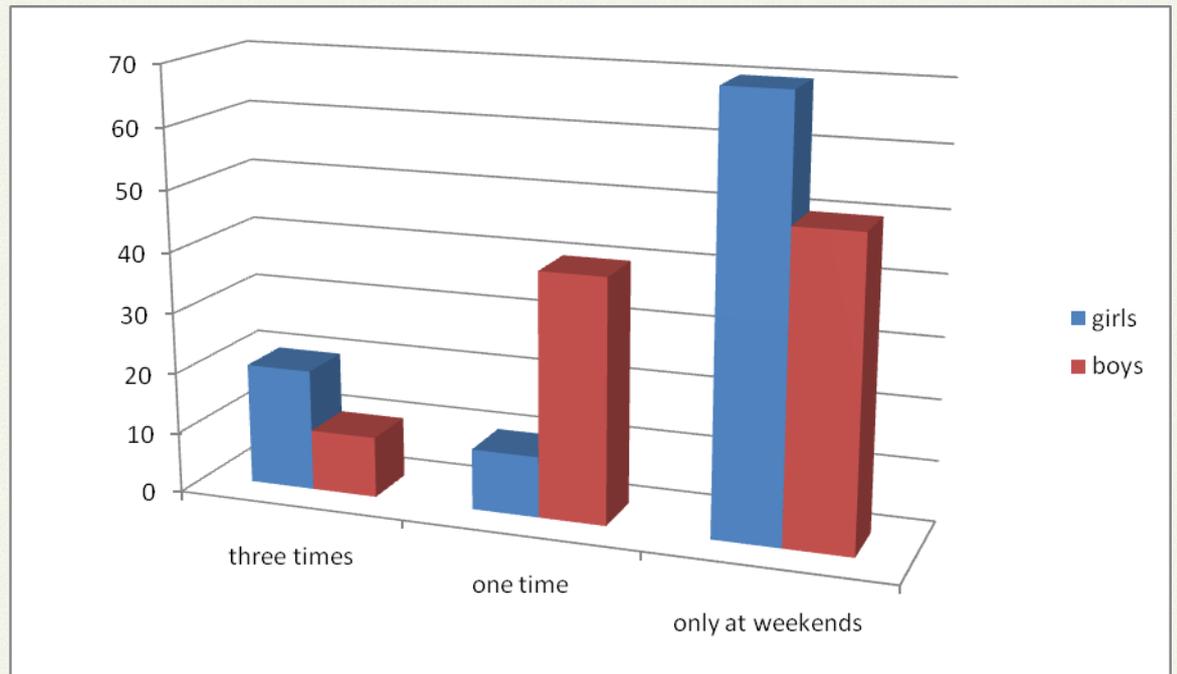
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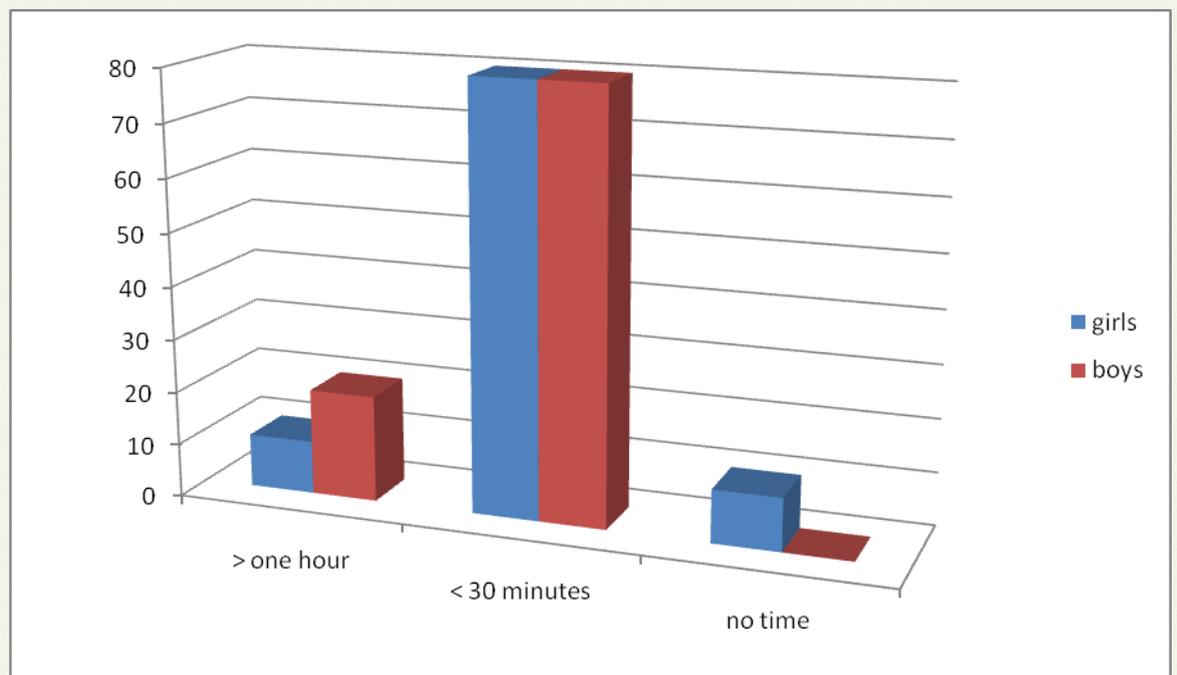
6. Appendix

6.1 Questionnaire: The Role of Facebook in the lives of Australian Teenagers – What Happens when Facebook Takes Over Your Social Life?

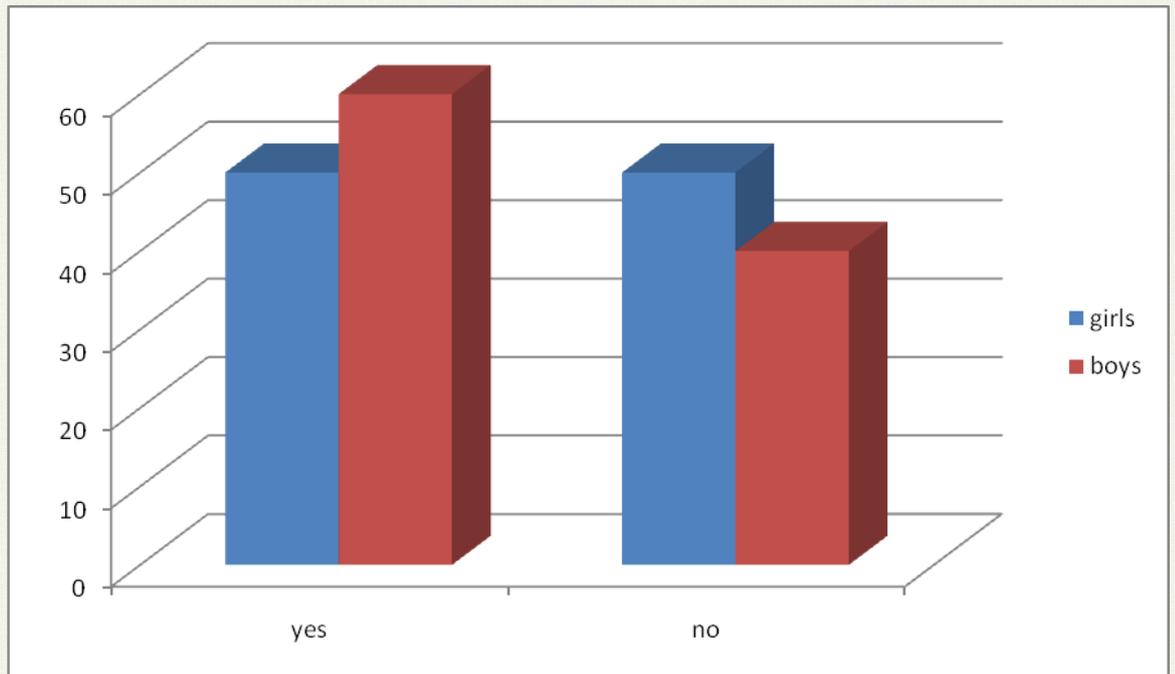
1) Do you see your friends during the school week after school?



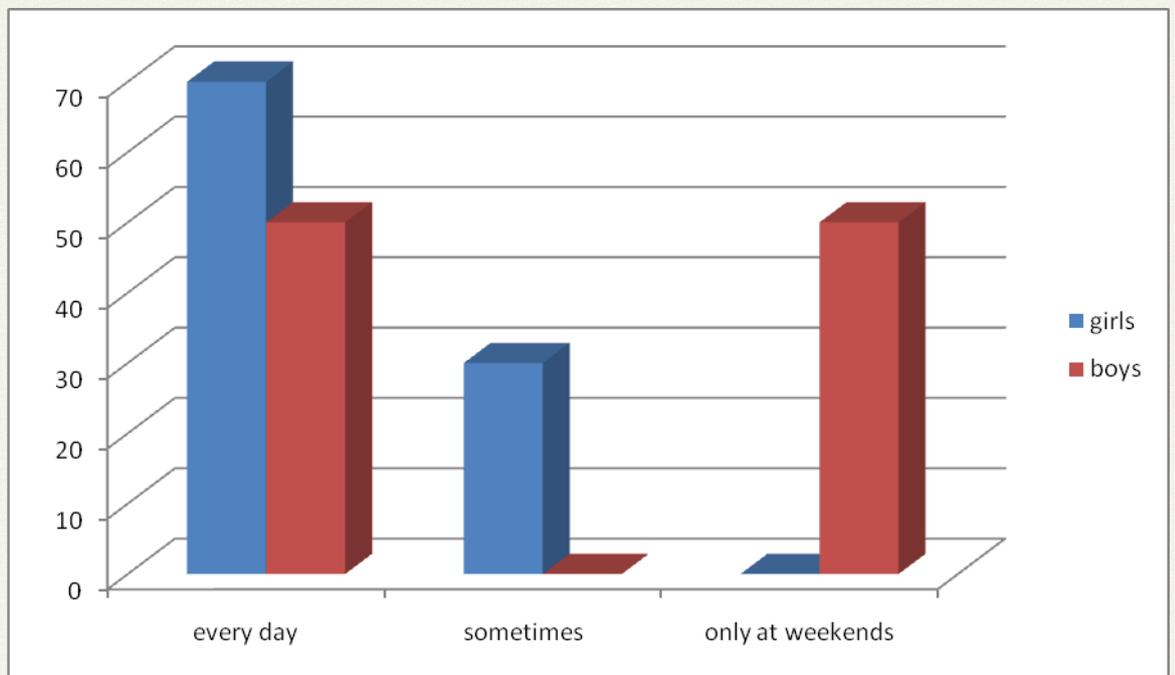
2) How much time do you spend on doing homework or studying for school?



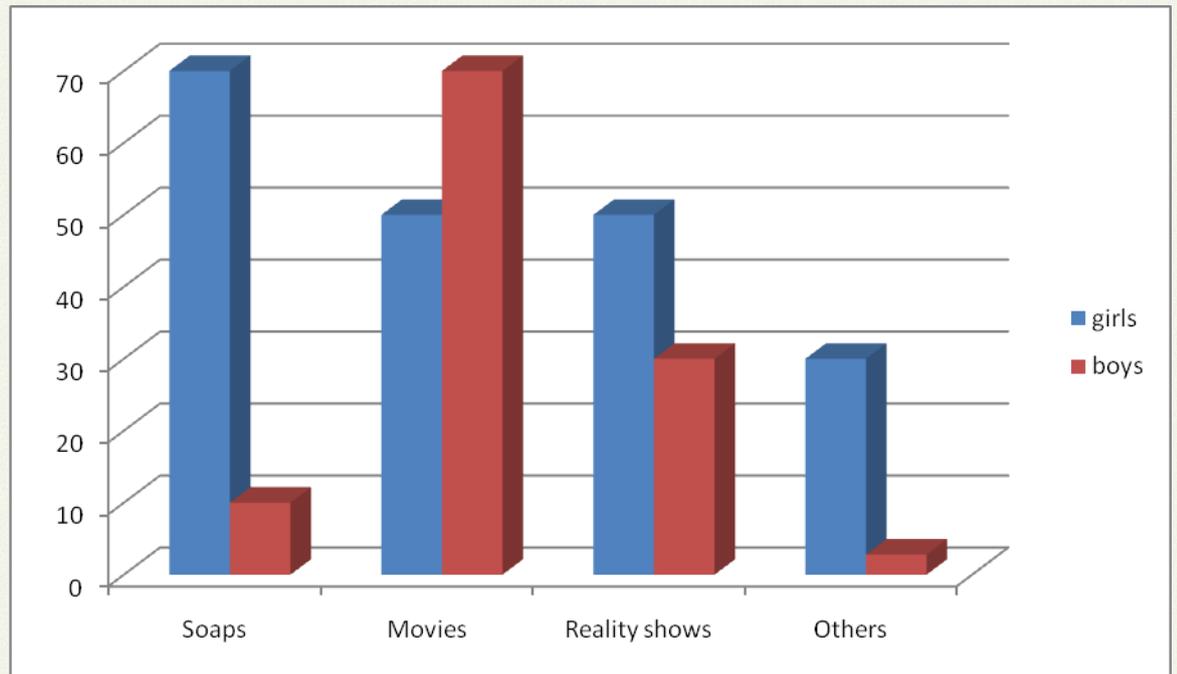
3) What are your hobbies?



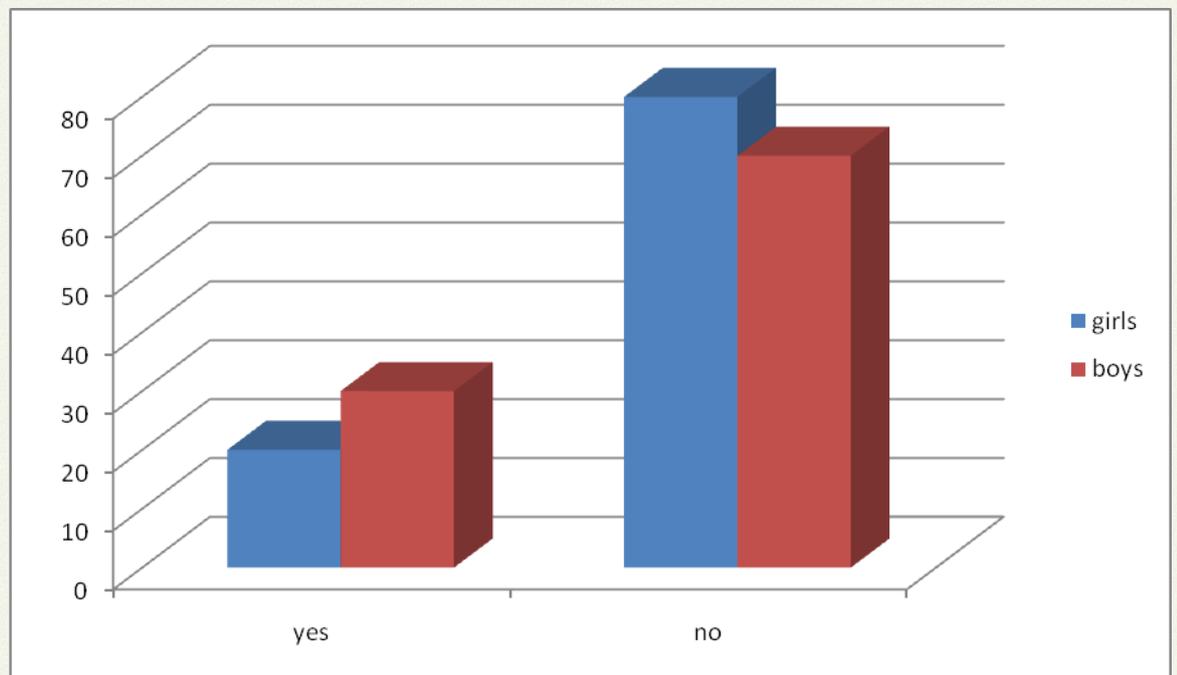
4) How often do you watch TV?



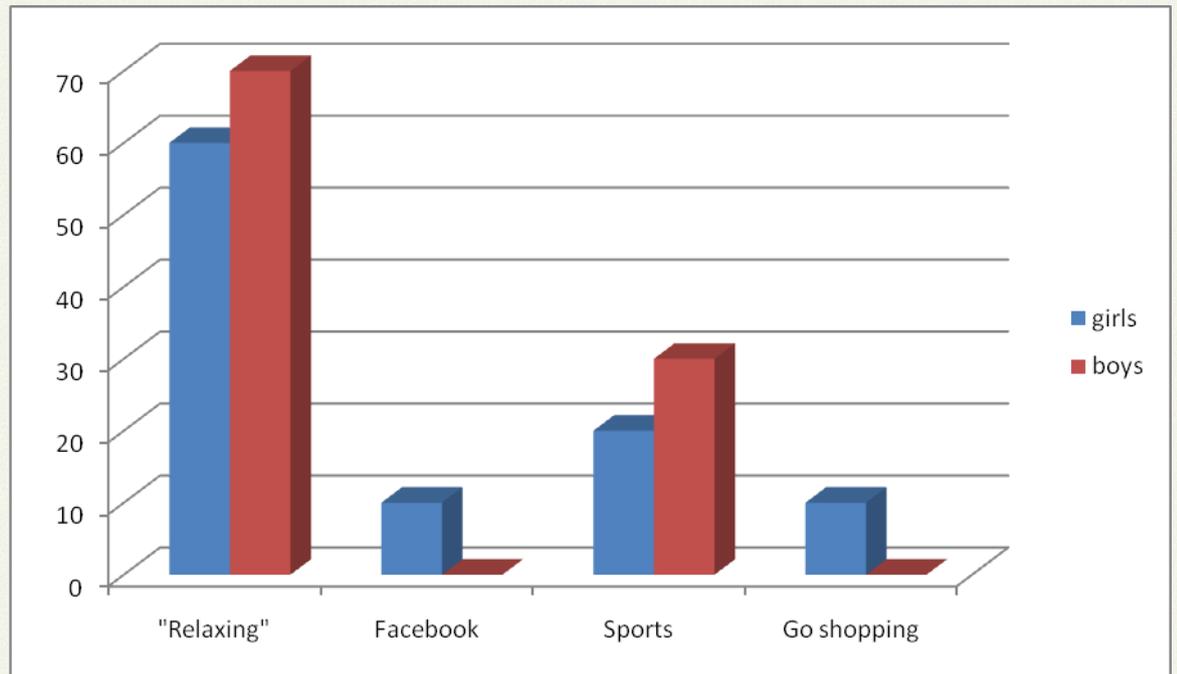
Which shows do you watch on TV?



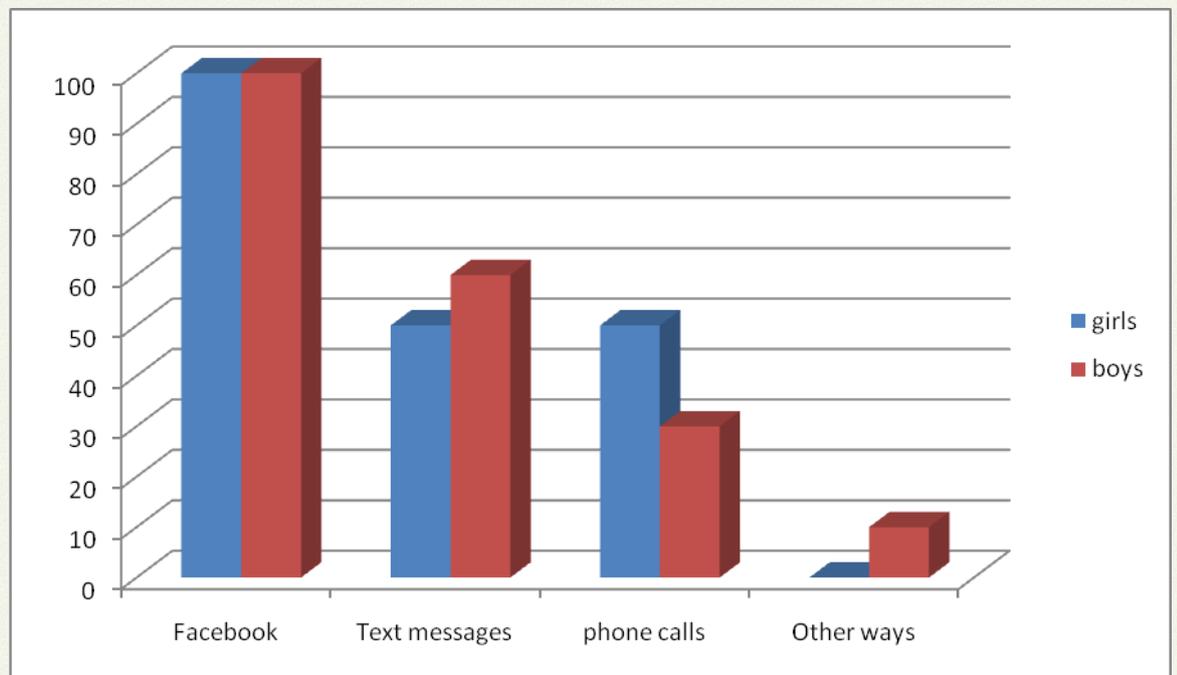
5) Do you have a part time job?



6) How do spend your free time (except from hobbies/jobs mentioned above)?



7) How do you contact your friends when you are not seeing them?



8) How many Facebook friends do you have?

GIRLS	BOYS
452	405
454	977
679	335
513	570
388	600
421	445
387	498
461	375
449	389
458	462

9) How many pictures do you have on Facebook?

GIRLS	BOYS
174	305
490	316
956	206
278	365
522	254
458	260
763	278
386	312
486	344
602	299

6.2 Internet Sources

<http://www.netball.asn.au/extra.asp?id=782&OrgID=1> (12.3.2013)

What is Netball?

The game of netball is an international sport and is played by two teams of seven players; based on throwing and catching. The object is to score goals from within a defined area, by throwing a ball into a ring attached to a 3.05 metres (10 feet) high post.

- Learn more about the [history of netball](#).
- Learn more about the [basic rules of netball](#).

Today the game is the most popular women's sport in Australia with an estimated one million players nation wide. Although traditionally identified as a sport for women, there is no reason why it cannot be played with mixed teams, and increasingly more boys and men are becoming involved.

At an international level Australia is well respected by over 40 affiliate countries, having won nine of the 12 World Netball Championships held since 1963.

In 1997 the sport entered a new era with the introduction of the National Netball League (Commonwealth Bank Trophy). This competition came to a close in 2007 after 11 years and was replaced in 2008 with the Trans-Tasman competition the [ANZ Championship](#).

National Championships are conducted for 17/U, 19/U and 21/U age divisions and the Australian Netball League allows younger players to have regular competition, and the public the opportunity to see some of the world's best netball on a regular basis.

<http://www.australia.com/explore/events/afl-events.aspx> (12.3.2013)

AFL - The Australian Football League Finals Series

National ; Melbourne, Victoria

September

From March to September Australian Rules Football (AFL) teams fight it out to make the top eight and qualify for the final series held in Melbourne in September. AFL is Australia's most attended sporting league, with passionately-supported teams in Sydney, Adelaide, Perth and Brisbane. Close to 95,000 fans pack the stands of the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) for the grand final while millions watch it worldwide on television. There's nothing like being there for the final series. The entire city takes on a carnival atmosphere as excited fans cheer their teams to victory. It is a truly unique Australian experience.

Australian Rules Football (AFL) is Australia's most attended sporting league, with passionately-supported teams in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Perth and Brisbane. Games are played around the country from March, culminating in the finals series in Melbourne in September.

Australian rules football was officially born in Melbourne in 1859, when the Melbourne Football Club formed and set out the first rules of play. In 1897, they joined with Carlton, Collingwood, Essendon, Geelong, Melbourne and St Kilda to form the Victorian Football League. This was the predecessor to the Australian Football League (AFL), which was formed in 1989 and today has 17 teams across Australia.

The sport's origins have been debated, but historians have pointed to a fusion of influences, including the Irish game of 'caid', rugby union and traditional Aboriginal games such as marngrook.

Today this high-energy and fast-paced game features two teams of 18 players, who must advance an oval-shaped ball towards the goalposts by kicking, handballing and running. The aim of the game is to score by pushing the ball

through the posts or kicking it through the middle two posts. Australian Rules is a contact sport and players are allowed to tackle with their hands or obstruct other players with their bodies.

You can catch this uniquely Australian sport at more than 100 home-and-away games held between late March and September. See the Sydney Swans at the Sydney Cricket Ground; the West Coast Eagles play at the Wacca in Perth; or the Brisbane Bears display their prowess at the Gabba.

For a true taste of AFL fever, you can't beat the Grand Final at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground. The entire city takes on a carnival atmosphere as two tribes compete for victory. Grand final passions run high in Melbourne, where fans are often divided along loyalties stretching back generations.

Of all Australian sport, AFL also has the highest representation of Aboriginal players. It's hugely popular in Aboriginal communities, including the lush Tiwi Islands near Darwin, where life comes to a standstill for the Grand Football Final in March.

7. Statement of Independent Work - Selbstständigkeitserklärung

Hiermit erkläre ich, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit selbstständig und ohne fremde Hilfe verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Hilfsmittel benutzt habe.

Insbesondere versichere ich, dass ich alle wörtlichen und sinngemäßen Übernahmen aus anderen Werken als solche kenntlich gemacht und mit genauen Quellenbelegen versehen habe.

Ort, Datum

Unterschrift