THE NATURE OF FRIENDSHIP AMONGST ADOLESCENTS WITH LEARNING IMPAIRMENT IN A SPECIALISED SCHOOL

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2010

THE NATURE OF FRIENDSHIP AMONGST ADOLESCENTS WITH LEARNING IMPAIRMENT IN A SPECIALISED SCHOOL

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS
(EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY)

in the

Department of Educational Psychology
Faculty of Education
University of Pretoria

SUPERVISOR
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PRETORIA
November 2010

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

I, Christina Margaret Fourie (student number 22012207), hereby declares that this mini-dissertation titled:

THE NATURE OF FRIENDSHIP AMONGST ADOLESCENTS WITH LEARNING
IMPAIRMENT IN A SPECIALISED SCHOOL

is my own work and that all references appear in the list of references.

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ABSTRACT

THE NATURE OF FRIENDSHIP AMONGST ADOLESCENTS WITH LEARNING IMPAIRMENT IN A SPECIALISED SCHOOL

by

Christina Margaret Fourie

Friendship and peer acceptance is an important facet of any adolescent's development. Adolescence is recognised as a period of discovering and forming one's identity. When an adolescent has a learning impairment, it impacts on all facets of his/her life, including socially (friendships). While needing to deal with the challenges of a learning impairment as well as to functioning socially, the adolescent needs to cope with these challenges as well as form an identity. In a similar vein, when the adolescent is faced with the challenges of a learning impairment, limited cognitive and language difficulties may impact on friendship relationships. Working in a school that caters specifically for learners with learning impairments, I started wondering: what role does their individual learning impairments play in the maintenance of friendship?

The purpose of this study was to gain insight and understanding into the nature of friendship amongst adolescents who have been identified as having a specific learning impairment. This study took place within a specialised high school setting where the focus is to provide support to the learner with specific learning needs.

This study utilised an interpretive, qualitative research approach. This study aimed to interpret and understand what is the nature of friendship for adolescents with a specific learning impairment. The study also aimed to understand how social issues such as social comparison and self-concept is understood from the participants' point of view and finally, to understand if the school environment within which they function play any role in the nature of friendships and how does the adolescent participant interpret this role. The research design was an instrumental case study. Data was collected from two participants by means of a one-on-one semi-structured interview and observations supported by field notes. The data collected was transcribed. The data was interpreted using a colour code for each theme identified.

The findings reported indicate that the participants' view of the self is influenced by their friends. Support and understanding in their friendships was possible as a result of trust, acceptance and understanding of how it is to be facing the challenge of learning impairments on a daily basis. The learners have found a place in the school were they can flourish both academically and socially. Socially, the challenges of learning impairments still play a role during interactions with friends. Social comparison based on physical appearance was highlighted. Self-concepts have been influenced by their learning impairment. Within the specialised school system, improved self-concepts were reported due to better academic performance and unconditional acceptance by friends and peers, despite having a learning impairment.

KEY WORDS

- Adolescence
- Learner impairment
- Friendship
- Social comparison
- Self-concept
- School for learners with learning impairments
- Inclusive education
- Social Identity Theory
- Social skills
- Peer group

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OPSOMMING

THE NATURE OF FRIENDSHIP AMONGST ADOLESCENTS WITH LEARNING IMPAIRMENT IN A SPECIALISED SCHOOL
(DIE AARD VAN VREINDSKAP TUSSEN ADOLESENTE MET LEER GEREMDHEDE IN 'N GESPESIALISEERDE SKOOL)

deur

Christina Margaret Fourie

Vriendskap en portuur groep aanvaarding is 'n belangrike aspek van enige adolesent se ontwikkeling. Adolesensie word erken as 'n tydperk van ondekking en die vorming van 'n identiteit. Wanneer 'n adolesent 'n leergeremdheid beleef, het dit 'n invloed op alle fasette van hulle lewens, insluitend sosiaal (vriendskappe). Terwyl die adolesent die uitdagings van 'n leergeremdheid moet hanteer asook sosiaal funksioneer, moet die adolesent terselftertyd die uitdaging hanteer om 'n identiteit te vorm. Wanneer die adolesent die uitdagings van 'n leergeremdheid hanteer, het beperkte kognitiewe en taal uitdagings ook 'n invloed op vriendskappe. Terwyl ek by 'n skool werk wat voorsien vir leerders met leergeremdhede het ek begin wonder: watter rol speel individuele leergeremdhede in die handhawing van vriendskappe.

Die doel van die studie was om insig te verkry in die aard van vriendskap tussen adolosente wat identifiseer is as leerders met 'n leergeremdheid. Die studie het plaas gevind in 'n gespesialiseerde hoërskool waar die fokus val om ondersteuning te bied aan leerders met leergeremdhede. Die studie was 'n interpretiewe, kwalitatiewe navorsings studie. Die doel van die studie was om die aard van vriendskappe tussen adolesente met leergeremdhede, te verstaan. 'n Verdere doel van die studie was om vas te stel hoe word sosiale vergelyking en self-konsep verstaan word deur die deelnemers en laastens om vas te stel of die skoolomgewing waarin die kinders funksioneer, enige rol speel in die aard van vriendskappe. Laastens is gekyk na hoe word die rol verstaan deur die adolesente.

Die navorsingsontwerp was 'n instrumentele gevalle studie. Data was versamel vanaf twee deelnemers deur middel van een-tot-een semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude en waarnemings

wat deur veldnotas ondersteun was. Die data wat versamel was is getranskribeer. Die data was interpreteer deur 'n kleur kode wat gekoppel is aan elke tema.

Die bevindinge dui aan dat die deelnemers se siening van die self beïnvloed word deur hulle vriende. Ondersteuning en begrip in hulle vriendskappe is moontlik as gevolg van vertroue, aanvaarding en begrip van hoe dit voel om die uitdagings van 'n leergeremdheid daagliks te hanteer. Die leerders het 'n plek in die skool gevind waar hulle beide akademies en sosiaal kan floreer. Op 'n sosiale vlak speel die uitdagings van 'n leergeremdheid steeds 'n rol in hulle vriendskappe. Sosiale vergelyking kom voor gebasseer op fisiese voorkoms. Self-konsepte word deur leergeremdhede beïnvloed. In die gespesialiseerde skool word beter self-konsepte gerapporteer weens beter akademiese prestasie en onvoorwaardelike aanvaarding deur vriende en lede van die portuur groep, teen spyte daarvan om 'n leergeremdheid te hê.

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CHAPTER 1
ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1   INTRODUCTION

'The ability to share one's life and connect emotionally through friendship is consistently reported as a critical factor in the development and maintenance of life satisfaction' (Gordon, Feldman & Chiriboga, 2005:1). Friendship and peer acceptance is an important facet of any adolescent's development. Gordon *et al.* (2005:1) state that friendship is dependent on an ability to sustain a relationship. When an adolescent is faced with certain challenges that limit their language and cognitive abilities, it may further hamper the development and sustainment of these relationships (Gordon *et al.*, 2005:1). Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2006:212) state that during all stages of development, but especially adolescence, peer groups have a great influence, which can be either positive or negative. Carr (2006:35) explains that peer friendships are important sources of support and a context within which to learn about maintaining relationships. Adolescents who are unable to make and maintain friendships are more at risk of developing psychological difficulties (Carr, 2006:35).

The adolescent with a learning impairment goes through a diversity of experiences: 'Learning difficulties encompass more than academic difficulties. There is a renewed recognition of related disorders that impact the individual's life and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties' (Lerner & Kline, 2006:518).

Adolescence is recognised as a period of discovering and forming one's identity. When an adolescent has a learning impairment, that adolescent has challenges in school due to the learning impairment, as well as in their social lives, as they need to cope with these challenges while forming an identity (Lerner & Kline, 2006:266). The adolescent with the learning impairment may exhibit a number of characteristics (developed from Lerner & Kline, 2006:269-270):

- Being a passive learner, waiting for someone to assist in problem solving, instead of actively attempting to solve problems independently.
- Repeated failure, which may result in a lowered self-concept.
- Challenges in the social arena due to difficulties with social skills.

- Attention deficits.
- A lack of motivation, due to repeated failure

In my proposed study, I aim to understand the nature of friendship between adolescents who all experience specific learning impairments and who are all functioning within a school situation that provides for their specific academic needs. I aim to understand which factors play a role in the experiences of the friendships.

1.2 RATIONALE OF THIS STUDY

During my practical work in the clinic of the Department of Educational Psychology at the University where I study, one of my clients was diagnosed with a learning impairment, namely reading difficulties. She was moved from a mainstream school to a school for children with learning impairments. Her words to me were: 'I am now the best reader in my class.' The experience with this client ignited a thought process: what do learners with learning impairments experience? How do they see themselves in comparison to their peers? I started my internship for Educational Psychology at a high school for learners who had been identified as having specific learning disabilities and difficulties. The thought process that started with that first client quickly developed and expanded through working with these learners. I reflected back to my own adolescent years and remembered how important my friends had been in my identity formation years. During counselling sessions with these adolescents, one of the main issues that would arise was their friendship. Observing their interactions on the playground as well as in the class fuelled the thought process even more. I started to wonder: what was the nature of the friendships I was observing? One day a Grade 10 learner mentioned that she became infuriated when her friend, a learner with ADHD, became distracted when they were talking, and she had to repeat everything she said. I began to wonder: what role do their individual learning impairments play in the maintenance of friendship? Along what lines does social comparison occur in this unique situation? Is there a greater sense of acceptance regarding learning impairments and more insight into certain behaviours that peers display?

When I began to read about this issue, it was evident that there have been various studies along the same lines. The only difference was that studies in the literature generally compared peers who was diagnosed with a learning impairment with those who were not. This type of group comparison research design may mask individual differences and it may not relate to

the participant's particular experience (Riddick, 2010:34). There exists a wealth of information regarding the social adaptation of learners with a learning impairment within an inclusive school environment. However, there is a limited amount of data available which compares the nature of friendship between adolescents who all experience some kind of specific learning impairment within a specialised school system, especially in the South African context. I believe this study will make a useful contribution to the literature by filling this gap and providing useful information regarding the social aspects of learning impairments.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

I work at a high school for children with various barriers to learning. This school creates an inclusive environment where learners with various learning impairments can function. As has been stated, I developed an interest in the social and friendship aspects of this environment. Social development is an important facet of the development of an adolescent. According to Kavale and Forness (2006, in Luciano & Savage, 2007:16), many learners with learning impairments demonstrate social skills deficits. Settle and Milich (1999:201) state that children with barriers to learning 'have significant difficulties in both academic and social domains'. According to several authors cited in Chan and Mpofu (2001:43, viz. Asher, 1990; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995; Van der Zander, 1993), peer groups provide children with opportunities to develop independence, experience equal relationships with others, acquire social status and develop an identity, share experiences and exchange emotional support. Since friendship and group acceptance is so important for the development of adolescents, do additional obstacles such as learning impairments influence peer relationships and the experiences of friendships? The purpose of this study is to gain insight and understanding into the nature of friendship among adolescents who have been identified as having learning impairments. This study will take place within a specialised high school setting where the focus is to provide support to the learner with specific learning needs.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to Azmitia, Ittel and Radmacher (2005:24), friendships during the adolescence phase undergo important changes which include an increase in intimacy and mutuality. These changes affect the nature of friendship. Selman (1980, in Azmitia *et al.*, 2005:24) indicates that the cognitive development that takes place during adolescence enables adolescents to reflect on their own and others' behaviour, emotions and intentions. This leads to deeper

friendship experiences. Emotional support, trust and loyalty have been identified as qualities valued most in adolescent friendships (Azmitia *et al.*, 2005:29).

Learning impairments can be divided into two main domains. Learning impairments are often associated with neurological causes that have an effect on learners' cognitive information processing and significantly affect their academic performance. The other domain includes the socio-emotional aspects of learning impairments (Leichtentritt & Shechtman, 2009:1). Some theorists attribute these to the same cognitive deficits that influence academic achievement (Barkley, 2002; Bauminger, Edelztein & Morash, 2005), while others attribute it to their sense of failure, shame and self-doubt (Arthur, 2003, in Leichtentritt & Shechtman, 2009:1). According to Leichtentritt & Shechtman (2009:1), the manifestations of learners with learning impairments go beyond skill deficits. The manifestations may also include loneliness, low self-esteem, anger and aggression.

There are various studies that compare learners with a learning impairment with peers who do not have learning impairments (Firth, Greaves & Frydenberg, 2010:77-85; Lackaye & Margalit, 2006:432-446). These comparisons are on various dimensions, including peer relationships within inclusive school environments (Hall & McGregor, 2000:114).

According to Margalit (2004, in Lackaye & Margalit, 2006:434), learners with a learning impairment often report social difficulties and peer rejection, with increased levels of loneliness as a result. However, Margalit (2004, in Lackaye & Margalit, 2006:434) also explains that there are some inconsistencies related to the experience of loneliness as reported by learners with learning impairments. This has led to a focus on the personality variation within learners with learning impairment. The personality variations mentioned may include personality, self-perception and resilience (Margalit, 2004, in Lackaye & Margalit, 2006:434).

According to Settle and Milich (1999:201), learners with learning impairments 'have significant difficulties in both academic and social domains'. Consistent school failure is associated with poor academic and emotional functioning (Chapman, 1988; Margalit & Zak, 1984; Patten, 1983, in Martinez & Semrud-Clikeman, 2004:411). A low performance at school is the trademark of a child with barriers to learning. This may lead to emotional problems and adjustment problems at school (Martinez & Semrud-Clikeman, 2004:411). Bowman and Gordon (2000, in Gordon *et al.*, 2005:3) describe some of the difficulties of learners with barriers to learning, namely finding it challenging to go to school, to make

friends, and to live with the disability. Luciano and Savage (2007:17) indicate that learners with learning impairments may experience a low scholastic self-concept and learned helplessness. This may lead to passive or submissive behaviour in social interaction. All these factors affect an adolescent's self-concept. An adolescent's self-esteem is a lens through which friendship is conceptualised. Rosenberg and Owens (2001, in Azmitia *et al*., 2005:24) suggest that learners with a low self-esteem tend to remember negative interpersonal events instead. This could lead to further self-doubt and eventually test friendships in ways that result in negative reactions from friends (Azmitia *et al*., 2005:25). I therefore aim to understand the role of social factors in learners' friendships.

There is a wealth of information available comparing peer relations and friendships between learners with learning impairments and those without. Nowicki (2003:172) explains that learners with learning impairments are at a greater risk for social rejection and negative self-esteem issues than average to high-achieving children. I want to investigate what factors play a role in friendships among learners with learning impairments, within a school environment that provides specifically for their needs. I plan to investigate the nature of friendship among learners with learning impairments. I want to understand if self-concept issues and social comparison play a role in their experiences of friendship. I also want to make a useful contribution to the existing literature regarding the nature and experience of friendship among learners with learning impairments.

1.5   RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SUBQUESTIONS

In this section the research question and subquestions will be discussed.

1.5.1   PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION

The following primary research question will be explored in this study:

❖   *What is the nature of friendship amongst adolescents with learning impairments in a specialised school context?*

1.5.2   SUBQUESTIONS

▪   What factors play a role in friendships among learners with learning impairments?

- How do children with specific learning impairments experience their friendships at school?
- What characteristics of learners with learning impairments influence their friendships?
- What role do social factors play in the experience of friendship among these learners?

1.6   ASSUMPTIONS

Based on the literature I have read, I assume that the adolescent's learning impairment will have some influence on the social interaction that takes place at school. I assume that the characteristics of the learning impairment, such as communication and social difficulties, will affect the friendships. I also assume that social factors such as self-concept and social comparisons affect the experience of friendships among these learners. I aim to understand what this influence entails.

1.7   CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

In the following section the different concepts that are used in this study will be clarified.

1.7.1   ADOLESCENCE

According to Engelbrecht and Green (2001:102), adolescence is regarded as one of the most complex developmental phases. To define adolescence requires multiple approaches. From a physiological approach, adolescence starts at puberty (Engelbrecht & Green, 2001:103). From a sociological approach, reaching sexual maturity is the beginning of adolescence. Society and the culture in which the adolescent functions determine the end of adolescence (Engelbrecht & Green, 2001:103). Engelbrecht and Green (2001:102) state that defining adolescence is a conceptual dilemma: when does childhood end and when is adulthood achieved?

In essence, adolescence can be described as a period of transition from childhood to adulthood. Changes occur physically, cognitively and socially. The adult that a child will become is formed during adolescence.

1.7.2   THE ADOLESCENT WITH A LEARNING IMPAIRMENT

Adolescents with a learning impairment have difficulties in both their academic and social lives. Many characteristics of learning impairments are similar to those of adolescence, and it is difficult to distinguish which behaviours occur as a result of a learning impairment or of being an adolescent (Lerner & Kline, 2006:266).

According to Lerner and Kline (2006:267), the difficulties associated with adolescence increase when the adolescent has a learning impairment. Lerner and Kline's (2006:267-270) description of the typical characteristics of the adolescent with a learning impairment is subsequently discussed in greater detail. However, it is important to bear in mind that these characteristics are not always present, and vary from individual to individual:

Many adolescents with learning impairments are considered passive learners (Lerner & Kline, 2006:269). After experiencing repeated failure, a sense of learned helplessness may develop. This means that the learner would wait until someone tells him what to do, instead of solving problems independently.

As adolescents are often exposed to a sense of failure, they may display certain acting-out or problematic behaviour. This sense of failure may also lead to a lowered self-concept. Adolescents with learning impairments often have low self-esteem and little self-confidence (Deshler *et al*., 1996; Lenz & Deshler, 2003; Silver, 1998; all in Lerner & Kline, 2006:269).

Another hurdle for the adolescent with a learning impairment is difficulties with social skills. This affect peer relationship establishment and maintenance (Lerner & Kline, 2006:269). Many adolescents with learning impairments experience a lack of motivation after years of perceived academic failure. These individuals give up rather than risk failure (Lerner & Kline, 2006:270-271).

1.7.3   LEARNING IMPAIRMENTS

According to Landsberg, Kruger and Nel (2005:364) a learning impairment is a 'heterogeneous group of neurological disorders which manifest in difficulties with language and mathematics'. Donald *et al*., 2006:3) use the term *barrier to learning* to describe 'any factor that is a hindrance or obstacle to a student's ability to learn'. Barriers to learning can be divided into three categories: contextual of sort (such as poverty), social problems (drug use,

abuse, alcohol use) and disabilities and difficulties with learning (such as reading difficulties) (Donald *et al*., 2007:3). This study falls within the third area, namely disabilities and difficulties with learning.

In this study, I use the term *learners with learning impairments* to describe learners who manifest what was previously described as specific learning disabilities. The reason for this is that the term *learning disabilities* may lead to the assumption that a learner cannot excel in other areas. The term learning impairment indicates that while the learner is experiencing academic functioning as challenging, this may not be the case in other areas of functioning (Landsberg *et al*., 2005:365). The learner may for example, excel in sport or cultural activities, despite academic difficulties.

1.7.4   SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING IMPAIRMENTS

A school for children with learning barriers is a school that creates an inclusive learning environment. According to Donald *et al*. (2006:128), this is an environment that is non-discriminative, accepting, and provides opportunities for the participation of everyone. The inclusive environment focuses on including everyone, regardless of ability, gender, language or disability, so that all learners can belong in a school and have access to all the educational opportunities offered by the school (Landsberg *et al*., 2005:4). Inclusion is about supporting all learners and educators so that the full range of needs are met. Inclusion is also aimed at overcoming barriers that prevent the system from meeting the full range of learner needs. Finally, inclusion recognises and respects differences among learners and builds on existing similarities (Department of Education: White Paper 6, 2001:17).   This definition of an inclusive school is applicable to all mainstream schools.

The school that served as site for this study is a specialised remedial school environment for learners who are faced with various learning impairments[1]. The types of learning impairment include attention difficulties, such as learners with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or attention deficit disorder (ADD), reading difficulties and disabilities, and spelling and writing difficulties. The school follows the National Curriculum of the Department of Education. The manner in which the classes are presented, the general tempo of information processing, and the size of the classes, are adjusted to the needs of the learners. For example, the classes are small in number, with no more than 12 learners per class.

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[1] Based on the definition described, the school that served as research site for this study cannot be described as an inclusive mainstream school as it caters exclusively for learners with various learning needs.

1.7.5 FRIENDSHIP

'Friendship is a social relationship based on interactions that are reciprocal, stable and serve the functions of intimacy, companionship, emotional support and affection' (Gordon *et al.*, 2005). Mishna, Wiener and Pepler (2008:551) state that friendships are dyadic, voluntary and equal in nature. Lutfiyya (1999), and Zajac and Hartup (1997), all in Gordon *et al.* (2005:1), state that reciprocity appears to be an important factor. Shared activities and interests are important elements in friendships (Bee & Boyd, 2002:323). Adolescents tend to gather in peer-affiliated groups where there are similarities between the group members (Farmer, Van Acker, Pearl & Rodkin, 1999:245). When learners choose each other as playmates, spend time interacting and state that they are friends, this is an indication of friendship (Hall & McGregor, 2000). Friendship includes sharing activities as well as verbal and non-verbal communication.

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

'A social identity could be described as a person's knowledge that he belong to a social category or group' (Hogg & Abraham, 1988, in Stets & Burke, 2000:225).

According to Hogg and Abraham (1988, in Stets & Burke, 2000:225), there are two processes involved in Social Identity Theory (SIT): social comparison and self-categorisation. Individuals tend to draw their identities from the social groups to which they belong. In SIT, there is a focus on the intergroup interaction and relationships. This includes how individuals see themselves as part of the group and in comparison with other groups. To have a social identity implies being like the others in the group and having similar perspectives (Stets & Burke, 2000:228).

I believe that SIT is applicable to this study as it provides an understanding of how social factors affect the nature of friendship. It also aids my understanding of how adolescents with a learning impairment function socially and develop their identities. I also want to understand how learning impairments affect the identity of the in-group and what influence they have on the nature of the friendships that develop from this in-group association. The theoretical framework will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

1.9 THE RESEARCH APPROACH AND PARADIGM

1.9.1 AN INTERPRETIVE, QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

This study is qualitative in nature. According to Denscombe (2003), qualitative research covers various approaches to social research, including sociology, social anthropology and social psychology. Garbers (1996) states that the objective of qualitative research is to promote understanding and insight into human conditions. Tesch (1990, in Denscombe, 2003) explains that qualitative research is concerned with how people understand phenomena and make meaning of it, as well as patterns of behaviour. To find the meanings that individuals attach to phenomena means that one needs to interpret the meaning making in some way (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This concept is upheld in the interpretive approach. Interpretivists aim to reconstruct the understanding of the participants. Interpretivists consider understanding to be an intellectual process whereby the interpreter objectifies that which needs to be interpreted (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

With this study I aim to interpret and understand the nature of friendship for adolescents with a specific learning impairment, from the adolescent participants' perspectives. I also want to understand how social issues such as social comparison and self-concept are understood from the participants' point of view. Finally I want to understand if the school environment in which they function, plays any role in the nature of friendships and how the adolescent participant interprets this role.

1.9.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.9.2.1 Research Design

I have decided to make use of an instrumental case study for my research design. De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2002:276) state that an instrumental case study can be used for gaining an understanding of a social issue and that the case study serves the purpose of facilitating the researcher's knowledge gain about a social issue. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), an instrumental case study is used to provide insight into a topic and to facilitate an understanding of it. By making use of an instrumental case study as research design, I will be able to understand what is the nature of friendship among learners with learning impairments, which is a social phenomenon in itself.

1.9.2.2   Participant selection

Purposeful sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in qualitative research. In purposeful sampling, participants are selected for their contribution to the study. I will purposefully select participants who have been identified with a specific learning impairment. The study will consist of two participants, one male and one female, in the age group of 15 and 16 years. Since boys and girls tend to socialise differently, the researcher decided to use the perspectives of both a male and female, to allow her to gain a better understanding of how friendship is perceived by the males and females in the school. The learners will be students from the high school for learners with specific learning impairments. The learners will be required to volunteer for participation in this study and be provided with all the information regarding the study and its purposes. This will enable all participants to make informed decisions regarding their participation. The data will be collected by means of one-on-one semi-structured interviews which will take place after school hours so as to not interrupt the school and remove learners from their classes. An interview should last approximately one hour in order to limit fatigue.

1.9.3   DATA COLLECTION AND DOCUMENTATION

1.9.3.1   Semi-structured one-on-one interviews

Semi-structured one-on-one interviews with participants will serve the purpose of data collection in addition to field notes and observations. According to Denscombe (2003), individual or one-to-one interviews involve a meeting between one researcher and one participant. The interviewer has a list of issues that needs to be discussed, but remains flexible regarding the order of topics and develops ideas along with the participant. The researcher is allowed to explore an emerging topic that may emerge. Answers are open-ended and the emphasis is on the participant's explaining more about the topic at hand (Denscombe, 2003). The researcher made use of a semi-structured interview to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' perceptions about a particular topic (De Vos *et al*., 2002:302).

According to Denscombe (2003), the following are some advantages of individual interviews:
- It should be easy to arrange the interviews as it only needs to suit two individuals.
- The opinions and views expressed is from one source only, the participant.
- The interview situation is easy to control as only one person is present.

De Vos *et al*. (2002:302) explain that a semi-structured interview on a one-on-one level is particularly suitable when the issue is personal. The participant should be viewed as the expert on the topic and be provided ample time to share his/her knowledge. Conducting the interview usually lasts some time and may become quite intense. After the participant is comfortable, the interview schedule should be used to facilitate the process, not shape it. The semi-structured interview may be considered a conversation which is guided by an interview schedule (formulated from De Vos *et al*., 2002:302).

One-on-one interviews are particularly useful for gaining large amounts of data in a short space of time. In-depth understanding of the topic is easily facilitated with one-on-one interviews. However, some limitations of one-on-one interviews include the unwillingness of participants to share or responses that are biased and even untrue. Seidman (1998) indicates that a particular risk is the fact that the interview may turn into a therapeutic situation (in De Vos *et al*., 2002:305). It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that therapeutic services are available to the participant as some interviews may become emotionally disturbing to the participant.

1.9.3.2   Observations and field notes

I will be observing the participants on the playground. Observations will continue over a period of one week, during break times at the school, to observe the interactions between the participants in a natural context. During my observations of the participant interactions, I will be making field notes of what I observe. Silverman (2000, in De Vos *et al*., 2002:285) suggests that when making field notes, one needs to record everything one sees and hears and to expand the notes beyond what was observed immediately. Field notes should be detailed accounts of what is observed, participant responses, actual discussions, participants' attitudes, perceptions and feelings. One needs to be careful when making field notes as one may miss important information while making the notes or inhibit participant responses during sessions (De Vos *et al*., 2002:285). I will be observing the participants closely and make shorthand notes during the sessions. Afterwards I will immediately transfer my notes into a journal, and write the observations down in detail.

Leong and Austin (2006) indicate that crystallisation provides a deepened, complex understanding of the topic. Crystallisation means to make use of various sources to broaden the understanding of a topic. By making use of one-on-one, semi-structured interviews,

observations as well as field notes, I will be making use of various sources to gather the information and thus be able to substantiate the information accordingly.

1.9.4   DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

De Vos *et al*. (2002:339) state that data analysis is the process of bringing order and meaning to a mass of data that was collected. All the data will be placed into similar formats (i.e. typed A4 sheets with margins on the left and right for notes). The voice recordings from the one-on-one interviews will be transcribed verbatim.

The data that will be collected during the study will be analysed qualitatively by identifying emerging themes. The transcripts and notes will be read through. Any significant or interesting aspects will be recorded in the left margin on the left. The transcripts will be read through again, and this time emerging themes will be documented in the right margin. The notes will be transformed to phrases that capture the quality of what was found in the text (Smith, 2003). The process suggested by Smith (2003) will be followed: The different themes will each be labelled with a code word to enable me to identify it more easily in the documentation. According to Robson (1993, in Breakwell, Hammond & Fife-Schaw, 2000), 'a code is a symbol applied to a group of words to classify or categorise them'. The themes will be listed on a sheet of paper and the connection between them noted. The themes will then be listed in a table, clustering similar themes together. Some themes will have subordinate themes. Some themes will also be left out of the table, due to reasons such as not being applicable or not producing rich information (Smith, 2003). Through the process of analysis and reflection, I will aim to develop a set of generalisations that explain the categorical themes identified (Denscombe, 2003). The same procedure will be used with all the documentation.

The themes must be translated into written narratives, and explained and illustrated (Smith, 2003). Care will be taken to distinguish between what the participants said and the researcher's analysis and interpretation (Smith, 2003). This would ensure that the information was accurate and correct.

1.10   QUALITY AND RIGOUR OF THE STUDY

Yardley (2000, in Smith, 2003) indicates three broad principles for assessing the quality of qualitative research:

1. *Sensitivity to the context* in which the study takes place. This can be done by means of an awareness of the existing literature, the underpinnings of the research method as well as the relationship between researcher and participant. I believe my study can be measured against this criterion as I had already done a vast amount of reading and will be doing much more. Finally, I aimed to develop a trusting relationship with my participants, where they could feel safe enough to share their information.

2. *Commitment* (degree of engagement demonstrated), *rigour* (thoroughness of the study, from the initial, question, literature review to the final analysis of the data), *transparency and coherence* (how clearly the stages of the research process are outlined in the final written document). I believe my study will demonstrate the criterion of commitment as I will be working closely with the participants, I will be observing them and I will be analysing their contributions thoroughly. I will attempt to ensure rigourness in my study by being thorough and being clear about the whole process in the final document, writing up the whole process in detail.

3. *Impact and importance* (does the study make a useful contribution to the existing literature and does it make a difference?). As I have stated previously, I noticed a gap in the literature and I believe my study can make a useful contribution to the literature by filling this gap. It can also be of use to future students who work both within inclusive school environments and environments that provide exclusively for learners with barriers. I believe the study can be helpful in understanding the social context and friendship dynamics of learners with barriers to learning.
Developed from Yardley (2000, in Smith, 2003).

1.11   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I will have acquired an ethical clearance certificate from the University of Pretoria's Ethics Committee, before embarking on this study. Furthermore, I will require written permission and informed consent from the principal as well as school governing body from the school that will function as site for this study, to conduct this study on the school grounds and using the learners from the school as participants. Denscombe (2003) indicates that as the researcher

I should uphold the following during the collection of data, analysis and explaining the findings:

1.   Respect the rights and dignity of the participants.

2.   Avoid any harm to participants which may arise from participating in the study.

3.   Operate with honesty and integrity (Denscombe, 2003).

I will uphold these basic principles throughout the study. There will be a trained and experienced educational psychologist on hand to attend to any harm that may arise from this study or psychological hurt the participants may experience. The participants will also be informed of the availability of this service. Furthermore, I will have contact details of other professionals available should another professionals' assistance be required. The ethical issues I will endorse throughout my study include confidentiality, informed consent and debriefing the participants.

1.11.1   CONFIDENTIALITY

Smith (2003) indicates that confidentiality within the interviews is important. The data will be kept confidential at all times during the study, during data collection, data analysis and writing up the final report. Finally, the identities of the participants will be kept confidential and alias names will be used to protect their identities. The participants will be informed of this beforehand.

1.11.2   INFORMED CONSENT

The participants need to be informed of the details and rationale of this study. Deception will be avoided as all the details of the study will be provided beforehand in written form to the school, participants and parents (Denscombe, 2003; Breakwell *et al*., 2000). This document will also be explained in detail to the participants before data collection will be started. The participants will also be explained what their rights are in relation to this study. Furthermore, it needs to be explained to them that they are free to withdraw from the study whenever they feel they need to. Informed assent must be provided by each participant, individually, in a written document (Smith, 2003). Since the participants are underage, informed consent must also be provided by the participants' parents or guardian.

1.11.3 DEBRIEFING OF PARTICIPANTS

The participants should receive any information they may require or ask for after their participation. Breakwell *et al.* (2000) suggest that the researcher should discuss their experiences of the process, with the participants. This will enable the researcher to monitor if any unintended or unanticipated harm or effects have been relayed to the participants. Any intervention that should take place must be done before the participants leave the research site (developed from Breakwell *et al.*, 2000). After each interview, I will discuss the session with the participant and investigate the possibility of any harm caused.

1.12 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study cannot be generalised to the wider population since the study comprises of a small participant sample. Another factor to keep in mind is the fact that due to reasons such as social popularity, participant responses may be socially biased. As the researcher, I need to be constantly aware of researcher bias. I need to be aware of my role in this study throughout.

1.13 PROPOSED STRUCTURE OF THIS STUDY

Chapter 1 consists of an introduction to the study, the rationale for pursuing this study, and the background to this study. The research questions are indicated. Furthermore, this chapter clarifies the key concepts of the study, the theoretical framework, research design and methodology. Important ethical considerations and quality assurance aspects of the study are indicated.

Chapter 2 will consist of a detailed literature review of the key points of the study. I will also elaborate on the theoretical framework on which the study is based.

Chapter 3 will be consisting of an outline of the research design that was selected. The methods for participant selection, data collection, data analysis and final interpretation will be discussed. Finally, this chapter will also include a detailed discussion of ethical considerations as well as the quality control of this study.

Chapter 4 will consist of a presentation of the information gathered and analysed during the study. The findings from this study will be indicated by describing the themes identified during the data analysis process.

Chapter 5 will provide a summarised version of the main findings and conclusions that have been made. This will be done in terms of the research questions and the overall purpose of this study. The chapter will also offer recommendations for future research possibilities.

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CHAPTER 2
ADOLESCENTS WITH LEARNING IMPAIRMENTS
AND THE NATURE OF PEER FRIENDSHIP

2.1   INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a phase that is characterised by peer group identification and a need to belong. When an adolescent is further faced with the complications of learning impairments, one wonders what impact this has on the adolescent.

By means of a literature review, the researcher describes what the term 'learning impairments' entails. The researcher continues to explore the learner with a learning impairment and the role social comparison plays in this context, and also the nature of peer friendships during adolescence. Finally, the researcher compares various studies where comparisons are made between learners with learning impairments and learners without. The final component of this chapter will describe the theoretical framework on which this study is based. The following is a schematic presentation of how Chapter 2 is structured:
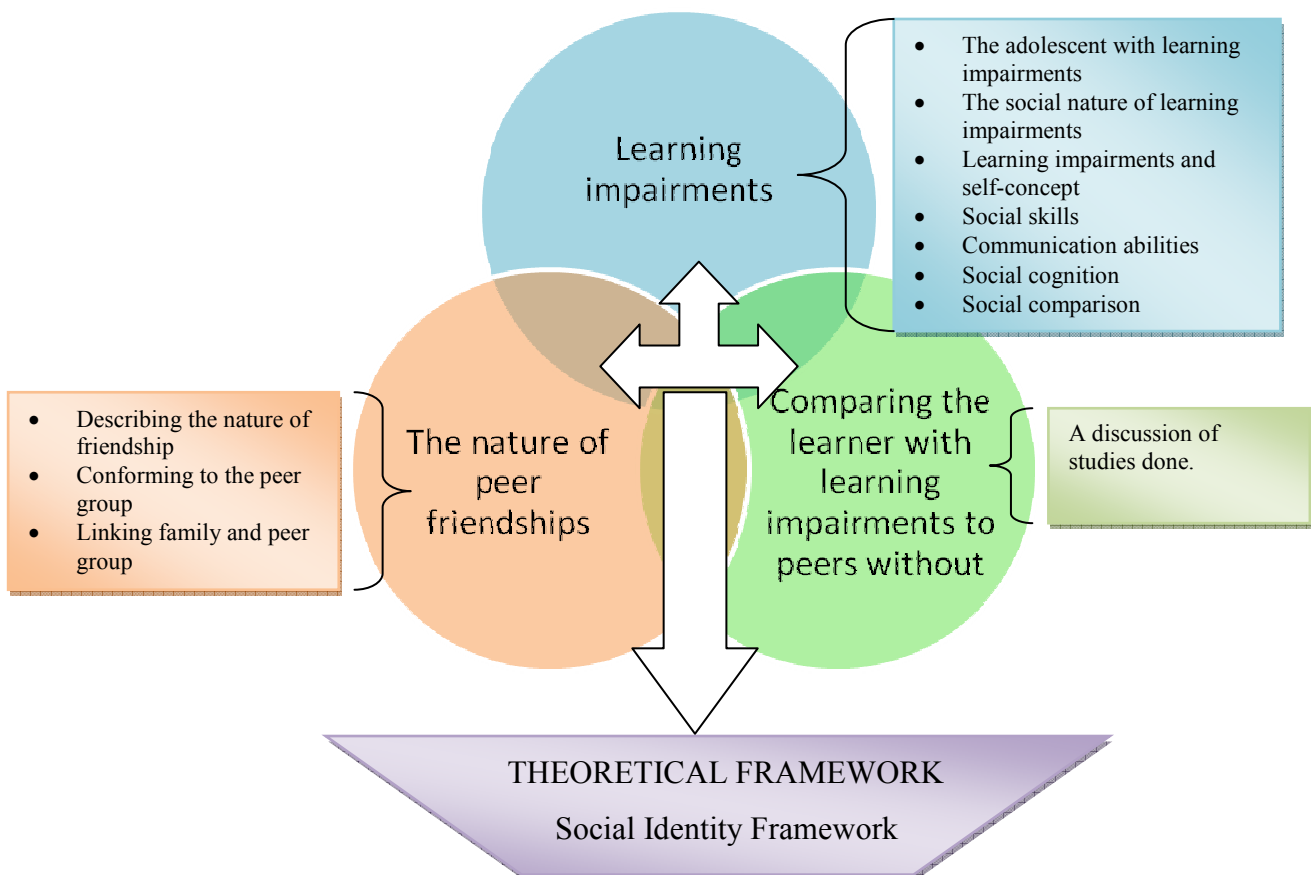
Figure 2.1 Schematic presentation of Chapter 2

2.2   DEFINING LEARNING IMPAIRMENTS

The White Paper 6 (2001:7) states that in the South African context, learners who are most vulnerable to barriers to learning are those who were previously labelled as 'learners with special educational needs', or otherwise stated, as learners with disabilities and impairments. It was decided to use the term 'learners with learning impairments' in this study to describe learners who manifest what was previously described as specific learning disabilities. The reason for this is that the term 'learning disabilities' may lead to the assumption that learners cannot excel in other areas. The term learning impairment indicates that while the learner is experiencing academic functioning as challenging, this may not be the case in other areas of functioning (Landsberg *et al*., 2005:365). The learner may for example excel in sport or cultural activities, despite academic difficulties.

Although there is no universally accepted definition for a learning impairment, it is usually accepted that a learner is diagnosed with a specific learning impairment when the learner's achievement in standardised tests for reading, writing and mathematics is significantly lower than what the learner is expected to achieve according to achievements in standardized intellectual assessment (DSM, 2000:49).

In the light of the definition of a learning impairment, the following section will discuss who the adolescent with learning impairments is.

2.2.3   THE ADOLESCENT WITH LEARNING IMPAIRMENTS

Adolescence is the period between childhood and adulthood. The adolescent is going through a stage that is characterised by both social and physical changes, which influences the view of self and others. The main goal of this developmental stage is to develop an identity of the self (Finestone, in Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2004). According to Lerner and Kline (2006:267), the difficulties of being an adolescent are compounded when the adolescent has a learning impairment. Who is the adolescent with learning impairments?

Certain characteristics are typically evident in the adolescent with a learning impairment. However, it is important to indicate that these characteristics are not always present as they vary from individual to individual. Some of these characteristics are discussed below:

Kamphaus (2000, in Santrock, 2001:245) claims that learning impairments most commonly associated with adolescents fall in the area of reading abilities. Adolescents find phonological skills, handwriting, spelling and expressive work most challenging (in Santrock, 2001:245).

Many adolescents with learning impairments are considered passive learners. After experiencing repeated failure, a sense of learned helplessness occurs. This means that the learner waits until someone tells them what to do, instead of solving their problems independently. Furthermore, due to a sense of failure, adolescents may display certain acting-out or problematic behaviour. This sense of failure may also lead to a lowered self-concept. Adolescents with learning impairments often have low self-esteem and little self-confidence (Deshler *et al*., 1996; Lenz & Deshler, 2003; Silver, 1998, in Lerner & Kline, 2006:269).

Another hurdle for the adolescent with a learning impairment is difficulties with social skills. Some adolescents display social ineptitude and have difficulties maintaining friendships (Lerner & Kline, 2006:269). Many adolescents with learning impairments experience a lack of motivation after years of perceived academic failure. These individuals give up rather than risk failure. Attribution theory states that when these adolescents achieve success, they attribute the success to some external force (Lerner & Kline, 2006:270-271).

In light of the discussion above, the focus of this argument will now shift towards the social nature of learning impairments.

2.2.4   THE SOCIAL NATURE OF LEARNING IMPAIRMENTS

Learning impairments impacts on many dimensions of a learner's functioning. Learning impairments are not just focused on academic performance and related difficulties. Another important component of learning impairments is social in nature. The social nature of learning impairments could manifest in the following: interpersonal conflicts, sense of loneliness (Al-Yagon & Mikulincer, 2004; Lackaye & Margalit, 2006; Margalit & Al-Yagon, 2002), anxiety (Li & Morris, 2007; Moore & Carey, 2005; Sideridis, 2007), low self- efficacy (Lackaye & Margalit, 2006), social difficulties (Weiner & Tardif, 2004) and a lack of self-control (Yasutk & Bryan, 1995). Landsberg *et al*. (2005:367) mentions the characteristics of the learner with a learning impairment as described by Smith (1998:147): engaging in socially unacceptable behaviour, not being able to predict the consequence of their behaviour, misunderstanding social cues, poor decision-making and problem-solving skills, improper social interaction, not

paying attention, being shy and distractible. These adolescents tend to be socially naïve, lonely and victimised by others. Yet, how do these factors impact on the individual learner with learning impairment?

2.2.5 THE IMPACT OF LEARNING IMPAIRMENTS ON THE SELF-CONCEPT OF THE ADOLESCENT

Santrock (2001:302) defines self-esteem as the global evaluative dimension of the self. For the purpose of this discussion, the term self-esteem will be covered under the umbrella term self-concept.

According to Margerison (1996, in Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006:66), self-concept can be 'regarded as a set of situation related attitudes and beliefs that you have about yourself that determines who you are and what you think you are and who you can become'. According to Riddick (2010:36), self-concept is an umbrella term that entails a person's self-evaluation of the self at a cognitive, affective and behavioural level. Individuals perceive themselves according to their perceived gifts in any environment. The concept of self is formulated from this. A self-concept may be high in some situations and low in others (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006:66).

A simplified model of self-concept (Figure 2.1) that was created by Marsh (1992) and indicated in Riddick (2010:37) is a good framework which can be used to understand how the term 'self-concept' is applied in this study:
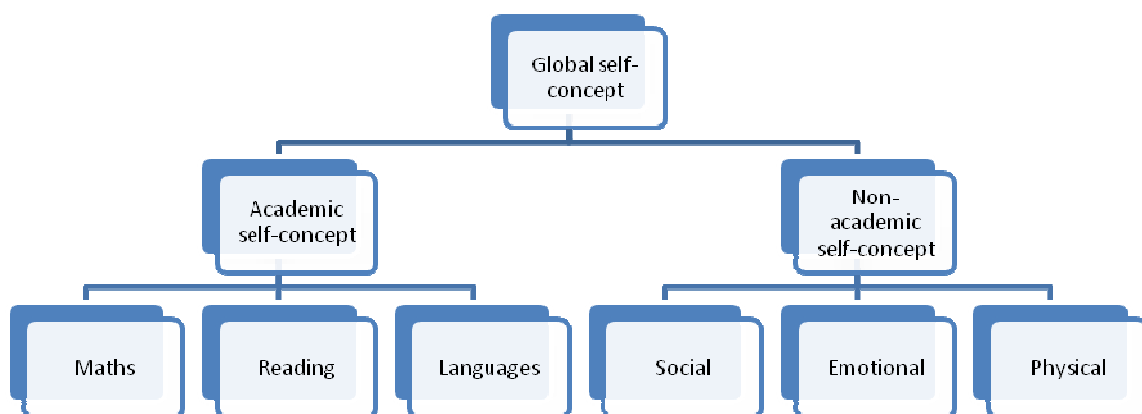
FIGURE 2.2: SELF-CONCEPT (Marsh, 1992, in Riddick, 2010:37)

The individual adolescent formulates a self-concept. This self-concept has various aspects or sides to it. The Global self-concept can be divided into the Academic self concept and the

Non-Academic Self-concept. The Academic Self-concept can be subdivided into Mathematics, Reading and Languages. The Non-Academic self-concept is subdivided into the following areas: Social, emotional and physical. Each of these areas contributes to the global self-concept of the adolescent.

According to Elmer (2001), individuals with a high self-concept are less responsive to negative feedback and able to ignore it. Individuals with a lower self-concept are more sensitive to negative comments and it often results in lowered self-concepts (Riddick, 2010:37). What is the relationship between self-concept and learning impairments?

There is contradicting research that indicates that learners with learning impairments have a lower self-concept than their learning enabled peers. Learning impairments are often associated with repeated failure and being unable to achieve goals. Often the adolescents' self-concept and sense of competence is affected by his academic performance. The adolescent with a learning impairment often has a negative view of the self. According to Silver (1998, in Lerner & Kline, 2006:528), the learner with a learning impairment's 'unsuccessful academic and social experiences lead to disappointment, frustration, feelings of incompetence, a lack of self-worth and a poor self-concept'. In contradiction to this, Smith (2004:285) states that learning impairments may have a negative effect on the adolescent's self-concept and motivation. Smith (2004:287) also stated that 'Many teenagers with LD are well adjusted, popular, and self-confident; they feel satisfied with themselves and accepted by their peers, despite low feelings of academic competence.'

According to Santrock (2001:303), there are two important sources that affect an adolescent's self-concept, namely peers and parents. As children mature into adolescents, the importance of parental contribution to self-concepts decreases as peer contributions increase. According to Cordoni (1990:9), the attitudes of people around the adolescent with a learning impairment have an effect on his self-concept. Cordoni (1990:9) mentions two coping mechanisms that often form the behavioural patterns of adolescents with a learning impairment, namely courage and hopelessness. Courage occurs when the adolescent attempts to try something, even if he knows he might not be able to do it. The second coping mechanism is often seen after repeated failure, when the adolescent feels hopeless and thinks he will not be able to do the activity well.

A more in-depth discussion regarding the subdivisions of the Non-Academic self-concept will now be discussed in relation to the impact thereof on the adolescent with learning impairments. The following section focuses on the social skills of the adolescent with learning impairments.

2.2.6 SOCIAL SKILLS OF THE ADOLESCENT WITH LEARNING IMPAIRMENTS

Social skills can be defined as the ability to exhibit appropriate behaviour in social settings. These skills include cooperation, self-control, understanding the needs of others and the ability to initiate and sustain social interactions (Elliot & McKinnie, 1994, in Nowicki, 2003:171).

Smith (2004:285) describes the importance of positively developed social skills as it contributes to an individual's satisfaction in all aspects of life. This is also true for adolescents. Many studies claim that adolescents with learning impairments have social skill deficits. This may include a lack of sensitivity to others, poor perception of social situations and social rejection (Bryan, 1997; Sridhaar & Vaughn, 2001; Wong & Donahue, 2002, in Lerner & Kline, 2006:521). According to San Miguel, Forness & Kavale (1996, in Mishna, 2003:337), 'the exact nature of the relationship between social skill deficits and learning disabilities is a matter of speculation'. However, as Haager and Vaughn (1997, in Lerner & Kline, 2006:521) state, not all learners with learning impairments experience difficulties with social skills. In fact, it appears it could be a strength to some. Yet how is this possible?

In collaboration with Haager & Vaugn's statement Smith (2004:285) states that if a child was socially well adjusted, this should remain so during adolescent years. Those who did not develop the necessary social skills during childhood will, however, find the adolescent years challenging in the social arena (Smith, 2004:285). The socially inept adolescent will have to face all the expected trials of adolescence, without the proper tools (i.e. social skills) to do so effectively. A study by Speec, McKinney and Appelbaum (1985, in Riddick, 2010:35), state that one third of learners with learning impairments showed no social or emotional difficulties. Various reasons could be associated with this, such as therapeutic inputs by professionals, social skill coaching and the type of learning impairment. Thus it is important not to assume that all learners with learning impairments will experience social skill difficulties.

Successful adaptation in the school setting requires certain social skill competencies. These may include refraining from interrupting others, perception, cognition, motivation, communicating in socially acceptable ways, sharing, waiting turns, being able to follow directions (Lerner & Kline, 2006:525; Moore & Carey, 2005:23-24). These skills are often an area of development for learners with learning impairments.

Based on the information discussed in the previous paragraphs it could be concluded that some adolescents with learning impairments may develop certain emotional difficulties. Often the learners are intelligent enough to know that they are different from their peers in some way. Their emotional difficulties may be internalised, such as a conscious choice not to learn, resisting pressure, fear of success, withdrawal and sadness. The difficulties may also be externalised by means of hostile, acting-out behaviour, excessive anger, fighting and defiance towards authority figures (Lerner & Kline, 2006:527). Smith (2004:287) explains that the adolescent with a learning impairment will disguise their feelings of not being good enough, by for example handing in untidy work, being the class clown or avoiding challenges. Furthermore, learners with learning impairments may exhibit low self-concepts, due to repeated academic failure, and anxiety as well as depressive tendencies (Lerner & Kline, 2006:529). Smith (2004:287) concurs with this by stating that the adolescent with a learning impairment tends to be more depressed than their peers.

Some typical behaviours that have been described by teachers and parents of adolescents with learning impairments have been described by Smith (2004:287). Some of these behaviours are defiance and resistance, poor emotional control, hyperactivity, anxiety, hostility, aggressiveness, rigidity, feeling ashamed, feeling unpopular, a lack of self-confidence and anticipating failure (Smith, 2004:287-288).

2.2.7 COMMUNICATION ABILITIES OF THE LEARNER WITH LEARNING IMPAIRMENTS

Communication abilities is one facet of social skills. This section provides an explanation of the communication abilities of the learner with learning impairments.

The verbal competencies of learners with learning impairments have been reported as having a significant influence on the social competence of these learners (Mathinos, 1988:437).

Verbal communication may be defined as 'to make common or shared'; this includes information as well as a special bond. Mathinos (1988:437) indicates that being a competent communicator means to have knowledge of the structure, meaning and function of sentences, an awareness of the social world and knowledge of how these two aspects interact during social interactions. The following was developed from contributions by authors stated in Mathinos (1988): The main focus of the communication abilities of learners with learning impairments is on the pragmatics, namely the use of language in communication. The following paragraphs describe how certain characteristics of learning impairments, in other words the correct use of pragmatics, may influence the social interaction of learners with learning impairments with their peers.

Hopper and Naremore, 1973 (in Mathinos, 1988) state that understanding pragmatics includes examining competence in interpersonal communication as well as code switching, which is the ability to change roles as needed during conversational interactions (Reid, Hresko & Swanson, 1991:335). Learners with learning impairments produce less complex messages and the meaning of the content is different than that of their peers. This could lead to confusion amongst parties during communication. As described in Mathinos (1988:437), learners with learning impairments tend to initiate topics and dialogue less frequently (Friel-Patti & Conti-Ramsden, 1984, in Mathinos, 1988), and to request extra information, clarification and elaboration less frequently (Donahue *et al*., 1980; Speckman, 1981; Speckman & Roth, 1982), appear to be less cooperative during conversations (Bryan & Bryan, 1978; Bryan *et al*., 1976). This could possibly lead to conflict amongst the parties. Furthermore, research indicates that learners with learning impairments have difficulty asserting the self or remaining in a dominant position during communication interactions (Bryan, Donahue, Pearl & Sturm, 1981; Donahue *et al*. 1980; developed from Mathinos, 1988:437). According to Reid *et al*. (1991), learners with learning impairments transmit less information during communicational interactions. The above-described factors may contribute to communicational interactions remaining superficial, without depth, insight and understanding.

According to Reid *et al*. (1991), the non-verbal communicational abilities of learners with learning impairments indicate that both receptive and expressive non-verbal communication is affected by learning impairments. This includes being less sensitive to the non-verbal communications of peers, invading private space, eliciting negative impressions and being more offensive (Reid *et al*., 1991). Smith (2004:289) describes how adolescents with learning

impairments may have trouble understanding facial and behavioural cues. This affects their social interactions, which could easily result in a negative experience due to misunderstanding. Smith (2004:289) states that the adolescent with a learning impairment may confuse positive cues as negative or negative cues as positive. This often confirms their feelings of inadequacy in comparison to their peers.

There was some indications during a study conducted by Mathinos (1988:442) that when learners with learning impairments asked a peer a question, the learners would answer it themselves, continuing with their own thoughts. She did not wait for her friend to provide and answer. The conclusions drawn from this study indicated that there was no significant difference in communication between learners with learning impairments and their more able peers. There are, however, slight and subtle differences that predominantly focus on the use of sophisticated strategies that enable productive and comfortable interactions (Mathinos, 1988:442).

2.2.8 SOCIAL COGNITION AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION IN ADOLESCENTS WITH LEARNING IMPAIRMENTS

Referring to the previous discussion regarding social and communicational skills of the adolescent with learning impairments it is deemed appropriate to now focus the attention to social cognition and emotional regulation. Bauminger *et al*. (2005:45) state that there is a strong consensus between socio-emotional abilities and learning impairment. Social cognition links both cognitive and socio-emotional abilities. Social cognition includes the following: reading and interpreting non-verbal and social cues, recognising social and emotional information, knowledge of different social behaviours and the ability to make an adequate attribution about another person's mental state (Bauminger *et al*., 2005:45). As adolescents mature, they develop their social cognition. There is individual variation in the level of social cognition (Santrock, 2001:190). Social cognition can be considered one of the most difficult areas for learners with learning impairments (Bauminger *et al*., 2005:45). The aspect of social cognition is important to this study as it guides further understanding of what factors affect friendship. If an adolescent with a learning impairment experiences difficulties with social cognition, it could affect the dynamics of friendship. According to Slavin (1993), friends will take on a role similar to that of parents during adolescence, namely that of advisor and companion. The capacity for empathy should be developed. If social cognition is challenging, an adolescent cannot fulfil the duty of friend as would be expected.

2.2.9   SOCIAL COMPARISON

As stated previously, social cognition is an awareness of social cues, social information and social behaviours. This knowledge is applied in social comparison which could be defined as 'any process in which individuals relate their own characteristics to those of others' (Buunk & Gibbons, 2000, in Dijkstra, Kuyper, Van der Werf, Buunk & Van der Zee, 2008:828). According to Santrock (2001:300), adolescents use social comparison to evaluate themselves. Whom do adolescents compare themselves with?

It is challenging to pinpoint exactly to whom adolescents compare themselves, as the groups are so varied and dynamic, for example: do they compare themselves to peers, their gender, classmates or team members? Within the school context, social comparison affects school performance. Dijkstra *et al*. (2008:829) have done a review of various studies that focus on social comparison in the classroom. They have come to the conclusion that only a few studies have asked participants to whom they compare themselves and why. The authors maintain that it remains unclear 'whether student's social comparisons serve to evaluate their abilities, enhance or protect their egos, improve their performances, or serve a combination of these motives' (Dijkstra *et al*., 2008).

Dijkstra *et al*. (2008:847) describe the dimensions of social comparison, indicating that individuals compare themselves for the purposes of self-evaluation, self-enhancement or self-improvement. These motives partly determine the direction of social comparison, which could be an attempt to compare oneself either upwards (better off), downwards (worse off) or similarly (lateral) (Dijkstra *et al*., 2008:850).

A study by Renick and Harter (1989, in Frederickson & Jacobs, 2001:403) hypothesised that when children with learning impairments were included in mainstream schooling systems, the children perceived themselves as academically less competent. However, when the same children were moved into smaller groups for special resource education, they maintained higher perceptions of their academic selves. This study is important as it supports some of the assumptions of this study, namely that within a specialised schooling system for learners with learning impairments, learners gain a more competent self-concept of their academic and social self.

In the following section the focus shifts from the components of learning impairments to the nature of peer friendships.

2.3 THE NATURE OF PEER FRIENDSHIPS

The following discussion deals with the exact nature of peer friendships. According to Santrock (2001:184), how an adolescent is seen by his peers is important to most adolescents. Being excluded could lead to sadness, frustration and stress. A peer group could be defined as adolescents who are of about the same age or have the same level of maturity (Santrock, 2001:184). Friendship is a reciprocal social relationship (Gordon *et al*., 2005:1). In friendships, adolescents learn various competencies that continue into adult relationships. These competencies include learning how to appropriately self-disclose, learning how to provide support to others, and learning how to manage conflict effectively (Santrock, 2001:196). According to Hartup (1992, in Gordon *et al*., 2005:4), the best predictor of adult adaptation is the adequacy with which a child gets along with others. Friendship develops from a mutual decision to make an association and provides feelings of trust and loyalty (Green, Schleien, Mactavish & Benepe, 1995, Zajac & Hartup, 1997, in Gordon *et al*., 2005:2). Adolescents pursue various activities with their peers, such as playing, going out and socialising. Therefore, what is the potential influence of peer friendships on adolescents?

Peer friendships may have a positive or negative influence on the adolescent. Good peer friendships contribute to effective adolescent social development. Santrock (2001:185) describes how theorists such as Jean Piaget and Harry Stack Sullivan maintained that it is through peer friendships that adolescents learn about reciprocity in relationships. Thus it is a logical conclusion that friendship is a way of developing social skills (Hartup, 1992, in Gordon *et al*., 2005:2). According to Bee and Boyd (2002:323), adolescents choose friends who are committed to similar activities as they are. Adolescent friendships become more intimate, which can be described as self-disclosure and sharing of private thoughts (Santrock, 2001:196). According to various authors (Berndt & Perry, 1990; Bukowski, Newcomb & Hoza, 1987; Sesma, 2000) intimacy in friendships is one of the most important features of friendships (Santrock, 2001:196). There is more sharing of feelings and secrets. Adolescent friendships appear more stable and tend to last long (Bee & Boyd, 2002:324). Sullivan (in Santrock, 2001:196) also states that adolescents learn to be sensitive partners in intimate relationships by forging close relationships with peers.

From the paragraph discussed above it may be concluded that friendships provide an important source of support to adolescents. Some theorists claim that such friendships will support is of greater importance than familial or parental support. As a result of this support, adolescents can work through problems. According to Bukowski, Sippola and Boivin, 1995) friends can protect 'at risk' adolescents from victimisation (in Santrock, 2001:196). Yet, what is the exact function of friendship in adolescent relationships?

Gottman and Parker (1987) (developed from Santrock (2001:195) indicate how friendships serve six functions during adolescence:

1. Companionship: friendship provides someone with whom the adolescent can spend time and join in activities.

2. Stimulation: Friendships provide information, excitement and amusement.

3. Physical support: Friendships provide time, resources and assistance.

4. Ego support: Friendships provide opportunity for support, encouragement and feedback. This enables adolescents to develop a sense of self and feel competent, attractive and worthwhile.

5. Social comparison: Friendships provide opportunity for adolescents to compare themselves and know where they stand in relation to others.

6. Intimacy/affection: friendships provide a warm, trusting, close relationship with another individual.

The negative influences of friendships will now be discussed. Negative influences on the adolescent include being rejected or ignored by peers. This could lead to feelings of loneliness and even hostility. Children who experience a lack of friendship and peer rejection find it challenging to develop appropriate social skills. This could result in becoming even more isolated (Gordon *et al.*, 2005:2). Power (2000, in Moore & Carey, 2005:23) found that learners with learning impairments have a lower level of peer acceptance. Being rejected has an influence on the development of positive self-esteem and leads to feelings of loneliness and depression (Asher & Paquette, 2003; Asher & Williams, 1996; stated in Gordon *et al.*, 2005:2). Doll (1996, in Gordon *et al.*, 2005:2), provides five factors that contribute to being friendless:

1. Behaviours that harm and interrupt social interactions.

2. Limited cognitive ability to select responses in social interactions.

3. Limited ability to empathise emotionally with peers.

4. Social anxiety.

5.   Outside influences that prevent adolescents from interacting.

These factors indicate what factors may affect friendship development in learners with learning impairments, which could result in an adolescent's becoming friendless. It is useful to know what factors may contribute to peer isolation in learners with learning impairments. Problematic peer relations contribute to victimisation (Mishna *et al*., 2008:337). Children who are victimised are often described as having few friends. Friends act as a buffer against being victimised and teased (Mishna *et al*., 2008:337). It is useful to know what factors are contributing to adolescents being friendless, as these factors affect the dynamics of friendship. In order for many adolescents to be accepted into friendships, they choose to conform to peer pressure.

2.3.1   CONFORMING TO THE PEER GROUP

Conformity can be defined as 'individuals who adopt the attitudes or behaviours of others because of real or imagined pressure from them' (Santrock, 2001:186). Adolescents experience a particularly strong need to conform during their teenage years. Conforming behaviours include dressing similarly, using a specific form of language (which may include swearing), listening to specific types of music, making fun of parents and teachers, using alcohol and cigarettes, drug use, and sharing leisure activities, attitudes and general behaviours.

Although most adolescents conform to the general peer group and societal norms, there are adolescents who are non-conformant and anti-conformant. Non-conformant adolescents are described by Santrock (2001:188) as individuals who know what people around them expect but do not use those expectations to guide their behaviour. Santrock (2001:188) describes anti-conformants as individuals who react counter to a group's expectations and deliberately move away from the actions or beliefs of the group. The following section will focus on the connection between the adolescent's family and peer group.

2.3.2   LINK BETWEEN THE FAMILY AND THE PEER GROUP

During adolescence there is a normal need to develop towards more independence and autonomy from parents. Santrock (2001:185) indicates that some theorists maintain that peer groups could serve that function of undermining parental taught values and introduce peers to drugs and alcohol.

Santrock (2001:186) points out that even though adolescents develop towards independence from their parents, their parents may play a vital role in the choice and development of peer relationships: According to Cooper and Ayers-Lopez (1985, in Santrock, 2001:186) the parents' choice of neighbourhood and community provides a pool for choice of peers.

Parents model modes of interaction with peers for their children. Santrock (2001:186) mentions a study by Armsden and Greenberg (1984), who found that adolescents who were securely attached to their parents maintained a secure attachment to their peers. Likewise it was found that adolescents who were insecurely attached to their parents were also insecurely attached to their peers.

The focus of this chapter now changes to a discussion of existing literature where the learner with learning impairments is compared to peers who do not have learning impairments.

2.4 COMPARING THE LEARNER WITH A LEARNING IMPAIRMENT TO PEERS WITHOUT

There is a wealth of studies which compare the learner with a learning impairment to peers without a learning impairment. These studies are based in inclusive school systems, where the learner with a learning impairment is accommodated in a mainstream classroom. Comparisons in this regard are readily available on all levels of functioning for the learner, from academic to social. Since the main focus of this study is to describe the nature of friendship between learners with learning impairments within a specialised school system which provides exclusively for learners with learning impairments, a few key aspects will be mentioned here to highlight the work done by researchers comparing learners with learning impairments, to those without, in an inclusive classroom environment.

Various studies focus on the peer relationship between learners with learning impairments and those without: Smith (2004:288) states that the learner with a learning impairment finds relationships with peers more challenging than learners who are more able. Smith (2004:288) states that the learner with a learning impairment is often less popular, has fewer friends and tends to be rejected more easily.

According to Gordon *et al.* (2005:2), 'growing up with a disability may separate one from peers'. According to Gordon *et al.* (2005:3), several studies indicate that there is a hierarchical preference for different types of disability. For example: conditions such as mental retardation and severe impairments have a lowered rate of preference. Learners with learning impairments are challenged to develop an abled as well as impaired image (Wright, 1983, in Gordon *et al.*, 2005:3). Furthermore, Low (1996, in Gordon *et al.*, 2005:3) notes that learners with learning impairments tend to distance themselves from fellow peers with learning impairments.

Peck (1994, in Gordon *et al.*, 2005:4) explored friendships within an inclusive school environment. He studied the cases of several abled children who were friends with learners with learning impairments. According to Peck (1994, in Gordon *et al.*, 2005:4) the children without learning impairments 'appeared to gain self-confidence, security and cooperative skills through their relationships with their disabled counterparts'. Peck, Donaldson and Pezzoli (1990, in Gordon *et al.*, 2005:4) identified six aspects that were considered as growth for the learners without learning impairments, after becoming friends with learners with a learning impairment:

1.   A better understanding of the self.
2.   A better appreciation of the feeling of others.
3.   Less discomfort with differently abled individuals.
4.   Developing personal values.
5.   The experience of genuine friendships with someone who is different than the self.

Luciano and Savage (2007:14) explored the bullying risk of children with learning impairments in inclusive educational settings. They state that a child with a learning impairment is at risk for being bullied due to 'deficits in social competence, disruptive behaviour, language impairment and low self-esteem' (Luciano & Savage, 2007:15). According to the study, learners with learning impairment reported that they did not have many friends. The authors concluded furthermore that children with learning impairments have certain characteristics that make them vulnerable to rejection and bullying. The authors concluded that 'low academic performance, language difficulties and unassertiveness make these children less liked by their peers without LD (learning disabilities)' (Luciano & Savage, 2007:28).

Hall and McGregor (2000:114) carried out a follow-up study of peer relationships of children within an inclusive school. These authors mention anecdotal reports that indicate that it is more challenging for older children with a learning impairment to form a friendship with a peer who does not have a learning impairment, than it is for younger children. The authors suggest longitudinal studies in this regard to determine the authenticity of this statement.

A study by Yu, Zhang and Yan (2005:325) compared Chinese children with learning impairments and children without learning impairments by exploring the characteristics of loneliness and peer acceptance. The results indicate that children with learning impairments report that they experience more loneliness and peer rejection. A possible cause may be that children with learning impairments are at a higher risk of rejection by peers because of behavioural problems and lowered levels of social competence (Yu *et al.,* 2005:329).

In conclusion, many different studies exist that compare the child who has a learning impairment, with a peer without a learning impairment. The comparisons are made in several areas, such as social competence, self-concept, peer acceptance and general risk factors. In general, the conclusions in the studies appear to agree that children with learning impairments are more at risk for being rejected by peers who do not have learning impairments. Some reasons for this include lowered social competence, behavioural difficulties, communication (language) difficulties and a lack of assertiveness. Being vulnerable to rejection by peers affects the self-concept of the child with a learning impairment. Finally, children with learning impairments are at risk of being victimised and bullied at schools.

The final component of this study provides a discussion of the theoretical framework for the study. The discussion in the next section highlights the theoretical underpinnings of the framework and provides a description of why it is regarded as applicable to this study.

2.4   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY (SIT)

'A social identity could be described as a person's knowledge that he belongs to a social category or group' (Hogg & Abraham, 1988, in Stets & Burke, 2000:225). A social group is a group of individuals who share a common social identity. In this study a social group consists of the learners in the school who have all been identified as learners with learning impairments, which could also be described as a common social identity. Through social comparison, individuals who are considered being similar is considered part of the in-group.

According to Gundlach, Zivnuska and Stoner (2006: 1607) as an individual identify with a group, he/she is able to formulate an identity of the self. This process of identification is driven by two factors, the need to define the self and to give meaning to one's life. This aspect of SIT assists in the understanding of how the learner's identity of the self as well as the group, can contribute to the nature of friendships. Realisation that learners have certain areas in common (for example, finding academic excellence challenging due to a learning impairment) contributes to a sense of being members of the in-group. Anyone who is not considered in this favourable light is cast out to the out-group.

According to Hogg and Abraham (1988, in Stets & Burke, 2000:225), the two processes involved in SIT are social comparison and self-categorisation. Each one of these produces different results: in terms of self-categorisation, the results are the application of accentuating when the self is enhanced. The results of social comparison could include highlighting perceived similarities between the self and the other members of the in-group, as well as also focusing on the perceived differences between the self and the out-group (Stets & Burke, 2000:225). Individuals tend to draw their identities (their view of who they are) from the social groups to which they belong. However, depending on the stage of life in which the individual finds himself, there are various social groups within which the individual functions. This specific assortment of social groups leads to a particular social identity. However, in another period of life, other social groups are more prominent, and the social identity is altered to suit the new arrangement of social groups in which the individual functions (Stets & Burke, 2000:225). This assists in the understanding of how learners identify with specific groups at specific stages of their lives and how this can contribute to the formulation of friendships.

In SIT, there is a focus on the intergroup interaction and relationships (including how individuals see themselves as part of the group, in comparison with other groups, and the consequences of these categorisations). Having a social identity means being like the others in the group and having similar perspectives. Brewer (2001) defined social identity as 'the extent to which the in-group has been incorporated into the sense of self, and at the same time, that the self is experienced as an integral part of the in-group (as stated in Gundlach et al., 2006: 1608).There is a strong sense of loyalty within the group and group members display similar behaviours and hold similar opinions or views regarding issues (Stets & Burke, 2000:228). This assists in the understanding of how different members of the same group may choose to develop similar behavioural patterns and even dress similarly.

According to Oakes (1987, in Stets & Burke, 2000:229), salience is the activation of an identity within a situation. A salient identity is 'one which is functioning psychologically to increase the influence of one's membership in the group on perception and behaviour' (Stets & Burke, 2000:229). A particular identity becomes activated as a result of the interaction that occurs between the characteristics of the member and the situation that is occurring (Stets & Burke, 2000:231). SIT enhances an understanding of how being members of the same group can contribute to a salient identity and how each member (or learner) may feels that he holds a specific and important role in the friendship.

An important cognitive aspect of SIT is depersonalisation, which means that the individual sees the self as a representation of the in-group identity, rather than a unique individual. This means seeing the self as an embodiment of the in-group prototype rather than a unique individual (Turner *et al.*, 1987, in Stets & Burke, 2000:231). This could be used to grasp how learners view themselves in relation to being members of a friendship group. In addition, this is an important facet of this study as adolescents are in a process of formulating their identities. It is useful to understand how the group may impact on the learner's viewing the self as part of a group (wanting to be part of a group and accepted into a social group – a longing for many adolescents) in relation to viewing the self as a unique individual. In an attempt to enhance their own self-evaluation, group members behave in a way that enhances the evaluation of their group (Turner *et al.*, 1987, in Stets & Burke, 2000:232). This aspect of SIT contributes to an understanding of how peer pressure could contribute to a particular member of the group engaging in behaviours that could possibly clash with personal values and views, in order to be accepted as a member into the group. According to Stets & Burke (2000:232) this is a process of enhancing and maintaining the self-esteem of individual group members. There appears to be mixed feelings regarding self-esteem within SIT (Abrams, 1992, Abrams & Hogg, 1990, in Stets & Burke, 2000:233). An increase in self-worth is not only dependent on identifying with a group, but also on being accepted into that group as a member (Stets & Burke, 2000:233). SIT assists in gaining a deeper perspective of how being accepted into a group and forming an identity may affect self esteem of individual members.

I believe that SIT is applicable to this study as it provides an understanding of how social factors play a role in the nature of friendship. Friendship could develop on several levels, between two individuals or amongst a group of 3 and more individuals. SIT is relevant to understanding the nature of either type of friendship as all friendships occur within a social

system and is impacted on by the group dynamics and social system the friendship is based in. In the case of this study, friendships, whether between two individuals or within a group, is influenced by the social school environment as well as the learners' social identities. .I believe friendships are social experiences and that a thorough knowledge of how the social dimension affects the development of the self is important. This study focuses on friendships amongst the wider school system which served as site for this study, amongst learners who have been identified as learners with learning impairments in common. This study is not aimed at understanding the nature of specific friendships in the school (i.e, amongst specific learners), but rather at gaining an understanding of how friendship is viewed and shaped by being learners of a school that serves to support learners with learning impairments. To assist in my understanding of how an adolescent with a learning impairment functions in the social realm and develops their identities, I need this framework to enhance my understanding. SIT describes how an individual develops an identity based on the in-group's identity. I want to understand what the participants of this study view as the in-group and how this contributes to the development of their identities. I also want to understand how learning impairments affect the identity of the in-group and what influence they have on the nature of the friendships that develop from this in-group association.

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CHAPTER 3
EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

3.1   INTRODUCTION

Punch (2005, in Cresswell, 2009:88) states that 'it is important to identify a problem that will benefit individuals being studied, one that will be meaningful for others besides the researcher'. This will be the aim of this researcher. Chapter 3 describes my use of an instrumental case study as research design. I will explain how the data was gathered by means of semi-structured interviews, observations and field notes. The data analysis procedure is explained. The chapter continues to explain what procedures were put in place to enhance the validity and reliability of the study and the findings. Finally, ethical considerations are explained, which have been upheld throughout the study.

3.2   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.2.1   RESEARCH DESIGN: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

This qualitative study explores the nature of friendship as it occurs among learners with learning impairments at a school for learners with learning impairments. According to Denscombe (2003:267), qualitative research covers various approaches to social research, including sociology, social anthropology and social psychology. Garber (1996:283) states that the objective of qualitative research is to promote understanding of and insight into human conditions. Qualitative research usually consists of the following characteristics: it occurs within a natural setting, and the researcher plays an important role as the actual collector of the data, which is collected from various sources. The focus is on what meaning the participant attaches to the phenomenon under study, which is led by a theoretical stance or orientation. Qualitative research describes the holistic and complex view of the phenomenon under study (Cresswell, 2009:176). Tesch (1990, in Denscombe, 2003:267) explains that qualitative research is concerned with how people understand phenomena and make meaning of them. It also explores patterns of behaviour.

3.2.2 INTERPRETIVISM

To understand the meanings individuals attach, one needs to interpret the meanings in some way (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:191). Qualitative research is an interpretive inquiry as 'researchers interpret what they see, hear and understand' (Cresswell, 2009:176). This concept is upheld in the interpretive approach. Interpretivists claim that it is possible to understand the subjective meaning a person attaches to a phenomenon, while remaining objective in the process. Interpretivists aim to reconstruct the understanding of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:193). Interpretivists consider understanding to be an intellectual process whereby the interpreter objectifies that which needs to be interpreted (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:194).

With this study I aim to interpret and understand the nature of friendship for adolescents with a specific learning impairment. Put into other words, do the typical characteristics of adolescents with specific learning abilities affect the friendship, from the adolescent participants' perspectives? Does the school environment within which they function play any role and how does the adolescent participant interpret this role?

3.2.3 SPECIFIC RESEARCH DESIGN: INSTRUMENTAL CASE STUDY

I have used an instrumental case study for my research design. Yin (2002, in Schwandt, 2007:28) states that a case study as research design is preferred when the researcher wants to study a phenomenon in a real-life context and when the researcher has little control over what is being studied. Case studies are useful for exploring issues where relationships are ambiguous. A case study is particularly useful if the researcher wants to explore the relationship between a phenomenon and the context in which it is occurring (Gray, 2009:247). According to Coolican (2004:134), a case study can be described as gathering information about one individual or group. A case study requires the collection of multiple sources of data. This could include the use of interviews and field observations (Gray, 2009:247, 252). By gaining multiple perspectives, one generates rich information when using case studies. A case study also addresses the issue of validity as various sources provide various views of the same phenomenon (Gray, 2009:249). It is accepted that although a case study provides rich detail, it is usually not generalisable.

De Vos *et al*. (2002:276) state that an instrumental case study can be used for gaining an understanding of a social issue; and the case study serves the purpose of facilitating the

researcher's knowledge gain about a social issue. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000:437), an instrumental case study is used to provide insight into a topic and to facilitate an understanding of it. By making use of an instrumental case study as research design, I will gain an understanding of the nature of friendship among learners with learning impairments, as friendship is a social phenomenon.

According to Gray (2009:256), when a single case is studied it is called an embedded study. This research could be defined as a single case study (the school for learners with learning impairments) with various units of analysis (the views from the different participants together with the observations made by the researcher).

The following advantages of the case study have been described by Cooligan (2004:136-137):

- Cases are so unique at times that they could not have been studied in a pre-planned manner.

- Established theories may be brought into disrepute if they are challenged by contrary cases.

- The data collected from various cases may be pooled and analysed to identify common factors or themes.

- A particular strength of case studies is the rich and detailed information they offer.

- Cooligan (2004:137-138) has also identified the following disadvantages of case studies:

- Even though case studies offer rich information, their disadvantage lies in the fact that the information cannot be generalised.

- Personal meanings may be attached to the information that is collected, as the researcher and participants usually spend extensive periods of time together.

- Subjectivity may also result from the fact that the researcher collects vast amounts of information and then chooses what information is entered into the final report; the final information is therefore subjective to the researcher's theoretical framework.

Some criticism against the use of case studies as a research design has also been raised by Gray (2009:248). Case studies have not been accepted by all researchers as a reliable, objective method. Case studies generate vast amounts of data that need to be worked through and interpreted. These critics claim that it takes special skills to successfully conduct case study research.

Yin (2003, in Gray, 2009:249) recommends that the researcher should prepare properly for the case study research process by formulating good research questions and ensuring that they are not interpreted according to subjective views. The researcher needs to document the findings accurately.

As has been stated, a case study is ideal to research and understand the relationship between a phenomenon and within the environment in which it occurs. The purpose of this study is to understand the nature of friendship (the phenomenon) within a specialised school environment (the environment in which it occurs). Furthermore, a rich description can be made of the phenomenon under study, by using various sources of data. I have used interviews, field notes and observations. Thus, a case study as research design is perfect for this study, which is small in size. I will be able to gain a deeper understanding of how the participants perceive friendships in the school they are in. I am aware of the fact that although the data gathered cannot be generalised, this study is a useful starting point for further studies along similar lines.

3.3   PARTICIPANT SELECTION

Purposeful sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in qualitative research. In purposeful sampling, participants are selected for their contribution to the study. The participants need to aid the researcher in understanding the phenomenon being studied (Cresswell, 2009:178). I purposefully selected participants who were identified with a specific learning impairment. The initial idea was to include five participants in this study. This number was reduced to two participants after the purpose of the research (mini-dissertation for partial fulfilment of a Master's degree) was considered. It was decided that having more than two participants would make the study too large in size. This is listed as one of the limitations of this study.   Thus, the study consists of two participants, one male and one female, in the age group of 15 and 16 years. It was decided to use the perspectives of both boys and girls as their socialising is different and I wanted to understand how friendship in this context is perceived by both boys and girls. The learners were students from a high school for learners with specific learning impairments. The learners who were approached to be participants in this study were identified by aid of and recommended by the principal of the school. The learners were asked to volunteer for participation in this study. They were given all the information regarding the study and its purposes, to enable them to make informed decisions regarding their participation. The data was collected by means of one-on-one semi-

structured interviews after school hours as to not interrupt the school and remove learners from their classes. Interviews were kept to approximately one hour to limit fatigue.

3.4   DATA COLLECTION AND DOCUMENTATION

3.4.1   SEMI-STRUCTURED ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured one-on-one interviews with participants served the purpose of data collection, together with field notes and observations. Please refer to Appendix E for the interview protocol used. According to Denscombe (2003:167-168), individual or one-to-one interviews involve a meeting between one researcher and one participant. The researcher uses a semi-structured interview to gain an in-depth understanding of the participant's perceptions about a particular topic (De Vos *et al*., 2002:302). Thus, by making use of a semi-structured one-on-one interview, I will be able to gain an understanding of how the participants perceive friendship and the nature there off in their unique situations. The interviewer is provided with a guideline of pre-set, open-ended questions and topics that is to be covered during the interview (the interview protocol), but remains flexible regarding the order of topics, and develops ideas along with the participant (Denscombe, 2003:167; Coolican, 2004:153). I, as the researcher and interviewer, played the situation 'by ear', and did not have to ask questions if the participant spontaneously provided the desired information. The interviewer may, however, return to the interview protocol to elicit further information from the participant. The researcher is allowed to explore a topic that may emerge (De Vos *et al*., 2002:302), and to probe for a detailed explanation if clarification is needed (Gray, 2009:375). Answers are open-ended and there is an emphasis on the participant's explaining more about the topic at hand (Denscombe, 2003:167).

De Vos *et al*. (2002:302) explain that a semi-structured interview on a one-on-one level is particularly suitable when the issue is personal. The following guidelines have been applied in this study: The participant is viewed as the expert on the topic and given ample time to share his/her knowledge. The interview usually lasts for a while and may become quite intense. After the participant has been made comfortable, the interview schedule should be used to facilitate the process, not shape it. The semi-structured interview may be considered a conversation which is guided by an interview schedule (Formulated from De Vos *et al*., 2002:302). Even though a range of questions is stipulated in the interview protocol, the order of the questions may change. Some questions that were not even considered initially may also be included (Gray, 2009:382). Responses are recorded by a voice recorder. The voice

recordings are later transcribed verbatim. As time is limited during an interview session, the interviewer should maintain control over the interview by keeping the objectives of the study in mind, asking the right questions and giving feedback to the participants regarding their responses (Gray, 2009:381).

The researcher decided on semi-structured one-on-one interviews as the main method for data collection because they are particularly useful for gaining large amounts of data in a short space of time. In-depth understanding of the topic is easily facilitated with one-on-one interviews. Semi-structured interviews allow for probing when the researcher wants the respondents to expand on their views and responses (Gray, 2009:373). Thus, large amounts of useful and rich data will be gathered in a short space of time. According to Denscombe (2003:168), the following are some advantages of individual interviews:

- It should be easy to arrange the interviews as they only need to suit two individuals.
- The opinions and views expressed are from one source only, the participant.
- The interview situation is easy to control as only one person is present.

Coolican (2004:153) notes the following advantages of semi-structured interviews:

- A natural conversation occurs, which usually flows with relative ease.
- There exists an opportunity for the participant to explore unpredicted thoughts.
- The interviewer has the opportunity to decide which aspects require further exploration.

Coolican (2004:153) states that a predominant disadvantage of semi-structured interviews is that from a positivistic perspective, they offer poor opportunity for comparison across participants. Other limitations of one-on-one interviews include the unwillingness of participants to share or responses that are biased and even untrue. Seidman (1998) indicates that a particular risk is the fact that the interview may turn into a therapeutic situation (De Vos *et al.*, 2002:305). It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that therapeutic services are available to the participants as some interviews may become emotionally disturbing.

In this study, the choice to make use of semi-structured interviews is mainly supported by the advantages and reasons for making use of the interview as data collection method. The researcher will be able to gain a wealth of rich and detailed information, taken from the perspective of the participant. This will enhance the researcher's understanding of how the nature of friendship is perceived by the participants. The disadvantages of using interviews are aspects that the researcher will remain cognisant of, and attend to if necessary.

I believe that by making use of a semi-structured interview as a data collection method, I will be able to gather important data regarding the research topic. The manner in which data collection occurs establishes an environment where the participants can feel safe to share their opinions. The researcher will remain cognizant of the possibility of psychological hurt that may occur during the interviews. Since myself as the researcher is a trained therapist, I need to be vigilant of the fact that the interview should not go over into a therapeutic session. I will have a trained psychologist on hand to handle any emotional hurts or disturbances that may occur.

3.4.1.1 Validity in semi-structured interviews

To address issues of validity, Gray (2009:375) suggests that the content of the interview protocol must focus on the objectives of the research. Gray (2009:375-276) refers to the work of Arksey and Knight (1999), who suggested that validity may be strengthened by the following guidelines:

- Make use of interview skills that build rapport and allow participants to express themselves.
- Ask participants to expand and elaborate on their answers.
- Allow enough time for participants to share their information during the interview session.
- The interview protocol must contain questions taken from the literature and pilot work with participants.

3.4.1.2 Skills and abilities of the interviewer

Guidelines on the skills and abilities of the interviewer have been developed from the work of Coolican (2004:156-157) and Gray (2009:380), for establishing rapport and managing the interview session. The guidelines are discussed in this section.

It is useful to make use of the terminology used by the participants. The mode of language must be accessible to the participants. The interview 'conversation' will be more comfortable and flow more freely when the participant does not have to concern himself with using formalised language. I applied this concept during the interviews, making use of language that is accessible to the participants. It is suggested that the participant should feel that his mode of

language is welcome and worthy. The interviewer should remain neutral in such a manner that the participant feels the interview is non-judgemental.

The interviewer should disclose all information at the beginning of the interview. The information should include the purpose of the study, what will be covered during the interview, the rights and responsibilities of the participant and how confidentiality will be managed. The interviewer may also explain the purpose of particular questions asked during the interview.

Confidentiality must be assured and maintained. The participants will be informed of this. If the participants are assured of confidentiality, they tend to share more during the interview. However, participants are often quoted verbatim in the discussion of the research. When this occurs, confidentiality cannot be offered. The researcher may then provide anonymity to the participant, which was rigorously enforced.

Some other skills that I as the interviewer kept in mind and applied during the interviews include (developed from Coolican, 2004:157-158):

- Proper listening skills. The interviewer should know when not to speak. Listening skills involve listening to the tone and emphasis of what is being said.
- Non-verbal communication. The interviewer needs to be aware of her own and the participant's non-verbal communication.
- The interview needs to feel natural. There should not be too many questions, which will hamper the flow of the conversation.
- The interviewer should remain interested in the answers provided by the participant. The participant should feel his contribution is valuable.

Furthermore, the questions should be simple and clear. Questions which are complex, leading, unclear and emotive should be avoided if possible. The researcher should avoid asking more than one question at a time. The questions should be open-ended, to allow for rich information, and 'why' questions should be avoided (Coolican, 2004:158).

During the interview, Coolican (2004:159) suggests that the interviewer should refrain from initiating the interview with emotionally laden questions. Descriptive questions should be asked first. Probes are helpful for eliciting more information from participants. It is

furthermore suggested that the interviewer informs the participant when the interview is about to change direction or if a particular question is important (Coolican, 2004:159).

The above mentioned skills were applied during each interview. The use of probes and easy, accessible language was used frequently.

3.4.1.3 Recording the interview

The interviews were audio recorded. The main reason for this was that if one makes use of handwritten notes it may slow down the interview process. Shorthand is useful for making notes. By means of an audio recorder, the participant's exact terms can be recorded, and the interviewer can focus on listening and interpretation of the interview process (Gray, 2009:385). The participant must be informed of his right to switch the recorder off at any stage during the interview. An advantage of using a recorder is that it allows a natural flow of conversation which may deliver valuable information (developed from Coolican, 2004:160). All the interviews were recorded onto a digital voice recorder. The recordings were used to compile the interview transcriptions. An easy flow of conversation was possible due to using a voice recorder. Participants remained completely anonymous on the recordings by making use of code names.

3.4.2 OBSERVATIONS

When a researcher is observing participants, she chooses to observe behaviour as it occurs naturally and does not experiment with it. Observation is described as a combination of senses and perception which focuses on viewing behaviour and interpreting it (Gray, 2009:396). In this study, the researcher participated in the observational data collection by acting as a non-participant observer. A non-participant observer is defined as someone who watches from a distance and has no influence on the behaviour being observed (Coolican, 2004:120). I observed the participants during the interviews.

3.4.3 FIELD NOTES

I made field notes of my observations. Bailey (1996) states that 'field notes are the backbone of collecting and analysing data' (Gray, 2009:402). In De Vos *et al.* (2002:285), Silverman (2000) suggests that when making field notes, one needs to record everything one sees and hears and immediately expand the notes beyond what was observed. Field notes should be

detailed accounts of what is observed, participant responses, actual discussions, participants' attitudes, perceptions and feelings (De Vos *et al*., 2002:286). One needs to be careful when making field notes as one may miss important information while making the notes, or inhibit participant responses during sessions (De Vos *et al*., 2002:285). I observed the participants closely and made shorthand notes during the sessions. These notes were made on an observational protocol. This protocol consists of a page divided into columns. One column is headed 'descriptive notes', which describes what is observed, such as the physical appearance of the participants, the environment and observed behaviour. The second column is headed 'reflective notes', which primarily consist of the thoughts, ideas and reflections of the researcher (developed from Cresswell, 2009:181-182). After I completed the observations, I transferred my notes into a journal, and wrote the observations down in detail.

3.5   DATA ANALYSIS

De Vos *et al*. (2002:339) state that data analysis is the process of bringing order and meaning to a mass of data that was collected. All the data was placed into similar formats (i.e. typed A4 sheets with left and right margins with enough space to make notes on). The voice recordings from the focus group sessions were transcribed *verbatim*.

The data analysis process was developed from contributions by Tesh (1990, in Smith, 2003) and Cresswell (2009:185). A schematic presentation which provides an outline of this process follows on the next page (Figure 3.1).

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┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                 All the data will be read through                  │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ▲
┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│      Raw data is organised and prepared for the analysis process    │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Validity of the information must be monitored throughout this process

FIGURE 3.1: THE DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

The data that was collected during the study was analysed qualitatively by identifying emerging themes. The transcripts and notes were read through. Any significant or interesting aspects were recorded in the margin on the left. This procedure was continued throughout the text. The transcripts were read through again, and this time emerging themes were documented in the margin on the right-hand side. The notes were transformed to phrases that capture the quality of what was found in the text (Smith, 2003:68).

The different themes were each coded with a colour code to enable me to identify it more easily in the documentation. According to Robson (1993, in Breakwell *et al*., 2000), a code is a 'symbol applied to a group of words to classify or categorise them'. The themes were listed on a sheet of paper and connections drawn between them. The themes were then listed in a table, clustering similar themes together. Some themes had subordinate themes. Some themes were also left out of the table, because they were not applicable or did not produce rich information (Smith, 2003:72-73).

3.6 INTERPRETATION AND WRITING UP OF THE DATA

The process of analysis and reflection was aimed at developing a set of generalisations that explain the categorical themes identified (Denscombe, 2003:272). The same procedure was used with all the documentation. By clustering similar themes together, and making sense of the information based on the theoretical framework and literature review, an understanding of the information could be formulated.

The themes were translated into written narratives where they were explained and illustrated (Smith, 2003:77). Care was taken to distinguish between what the participants said and the researcher's analysis and interpretation (Smith, 2003:77). This ensured that the information was accurate and correct.

3.7 QUALITY AND RIGOUR OF THE STUDY

In order to check the accuracy and credibility of the study, one needs to confirm the reliability and validity of the study. Qualitative reliability is defined as the researcher's consistency across the study. Qualitative validity is defined as ensuring the accuracy of the findings (Cresswell, 2009:190). The validity of the findings needs to be confirmed by all members involved in the study, the researcher, participants and readers (Cresswell & Miller, 2000; in Cresswell, 2009:191).

Gibbs (2007) provides the following guidelines for ensuring reliability in the study:

▪ Go through the verbatim transcripts from the interview to ensure that no mistakes occurred during the transcription process.

▪ Check the coding process to ensure that the correct codes were assigned to the different themes identified.

Cresswell (2009:191-192) suggests that the following procedures need to be adhered to throughout the study to ensure the validity of the findings:

▪ Triangulate the data from different sources. Several sources of data enhance the validity of the data.

▪ Use member checking. The accuracy of the findings can be confirmed by taking the final report to the participants and allowing them to confirm the accuracy of the findings as stated in the report.

▪ Use 'thick, rich descriptions' of the data in the final report.

▪ Explain any bias that may have occurred from the researcher himself.

- Disclose any information that stands in opposition of the themes. If the researcher discloses contradicting evidence, it allows for a more realistic view of the study.
- Spend enough time in the field to gather enough data.

The guidelines that were suggested by Gibbs (2007) and Cresswell (2009) were implemented to enhance the validity of the findings. After the interviews were transcribed, they were played again to limit any potential errors that could have occurred during the transcription process. After the initial analysis process whereby codes were assigned to different themes, the codes were checked a second time, in order to ensure correctness and applicability. Another method for enhancing validity is indicated by Denzin and Lincoln (2000:392), namely crystallisation, which provides a deepened, complex understanding of the topic. Crystallisation means to use various sources to broaden the understanding of a topic. By combining one-on-one semi-structured interviews, observations and field notes, I used various sources to gather the information and was therefore able to substantiate the information accordingly and enhance the validity of the data. As Cresswell (2009) states 'thick, rich descriptions was attempted to add rigour to the findings of the study.

Yardley (2000, in Smith, 2003:233-234) indicates three broad principles for assessing the quality of qualitative research:

1. *Sensitivity to the context* in which the study takes place. This can be done by means of an awareness of the existing literature, the underpinnings of the research method and the relationship between researcher and participant. I believe my study can be measured against this criterion as a vast amount of reading has been done. During my planning and writing of the proposal, I developed a thorough knowledge of the research methods I am using. Finally, I developed a trusting relationship with my participants, where they could feel safe enough to share their information.

2. *Commitment* (degree of engagement demonstrated), *rigour* (thoroughness of the study, from the initial, question, literature review to the final analysis of the data), and *transparency and coherence* (how clearly the stages of the research process are outlined in the final written document). I believe my study demonstrates the criterion of commitment as I worked closely with the participants, observed them and analysed their contributions thoroughly. I will ensure rigour in my study by being thorough and being clear about the whole process in the final document, writing up the whole process in detail.

3.   *Impact and importance* (does the study make a useful contribution to the existing literature and does it make a difference?). As I have stated, I noticed a gap in the literature and I believe my study can make a useful contribution to the literature by filling this gap. It can also be of use to future students who work in inclusive school environments and environments that cater exclusively for learners with barriers. I believe the study can be helpful in understanding the social context and friendship dynamics of learners with barriers to learning. Developed from Yardley (2000, in Smith (2003:233-234).

3.8   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Northway (2002:3, in Flick, 2009:40) states the importance of conducting ethical research: 'However, all aspects of the research process, from deciding upon the topic through to identifying a sample, conducting the research and disseminating the findings, have ethical implications'.

A code of ethics is used to regulate the researcher when conducting studies. Ethical behaviour requires the researcher to avoid harming participants, by respecting and considering their rights and needs (Flick, 2009:36). I received ethical clearance and permission to embark on this study from the University of Pretoria's Ethics Committee. Furthermore, I requested written permission and informed consent from the principal of the school selected as my venue for this study, to conduct the study on the school grounds and use the learners from the school as participants. Denscombe (2003:134) and Gray (2009:73) indicate that the researcher has to uphold the following ethical principles during the collection of data, analysis and explaining the findings:

1.   Respect the rights and dignity of the participants.
2.   Avoid any harm to participants which may arise from participating in the study.
3.   Gather informed consent from the participants.
4.   Operate with honesty and integrity and avoid the use of deception.

Ethical behaviour during the data analysis phase requires that the interpretations of the data and findings be grounded in the information provided by the participants. Furthermore, personal prejudices should be avoided (Flick, 2009:41).

I attempted to uphold these basic principles throughout the study. I had a trained and experienced educational psychologist on hand to attend to any harm that might have arisen from this study or psychological hurt the participants might have experienced. They were informed of the availability of this service. Furthermore, I had contact details of other professionals available should another professional's assistance be required. The ethical issues I endorsed throughout my study include confidentiality, informed consent, debriefing the participants.

3.8.1 CONFIDENTIALITY

The data is kept confidential at all times. Several steps had been taken to keep the data stored in such a manner that it cannot be accessed by other individuals, with the exception of the researcher and her supervisor. The data is kept in manual as well as electronic form. The data in the raw form is kept under locked storage when it is not being used by the researcher or her supervisor. When the individuals were using the raw data, it was done in isolation. The data in electronic form are stored in files with passwords. The data will also not be kept for a longer time period than it is needed. After this period, all forms of the data will be destroyed. According to Gray (2009:79), it is advisable that the link between the raw form and electronic data be weakened by using code names to protect the identities of the participants. The identity of the participants was kept confidential and alias names were used to protect their identities. The participants were informed of this beforehand.

3.8.2 INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent has several criteria:
- It should be provided by a competent individual.
- The participant needs to be properly informed of all details regarding the study.
- The consent needs to be given voluntarily (Flick, 2009:41).

The participants in the study were informed of the details and rationale of this study. Deception is described as representing the data as something that it is not, in other words 'the participants understand one purpose but the researcher has another purpose in mind' (Gray, 2009:79; Cresswell, 2009:89). Deception was avoided as all the details of the study were provided beforehand in written form to the school, participants and parents (Denscombe, 2003:137; Breakwell *et al.*, 2000). This document was explained in detail to the participants before data collection started.

The participants were informed of their rights in relation to this study. Furthermore, it was explained to them that their participation was completely voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study whenever they felt they needed to. Participants were also informed of their right to refuse to respond if they felt uncomfortable with questions (Gray, 2009:78). Finally, informed consent was provided by each participant, individually, in a written document (Smith, 2003:189). Since the participants were underage, informed consent was also provided by the participants' parents or guardian. The informed consent documents had to be signed before the study commenced (Cresswell, 2009:89).

Gray (2009:76, in Crow *et al.*, 2006) describes the following advantages from gaining informed consent from participants:

▪ Participants may be more open to the study and share more honestly in their responses.
▪ Due to the openness and resulting confidence in the study, more participants may be willing to participate in the study.
▪ As researchers are forced to clarify the purpose of the study, it assists the researchers in their task.

3.8.3 DEBRIEFING OF PARTICIPANTS

The participants received any information they required or asked for after their participation. Breakwell *et al*. (2000) suggest that the researcher should discuss participants' experiences of the process with them. This was done after each interview session, with each participant. This enabled the researcher to monitor if any unintended or unanticipated harm or effects were relayed to the participants. Any intervention that should take place, must be carried out before the participants leave the research site (developed from Breakwell *et al*., 2000). After each interview, the session was discussed with the participant and the possibility of any harm was evaluated. It was determined that the interviews fortunately had no damaging or harmful effect on the participants.

3.8.4 AVOIDING HARM TO THE PARTICIPANTS

As the researcher I had an ethical duty to avoid any harm to my participants due to their participation in the study. According to Gray (2009:74), 'harm' in the research context could include embarrassment, mental distress, anxiety and stress on the part of the participant. The

basic principle of respect for the rights of my participants is essential for avoiding harm. According to Gray (2009:74), researchers argue that one should go beyond avoiding harm and determine how the research could be useful and provide useful benefits to the participants. To act ethically means to assure that the study yields useful and meaningful information that is of benefit to others (Gray, 2009:74).

3.9   CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a detailed description of the research process as it was implemented in this study. The research design of an instrumental case study was described under the paradigm of interpretivism. It was indicated how the participants of this study were selected. The different techniques used for data collection were described, together with the data analysis and interpretation process. The chapter concluded with an explanation of what procedures were implemented to ensure validity and reliability of the findings from this study. Finally, the ethical considerations that were implemented and upheld during the course of this study were explained.

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CHAPTER 4
RESULTS AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

4.1   INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3 the research process was described. In Chapter 4, the results and findings of this study are discussed. The chapter starts with the results, discussing each theme and subtheme that was identified. Colour-coded verbatim quotations of the participants in support of the discussion of the themes and subthemes are included. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the results in relation to existing literature. Both similarities as well as possible contradictions will be indicated.

4.2   DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

After each interview, the interview was transcribed verbatim. Each interview was checked to ensure that no errors occurred in the transcription process. Each transcript was read through and interesting observations or thoughts were recorded. In the right-hand margin, possible emerging themes were noted. After reading through the transcripts a second time, the emerging themes were highlighted, using a colour code for similar themes. After the third reading, the themes were grouped into main themes with relevant subthemes. A specific code word was assigned to each theme and subtheme, recorded in the right-hand margin of the transcripts. Each main theme was coded with a specific colour and each subtheme was coded in a different shade of the same colour. The colour coding of each theme and subtheme was related to the transcripts and every piece of relevant data was highlighted in the correct colour code. Each coded piece of data was double-checked against the relevant code word recorded in the right-hand margin of the transcripts to ensure that themes in the transcripts could be identified easily. The themes were then listed in a table, clustering the main themes and the relevant subthemes together.

Generalisations and explanations for each of the themes were done during the interpretation phase of the data. The results of the clustered main themes and relevant subthemes were related to the existing literature and theoretical framework.

4.3   RESEARCH RESULTS

Based on the data analysis of all the data gathered during the study, four main themes and related subthemes emerged. Theme 1 describes how friendship is perceived by the participants based on support and understanding. Subtheme 1.1 describes participants' perception of friendship and how it influences them. Subtheme 1.2 describes typical characteristics of friendship, as it is perceived from the participants' point of view. Subtheme 1.3 is one of the key themes of this study and focuses on how support and understanding for peers and friends are perceived in the school used as the case study.

Theme 2 focuses on how friendships at the school for learners with learning impairments influence social comparison and self-concept. Subtheme 2.1 focuses on how social comparison occurs on various levels. Subtheme 2.2 describes the influence of learning impairment on self-concept.

Theme 3 describes a learning impairment and the influence thereof on friendship. Subtheme 3.1 indicates the participants' awareness of their learning impairment and subtheme 3.2 describes the influence of the learning impairment on friendship.

Theme 4 describes the school for learners with learning impairment and its learners. Subtheme 4.1 describes the characteristics of the school for learners with learning impairment and the effect on the learners. Subtheme 4.2 compares the participants' experiences of friendship and peer support at previous (mainstream) schools with those in the school for learners with learning impairment.

TABLE 4.1: THEMES AND SUBTHEMES (Summarised by relevant colour codes)

Theme	Description
Theme 1	Perceptions of friendship based on support and understanding
Subtheme 1.1	Participants' perception of friendship and how it influences them
Subtheme 1.2	Typical characteristics of friendship
Subtheme 1.3	Support and understanding for peers and friends
Theme 2	Social comparison and self-concept
Subtheme 2.1	Social comparison on various levels
Subtheme 2.2	Influence of learning impairment on self-concept

Theme	Description
Theme 3	Learning impairment and friendship
Subtheme 3.1	An awareness of the characteristics of learning impairment
Subtheme 3.2	Influence of learning impairment on friendship
Theme 4	The specialised school environment and its learners
Subtheme 4.1	Characteristics of the specialised school environment and their effect on the learners
Subtheme 4.2	Experiences of friendship and peer support at previous (mainstream) schools in comparison with those in the specialised school environment

4.3.1 THEME 1: PERCEPTIONS OF FRIENDSHIP BASED ON SUPPORT AND UNDERSTANDING

Theme 1's subthemes provide clarification on how friendship is perceived by the participants based on how support and understanding contributes to the friendships. This theme focuses on how the participants perceive their friendships in the specialised school. The typical characteristics of how the participants define their friendships are also described.

4.3.1.1 Subtheme 1.1: Participants' perception of friendship and how it influences them

Subtheme 1.1 explains participants' perception of friendship and how it influences them. Participant 1 (Clown) stated *'you need friendships that ... i'ts part of life, it's part of growing up. Your friends are the people that make you bigger and stronger'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 1-2). From this statement it is evident that friendship was considered an important part of his life. It is furthermore implied that he considered his friends an important facet of helping him feel better about himself. Participant 1 listed the factors that he considered important: *'I have a list of what is going on in my life, respect, love and friendship. Friendship is one of the main things going on in my life. If I don't have friends I don't think I will be able to do it'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 2). From this statement it can be concluded that Participant 1 considered his friendships so important that he felt he could not do anything without them. He was truly dependent on his friends.

To a large extent, Participant 1 defined himself based on his friendships. He stated: *'they are part of my life, they make me who I am'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 4). Participant 2 (Kitty) held a similar view of the friendships in her life. She indicated that *'my*

friends are my life' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 22). She also perceived her friends as adding to her defintion of herself: *'I am nothing without my friends)'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 22). Participant 2 perceived her friends as understanding her in her unique way: *'They understand me'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 23). Gordon, Feldman and Chiriboga (2005:1) state: 'The ability to share one's life and connect emotionally through friendship is consistently reported as a critical factor in the development and maintenance of life satisfaction.' This theme supports the notion that friendships were very important to the participants, as it is assumed to be to the overall development of adolescents. According to various authors (Asher, 1990; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995; Vander Zander, 1993; all in Chan & Mpofu, 2001:43), peer groups (friendships) provide children with opportunities to develop independence, experience equal relationships with others, acquire social status and develop an identity, share experiences and exchange emotional support. Friendship and group acceptance is important for the development of adolescents.

4.3.1.2 Subtheme 1.2: Typical characteristics of friendship

Each participant had a unique perception of how friendship should be characterised. Based on these characterisations, a better understanding of how friendship is perceived could be formulated by the researcher.

Participant 1 was of the opinion that considering the size of the school (about 100 learners from grade 8-12), he was friends with most of his peers in the school: *'I am friends with almost everyone in the school'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 2). Participant 2 concurred with this statement: *'everyone is sort of friends with everyone. It's a small school'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 17). Participant 2 states that this was because most of the children in the school had similar problems: *'I think the children in the school are close because many of the children come out of bad circumstances at home. So many of them have sort of the same problem'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 17). It is within friendship and peer groups that adolescents develop their identity. According to Smith (2004:287), adolescents with learning impairments may find it challenging to make close peer attachments. It appears that within the school used for this study, where all the learners are faced with a learning impairment of some kind, it is easier for the learners to make close peer attachments. This contradicts the statement made by Smith.

Participant 1 enjoyed spending time with his friends. There were various activities that they had in common and enjoyed doing together: *'well, we all like metal and guitar, we like to spend time together'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 3).

The participants stated that they enjoyed spending time with their friends. They also stated that they enjoyed doing certain activities with their friends. Gottman and Parker (1987, in Santrock, 2001:195) indicate companionship as one of six functions of friendship during adolescence: providing someone with whom the adolescent can spend time and join in activities together This confirms Participant 1's statement of how he enjoyed doing activities with his friends.

Participant 1 indicated how he valued the nature of his friendships: *'we give each other enough space and enough respect and also enough attention'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 4). Honesty was another important characterstic of his friendships: *'we are honest with each other'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 5). Participant 2 valued similar characteristics regarding her friendships: *'the thing between us is, it's the trust we have invested, we like each other and we can tell each other everything and we don't have to worry what they are thinking of us. We can be ourselves around them. We don't have to hide something and I can talk and be there for each other'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 19). The participants indicated that one of the fundamental characteristics of their friendships was trust. This enabled them to share information on a deeper level and developed a sense of security that their information would be kept safe and not divulged to others. This allowed the participants to just be themselves with around their friends, a kind of 'letting their guard down'. In addition, Participant 2 believed an important characteristic about her friendships was the fact that she should be able to laugh with them: *'I must be able to laugh around my friends'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 19).

Participant 2 indicated that she valued the fact that she could have deep, honest conversations with her friends: '*You can have a real conversation here. It's not just ha-ha here and there, making random jokes and so on. It's that you are really talking to someone here'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 18). Participant 2 valued the fact that she could have conversations with her friends about things she could not necessarily share with someone else: '*someone to talk to because you can't talk to your parents about everything. It's nice to know there is someone who is willing to listen to you'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 23).

Participant 2 described a realisation she had regarding friends. She indicated how important it was to have a variety of friends: '*but then I realised that sometimes you don't need the laughing but a more serious friend and less talking. It's always nice to have a variety of friends*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 20). Participant 2 also indicated: '*it's nice to have fun friends but there are those who cannot be serious and you need the ones that can talk seriously, who has been through the things and can talk seriously about it. Then you need the more friendly friends who just want to be peaceful and calm, then you can spend time with them. It's nice to have a variety of friends who feel like you do, who you can go to*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 31).

Participant 1 indicated that in his circle of friends they did not like conflict: '*we don't like to fight, we do't like it at all*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 7). If conflict did occur, however, Participant 1 indicated that he had developed a way of dealing with the conflict: '*I become angry and then I push them away for a while, I don't want to talk about it. But after a while I will go and talk to them or wait a while and then tell them I will come and talk to them*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 9). Participant 1 did not always appear keen to immediately resolve conflict. He would, however, talk it out with his friends after a while.

Participant 2 believed that friends should not judge other based on outer appearance: '*They must not just get to know you from the outside, but from the inside as well*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 20).

When asked what made his friendships so special, Participant 1 indicated it was the fact that they supported each other and did not judge one another: '*the fact that we are there for each other and we don't judge and stuff*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page12).

This point of view describes the main aspect of Theme 1: Support and understanding.

4.3.1.3   Subtheme 1.3: Support and understanding for peers and friends

Emotional support, trust and loyalty have been identified as qualities valued the most in adolescent friendships (Azmitia *et al*., 2005:29). Both participants considered their friends a source of support and understanding regarding their specific personalities as well as specific learning impairments. Both participants indicated how they turned to their friends for support

when they were having difficulties. According to Santrock (2001:196) adolescent friendships become more intimate and sharing of private thoughts and self-disclosures occur.

Participant 1 indicated his friends were always there: *'your friends are always there'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 2). He also described how he would turn to his friends for support when he was having some difficulties: *'if I have problems I go directly to him because he understands'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 2). Trust was considered an important factor for effective support from friends: *'it's stuff like that and that we can trust each other and talk with each other'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 12). Participant 2 indicated that due to the fact that many of the children in the school had similar experiences, the children were could understand better and provide adequate support to their friends: *'Many of the children cry about things here and many of the children are strong here, they talk to each other and they understand how it is so they can talk with each other and they are sort of on the same page most of the time'* (Interview transcriptions, participant , page 17). Participant 2 also stated *'we sort of know what the others are going through and if we just talk casually, we understand each other's tempers and stuff'* (Interview transcriptions, participant , page 18). Support and understanding by friends was facilitated by the fact that the learners in the school had an understanding of what their peers were experiencing in terms of learning impairments.

Participant 1 explained how he provided support to his friends: *'if they have problems I will support them where I can and if I am down myself, I will go and talk to them'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 3-4). Participant 1 indicated how he would also provide support to his friends by providing them guidance from his own experiences: *'then I will tell him what I learned from my mistakes, because someone said: 'don't make the same mistake twice', something like that. Well, if I did it already, why must someone else do it? So if I did something wrong and he has not, then I don't want him to do it because it may be bad'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 9). Participant 2 had situations where she had to support her friends who had some emotional challenges and considered suicide. She described how she provided support to them: *'I have helped many of my friends who wanted to commit suicide, then I remind them there is always something to live for'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 19).

Participant 1 described different ways in which his friends supported him: *'They always look for something to make me laugh'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 5). He also

explained how his friends provided emotional support when he was having problems: '*for G, E and H, I tell everything. If I have a problem I tell them directly. And then they will talk to me*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 7). From this statement it is clear that Participant 1's friends discussed problems with him.

Within the specialised school environment, support and understanding by friends is facilitated by the fact that the children have an understanding of what their friends are going through because of personal experiences. Participant 1 stated this about his friends and peers in the school: '*some of them have the same problem as me)*' and '*we just understand each other*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 12). Participant 2 made an interesting statement when she indicated how the children in the school would become upset if someone teased or laughed at another person with a learning impairment: '*and the children in this school, if you laugh at someone, they will scorn you*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 18). When she was asked if this could be because the children and other individuals in the school has a better understanding of how the children were and what their needs were, she indicated it was because the relevant individuals and children are better informed and educated. Researcher: '*Do you think they have a better understanding?*' Participant 2: '*yes, they are much more informed*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 18). She indicated that a reason for this was because the learners had a thorough understanding of how it was to be faced with a learning impairment and be challenged with it in many arenas, especially socially. Thus it can be concluded that there is agreement between this and a statement by Bukowski *et al.* (1995, in Santrock, 2001:196), which indicates that friends can protect 'at risk' adolescents from victimisation. This means that the learners in the school protect their peers from being teased by others.

Participant 2 made a dramatic statement about which she felt very strongly. This statement indicates how one should not just feel sympathy towards someone with a learning impairment. She stated that one should rather assist the individual instead of just feeling sorry for them: '*you must not pity them, you must help them and make them strong. That's how it is, we don't feel sorry for each other and just move on and pretend that nothing is wrong*' and '*if you want to feel sorry for her, help her because you don't have a right to pity her because then you don't really care. If you feel sorry for her, help her*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 19). The researcher recorded the following in her field notes:' *This was quite an interesting observation for me. Kitty was adamant that one should not feel sorry for learners with learner impairments. She feels that if you feel sorry, you do not really care for*

the individual. She believes one should rather demonstrate one's care by assisting the person in some way, instead of just pitying them' (Field notes).

Participant 1 indicated how the learners in the school supported each other in an academic context. He stated how peers reminded each other of classwork and assisted each other: '*Some people in the school are really nice – they help me with my work*' and '*they remind me of the work that I must do*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 13-14). The learners supported each other in learning and explaining the work when a peer did not understand it. The learners in the specialised school were all learners who experience some kind of learning impairment. As a result, academic performance was not easy for the children to achieve. The participants indicated how it was often difficult for them to be motivated to do school work, as it required much more effort from them. Motivation was enhanced by their friendships. Within this context, the participants indicated how their friends and peers motivated them to do their schoolwork, even when they did not want to: '*let's say I don't want to do my work, then they say, dude, you want to finish it. Let's say I don't finish it, they will go on till I just do it or they will say, dude, just finish it*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 14). This motivation was provided by their peers. The ability for these learners to motivate and support each other, requires a deeper understanding of what they are going through. Friends know how it feels not to excel academically.

Friends also motivated Participant 1 to keep in mind what his long-term goals were, namely to reach Grade 12: '*they motivate me most of the time to get my matric*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 13-14). Participant 2 provided similar statements: '*and my friends here, they have supported me so much. They made me strong*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 21). This finding validates another function of friendship: Physical support, where friends provide time, resources and assistance (Santrock, 2001:195). This understanding of peers and friends moves to other areas of functioning as well.

Participant 2 described how her friends not only supported her in the academic context, but other contexts, such as religion, as well: '*the thing is, all my friends are supportive, all my friends are Christians*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 22).

Participant 2 described an incident where she was going through a particulary difficult experience at the school regarding a drug test. She indicated how her friends supported her during this ordeal: '*the children came to me and they were there for me. I appreciated it so*

much' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 23). She described how it felt for her when her friends provided this support: '*children here, yes, they are there for you. And it gave me peace because it feels as if I always have someone with me'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 22). She provided a beautiful description of how she perceived this support: '*it's deep here, the children actually worry about you'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 22)

4.3.2   THEME 2: SOCIAL COMPARISON AND SELF-CONCEPT

Theme 2 provides a look at how the participants understood how they compared themselves to their peers based on various aspects, such as academic performance and physical appearance. This theme continues to explore how social comparison has an effect on the participants' self-concept. This theme also focuses on how friends affect self-concepts.

4.3.2.1   Subtheme 2.1: Social comparison on various levels

Adolescents compare themselves on various levels to their friends and peers. One of the functions of friendships is social comparison: Friendships provide opportunity for adolescents to compare themselves and know where they stand in relation to others (Santrock, 2001:195). Santrock (2001:300) state that adolescents use social comparison to evaluate themselves. The following diagram explains the levels of social comparison as determined in this study:
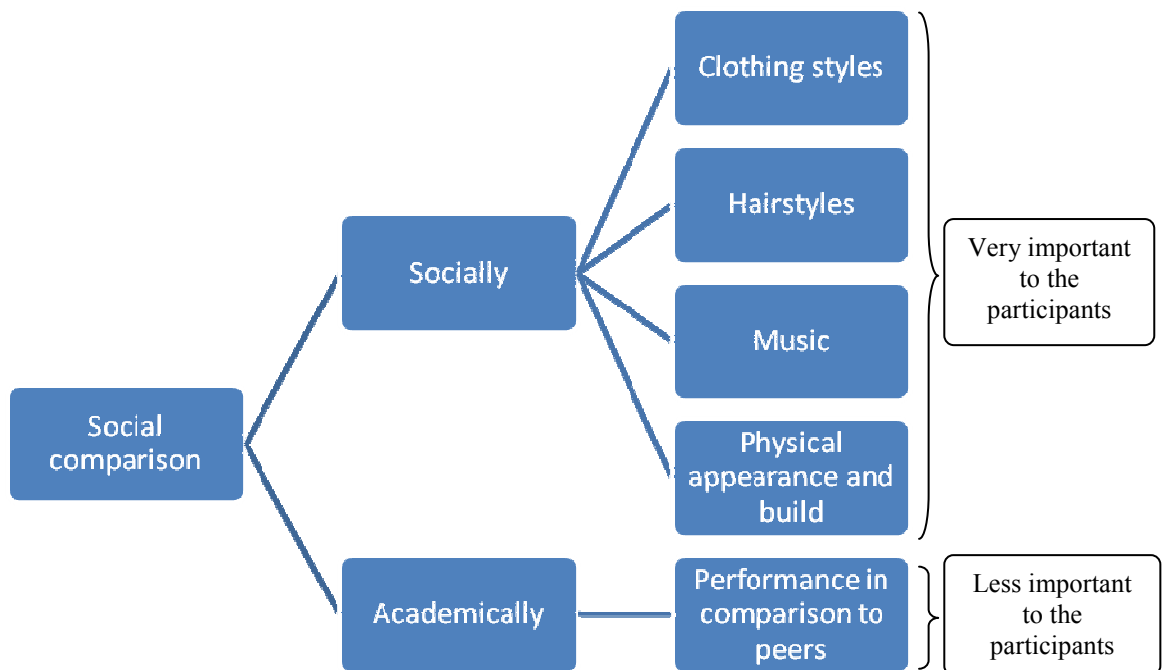
FIGURE 3.1: LEVELS OF SOCIAL COMPARISON

Social comparison takes place on various levels. These levels could include physical appearance, specific learning impairments, skills and emotional states. Participant 1 stated that from his perspective, everyone was the same. Thus when he compared himself with his peers in the school, he perceived them all to be similar: *'all of us are almost the same'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 5). He continued to explain that one aspect which he and his friends had in common, in terms of learning impairment, was that they all had difficulty with aggression: *'we all struggle with aggression'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 4). Participant 1 explained that his considered himself to be exactly like his friends: *'With the people who I spend most of my time, they are just like me'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 6).

When the interviewer explored different bases of comparison, various aspects that were used to base comparison on were mentioned. Participant 1 felt that when it came to physical appearance, everyone dressed similarly in order to look the same: *'all dress the same'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 6). He also stated: *'we all wear the same clothes here, me friends and I want to grow our hair and we like the same music and stuff and we like any type of music'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 9). Participant 2 stated that social comparison was made based on what their peers' physical appearance was like: *'on how they look'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 32). Participant 2 indicated that physical appearance was important to her when social comparison occured in her friendships: *'she is so thin, she is built so beautifully'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 32). She continued to explain how it made her feel about herself: *'then I look at myself and it's bleh'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 32). Participant 2 felt that she was not as pretty as her friend. Then Participant 2 made two interesting yet contradicting statements about how she appreciated herself, yet she wanted to be like another person: *'yet I appreciate myself ... I want to be like another person'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 32). That is an indication that her social identity and self-concept were still developing and though she wanted to accept herself, she was not there yet. Stets and Burke (2000:228) state that to have a social identity implies being like the others in the group and having similar perspectives. Her social identity was still developing.

According to Dijkstra *et al.* (2008), it is not always clear 'whether students' social comparisons serve to evaluate their abilities, enhance or protect their egos, improve their performances, or serve a combination of these motives'. It is concluded that the reason for

social comparison, whether it is to enhance their egos, improve performance or a combination thereof, is determined by the situation in which the learner finds him/herself.

Based on academic performance, Participant 1 compared himself to specific peers who excelled. He felt that he did not always live up to the level he had set for himself, based on the comparison: '*Try to do my work well but I struggle'.* He explained that it had an effect on him when someone performed better than he did academically: '*someone did better than me and everyone is giving that person the attention, then I feel badly'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 10).). A poor performance at school is the trademark of a child with barriers to learning. This may lead to emotional problems and adjustment problems at school (Martinez & Semrud-Clikeman, 2004:411). Participant 1's self-concept was negatively influenced by how he perceived his academic performance in comparison to his peers. When specific learning impairments play a role when peers compare themselves to others, Participant 1 was aware of the fact that his academic performance was largely influenced by his learning impairment: '*Some of them have the same problem as I do, then they say hey dude, I sucked. But then I say but me too. Okey, but why did you? Then I say I have this problem* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 12). He also stated '*because all of us have the same problem here'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 14). Thus, it can be understood that Participant 1 was aware of how learning impairments manifested in his friends when he compared himself to his peers. The awareness of the learning impairment has an influence on how social comparison is perceived. Participant 2 perceived social comparison based on academic performance as not present in her circle of friends: '*we don't really focus on how well you do at school'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 20). Participant 2 reasoned that social comparison did not prevail based on academic performance. She believed that it was just not important.

Another factor regarding social comparison was raised by Participant 1 when he explained that he smoked. He did, however, feel that he did this because it made him calmer: '*honestly, it just calms me down'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 6). He was of the opinion that he did not smoke to compare himself-to peers: '*I also smoke but then I don't compare myself to others'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 6), or to be considered part of a group: *I try not to be in a group'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 6).

Participant 1 made an interesting statement which indicated that even though social comparison occurred in his life, he did not allow it to influence him: '*you must be independent for the right reasons and not accept what people tell you about how you are in things and*

build your self-confidence and always be strong' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 15).

Participant 2 regularly drew social comparisons. She believed that what her friends said about her was the truth and she believed it. She based what she thought of herself on her friends' opinions of her: *'so what they think of me affects what I think of myself. When they say I look pretty today, I believe it. I will not think anything else. So it is about what my friends think. It has always been like that'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 23).

Social comparison in the context of the study was based on physical appearance, while social comparison based on physical appearance is not prevalent. Dijkstra *et al.* (2008) provide a description of the dimensions of social comparison. Comparison occurs as motivation for self-evaluation, self-enhancement or self-improvement, upwards, downwards or laterally. It is concluded that social comparison in terms of physical appearances is motivated by self-enhancement and self-improvement, in an upward direction. Social comparison links closely with an individual's self-concept as it often affects how an individual thinks of the self.

4.3.2.2   Subtheme 2.2: Influence of learning impairment on self-concept

According to Riddick (2010:36) self-concept is an umbrella term that entails a person's evaluation of the self at a cognitive, affective and behavioural level. According to the statements of both participants, their friends had a significant influence on their self-concepts. This is confirmed by Cordoni (1990:9), who states that the attitudes of people around the adolescent with a learning impairment affect his self-concept. Participant 1 stated that one of his main goals was to keep other people happy. He stated that if he could make other people happy, it made him feel good about himself: *'it's one of my main goals, to keep people happy. And they play an important role, if they cant make me laugh, I cannot keep people happy. If they are happy I can make them laugh and it's worth it for me, it makes me feel good'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 5-6).

According to Santrock (2001:303), important sources that affect an adolescent's self-concept are parents and peers. As children mature into adolescents, the importance of the parental influence on self-concepts becomes less as peer influences increase.

Participant 2 provided perspectives on how being in the specialised school affected one's self-concept: *'here it's not about how dumb or clever you are. It's about if you can talk to that*

person and if they are going to find you stupid if you do talk to them (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 20). She indicated that the school helped to enhance one's self-concept as one performed much better academically than at other schools. Where learners previously perceived themselves to be poor students in comparison to their peers, they perceived themselves to be better learners in the specialised school. This led to an improvement in their self-concepts.

Participant 2 described how her self-concept had improved significantly since she moved to the specialised school environment. At her previous schools she did not excel academically : *when I was in M (high school) I got 30-40%. It was bad for me. I believed I was dumb'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 21). She described how it made her feel about herself: '*I thought I was completely dumb. No qualities in me. Then my parents told me I have ADD. Then I thought okay I am retarded'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 21). She felt as if she had no qualities in her, she even felt retarded. It is clear that her self-concept was negatively influenced. This rings true according to Luciano and Savage (2007:17), who indicate that learners with learning impairments may experience a low scholastic self-concept and learned helplessness. Due to her underachievement, as well as not fitting in socially, her self-concept was negatively influenced. This is supported by Silver (1998), who states that the learner with a learning impairment's 'unsuccessful academic and social experiences lead to disappointment, frustration, feelings of incompetence, a lack of self-worth and a poor self-concept' (in Lerner and Kline, 2006:528). Participant 2 continued to explain how her self-concept improved after she moved to the specialised school: '*when I came here I started to do good, it was crazy. I got 80-90% for a test'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 21). She started to take better care of herself on a physical level by noticing how she looked: '*yes, I started to dress better and care about how I looked. Yes, see, E told me the other day that when I came here I looked like a tomboy. Now I care about how I look, make-up myself and yes'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 21). Participant 2 states: '*I care much more about how I look'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 21). Based on observations made the positivity in her self-concept was confirmed. The researcher noted: *'Comes across as self confident and opinionated. Kitty did not appear nervous before or during the interview. I believe she is self confident in her ability. Socially she comes across as well adjusted and well verbally strong'* (Field notes).

4.3.3   THEME 3: LEARNING IMPAIRMENT AND FRIENDSHIP

Theme 3 explores the typical characteristics of learning impairment as it was perceived by the participants. The characteristics of learning impairment are described, followed by the participants' perception of how learning impairment affected their friendship. This theme investigates the nature of friendship among learners with a learning impairment.

4.3.3.1   Subtheme 3.1: An awareness of the characteristics of learning impairment

A learning impairment is 'any factor that is a hindrance or obstacle to a student's ability to learn' (Lazarus & Lolwana, 2007:3). This includes difficulties and disabilities in regard to learning. Participant 1 indicated that one of his learning impairments was aggression. He described how his aggression started after his father's death: '*I became aggressive when my father dies, that's when the aggression came out in me*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 4). It must be noted that the aggression the participant refers to started when his father passed away. In reaction to a question as to what influence this may have on his friendships he responded by describing how the aggression could result in the situation becoming out of hand: '*our aggression gets out of control*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 4). According to Leichtentritt and Shechtman (2009:1), a manifestation of learners with learning impairments may be anger and aggression. It appears that the aggression that is referred to here by Participant 1 could be traced back to the loss of his father and should therefore not necessarily be viewed as characteristic of learner impairments in this case.

Participant 1 continued to express that another aspect he considered to be a learning impairment was the fact that he forgot quickly: '*I forget quite easily*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 8). Participant 1 commented that he would probably not even remember what he said during the interview: '*after this I'm not even going to remember what I said*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 8).

Participant 1 described his experience of the learning impairment he was challenged with (ADD – Attention-Deficit Disorder)[2]: '*like H and I are similar. If we have enough sugar in, we are awake the whole day and we talk and H will start to talk about trolleys. Then I will be*

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[2]Attention-deficit disorder (ADD) or ADHD (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) is '[a] condition characterised by severe problems of inattention, hyperactivity, and/or impulsivity, often found in persons with learning impairment' (Hallahan & Kaufman, 2000:177, in Landsberg et al., 2005:367). Possible manifestations of ADD/ADHD include 1) learners are slow processors, 2) they lose their place without being aware of it, 3) they have to be reminded to stop an activity to enable them to focus on the work they should be doing (Bley & Thornton, 2001:18-19, in Landsberg et al. , 2005:368).

there and will not be able to keep my laugh in, and H will start to tell a story and I will chip in and then the story just goes on. We will write a book about our stories. We will make children and parents very happy. We are clever then and H and I, we have large imaginations' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 8). Based on an observation that was noted in the field notes, Participant 1 found it challenging to maintain his focus on the conversation: '*His attention is really distractible. He would be answering a question in the right context, then say something and his concentration would be lost to the question at hand. He would start talking along new lines of thought. As the interviewer, I had to allow this to a certain extend, but at times he would continue completely of the topic. I had to refocus him'* (Field notes). The researcher furthermore indicated the following thought based on this observation*: 'I wonder, within a social context, do his friends become frustrated and even irritated by the fact that he finds it challenging to maintain a conversation in one context? I also wonder how it will be, when you have 2 or 3 friends together, with this occurrence? I wonder about the depth of their conversations and meanings attached to the conversation'* (Field notes). It appears as if Participant 1 is not aware of the possible impact the learning impairment he faces may have on his friendships. This could possibly lead to conflict due to misunderstandings.

He also indicated how it influenced his academic performance: '*but H and I found out that we struggle with learning because it's one of the symptoms of ADD'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page12).

Initially Participant 2 provided this perception of the learning impairment she experienced (ADD): '*My parents struggled with me because later on I just didn't even want to study because I thought it's not going to help. I thought I was dumb, no qualities in me. Then my parents told me I have ADD. Then I thought okey, I am even more dumb, okey I am retarded'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 21). After her parents informed her that the learning impairment she faced was ADD, she did some research on what it entailed. In her research, Participant 2 stumbled upon information about a New Age movement called Indigo Children[3]. This perspective put the typical characteristics of ADD in a much more positive light for her. Participant 2 gave an interesting perspective on the learning impairment she was faced with, seeing it as a gift, not an illness: '*but it is not an illness we have, it is a gift'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 25). This perspective and view on life was

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[3] This movement indicated that the New Generation Children are called Indigo Children. The Indigo Child is characterised by similar characteristics as someone who has been diagnosed with ADD.

observed. The researcher made the following notes in this regard: *'I am amazed at how she has rationalized her learner impairment in such a way so it empowers her. I believe she had to go through various periods of self development and belief in herself to reach this stage'* (Field notes).

Researchers provide contradicting information on how a learning impairment affects self-concepts. It appears as if Participant 1 wanted to impress the researcher, as was noted in the field notes: '*Some of the responses appear to be answered in such a manner as to impress me*' (Field notes). It could also be understood that Participant 1 answered the questions in a way that could potentially put him in a favourable light, which could be connected to his self-concept of wanting to impress others.

In the case of Participant 2, the learning impairment she faced initially had a negative effect on her self-concept. Subsequently, she gained a positive perspective on her learning impairment.

Cordoni (1990:9) mentioned courage as a coping mechanism for a learning impairment. Participant 2 displayed courage in trying to improve her academic performance, despite the failures she had experienced. Her perspective of the learning impairment she was faced with provided this courage.

4.3.3.2   Subtheme 3.2: Influence of learning impairment on friendship

This subtheme explores the relationship of learning impairment on friendship. Smith (1998:147) describes some characteristics of learning impairments which may affect social interactions: engaging in socially unacceptable behaviour, not being able to predict the consequence of one's behaviour, misunderstanding social cues, poor decision-making and problem-solving skills, improper social interaction, not paying attention, being shy and distractable (in Landsberg *et al*., 2005:367). Some of these behaviours were highlighted in the study.

Within the specialised school environment, many learners experience the typical characteristics of ADD. Participant 1indicated how the characteristics of ADD manifested among peers and friends who had been identified as experiencing symptoms of ADD: '*if all of your friends are hyperactive, you cannot concentrate*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1,

page 10). This confirms Smith's statement that not paying attention and distractability have an influence on the learners' social interaction. This statement was confirmed by observations made. It was observed how Participant 1 found it challenging to maintain his concentration to the activity at hand: *'It's as if his attention is only focused for a moment or two, then he says something and his thoughts trail along those line' (*Field notes)*. The researcher was concerned with the possible impact of this on his friendships: '*do his friends become frustrated and even irritated by the fact that he finds it challenging to maintain a conversation in one context?´* (Field notes).

As was previously stated, Participant 1 indicated that a characteristic of the learning impairment he was faced with was forgetfulness. When asked what effect this had on his friendships, Participant 1 provided interesting statements: '*like sometimes I forget people's birthdays'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 11). He also described an incident where forgetfulness led to some conflict between him and his friend about a camp on which he was supposed to accompany his friends: 'I *forgot about a camp where G and I would have gone on to. The evening he phoned me and asked if I was packed, because they were on their way to get me. Then I said for what? For the camp? What camp? Then he was angry with me. Then I actually went along and when we came back he asked me if I forgot. I said yes, I did forget'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 11). This incident led to conflict between him and his friend. His friend did indeed display understanding to a certain extent, but it had a momental effect on their friendship, with his friend becoming angry with him. From Participant 1's response it seems as if the effect of forgetfulness lead to some conflict. However, it is assumed that this was resolved and had no permanent effect on the friendship.

Participant 2 provided a perspective on how her friends understood her and accepted her as she was, despite a learning impairment: '*understand, I am a little unique (laughs). A little crazy. I have to much energy and I say the most random things. They accept me for it'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 24). Participant 2 provided the following description of how she perceived the learning impairment herself: '*I am happy I have ADD. I will never regret it. It is cool'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 24).

Participant 2 provided some perspectives on how the typical characteristics of learning impairment were understood by the learners from the specialised school environment and how this understanding contributed to how the learners supported each other, both emotionally and in relation to school work: '*yes, most of the children here have it. See, if you don't get the*

work into your head, they may know how to because they have the same learning techniques and stuff' and *'so I explain things to her and then she understands it because we undertand just a little more how our heads work and stuff, And I can use a picture to show it to her and explain to her in easier ways'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 24).

In exploring the nature of friendship among learners with learning impairment, Participant 2 was able to provide perspectives on how a learning impairment such as ADD plays a role in day-to-day social activities, such as listening to one's friends: *'we know how to talk to each other and when I am talking to someone, and I see their attention is slipping, I say focus (snaps her fingers). I can see when it happens. I see they start to look around so of course they are not listening. Then I ask them what I said. Then they are uh? Then they don't know what, you must keep it short and to the point if you talk to your friends'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 27). Participant 2 described that when one was talking to friends, it should be kept short and to the point, otherwise their attention would be distracted and the message would get lost: *'Yeh, thay are not going to sit and listen to every single thing you did. You must say what you want to very quickly because they are not going to listen for a long tome, so say what you can. It's like a 30 second rule or something. You must say what you can, after that time, it's sorry'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 27). It could be assumed that this may lead to conflict when one peer feels as if the other was not listening. It does appear that in this specific context, the learners understood that attention became distracted easily and they had developed a way of communicating quickly, to get messages across before the attention was lost.

Another factor that affected peer relations and could lead to conflict was what happens to Participant 2 when her attention was distracted while she was in conversation with a friend: *'it's attention deficit. I lose my focus. What irritates my friends is that when we stand in a group and B is talking to me. Then I will just walk away. Because I stopped listening and I am looking at all the people around me and then I would just walk away. Then he becomes angry with me for it'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 29). Her attention became distracted and then Participant 2 would just walk away from the conversation, often in mid-conversation. Often Participant 2 did not realise this was happening: *'I don't even notice it. I only notice it afterwards. I would be walking and someone will call me and they will keep on calling me and stand close by and I wouldn't even hear. It's annoying but okey'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 29). The occurences described by Participant 2 agrees with Smith's description of behaviours. In the description by Participant 2, the following

behaviours as described by Smith (1998:147), are indicated: socially unacceptable behaviour, misunderstanding social cues, poor decision-making skills and not paying attention and being distractable (Landsberg *et al.*, 2005:367).

4.3.4 THEME 4: THE SPECIALISED SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND ITS LEARNERS

To thoroughly grasp the nature of friendship among learners in the specialised school, it is important to first understand the characteristics of the specialised school and what effect it has on the learners. To enhance one's understanding of this, it is a good idea to understand what experiences the participants had at their previous schools, which were mainstream schools, in comparison to their experiences at the specialised school.

4.3.4.1 Subtheme 4.1: Characteristics of the specialised school environment and the effect thereof on the learners

Participants 1 and 2 came to the specialised school environment after being in large, well-known high schools. They provided various perspectives on the typical characteristics of the specialised school environment. Participant 1 indicated that at the school, everyone was friendly and this made one feel safe and welcome in the school: '*here, everyone is friendly, greets every time. Here you don't feel endangered, you feel as if you must be here*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 2). Participant 1 continued to explain that in the specialised school, the children did not make it difficult for peers to adjust to the school and that most people liked each other: '*I have not seen anyone who makes it bad for people here. Here are about 10 people who do not like my friends and my choice of music*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 3).

In the context of academic work, Participant 1 described that the work was explained in an easier way which accommodates children who face difficulties with their concentration: '*work is completed quickly here, less children in the class because I struggle with concentration and yeh, well*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 2). He also stated that the smaller size of the classes was better for someone like him who was challenged by distractability. If a learner did not understand the work, a teacher could be approached for assistance. Participant 1 also indicated that friends could be approached for academic support, should a teacher not be available for assistance: '*Here it's just for the teacher: I do not understand, then they say that and that and hey help me till I understand. If the teacher cannot help me I will ask one of*

my friends if they will help me. People help each other here' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 15). Participant 2 made similar statements indicating that the manner in which the classes were presented made it easier for her to grasp the academic content: '*the teacher makes it easier here because of how they work and yeh, it's just better'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 18). Participant 2 also stated that the manner in which classes were presented was important: '*it does not help if the teacher just writes it on the board. She must use drawings, it makes it better'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 27).

When asked if he enjoyed being in the school, Participant 1 stated: '*I enjoy it here'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 15). Participant 2 stated that since she moved to the specialised school, she started to excel academically. It made her believe in her abilities: '*when I came here I started to do very good, it was crazy. I got 80-90% for a test. I wondered what was going on? And then I was like wow, I can actually do good'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 21). This was also observed and recorded in the field notes: '*Appears as if she is more comfortable in this school than her previous high schools. Kitty seems to be well adjusted in the school she is currently. It appears as if she is more settled and happy here'* (Field notes).

4.3.4.2   Subtheme 4.2: Experiences regarding friendship and peer support at previous (mainstream) schools in comparison with the specialised school environment

Friendship in the specialised school environment is possible as friends can be trusted. This was not always possible at other schools, according to Participant 1. Turning the focus to the social context of the school, Participant 1 informed the researcher that in the specialised school, trust was obtainable as friends kept secrets, in comparison to his previous school were trust was always hard to find: '*I will tell a friends something and the next day I will hear everything is out in the open. Here it is quiet, no one knows about it'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 2). In respect of conflict, Participant 1 was of the opinion that at the specialised school, the children accepted each other and conflict was not an issue: '*because no one here is against each other, nobody wants to hit like at other schools'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 2). The children seemed to accept each other more. Participant 2 indicated how in her experience children at other schools did not necessarily grasp the implications of having a learning impairment. Participant 2 provided some insight

into how children at other schools viewed children with learning impairment: '*Children at other schools are so shallow and stupid, they joke and laugh at people with disabilities. And they don't really know how it is*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 18). Conversely, learners at the specialised school have a better understanding and personal experiences of learning impairments, and will sort out those that dare to laugh at or tease their peers: '*And the children in the school – if you laugh at someone – they will reprimand you*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 18). In the specialised school, it appeared that the children had a better understanding of how it was to be dealing with a learning impairment each day. Participant 2 even stated that if you were to laugh at anyone with a disability of some kind, you would get into trouble.

In other schools, the learners do not necessarily have an understanding of what a peer who has a learning impairment is going through. According to Margalit (2004, in Lackaye & Margalit, 2006:434), learners with a learning impairment often report social difficulties and peer rejection with higher levels of loneliness as a result. Participant 2 shared some experiences where her friends at her previous school had mistreated her and did not understand her unique learning needs. It resulted in her self-concept being negatively influenced: '*One of the reasons I left M is because my friends did not want to...I often changed groups – they always walked over me and I allowed it and when they got tired of me and I could not help it*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 21-22). She also stated this: '*It broke me, my previous friends. They thought badly of me and they gossiped and it broke me completely*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 23).

Participant 2 stated that her friends and peers in her previous school were oblivious to experiencing academic challenges: '*those children never took anything seriously. Their greatest worry was if their lipgloss looked pretty. If all those things looked perfect*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 23). She stated that in the specialised school peers cared about each other and had a better, deeper understanding of the academic challenges they were all going through: '*here it's deeper – they actually care about a person*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 23). She described a particular incident where she was supported by her peers. She indicated that if a similar incident had occurred at her previous school, her friends would just have assumed she was trying to get attention: '*Where if in M I had something like that, they would say I was trying to get attention or something*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 23). At the specialised school, she was supported through the difficult incident: '*Children here, yeh, they are there for you*' (Interview transcriptions,

Participant 2, page 23). She also stated how she was no longer friends with her friends from her previous school: *'I had a best friend. When I came to this school, she did not want to be my friend anymore. And now we are no longer friends anymore'* (Interview transcriptions, Participant 2, page 30).

4.4   DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The school that served as site for this study was a high school for learners from grades 8 to 12. The focus of this study fell on the adolescent learner with a learning impairment. The aim of this study was to gain insight and understanding into the nature of friendship among adolescents who have been identified as having a specific learning impairment. In the context of the mainstream school, Margalit (2004, in Lackaye & Margalit, 2006:434) states that learners with learning impairment often report social difficulties and peer rejection with higher levels of loneliness as a result. Bowman and Gordon (2000, in Gordon *et al.*, 2005:3) describe some difficulties of learners with barriers to learning, such as finding it challenging to go to school, to make friends and to live with the disability. Was this the case in this school exclusively for learners with learning impairment?

Considering the size of the school (about 100 learners), both participants indicated that most of the learners in the school were friends with each other. It appears that within the specialised school system, where all of the learners are faced with a learning impairment of some kind, it is easier for the learners to make close peer attachments. The participants stated that they enjoyed spending time with their friends. They also stated that they enjoyed doing certain activities with their friends. Thus, it is evident that the participants considered themselves to be part of a social group of friends in the school and they enjoyed spending time together and doing similar activities. Hogg and Abraham (1988, in Stets & Burke, 2000:225) state that 'a social identity could be described as a person's knowledge that he belongs to a social category or group'. Individuals tend to draw their identities (their view of who they are) from the social groups within which they belong (Stets & Burke, 2000:225).

Investigating the nature of their friendships, the participants indicated that one of the fundamental characteristics of their friendships was trust. This enabled them to share information on a deeper level and develop a sense of security that their information would be kept safe and not be divulged to others. This concurs with the statement by Gordon *et al.* (2005:2) that friendship creates feelings of trust and loyalty.

Another characteristic of their friendships is that there appears to be a deeper level of friendship, a deeper connection. This allows the participants to just be themselves with their friends, a kind of 'letting their guard down'. Therefore, a sense of security is evident again. There also seems to be a need to have a balance between the types of friends. Participant 2 believed in having friends with whom you could do fun activities and make jokes. She also believed in having friends who had more serious natures, with whom you could just talk and spend some quiet time.

One of the main findings of this study focuses on how both participants considered their friends as an important source of support and understanding. This was especially the case when they were faced with challenges that they could not share or discuss with other people, such as their parents. This concurs with the statement in Santrock (2001:196) that intimacy is an important feature of friendships, including sharing feelings and secrets. Some theorists claim that this support is of greater importance than familial or parental support. The participants indicated that their friends understood them better because they were going through the same experiences. The social identity of the adolescent is enhanced by this as there is a strong sense of loyalty within the group and group members display similar behaviours and hold similar opinions or views regarding issues (Stets & Burke, 2000:228). This is confirmed by one of the six functions of friendship described by Gottman and Parker (1987), namely ego support. This function allows friendships to provide opportunities for support, encouragement and feedback (Santrock, 2001:195). An interesting statement by Participant 2 indicates how protective the learners in the school are about each other. She stated that if you were to laugh at someone who had a learning impairment, you would be reprimanded by the learners of the school. Learners in the school protect their peers from being teased by others, confirming the view of Bukowski *et al*. (1995) that friends can protect 'at risk' adolescents from victimisation (in Santrock, 2001:196). A perspective from Participant 2 states that people must not feel sorry for learners with learning impairments. She believed one should rather help and provide assistance.

Motivation is enhanced by their friendships. Since academic performance is more challenging for these learners, they need more motivation. This motivation is provided by their peers. The ability of these learners to motivate and support each other requires a deeper understanding of what they are going through. This understanding functions on several levels, including understanding what friends are going through academically. A particular identity (having a learning impairment) becomes activated as a result of the interaction that occurs between the

characteristics of the member (being someone who is challenged by the learning impairment) and the situation that is occurring (not excelling academically) (Stets & Burke, 2000:231). In other words, friends know how it feels not to excel academically. They also know how much effort it requires to study effectively. They grasp the need for motivation, especially if repeated failure causes the children to avoid work (as in the case of Participant 1). An understanding of how to internalise the work is important as the learners support each other in learning and explaining the work when a peer does not understand it (Participant 2). Support and understanding in this context also focuses on long-term goals, such as supporting peers to work hard now to reach matric, and eventually reach their long-term goals of careers they want to pursue. This also encompasses motivating peers to work hard in order to reach those goals.

Emotional support is also provided by friends, such as Participant 2 who provided her friends with support when they considered commiting suicide. She received the same support when she went through a particularly difficult time at the school. Her friends provided her with emotional support and she felt that they actually cared about her as person, as who she was. This kind of support had, however, not been present at her other school. Such support focuses on Ego support again, where friendships provide opportunity for support, encouragement and feedback. This enables adolescents to develop a sense of self and feel competent, attractive and worthwhile (Santrock, 2001:195). It also includes emotional support and understanding for different views on religion. It includes allowing space for different religious views within similar friendship circles and allowing peers the freedom to practice traditions associated with specific religions.

Depersonalisation is an important aspect of SIT. The individual sees the self as a representation of the in-group identity, rather than as a unique individual. This means seeing the self as an embodiment of the in-group prototype rather than a unique individual (Turner *et al.*, 1987, in Stets & Burke, 2000:231). Adolescents compare themselves on various levels to their friends and peers. In the context of the study, social comparison is based on physical appearances, clothing, hairstyles and music. Participant 1 compared himself to his friends and considers himself to be exactly like his friends and he indicated that he and his friends wore similar clothing styles. They listened to the same kind of music. Participant 2 described that her basis for social comparison on a physical level was how she looked in comparison to her friends. Participant 2 stated that she wanted to be like other people. She based what she thought of herself on what her friends' opinions are of her. Turner *et al*. (1987, in Stets &

Burke, 2000:232) state that in an attempt to enhance their own self-evaluation, group members behave in such a manner that it enhances the evaluation of their group. Social comparison in terms of physical appearances is motivated by self-enhancement and self-improvement, in an upward direction (Dijkstra *et al*., 2008). This was evident from the statements by both participants. The participants wanted to be considered part of the in-group (their friendship groups) when social comparison was based on physical appearance.

Social comparison based on academic performance is another aspect that came to light in the results. Based on academic performance, Participant 1's self-concept was negatively influenced by how he perceived his academic performance in comparison to his peers and he was aware of how the learning impairment he was faced with, influenced his academic performance and how learning impairments manifested in his friends. Thus, it can be reasoned that the awareness of the learning impairment has an influence on how social comparison is perceived. Participant 2 reasoned that social comparison did not prevail based on academic performance. She believed that it was just not important to compare oneself based on academic performance.

Participant 2 raised some perspectives on how being in the specialised school affected self-concepts. She indicated that the school helped to enhance one's self-concept as one performed much better academically than at other schools. Where learners previously perceived themselves to be poor students in comparison to their peers, they perceived themselves to be better learners in the specialised school. This led to an improvement in their self-concepts.

Participant 1 indicated that his self-concept was influenced by how he made other people feel happy as well as by how they made him feel. As children mature into adolescents, the importance of the parental influence on self-concepts becomes less as peer influences increase. Thus, it is concluded that the influence of peers on self-concepts at the school should become more significant as the learners mature.

Participant 2 provided insight in how her self-concept has developed. At her previous school, she was hampered by a learning impairment, which contributed to academic underachievement. Her self-concept was negatively influenced. After receiving intense learning support and therapeutic inputs, she was moved to the specialised school. Due to the nature of the school, Participant 2 displayed great improvement in her academic performance. This led to a significant improvement in her self-concept. Participant 2 started to take better

care of herself physically. She stated that she was taking much better care of how she was looking now.

The participants in this study were aware of the characteristics and nature of the learning impairments they were faced with. Participant 1 indicated that one of the learning impairments he faced was aggressive behaviour. Participant 1 stated that often this aggressive behaviour led to challenging situations.

Participant 1 also indicated that he forgot often. One of the characteristics of ADD is being disorganised (Landberg *et al*., 2005:368), which could contribute to this sense of 'forgetfulness'. Participant 1 was aware of how the characteristics of the learning impairment contributed to the difficulties he faced to excel academically.

Participant 2 provided details on how she initially could not understand why she was not excelling academically like her peers. She indicated that it had a negative effect on her self-concept. She stated that she did not even want to study any more. Initially, the influence of the learning impairment on her self-concept was negative; at the specialised school, she perceived it to be a gift, not an illness.

Participant 1 indicated how the characteristics of ADD manifested among peers and friends who had been identified as experiencing symptoms of ADD. He described that in a circle of friends, it was often easier for him to focus when his friends were saying something interesting or funny. It is assumed that the rest of the time it was challenging for him to remain focused. He made a statement that explains this: '*If all your friends are hyperactive, you cannot concentrate*' (Interview transcriptions, Participant 1, page 10).

Another characteristic of learning impairment that often affects friendship is forgetfulness, such as forgetting a friend's birthday. This could have a negative effect on friendship as the friends may start to feel that they are not important to him. He also described an incident where he forgot he was supposed to go away for a weekend with a good friend. In this instance, the typical characteristics of learning impairment had an influence on the nature of that friendship. Participant 1 indicated that although his friend understood that he forgot to a certain extent, some conflict arose as a result.

The presence of a learning impairment within a circle of friends has an effect on how friends influence each other to do their school work. Participant 1 admitted that school work was not a priority for him and his friends. Though they supported each other to a certain extent to do the work, it appears as if most of the friends in the circle did not put a high priority on school work and would much rather go out. This influenced their academic performance.

Participant 2 stated that her friends accepted her as she was, despite her behaviours as a result of her learning impairment. The learners in the school have an understanding of how a learning impairment affects a person. This understanding is a contributing factor to how the learners support each other. The learners understand how they learn effectively and know how to explain school work if necessary. It is concluded that due to this level of understanding, acceptance and understanding of friends occur in the school. Thus, another factor to the nature of friendship among the learners with learning impairment is acceptance and support due to understanding of how it feels to have a learning impairment.

In an exploration of how the characteristics of learning impairment affect social interactions and situations, it appears that when the learners are together in a group having a conversation, some lose their focus and start to think of other things. In conversation with peers whose concentration is easily distracted, one needs to keep the conversation short and to the point. There is no space for elaborate, long stories as the friend listening to the story loses focus. It is assumed that this could lead to conflict.

Both participants came to the specialised school environment after being in a large, mainstream high school. They provided perspectives on the various characteristics of the specialised school environment. One of these characteristics is how the school creates a safe environment for the learners. This environment allows the learner to feel welcomed and accepted. It appears as if most of the learners in the school liked each other and this made being in the school functional.

Another characteristic of the school is the manner in which the teachers present work at the school. The work is presented in a manner that accommodates the specific learning needs of the learners in the class. When it happens that a learner does not understand the work, they have the option of approaching the teacher who can explain the work again. Their other option is to approach a friend. Both participants indicated that they enjoyed being in the school. The positive influence that it has had on both participants is also indicated.

Friendship in the specialised school environment is possible as friends can be trusted. The nature of friendship in the school entails trust, support and understanding. A safe environment is created in this way. This was not always possible at other schools, according to Participant 1. It appears as if conflict is less of an issue in the school compared to other schools. Participant 1 stated that in the specialised school, the children seemed to accept each other more. Participant 2 indicated how in her experience children at other schools did not necessarily grasp the implications of having a learning impairment. In the specialised school, it appears that the children have a better understanding of how it is to be dealing with a learning impairment each day. Participant 2 even stated that if you were to laugh at anyone with a disability of some kind, you would get into trouble.

Participant 2 furthermore stated that her friends and peers in her previous school did not grasp the implications of having a learning impairment. They had other concerns in life. She stated that at the specialised school, the children grasped the challenges of learning impairments as they were facing it themselves. This understanding allows for a greater level of understanding and empathy. She stated that the support one got at the school was evident of how the learners cared for each other.

4.5   CONCLUSION

The support and understanding these learners provide to each other is because they understand from personal experience how it feels to face the daily challenges of learning impairment. The level of understanding and support allows the learners to feel safe and secure in the school. A deeper level of understanding allows the roots of friendship to reach greater depths and the learners have found a place in the school were they can flourish in all areas of their lives. Socially the challenges of learning impairments still play a role, such as short attention spans during conversations, forgetting friends' birthdays or important dates with friends. This could lead to conflict, but due to a deeper level of understanding and resulting patience, the conflict should be resolved easily.

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CHAPTER 5
CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4 I discussed the results of the study. The results were related to existing literature. With this I aimed to highlight any correlations and contradictions between the findings of this study and the literature.

In Chapter 5 I provide a brief overview of the preceding chapters. Final conclusions are made by re-examining the research questions formulated in Chapter 1. Reflections on possible limitations are done. This chapter concludes with a discussion of recommendations for future studies.

5.2 AN OVERVIEW OF THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 provided an orientation to this study. I provide an introduction as well as the rationale for this study. The purpose of the study is discussed along with orientating the reader by indicating the problem statement. The research questions and assumptions to this study are discussed. A brief summary of the theoretical framework (SIT) is provided. This is followed by a brief discussion of the research approach and paradigm, which is a qualitative, interpretive approach. I also looked at the research methodology and strategies. I concluded Chapter 1 with an overview of the chapters of this mini-dissertation.

Chapter 2 consisted of a detailed literature review regarding the key points of this study. The reader was orientated towards the contextual nature of the study by defining learning impairment. I provide a description of the adolescent with a learning impairment. The social nature of learning impairments is discussed followed by a look at their influence on the self-concept, social skills and communication abilities. This is followed by an exploration of social comparison and finally the nature of friendship. A discussion which looks at conforming to peer groups and the link between family and the peer group follows. Finally, a comparison is drawn between existing literature that compares the learner facing a learning impairment with one who is not facing such a challenge. The chapter concludes with a description of the theoretical framework of this study, namely SIT.

Chapter 3 provides a description of the research process and how this study was conducted. Interpretivism as research paradigm is discussed. A discussion of instrumental case studies provides the research design. The selection criteria of the participants are highlighted followed by the data collection strategies, viz. semi-structured one-on-one interviews, observations and field notes. The steps for the thematic data analysis and interpretation are outlined. The chapter is concluded by a detailed discussion of the ethical considerations as well as quality control of this study.

Chapter 4 consists of a presentation of the results gathered and analysed during the study. The themes that have emerged from the results are presented: Theme 1 explores how friendship is perceived by the participants based on support and understanding. Theme 2 focuses on how friendships within the specialised school influence social comparison and self-concept. Theme 3 describes the relationship between having a learning impairment and its influence on friendship. Theme 4 consists of a description of the specialised school environment and its learners. Theme 4 compares the participants' experiences of friendship and peer support at previous (mainstream) schools to those in the specialised school environment. Chapter 4 is concluded by presenting the literature in terms of existing literature. This provides a presentation of the finding of this study.

In this section I will be presenting the concluding remarks by revisiting the research questions as stated in Chapter 1. Friendship and peer acceptance is important for the development of adolescents. Do additional obstacles such as a learning impairment influence peer relationships and the experiences of friendships? This study aimed to gain insight and understanding into the nature of friendship among adolescents who have been identified as having a specific learning impairment. The study took place within a specialised high school setting where the focus is on providing support to the learner with specific learner needs. With this study I aimed to investigate what factors play a role in friendships among learners with learning impairments, within a school environment that caters specifically for their needs. I wanted to understand the nature of friendship among learners with learning impairments and whether self-concept issues and social comparison play a role in their experiences of friendship. With this study I also wanted to make a useful contribution to the existing literature regarding the nature and experience of friendship among learners with learning impairments.

The following primary research question was explored in this study:

❖ *What is the nature of friendship among adolescents with learning impairment in a specialised school context?*

The following subquestions were identified in addition to the primary research question:

1. What factors play a role in friendships among learners with learning impairments?

2. How do children with specific learning impairments experience their friendship within the school?

3. What are the characteristics of learners with learning impairments which has an influence on their friendships?

4. What role do social factors play in the experience of friendship among these learners?

Based on the literature I have read, certain assumptions have risen. These include:

- That the adolescent's learning impairment will have some influence on the social interaction that takes place at the school.

- That the characteristics of the learning impairment, such as communication and social difficulties, will affect the friendships.

- That social factors such as self-concept and social comparisons affect the experience of friendships among these learners.

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I aimed to understand what this influence entailed.

5.3.1 REFLECTING ON SUBQUESTION 1: WHAT FACTORS PLAY A ROLE IN FRIENDSHIPS AMONG LEARNERS WITH LEARNING IMPAIRMENTS?

The contributions by the participants added to the following discussion of what factors play a role in friendship among learners with learning impairment in the specialised school. It was concluded that friendship is an important facet for the adolescent participants as friendships contribute to the participant's development and general satisfaction in life. In essence, the participants define who they are according to their roles in their friendships.

Several factors came to light that play a role in the friendships of the learners with learning impairments: The participants stated that they enjoyed spending time with their friends and doing certain activities with their friends.

Another factor that came to light was that the participants indicated that trust was one of the fundamental characteristic of their friendships. Trust enables them to share information on a deeper level. This allows the learner to develop a sense of security that their information will be kept safe and not divulged to others. Friendships appear to be at a deeper level, a deeper connection. The learners can just be themselves with around their friends; in a way, they may 'let their guard down'. Once again a sense of security is promoted.

To have a collection of friends was identified as playing a role in friendships. Participant 2 believed it was important to maintain a balance between the types of friends she had. She believed it was important to have friends with whom she could participate in fun activities. She also considered it important to have more serious friends who could provide serious conversation as well as support.

Both participants considered their friends an important source of support and understanding. Support and understanding by friends is facilitated by the fact that the learners in the school have an understanding of what their peers are experiencing in terms of learning impairments. The participants indicated that their friends understood them better because they were going through the same experiences.

This understanding of what friends are going through due to personal experience indicated a protective stance among peers in the school. Participant 2 indicated how protective the learners in the school were about each other. She stated that if you were to laugh at someone who had a learning impairment, you would be reprimanded by the learners of the school. Participant 2 raised an interesting viewpoint that people must not feel sorry for learners with learning impairments. She believed one should rather help.

5.3.2 REFLECTING ON SUBQUESTION 2: HOW DO CHILDREN WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING IMPAIRMENTS EXPERIENCE THEIR FRIENDSHIPS WITHIN THE SCHOOL?

The learners in the school experienced their friends as an important source of trust and support. This is because the children in the school had all gone through similar experiences at their previous school and still experienced the challenges their individual learning impairments placed on them, Support for friends developed from this emphatic understanding, along with protectiveness and trust.

Both participants indicated how they wanted to be similar to their friends. Participant 1 considered himself to be exactly like his friends. They defined their identities by feeling as if they belonged to a circle of friends. Wanting to be like their friends involved dressing similarly, wanting to look similar on a physical level, doing activities together and being able to be accepted by friends for who they were. According to the statements of both participants, their friends had a significant influence on their self-concepts.

5.3.3 REFLECTING ON SUBQUESTION 3: WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LEARNERS WITH LEARNING IMPAIRMENTS THAT HAVE AN INFLUENCE ON THEIR FRIENDSHIPS?

It was found that when the learners were together in a group having a conversation, some of the learners tended to lose their focus and start to think of something else. Participant 2 indicated that in order to prevent this from happening, one needed to keep the conversation short and to the point. Long conversations could cause friends to lose focus and this could lead to conflict.

Participant 1 stated how it was easier for him to focus when his friends were saying something interesting or funny. He explained: '*if all your friends are hyperactive, you cannot concentrate*' (Interview transcriptions, participant 1, page 10).

Forgetfulness is another characteristic of learning impairments that influences the experience of friendship. Participant 1 explained that he often forgot friends' birthdays. This could have a negative effect on their friendships as the friends might start to feel they were not important to him.

Participant 2 experienced that her friends accepted her as she was, despite her behaviours as a result of her learning impairment.

Friends supported each other minimally in relation to their school work. This included reminding each other of homework tasks that need to be completed. It does, however, appear that school work is not a high priority to the learners. This influences their academic performance.

The learners in the school have an understanding of how a learning impairment affects a person including understanding know how it feels not to excel academically. The learners also have an understanding of how much effort it requires to study effectively. This understanding is a contributing factor to how the learners support each other. The learners understand how they can learn effectively. They also know how to explain school work to each other if necessary. Since academic performance is more challenging for these learners, they need more motivation. This motivation is provided by their peers. They also grasp the need for motivation, especially if repeated failure has resulted in the children avoiding work. Understanding how to internalise the work allows friends to support each other in learning and explaining work to each other. Long-term goals are also supported by the motivation to reach these goals (such as achieving matric). This includes motivating peers to work hard in order to reach those goals.

To these learners friendship means to respect different views on religion. It includes allowing the space for different religious views within similar friendship circles and allowing peers the freedom to practice traditions associated with specific religion.

5.3.4 REFLECTING ON SUBQUESTION 4: WHAT ROLE DO SOCIAL FACTORS PLAY IN THE EXPERIENCE OF FRIENDSHIP AMONG THESE LEARNERS?

Two distinct social factors came to light in the study, namely social comparison and self-concept.

Participant 1 considered himself to be exactly like his friends. Participant 2 described that her basis for social comparison on a physical level was how she looked in comparison to her friends. Physical appearance constitutes one of these levels. Participant 1 indicated that he and his friends wore similar clothing styles. In the context of the study, social comparison occurred based on physical appearance, clothing, hairstyles and music. Individuals tend to draw their identities (their view of who they are) from the social groups within which they belong. Stets and Burke (2000:228) state that having a social identity means being like the others in the group and having similar perspectives. There is a strong sense of loyalty within the group and group members display similar behaviours and hold similar opinions or views on issues

Social comparison based on academic performance is another aspect that came to light in the results. Based on academic performance, Participant 1's self-concept was negatively influenced by how he perceived his academic performance in comparison to his peers. Participant 1 was aware of how the learning impairment he was faced with influenced his academic performance and how it manifested in his friends as well. It has been concluded that the awareness of the learning impairment has an influence on how social comparison is perceived. Participant 2 reasoned that social comparison was not based on academic performance. Thus it is concluded that social comparison based on academic performance is not important.

Another social factor that became evident in this study is how friendship influenced the self-concept of the participants, in the context of their academic difficulties. Both participants stated that their friends had a significant influence on their self-concepts. Participant 1 indicated that his self-concept was influenced by how he made other people feel happy and also how they made him feel. Participant 2 explained how being in the specialised school affected her self-concept. She indicated that the school helped to enhance one's self-concept as one performed much better academically than at other schools. Where learners previously perceived themselves to be poor students in comparison to their peers, they perceived themselves to be better learners in the specialised school. Participant 2 explained how her academic performance had improved since she moved to the school. This led to an improvement in their self-concepts.

5.3.5 REFLECTING ON THE PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION: WHAT IS THE NATURE OF FRIENDSHIP AMONG ADOLESCENTS WITH LEARNING IMPAIRMENT IN A SPECIALISED SCHOOL CONTEXT?

The learners in the school are able to provide their friends with support and understanding as they have personal experience of coping with a learning impairment. Each learner in the school has had the experience of being challenged by a learning impairment of some kind. The definition of a learning impairment is when the learner's achievement in standardised tests for reading, writing and mathematics is significantly lower than what the learner is able to achieve (DSM, 2000:49). That implies that even though a learner may find aspects of school challenging, they tend to excel in other areas. Many researchers state that learners with learning impairments display social deficits. According to Settle and Milich (1999:201), children with barriers to learning 'have significant difficulties in both academic and social

domains'. Learners with learning impairments demonstrate social skills deficits (Kavale & Forness, 2006, in Luciano & Savage, 2007:16). Most of the literature read in relation to this study dealt with studies in which learners with learning impairments were compared to learners without, often in an inclusive school system. It was difficult to identify studies that held similarities to this study, which compared the social nature of learning impairments and friendship, among learners with learning impairment, in a school for their specific learning needs. In this study it was found that even though the learners in the school faced certain challenges due to learning impairments, they did not seem to experience the typical social deficits reported in the literature. Participant 2 indicated how her friends and peers in her previous school did not grasp the implications of having a learning impairment. She stated that at the specialised school, the children grasped the challenges of learning impairments as they were facing it themselves. This insight allows for a greater level of understanding and empathy. She states that the support one got at the school was evident of how the learners cared for each other.

It was reported that the support and understanding these learners gave each other is due to the fact that they understood from personal experience how it felt to face the daily challenges of learning impairment. This enhances a feeling of security among friends, knowing that they are understood and accepted despite a learning impairment. A deeper level of understanding allows for friendship to develop in such a way that the learners have found a place where they are accepted and allowed to blossom in ways that they have not known. Participant 2 described how she was affected by how her friends perceived her at her previous school. She described how it affected her self-concept. She also indicated how her self-concept had improved since she started attending the specialised school.

5.4   REFLECTING ON THE ASSUMPTIONS HELD FOR THIS STUDY

In Chapter 1, I indicated certain assumptions that I as a researcher had. It was assumed the adolescent's learning impairment would have some influence on the social interaction that takes place at the school. Socially, the challenges of learning impairments still play a role, such as short attention spans during conversations, and some losing their focus during conversations. Conversations cannot be long as the learners' concentration suddenly wanes. This leads to frustration and in some instances conflict. Other factors of learning impairment that influence friendships include forgetting friends' birthdays. This could lead to conflict; however, due to a deeper level of understanding and resulting patience, the conflict should be

resolved easily. This confirmed the assumption that the learners' learning impairment has some influence on social interaction. Another assumption, namely that the characteristics of the learning impairment, such as communication and social difficulties, would impact on the friendships, was also confirmed by the findings.

The assumption that the learning impairment has an influence on social interaction was determined, though not in the way it was assumed to be. It was assumed that socially, the typical characteristics of learning impairment would have a negative effect on friendships, making it challenging to initiate and maintain friendships. However, it has come to light that the learners in the school have developed ways of coping with these challenges, mostly due to a deep understanding of how it feels to be challenged by learning impairments.

Trust is an important facet of friendship in the school. This environment allows the learner to feel welcomed and accepted. It appears as if most of the learners in the school like and accept each other. The nature of friendship in the school entails trust, support and understanding. A safe environment is created in this way.

I also assumed that social factors such as social comparisons and self-concept affect how friendship is perceived among these learners. According to the results of the study, social comparison is based on physical appearances, clothing, hairstyles and music. The learners in the school have a longing to be exactly like their friends, believing that this will enhance their acceptance in the social circles. Academic performance is not a priority to the learners in the school. Many adolescents with learning impairments are considered passive learners (Lerner & Kline, 2006:269). After experiencing repeated failure, a sense of learned helplessness occurs. A deeper understanding of what friends are going through, as well as a sense of academic performance being less important, has resulted in the fact that social comparison based on academic performance is not important to the learners.

Adolescents with learning impairments often have low self-esteem and self-confidence (Deshler *et al*., 1996; Lenz & Deshler, 2003; Silver, 1998; all in Lerner and Kline, 2006:269). Both participants stated that their friends had a significant influence on their self-concepts. Where learners previously perceived themselves to be poor students in comparison to their peers, they perceived themselves to be better learners in the specialised school.

5.5   CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

In conducting the literature review for this study, it was noticed that there are many sources of research where a comparison is made between learners with learning impairment and learners without. These comparisons are focused on various aspects, such as academic performance, social interactions, friendships, social comparison and self-concepts. Another element of these studies was that they were conducted in schools where learners with learning impairments were included in mainstream schools. The study that most closely resembles this study was done by Renick and Harter (1989, in Frederickson & Jacobs, 2001:403). The participants of the study were learners with learning impairments that were included in mainstream schooling systems. The children perceived themselves as less academically competent. However, when the same children were moved to smaller groups for special resource education, they developed higher perceptions of their academic self. This study supports some of the assumptions of this study, namely that within a specialised schooling system for learners with learning impairments, learners perceive a more competent self-concept of their academic and social self.

This study contributed to my understanding of how friendship is perceived from the perspective of learners with a learning impairment. Furthermore, this study contributes to the literature by providing a glance at aspects of adolescents' perception of friendship from an angle that has not been investigated before.

Furthermore, this study could be valuable to educators as it provides insight into how learners with learning impairments interact socially. It provides insight into how friendship is perceived from the perspectives of these learners and what factors play a role in the nature of friendship between learners with learning impairments.

This study could be of value to anyone who considers moving their child to a specialised school environment as it provides understanding of how a learner's self-concept is influenced by being in such a school.

This study contributes to South African literature as it has been conducted within a South African context.

5.6   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Various limitations of the study can be highlighted. The study consisted of a small participant sample. Due to the small participant sample, findings from this study cannot be generalised to the wider public. Furthermore, the study was conducted at one school as research site. Generalisations among similar schools will be difficult based on this study alone. This school is also small in size and the size of the school may influence the findings of this study. The study needs to be repeated on a much larger scale to enable generalisations to be made.

After the data was collected and analysed, the researcher did not make use of member checking to enhance the validity of the study. In hindsight, the researcher realises that member checking could have contributed to the validity of this study and might also further have enhanced the researcher's own understanding. This can be linked to another limitation, whereby researcher bias is a possibility, although the researcher attempted at every possible moment to prohibit personal views and bias from influencing the analysis and findings of this study.

The validity of the findings in this study could also have been improved if observations were made of the participants' interaction within natural settings, such as on the playground. In hindsight, the researcher realises that valuable information could have been gathered by observing peer interactions and relating this to the findings gained from the study.

Another factor to keep in mind is the fact that due to reasons such as social popularity, participant responses may be socially biased. That indicates that the responses from the participants may have been stated in such a manner as to receive social acceptance.

5.7   RECOMMENDATIONS

5.7.1   FUTURE RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES

It is recommended that another study on a larger scale be conducted, with more participants included. Comparisons of the results could also be made across different schools for learners with learning impairments. In this way, a thorough understanding of the social nature of learning impairment and the nature of friendship could be investigated. This is especially necessary in the South African context where many learners face different learning impairments.

5.7.2   SCHOOLS

It is essential to educate and inform learners and teachers of the nature of learning impairments to develop a better understanding in learners who are not faced with learning impairment. This could be done in two ways: running awareness projects in schools and as part of the curriculum for Life Orientation.

Support groups in mainstream schools could be established for learners with learning impairments. The purpose of the support groups would be so they feel they are not alone and that there are other learners like them.

5.7.3   DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

In White Paper 6, the Department of Education has indicated how inclusive education will be implemented in South Africa. This is a worthwhile endeavour. I do, however, feel that there is a need for schools such as the school that served as site for my study. Such a school environment creates a space where the learner is accepted and feels as if he has a place. From the comments of the participants of this study as well as previous studies, it seems that fitting into a mainstream school is an extra challenge the learner with a learning impairment could do without. Creating school environments that cater for learners with learning impairment is highly recommended.

5.8   CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this study was to gain insight and understanding into the nature of friendship among adolescents who have been identified as having a specific learning impairment. Friendship and group acceptance is so important for the development of adolescents. This study aimed to investigate if additional obstacles such as a learning impairment influence peer relationships and the experiences of friendships. I wanted to understand if self-concept issues and social comparison play a role in their friendship. I also wanted to make a useful contribution to the existing literature regarding the nature and experience of friendship among learners with learning impairments.

The participants in this study indicated that their view of the self is influenced by their friends and that they considered themselves to be exactly like their friends. The participants indicated

that support and understanding in their friendships was possible as a result of trust, acceptance and understanding of how it is to be facing the challenge of learning impairments on a daily basis. The level of understanding and support allows the learners to feel safe and secure in the school. The learners have found a place in the school were they can flourish in all areas of their lives, both academically and socially. Socially, the challenges of learning impairments still play a role, such as short attention spans during conversations, forgetting friends' birthdays or important dates with friends to join in an activity, such as going out to a movie.

Social comparison based on physical appearance was highlighted as being prominent in the specialised school. Social comparison based on academic performance appears not to be a factor among the learners. Their self-concepts have, however, been influenced by their learning impairment. Participants report that in their previous mainstream schools, their self-concepts were negatively influenced by poor academic performance and social isolation. Within the specialised school system, improved self-concepts were reported due to better academic performance and unconditional acceptance by friends and peers, despite having a learning impairment.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Ethical clearance

APPENDIX B
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APPENDIX A

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

APPENDIX B

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE RESEARCH

PARTICIPANTS

PARENTS

SCHOOL

Sir/ Madam,

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY

I, Christina Margaret Fourie am kindly applying for permission to conduct a research study in your school as part of my Masters in Educational Psychology Degree qualification with The University of Pretoria. The title of the research study is: **THE NATURE OF FRIENDSHIP AMONGST ADOLESCENTS WITH LEARNING IMPAIRMENTS WITHIN A SPECIALISED SCHOOL.** This study focuses on the nature of friendship amongst learners with learning impairments.

The purpose of this study is to gain insight and understanding into the nature of friendship amongst adolescents who have been identified as having a specific learning impairment. This study will take place within a specialised high school setting where the focus is to provide support to the learner with specific learning needs.

Your school was specifically selected as site for this study. The reason for this is that your school caters for learners with learning impairments. Furthermore, being a high school suites my need for participants who are adolescents. I am hereby kindly asking for permission to do my research in your school.

After obtaning permission from you, I still need to gain permission from the selected participants as well as their parents/guardians. I will purposefully select participants who have been identified with a specific learning impairment. The study will consist of 2 participants, one male and one female, in the age group of 15 and 16 years. The data will be collected by means of one-on-one semi structured interviews which will take place after school hours as to not interrupt the school and remove learners from their classes. An interview should last approximately one hour in order to limit fatigue.

After the information was collected and the results determined, I will return to the participants and convey the results to them. This enables them to verify the data and confirm that it was not fabricated. Research participants will be informed of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time. I will offer confidentiality, honesty and integrity. The participants will be treated with respect and dignity. Participants will be debriefed after each interview to determine if any harm was inflicted. There will be a trained and experienced educational psychologist on hand to attend to any harm that may arise from this study or psychological hurt the participants may experience.

....

Mrs. C.M Fourie   Dr. M. Moletsane

Masters in Educational Psychology Student   Student's Supervisor

LETTER OF ASSENT

My name is Christa Fourie. I am a Master's student at the University of Pretoria. I am busy with a research project that will help me to better understand how you see your friendships here at school.

We will be having a discussion one afternoon after school about friendships and how you see your friendships here at school. Our discussion will last for about one hour.

I am asking you if you will be willing to have this discussion with me. I will also be observing you here at school while you are on the playground.

You can choose a make-up name or code name so no one will know that it was you who talked to me. The information you give to me will be kept by myself and my teacher, Dr Mokgadi Moletsane. Nobody else will know your name. When I write about the information we discussed, I will always use the code name you have chosen.

Your parents/guardian are also going to give permission for you to be part of this research study.

You are invited to join in this research project. You can leave this project any time you want to. I will come and have a chat with you before I write the final copy of my research project so that you can tell me if you agree with what I have written about our discussions.

....
Mrs. C.M Fourie   Dr. M. Moletsane
Masters in Educational Psychology Student   Student's Supervisor

Dear Parent/Guardian

RE: PERMISSION FOR YOUR CHILD TO BE A PARTICIPANT IN A RESEARCH STUDY

I, Christina Margaret Fourie am kindly asking your permission for your child to be a participant in this research study as part of my Masters in Educational Psychology Degree qualification with The University of Pretoria. The title of the research study is: **THE NATURE OF FRIENDSHIP AMONGST ADOLESCENTS WITH LEARNING IMPAIRMENTS WITHIN A SPECIALISED SCHOOL.** This study focuses on the nature of friendship amongst learners with learning impairments.

The purpose of this study is to gain insight and understanding into the nature of friendship amongst adolescents who have been identified as having a specific learning impairment. Your child's school was specifically selected as site for this study.

Along with obtaining permission from you, I still need to gain permission from your child. I have purposefully selected your child as one of my participants, as he/she has been indentified with learning impairments. The data will be collected by means of one-on-one semi structured interviews. These are interview situations which will allow your child to tell me about their experiences regarding friendships and what factors play roles in their friendships. The interviews will be conducted in private. An alias name will be used so that your child will not be identified. The interviews will be about one hour long, so your child will not get too tired. It will take place after school so that your child does not miss class.

After the information was collected and the results determined, I will return to your child and convey the results to them. This enables your child to verify the data and confirm that it was not fabricated. Your child will be informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. I will offer confidentiality, honesty and integrity. The participants will be treated with respect and dignity. Your child be debriefed after each interview to determine if any harm was inflicted. There will be a trained and experienced educational psychologist on hand to attend to any harm that may arise from this study or psychological hurt your child may experience.

....

Mrs. C.M Fourie   Dr. M. Moletsane

Masters in Educational Psychology Student   Student's Supervisor

Wie dit mag aangaan,

RE: TOESTEMMING OM NAVORSING BY DIE SKOOL TE DOEN

Ek, Christina Margaret Fourie doen hiermee aansoek om my navorsing studie by die skool te doen as deel van my Meesters graad in Opvoedkundige Sielkunde by die Universiteit van Pretoria. Die titel van die studie is: **DIE AARD VAN VRIENDSKAP TUSSEN ADOLESENTE MET LEER GEREMDHEDE**. Hierdie studie fokus op die aard van vriendskap tussen leerders met leer geremdhede.

Die doel van die studie is om insig en beter begrip te kry aangaande die aard van vriendskappe tussen adolesente wat geidentifiseer is met leer geremdhede. Hierdie studie gaan plaasvind binne 'n gespesialiseerde skool omgewing waar die fokus is om ondersteuning te bied aan die leerder met 'n leer geremdheid.

Julle skool was spesifiek geselekteer as navorsings punt. Die rede hiervoor is dat julle skool die tipe leerders waarop die studie op fokus, akommodeer. Die skool is ook 'n hoërskool, wat dus my behoefte pas om adolesente as deelnemers te hê. Hiermee vra ek vriendelik toestemming om my navorsing te doen by die skool.

Nadat ek toestemming by julle as skool verkry het, moet ek toestemming verkry by die deelnemers asook hulle ouers/voogde. Ek het doelbewus die deelnemers geselekteer omrede hulle identifiseer is as leerder met leer geremdhede. Die studie sal bestaan uit 2 deelnemers, een manlik en een vroulik, in die ouderdoms groep van 15 tot 16 jaar. Die data sal ingesamel word deur middeld van een-tot-een semi gestruktureerde onderhoude. Die onderhoud sal sowat 'n uur duur. Dit sal geskied na skool ure om te verhoed dat klastyd onderbreek word.

Nadat die inligting versamel en verwerk is, sal die data aan die deelnemers getoon word om hulle in staat te stel om te verseker dat die data waar en akkuraat is. Navorsings deelnemers gaan in kennis gestel word van hul reg om enige tyd te ontrek vanuit die studie. Ek sal vertroulikheid, eerlikheid en integriteit bied. Die deelnemers sal met respek behandel word. Deelnemers sal na elke onderhoud kans kry om te ontlaai. Sodoende kan ek vasstel of enige skade berokke is. Daar sal 'n ervare Opvoedkundige Sielkundige beskikbaar wees om enige skade aan te spreek wat kan ontwikkel vanuit die onderhoude.

....

Mev. C.M Fourie   Dr. M. Moletsane

Meester in Opvoedkundige Sielkunde Student   Studente Supervisor

TOESTEMMINGS BRIEF

My naam is Christa Fourie. Ek is 'n Meesters graad student by die Universiteit van Pretoria. Ek is besig met 'n navorsings projek wat my gaan help om julle vriendskappe hier by die skool beter te verstaan.

Ons gaan 'n gesprek voer een middag na skool oor vriendskappe en hoe is vriendskappe hier by jou skool. Ons gesprek sal sowat 'n uur lank wees.

Ek wil jou vra of jy bereid sal wees om die gesprek met my te voer? Ek gaan julle ook waarneem hier by die skool terwyl julle op die speelgrond is.

Jy kan vir jouself 'n opgemaakte- of kode naam kies sodat niemand kan weet jy het met my gepraat nie. Die inligting wat jy met my deel gaan gehou word deur myself en my onderwyser, Dr Mokgadi Moletsane. Niemand gaan jou naam sien nie. Wanneer ek gaan skryf oor die inligting vanuit ons gesprek, gaan ek altyd jou kode naam gebruik.

Die onderhoud gaan met 'n band opnemer opgeneem word, sodat ek weer daarna kan luister na die tyd. Net ek gaan na dit luister.

Jou ouers/voog gaan ook toestemming gee dat jy mag deel wees van die navorsing studie.

Jy word hiermee uitgenooi om deel te wees van die navorsing studie. Jy kan enige tyd stop met jou deelname en die projek verlaat. Ek gaan later met jou kom gesels oor die inligting vanuit ons gesprekke, voordat ek die finale kopie van die navorsings studie skryf, sodat jy my kan sê of jy saamstem met wat ek geskryf het.

....

Mrs. C.M Fourie   Dr. M. Moletsane

Meester in Opvoedkundige Sielkunde Student   Studente Supervisor

TOESTEMMINGS BRIEF

DEELNEMER

Hiermee gee ek ....(naam en van) toestemming dat ek sal deelneem aan die studie. Ek het die brief gelees en verstaan wat aan my verduidelik is.

Ek gee ook toestemming dat die onderhoud op band opgeneem mag word. Ek verstaan ook dat my identiteit beskerm sal word regdeur die navorsingsproses asook in die finale produk.

....

     Geteken   Datum

....

      Getuie

Geagte ouer/voog

RE: TOESTEMMING VIR JOU KIND SE DEELNAME TOT DIE NAVORSING STUDIE

Ek, Christina Margaret Fourie vra u toestemming vir u kind om 'n deelnemer te wees in my navorsing studie as deel van my Meesters graad in Opvoedkundige Sielkunde by die Universiteit van Pretoria. Die titel van die studie is: **DIE AARD VAN VRIENDSKAP TUSSEN ADOLESENTE MET LEER GEREMDHEDE**. Hierdie studie fokus op die aard van vriendskap tussen leerders met leer geremdheid.

Die doel van die studie is om insig en beter begrip te kry aangaande die aard van vriendskappe tussen adolesente wat geïdentifiseer is met leer geremdhede. Hierdie studie gaan plaasvind binne 'n gespesialiseerde skool omgewing waar die fokus is om ondersteuning te bied aan die leerder met 'n leer geremdheid.

Terwyl ek toestemming verkry het van u as ouer, moet ek ook toestemming verkry van u kind. Ek het u kind spesiefiek gekies om deel te neem aan die studie. Die data sal ingesamel word deur middel van een-tot-een semi gestruktureerde onderhoud. Die onderhoud sal sowat 'n uur duur. Dit sal geskied na skool ure om te verhoed dat klastyd onderbreek word. Die onderhoud gaan u kind geleentheid gee om my te vertel van hulle ervaringe aangaande hul vriendskappe en watter faktore speel 'n rol in hulle vriendskappe. Die onderhoude gaan in privaatheid geskied. 'n Skuilnaam gaan ook gebruik word sodat u kind nie geidentifiseer word nie.

Nadat die inligting versamel is en die resultate verwerk is, sal ek die resultate aan u kind toon sodat hy/sy kan bevestig dat dit die waarheid is. U kind is in kennis gestel van sy reg om enige tyd van die studie te onttrek. Ek bied konfidensialiteit, eerlikheid en integriteit. U kind sal met respek behandel word. U kind sal na elke onderhoud kans gegun word om te ontlaai. Sodoende kan ek vasstel of enige skade berokke is. Daar sal 'n ervare Opvoedkundige Sielkundige beskikbaar wees om enige skade aan te spreek wat kan ontwikkel vanuit die onderhoude.

....

Mev. C.M Fourie   Dr. M. Moletsane

Meester in Opvoedkundige Sielkunde Student   Studente Supervisor

TOESTEMMINGS BRIEF

DEELNEMER

Hiermee gee ek ....(naam en van), Ouer/Voog van .... (u kind se naam en van) toestemming dat my kind mag deelneem aan die bogemelde studie. Ek het die brief gelees en verstaan wat aan my verduidelik is.

Ek gee ook toestemming dat die onderhoud op band opgeneem mag word. Ek verstaan ook dat my kind se identiteit beskerm sal word regdeur die navorsingsproses asook in die finale produk.

....

     Geteken   Datum

....

     Getuie

APPENDIX C

TRANSCRIPTIONS FROM ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

Deelnemer 1: Clown

Sleutel:

N: Navorser

C: Clown

	N: Baie dankie dat jy bereid is om deel te neem aan die studie. Dit word opreg waardeer.	
	C: Dis reg.	
	N: Watter kode naam het jy besluit om te gebruik?	
	C: Clown	
	N: Clown, goed. So ek gaan van hier af na jou verwys as Clown. Jy't nou die brief gelees. Ek wil net vinnig weer deur hardloop wat jy kan verwag. Hierdie is 'n een-tot-een onderhoud, so dit beteken dis net ek en jy wat hier is en ek gaan vir jou 'n paar vragies vra en jy jy antwoord net soos hoe dit vir jou is. Dis eintlik meer 'n gesprek as wat dit 'n onderhoud is. Oke, ons gaan gesels. Jy is tans hoe oud?	
	C: 15	
	N: En jy is in xx Skool?	
	C: xx skool.	
	N: Oke, en dan wil ek jou net weereens herrinner aan wat in die brief gestaan het. Basies, jy is vry om van die studie weg te stap, enige tyd. En ek gaan, wanneer ek klaar is, die data vir jou kom wys en jy kan daarna kyk of jy saamstem met die data en die bevindinge. Indien daar iets is waarmee jy nie saamstem nie, verander ek dit tot dit jou pas, oke? Jy is die kenner op die veld, nie ek nie, en jy moet jou kennis met my deel, sodat ek meer kan leer van jou af. Goed. Kom ons begin die gesprek. Verduidelik hoe sien jy vriendskappe?	
Considers friendship as an important aspect of his development	C: Ek dink jy't vriendskappe nodig wat jy… dis deel van die lewe, dis deel van grootword. Jou vriende is die mense wat jou groter en sterker maak, en nie net jou ouers nie, want as jou ouers nie daar is om jou reg te help nie met iets wat jy verkeerd gedoen het en jy	Perceptions of friendships

Support and understanding |

His friends are always there for him.	trust hulle nie of jy's bang vir hulle is jou vriende ook altyd daar. Soos ek en H. As ek probleme het gaan ek direk na hom toe want hy sal verstaan.	
	N: Ja, daar is vriendskappe wat 'n belangrike rol in jou lewe speel. Hoe belangrike rol dink jy is dit?	
Friendship is important	C: Wel dis belangrik. Ek't 'n lys wat in my lewe aangaan: respek, liefde en vriendskap. Vriendskap is een van die hoof goed wat in my lewe moet aangaan. As ek nie vriende het nie dink ek nie ek sal iets kan doen nie.	Perceptions of friendships
Feels safe in the school	N: Verduidelik vir my hoe is julle vriendskappe?	
	C: Ek's vriende met omtrent almal in skool en ek dink dis lekker om so 'n groot groep vriende te hê, want niemand is hier teen mekaar nie, niemand wil mekaar slaan soos in ander skole nie. Soos ek was in W (hoërskool) wat baie groepe het soos jocks ens. Dit werk net nie, maar hierso is almal vriendelik, groet mekaar elke keer. Hier voel jy nie bedreig nie, jy voel of jy hier moet wees.	Characteristics of friendships Previous school vs current school Specialised (current) school
	N: Klink of jy voel jy pas goed in hierso?	
	C: Ja, ek hou baie van die skool.	
	N: Wat is vir jou anders in hierdie skool as in die ander "gewone" skool?	
The school assists him regarding his learner impairment	C: Wel, die werk word makliker afgehandel hierso, minder kinders in 'n klas want ek sukkel met konsentrasie en ja wel, mense is hierso baie meer betroubaar.	Specialised (current) school Support and understanding
	N: Vertel my meer van hoekom mense meer betroubaar is hierso?	
	C: Want toe ek soos in graad 8 in W was, was mense soos, ek vertel vir 'n vriend iets dan hoor ek die volgende dag alles is weer uit. Hier is dit stil, niemand weet omtrent daarvan nie.	Previous school vs current school
	N: Is dit dalk oor die feit dat hier minder kinders in die skool is?	
	C: Ja	
	N: Verduidelik vir my wat is die eienskappe van die skool se vriendskappe?	
	C: Ek verstaan nie...	

	N: 'n Eienskap is 'n karakter trek bv. As jy nou moet gaan vergelyk met jou vriendskappe by jou vorige skool teenoor jou vriendskappe wat jy in die skool het, wat is anders?	
	C: Mense in W het moes geld. Hulle kan mense omkoop daarso. Hierso is ook mense met baie geld, maar hulle is nie van hoor: doen vir my dit of anderster. Soos laas jaar in W was daar 'n ou wat ek bedoel almal in graad 8 gedreig het en goeters. Toe hoor ek hy is gedreig deur sy familie want hy dink hy's so goed met geld en alles en dit so bad maak vir almal. Hier het ek dit nog nie gesien dat iemand dit bad maak vir mense nie. En almal hier, hier is so 10 mense wat nie hou van my en my vriende se musiek nie. Maar ek verstaan dit, hulle musiek is net rustig.	Specialised (current) school
		Specialised (current) school
	N: Vertel my meer van die musiek?	
	C: Ek jou van metal, dit maak my kalmeer. Dit kalmeer my.	
	N: Wat is nog uniek aan julle vriendskappe? As jy dink aan jou vriendskappe, wat is uniek aan julle vriendskappe wat nie in ander vriendskappe is nie.	
	C: Wel ons almal hou van metal en guitar. Ons like om te kuier en ja ons, ons resprekteer ons ouers.	Characteristics of friendship
	N: Vertel my meer?	
Friends are important	C: Ons ouers word nooit afgeskryf nie. Ons het baie respek teenoor ons ouers. En ons glo jy lig nie jou hand teen mense wat jou gemock het nie. Ek sal nooit my hand eens lig vir my ou vriende nie. Hulle is deel van my lewe, hulle maak my wie ek is. So ja...	Perceptions of friendships
	N: Hoe vergelyk jy jouself met jou vriende?	
	C: Ek dink eks 'n goeie vriend, ek's altyd daar as hulle probleme het en ek ondersteun hulle waar ek kan en self al is ek down, sal ek net met hulle gaan praat.	Support and understanding
	N: Vergelyk jy jouself ooit op verskillende vlakke met jou vriende, soos bv sport?	
Aggression is classified according to him as a	C: Nie een van ons hou van sports nie, al wat ek en G en E doen sport en dis is kickboxing. Dis al sport wat ons in gemeen het. Ons sukkel almal met aggressie.	Social comparison on

learner impairment as well	N: Vertel my meer daarvan?	various levels
	C: Ek het begin baie aggressief raak toe my pa oorlede is, toe begin aggressie baie opkom in my. Dis hoekom my ma gesê het ek moet kickboxing doen, sy't gehoor dit dit help mense om aggressiwiteit uit te kry. En sover begin dit nogals om te help en ons baklei nie net nie. Daar is redes, ons benodig 'n goeie rede om te baklei, soos as 'n ou aan 'n meisie slaan, dis een van ons hoof redes.	Characteristics of learner impairment
	N: Verduidelik vir my watter invloed het aggressie op julle vriendskappe?	
	C: As ons aggressief raak is ons uit beheer uit.	Characteristics of learner impairment
	N: Het dit al ooit 'n invloed op julle vriendskappe gehad, soos jy haal jou aggressie uit op jou vriend?	
	C: Nee, nog nooit nie, veral nie G nie, ons is dieselfde dag gebore, dieselfde verjaarsdag. Ons kom goed oor die weg, my ma en sy ma ook. Wel ek en hy't nog nooit baklei nie, ek en H ook nog nooit baklei nie, of met G baklei nie. Nie een van ons was al ooit kwaad nie.	
Characteristics of friendship	N: Wat dink jy dra by tot dit?	
	C: Ek weet nie... Ek dink dis omdat ons mekaar genoeg spasie gee en genoeg respek gee en genoeg aandag ook.	Characteristics of friendship
	N: As jy sê genoeg aandag, wat bedoel jy daarmee?	
	C: Soos oke, ons ditch nie mekaar nie. As een planne maak gaan almal. En as een van ons nie die plan kan bywoon nie het ons of 'n goeie rede of dis net verkeerd van ons dan. Ons is altyd bymekaar anyway. Meeste van die naweke is ek by G en E is daar. Maar H kan nie altyd kom nie want sy ma hulle wil nie. Ek sien hom net by die skool. Ons is steeds goeie vriende.	Characteristics of friendship
	N: Watter rol speel jou vriendskappe in dit wat jy van jouself dink?	
	C: Nee, ek weet noe eintlik rerig nie. Ek dink... Wel hulle laat my baie goed voel. Hulle sal se " jy lyk nie goed vandag nie". Ons is eerlik met mekaar, soos sê nou my hare is skeef gesny of iets, sal hulle vir my sê ek sal beter lyk met kort hare. En ek sal dankie? So, dis hoe ons is. Ons almal is omtrent dieselfde ook.	Self-concept Characteristics of friendship

	N: As jy nou dink aan die breër konteks van die skool, sluit nou net vir 'n oomblik jou naaste vriende uit, vergelyk jy jouself met enige van die kinders in die skool en hoe?	Social comparison
	C: Ek is nou nie mal oor almal in die skool nie, maar meeste van die mense is oke. N is nou 'n baie nice ou en W ook.	
	N: Dink jy jy die ander kinders het enigsens 'n invloed op wie jy is en hoe jy jouself sien en verduidelik vir my hoe.	
	C: Somtyds. Soos bv as E (leier) my uitcrap oor iets begin ek aggressief raak en ja, dis omtrent al. En baie van hulle maak my ook vrek gelukkig. En ja, niemand is rerig sleg in ons skool nie. Almal is goeie mense.	Perceptions of friendships
	N: Weet jy wat is 'n identiteit?	
	C: Ja	
	N: Dis wie jy is	
	C: Ja	
	N: Verduidelik vir my hoe mense in hierdie skool bydra tot jou identiteit, tot wie Clown is?	
Self concept is determined by peers	C: Wel, hulle soek altyd 'n rede om my te maak lag want hulle sê ek't 'n baie snaakse lag. Dis hoekom ek my clown noem, ek't 'n groot smile en omdat ek soos een lag en ek kan almal laat lag en ja. Dis een van my hoof doele, om mense gelukkig te hou. En ja, as hulle speel nogal 'n belangrike rol, as hulle my nie laat lag nie, kan ek nie mense nie gelukkig hou nie. As hulle happy is, kan ek hulle maak lag en dis die moeite werd vir my, dit laat my goed voel.	Support and understanding

Self-concept |
	N: Weet jy wat is 'n reputasie?	
	C: Mmm (ja)	
	N: 'n Reputasie speel ook 'n goeie rol want ons reël is mos jy mag nie aan meisies slaan nie of so iets nie, en as een van ons aan 'n meisie slaan, gaan ons seker maak ons reputasie gaan af, ons gaan sleg voel. 'n Reputasie is actually ook 'n baie goeie ding in ons lewe, dis soos as mense goed (dinge) van my praat, soos in Hoërskool, sal ons, ek, G en E direk na skool soontoe gaan, sal	Support and understanding

	ons by die ou gaan hoor. Maar ons praat eers, maar as hulle wil baklei sal ons maar ons baklei nie direk nie, ons probeer eers praat. N: Hoe dink jy vergelyk jy jouself met ander mense in die skool? Dis mooi woord wat ons gebruik is jou portuurgroep, die mense at op jou vlak is-hoe dink jy vergelyk jy jouself met ander mense? C: Nee, daai vraag weet ek nou nie rerig nie. Ek't nog nooit so daarna gekyk nie. N: Probeer bietjie dink. Daar is verskillende maniere hoe 'n mens jouself kan vergelyk met ander. Jy kan jouself vergelyk met jou skoolwerk, op hoe jy fisies lyk, jou voorkoms... C: Ja, voorkoms sal ek sê soos met G-hulle. Die manier van werk eerder saam. P-hulle en joh.	Social comparison
Physical appearance is important to him	N: Verduidelik vir my daai. Jy het nou vertel met wie vergelyk jy jouself, maar hoe? Watter goed jy in ag neem wanneer hy die vergelyking doen. C: Trek dieselfde aan, soos hierdie funky klere. Ek hou baie van skinny jeans en met P bedoel ek, ek probeer my werk goed doen maar ek sukkel daarmee en wel, eerlikwaar ek rook ook maar dan vergelyk ek nie myself met iemand nie. Dis nie...., ek probeer nie in 'n groep wees nie. Eerlikwaar laat dit my net kalmeer. Kom ons stel dit ook so, saam mense wat ek meeste van die tyd kuier is dit net van hulle is presies net soos ek. Hulle het ook probleme, maar hulle wys dit nie vir almal nie. N: Is julle meer oop met mekaar in julle kleiner vriendekringe? C: Ja N: Vertel my meer?	Social comparison Support and understanding
	C: Ek vertel vir G, E en H vertel ek alles voor. As ek 'n probleem het vertel ek hulle direk. En dan sal hulle met my praat en sê Bv. Ek moet dit los, ek moet dit dien en sulke goed. Of hulle sal sê jou aan met dit, jy is sterk, jy sal dit kan deurmaak. Of self ek, ek sal dieselfde sê vir sulke goed. N: Verduidelik vir my hoe ondersteun jou vriende jou? C: As mense goed oor my pa sê dan is hulle direk opstandig	Support and

	teenoor die mense en as hulle goed agter ons rug sê en ons weet nie daarvan nie, sê nou ek is vir 'n week Kaap toe of iets en mense praat sleg van my hier by die skool, dan sal hulle hul direk stop en seker maak hulle praat nie weer so nie. Ja, ons staan op vir mekaar. Ons slaan nie aan kleiner kinders en so nie ek ons kom ons wees eerder eerlik, direk en sê ons hou nie van baklei nie, ons hou niks daarvan nie, ons is gechill. Soos ek en G sal sê: ons is geblom.

N: (Lag) Verduidelik vir my daai beskrywing? | understanding

Characteristics of friendship |
| I love this description of 'chilling': to "blom" | C: Blom is soos 'n blom is altyd rustig en hy pla niks en niemand nie. Dis wat ons gebruik. Soos my ma'lle gebruik dit, dan sê hulle gaan blom in jou kamer, dan gaan sit ek rustig in my kamer. Dis soos chill, net in Afrikaans: blom. | |
| His concentration is jumping, I had to refocus him | N: Dis die mooiste beskrywing wat ek nog gehoor het...
Watter leergeremdhede ervaar jy?

C: Leer, joh, dis sleg, ek's sleg met leer. Ek kan goed leer maar as daai toets daar is, dan is dit weg en ek weet nie wat om te sê nie. Dan skryf ek maar op die algemene kennis. En dit bring my deur actually. Maar al wat my nog afbring is my ma- hulle waardeer nie altyd nie.

N: Vertel my meer? | |
| His family places pressure on him to excell | C: Oom Andre, my stiefpa wil hê ek moet goed doen. Darem nou nie alles 80's nie, maar alles bo 60 en dis nogals moeilik. Maar hulle dink as ek soos sê ek vergeet, en ek vergeet ook nogals vinnig, sê hulle ek moet ophou verskonings uitdink oor "ek vergeet". Maar meanwhile vergeet ek rerig. En soos H, hy vergeet ook rerig. En soos na hierdie gaan ek nie eens weet wat ek gesê het nie.

N: (Lag) Wel, onthou ek't gesê jy kan weer daarna kyk as jy wil ne.

C: Maar ja, ek het baie respek vir hulle en Oom Andre is baie nice, hy's eitlik soos 'n pa vir my, en eerlikwaar hy gaan nooit my pa se plek vat nie maar hy is nogsteeds daar vir my en alles. Hu is goed vir my en my ma en my stiefsussie en ek waardeer hom. | Characteristics of learner impairment |
| Question | N: Ag, dis goed. Daar was al mense wat my vertel om aandag afleibaar te wees het 'n sekere invloed op hulle vriendskappe- op die manier hoe hulle met mekaar kommunikeer en praat. Soos as | |

appears to abstract for him	hulle daar buite op die speelgrond sit en praat met mekaar. Dink jy dat julle almal se verskillende leergeremdhede een of ander invloed het op die manier hoe julle vriende is met mekaar? C: Mmm, ek weet glad nie... N: Dink 'n bietjie, bv om aan hiperaktief te wees. C: O ja, ek weet daarvan. N: Vertel my meer? C: Ek hou baie van my suiker. Almal weet dit nogal, so ek en H is dieselfde. As ons genoeg suiker inhet, is ons heeldag wakker en praat ons en H sal begin oor trollies praat. En dan sal ek daar sit en kan nie my lag inhou nie, dan sal H 'n storie begin vertel dan sal ek inchip en dan gaan die storie nog aan en goeters. Ons sal 'n storie boek kan skryf oor ons stories saam. Ons sal die kinders en hulle ouers gelukkig kan maak. Ons is ook baie slim dan, en wat ek ook weet, ek en H, ons het groot imaginations, baie groot. N: Ja?! Vertel my soos bv? C: Soos ek en H kan... ek teken goed uit my kop uit wat ek wil hê en goeters. Soos ek wil na skool ingaan in tatoos en guitar speel en sulke goed. Ek speel guitar op die oomblik en ja... N: Watter onlekker invloede het jul leergeremdhede op julle vriendskappe? C: Mmmm, ons raak ook baie vinnig kwaad en partykeer dan praat ons nie met mekaar nie. Ek raak kwaad en partykeer dan stoot ek hulle net 'n bietjie weg, want ek wil nie daaroor praat of iets nie. Maar oor 'n rukkie sal ek met hulle gaan praat of so 'n rukkie wag en dan vir hulle sê ek sal met hulle kom praat. En dan dink hulle partykeer dis weird dat ek dit doen. En ja, dis al. N: Dink jy dat jy jouself somtyds vergelyk met jou vriende, gebasseer op jou geremdheid? C: Nee... N: As jy dit moet vergelyk met jou vorige Hoërskool, dink jy daar's 'n verskil in dit?	Characteristics of learner impairment Characteristics of learner impairment Characteristics of friendship
Physical	C: Ja, ons almal dra dieselfde soort klere hierso, ek en my vriende	Social comparison

appearance is important to be socially acepted	en ons wil ons hare groei en ja, hou van dieselfde musiek en goeters en ons hou baie van enige tipe musiek, behalwe boeremusiek. N: Verduidelik watter rol speel jou leergeremdheid in jou vriendskappe se ontwikkeling? C: Wel, iets wat ek gebruik is D, wat in graad 8 is. Dan vertel ek hom wat het ek geleer uit my foute, want iemand het mos gesê, 'dont make the same mistake twice', iets soos dit. Wel, ek het dit alreeds gedoen, hoekom moet dit weer deur iemand anders gedoen word? Soos ek het iets verkeerd gedoen en hy't dit nog nie gedoen dan, dan wil ek nie hê dat hy moet nie want dis sleg dalk. As iets goed is sal ek dit vir almal sê, gaan try dit dis great. Ek hou ook nie daarvan om te sien as mense geforseer word om iets te doen ne. N: Jy het gesê jy sukkel om te leer, en hoe is dit, maar dieselfde met baie van die kinders hierso? C: Ek dink so. Ek dink dis omdat hy ADD het en ook bietjie depresiwiteit en sulke goeters. N: Watse invloed het al daai fassette wat jy nou genoem het op julle vriendskappe? C: Ons hou nie daarvan om mekaar af te sien nie en goed en nou die dag het E gebel en gesê hy voel nie lekker nie. Toe vra ek my ma of hy hier kan kom slaap. Sy sê toe dis reg en hoor ook wat's die storie. Toe kom slaap hy daar en ons praat die hele aand daaroor en goeters. Partykeer raak ons oook kwaad vir mekaar oor wat gebeur het en goed. N: Ja? Soos bv? C: Wel, sê nou hulle sê ek moenie vir hierdie meisie gaan nie want sy sal my seermaak en goed en sê so 'n maand of twee later gebeur dit, dan was ek nogal kwaad dat hulle gesê het dit gaan gebeur maar ek wou net nie hoor nie want ek wou nie myself laat sleg voel het nie. N: Dink jy gebeur... Of verduidelik vir my hoe jy kan voel dat jy kan sleg voel oor jouself? C: Uhm, Iemand het bv baie beter gedoen as ek, dan gee almal baie meer aandag aan hulle en sê nou ek hou baie van 'n meisie	Support and understanding Support and understanding Support and understanding Social comparison

| | en 'n ander ou hou van haar en dan kry hy haar, dan voel ek ook baie sleg. Wat ek ook nie van hou nie-ek sien hierdie baie goeie meisie dan kom hierdie slegte ou en vra haar uit en goed en dan's hy net 'n player. Dan voel ek nogals baie sleg.

N: Watter bydra maak 'n leergeremdheid, dis nou 'n ding wat maak dat jy sukkel om goed te doen en maklik te leer. Watter bydra maak so 'n iets tot 'n vriendskap?

C: Al wanneer ek rerig konsentreer is as my vriende iets ouliks of snaaks sê. Dis al wanneer ek rerig kan konsentreer. **As al jou vriende hiperaktief is, kan jy nie konsentreer nie.**

N: Wanneer so iets gebeur, verduidelik vir my hoe is dit, wat gaan aan daarso?

C: je... ek weet nie hoe om daai te verduidelik eintlik nie.

N: Noem vir my voorbeelde.

C: Uhm, bv oke, ons sit by G se huis en speel computer games, dan praat hy met my. Maar ek het oorfone in en kyk op die rekenaar. Wanneer ek oorfone in het kan ek nog hoor, maar as ek op die rekenaar kyk dan hoor ek ander geluide ook. Dan, toe begin G 'n grap vertel ek ek lag toe ook saam. En hulle vra toe: en wat nou? En ek sê lag vir die grappie. Toe sê hulle watse grappie? Toe vertel ek die grappie presies net so oor.

N: Nou hoe het dit gewerk? Jou oorfone was dan ingeprop (in jou ore)

C: Nee, nee, nie daai dag nie. Ek kon nog sien en alles hoor. Dis vir my nogal weird.

N: Ja. Kan jy vir my nog voorbeelde noem?

C: Nee, ek vergeet baie.

N: Die feit dat jy so baie maklik vergeet, het dit 'n invloed gehad....(hy onderbreek met die antwoord wat volg)

C: Ja, soos partykeer vergeet ek mense se verjaarsdae.

N: En soms, wat nog?

C: Soos ek het vergeet van 'n kamp waarop ek en G sou gaan. | Influence of LI (learner impairment) on friendship

Characteristics of learner impairment

Influence of LI (learner impairment) on friendship |

He is very dependent on his friends	Toe hy my die aand bel antwoord ek en hy vra: is jy al klaar gepak, want hulle was oppad om my te kom haal. Toe sê ek vir wat? Vir die kamp. Ek sê watse kamp? Toe is hy baie kwaad vir my nogal. Toe het ek actually saamgegaan en toe ons terugkom vra hy my het ek vergeet. Toe sê ek ja, ek het vergeet.	
	N: Dink jy hy verstaan jou beter...	Social comparison
	C: Ek en hy is presies dieselfde. Ons het dieselfde persoonlikheid. 12 Ontober, Libra, en dis nogal weird want ekt nooit gedink dat jou sterteken en geboortedatum... Soos as hy iets sê dan praat ek presies dieselfde as wat hy dink soos ek wil 'n liedjie luister, dan begin G hom speel.	
	N: Dit klink vir my of julle verbind is op amper 'n hoër vlak?	Social comparison
	C: Ek en hy... Mense dink ons is broers soos ek en hy praat. As iemand iets sleg van G sê is ek baie opstandig, baie. G is letterlik vir my soos 'n broer. Ons is so. En by sy huis is ek soos familie, almal hanteer my presies dieselfde daarso en	
	N: Wat maak julle vriendskap so spesiaal?	Characteristics of friendship
	C: Die feit dat ons daar is vir mekaar en mekaar nie judge nie en goed. Dieselfde musiek luister en dat ons altwee se ouers van mekaar hou en goeters. Hulle wil hê ons moet vriende bly. Hy is 'n baie goeie invloed op my.	Perceptions of friendships
	N: Ja, vertel my meer?	
	C: Hy is ook teen drugs en goeters. Hy hou my weg. Al wat ons het is, ons altwee rook. Ek drink eerlikwaar, maar nie baie nie. My ma'lle weet ook ek drink nie baie nie. Ons sal soos 'n six pack drink maar nou nie bier nie, ek hou nie van bier nie. Een bier wat lekker is, is soos Heineken. Dis al, my pa het dit ook gedrink. En ja, dis sulke goed en dat ons mekaar kan trust en met mekaar kan praat.	Support and understanding
	N: Dis wonderlik hoor, dis wonderlik dat jy so iets het in 'n vriend. Verduidelik hoe jy moontlik jou vriende beter kan verstaan as gevolg van daai ding wat maak dat jy sukkel om te leer, die rede hoekom julle in die skool is. Julle almal het 'n rede hoekom julle in die skool is. Wat van daai goed maak dat jy jou vriende beter verstaan?	Support and understanding
	C: Party van hulle het mos dieselfde probleem as ek. Dan sê hulle hey dude, ek het gesuck. Maar dan sê ek maar ek ook. Oke	Social comparison

	maar hoekom jy dan? Dan sê ek want ek het hierdie probleem. Dan probeer ons iets uitdink oor hoekom ons so sleg gedoen het. My ma"lle glo my nogsteeds nie dat ek so sukkel om te leer nie. Maar ek en H het al uitgevind ons sukkel om te leer want ek dink dis van die simptome van ADD.	Characteristics of learner impairment
School is not very important to him, probably due to the learner impairment that makes studying difficult	N: Wat is dit wat maak dat julle sukkel om te leer wat maak dat julle mekaar beter verstaan?

C: Well, ek dink... Wel... Ons verstaan mekaar maar net, want ons weet wat... soos ek kan sien wat hy like en goeters, maar ek kan nie weet of hy dit gaan like nie. Ek kan dit sien as ek by is maar as ek nie by is nie gaan ek dit nie kan sien nie. | Support and understanding |
| | N: Hoe ondersteun julle mekaar met die skoolwerk?

C: Nie baie goed nie-ons is nie so mal oor skoolwerk nie. Ons wil nie worry oor skoolwerk nie, ons gaan liewers iewers heen,dan gaan kuier ons. Dan maandag by die skool, dan vra hy my, het jy huiswerk gedoen, dan sê ek nee, het jy? Dan sê hy nee, dan is ons sommer kwaad vir mekaar. Dan sal ons bymekaar sit en saam werk, en sê hoor hier, lees jy dit en dan sal ek die vraag lees en dan lees jy dit vir my. Hy sal dit eers neerskryf dan sal ek dit na hom neerskryf. | Influence of LI (learner impairment) on friendship

Support and understanding |
| | N: So julle ondersteun mekaar met julle huiswerk selfs wanneer julle dit nie gedoen het nie. Hoe ervaar julle vriendskap binne die skool waar jy tans is?

C: Meisies is nie altyd so goed nie, hulle is aan en af, aan en af. Want hulle sê die een dag hallo en die volgende dag gaan weg. Meisies is altyd nog wierd- die eendag ek is lief vir jou en die volgende dag jis, ek haat jou. Soos C en C- hulle kan vassit en dan is hulle twee kwaad vir mekaar. Dan is hulle kwaad vir die hele klas ook sommer. | Gender differences regarding friendship |
| | N: Verduidelik vir my meer van daai interaksie in die klas?

C: Joh, Ek sal maar net lag en goeters. As hulle dan nou met my baklei sal ek opstandig raak.

N: Veruidelik vir my, ek wil net bietjie agtergrond inligting hê-as jy jou vriende in W teenoor die vriende wat jy nou het, die ding wat julle vriende met mekaar gemaak het en hoe julle vriende was, daai eienskap van julle vriendskap, wat is anders gewees by jou vorige skool teenoor hier? | Influence of LI (learner impairment) on friendship |

	C: In W was niemand rerig vriende nie want almal was hierdie regte washouts en goeters. Hulle het skateboard gery en goeters-toe dink hulle wel, twee van my vriende was skateboarders en regte washouts en toe dink hulle hulle is nou rerig cool-hulle was getarget in die skool. Party mense in die skool was rerig nice-hulle help my met werk. Ander sê los jou werk, jy mors jou tyd.	Support and understanding Perceptions of friendships
	N: En hierso?	
	C: Hierso...hulle herrinner my aan my werk wat ek moet doen.	
	N: Hoe ondersteun jou vriende jou met jou skoolwerk spesifiek?	
	C: Uhm, hulle motiveer my meeste van die tyd om goed te doen en matriek te kry. Van die goed wat ek wil doen, bv my guitar en goeters. Hoe vinniger ek klaar is met skool hoe vinniger kan ek geld maak. En ek wil soos goed maak en dit.	Support and understanding
	N: Hoe ondersteun hulle jou-wat sê hulle, wat doen hulle?	
	C: Sê nou ek sê ek wil nie my werk doen nie. Dan sê hulle, maar dude, jy wil dit eerder doen. Sê nou maar ek het dit nie gedoen nie, sal hulle aanhou tot ek dit doen of hulle sê dude, maak dit net klaar, sal dit dan doen.	Support and understanding
	N: En jy teenoor jou vriende?	
	C: Ek sê nou maar hulle moet werk en ek sien maar mmm hulle wil nie meer werk nie dan sê maar jy moet dit nou doen, maar dan sê hy maar hy wil nie. Dan sê ek, wel maak seker jy doen dit voor skool.	Support and understanding
	N: Het jy enige iets wat jy vir my nog wil vertel oor jou vriende of vriendskappe?	
	C: Wel al wat ek kan sê is die skool maak ons vriendskappe baie sterker. Ons almal is saam mekaar ons judge nie, ons is almal soos een groot familie hierso.	
	N: Hoekom dink jy is dit so?	
	C: Omdat ons almal het probleme hierso.	Social comparison
	N: En watter bydra maak die skool tot dit?	
		Support and

	C: Hulle probeer ons help. Ek weet nie of hulle dit regkry nie maar die onderwysers as hulle ons baie kwaad maak, dan sal ons daaroor praat en mooi daaroor gaan dink en dan sal ons sien of ons verkeerd is of nie. En dan sal ons die volgende dag teruggaan en mooi praat met die juffrou en ons sal na die juffrou luister en hulle glo. N: Dit klink of julle meer aanvaar word hierso?	understanding
He feels that the school supports him	C: Ja, in W kry ons die werk dan sal ek gaan na die juffrou en sê dat ek het nie mooi verstaan nie. Dan sê sy net gaan hoor by die ander mense. Hierso is dit net vir juffrou: ek verstaan nie, dan sê hulle dit en dit en hulle sal my reghelp tot ek verstaan. As juffou my nie kan help nie sal ek een van my vriende vra en hulle sal my help. Mense help mekaar hier baie goed. N: Dink jy dis omdat almal begrip het vir waardeer julle gaan?	Characteristics of the specialised school environment
The loss of his father was hard for him	C: Mense weet waardeer ek gaan met my pa en goeters. N: W is 'n baie groot skool en baie kinders... C: Ja, dis waar-mense sal net iets van my pa sê dan sal ek snap. Hier weet almal daarvan en hulle sal niks daarvan sê nie. Hulle sal dit nie opbring nie en alles. N: Dit klink vir my of julle baie ondersteuning kry hierso? C: Ja. N: Wonderlik, is dit vir jou lekker om in die skool te wees? C: Ja, ek geniet dit baie hierso. N: Ja... enige laaste gedagtes? C: Mmm, wel al wat ek kan sê is sterkte, jy moet verstandig wees vir die regte redes en nie aanvaar as mense vir jou sê jy is sleg in goed en jou selfbeel groot hou en jou altyd sterk hou. N: Pragtig, ek wil jou baie bedank vir jou deelname in die studie. C: Ek is bly ek kon deelneem. N: Ek waardeer dit rerig en jou bydraes is van groot waarde. Baie dankie.	Perceptions of friendships Characteristics of the specialised school environment Social comparison

	C: Groot plesier.	

Deelnemer 2: Kitty

Sleutel:

N: Navorser

K: Kitty

	N: Hallo Kitty, ek wil jou bedank dat jy besluit het om deel te wees van die studie, dis van onskatbare waarde vir my en ek waardeer elke bydra wat hy gaan lewer vanmiddag. Ek wil jou net weer herrinner aan dit wat in die brief gestaan het wat jy vir my geteken het. Basies bly dit wat jy vir my vertel konfidensieël en ek gaan nie jou regte naam gebruik nie, maar jou kode naam van Kitty gebruik. Jy moet ook onthou jy is vry om enige tyd te onttrek van die studie as jy voel dit werk nie meer vir jou nie. Wanneer ek klaar al die inligting verwerk het en ek't die finale dokument geskryf gaan ek dit aan jou wys en jy kan kyk of jy saamstem met alles wat ek daarin geskryf het en dat ek nie iets sê waarvan jy nie hou nie. As daar iets is, verander ons dit totdat jy gemaklik is met wat in die dokument staan. Vertel my bietjie, hoe is julle vriendskappe hier in die skool?	
Feels as if the school has assisted in her development and improvement of confidence	K: Oke, wel almal is half met almal vriende. Dis 'n klein skooltjie. Ons is nie eintlik rerig vriende met die graad 8 en 9's nie, dis net soos A met wie ek vriende is. Ek dink kinders in die skool is baie close aan mekaar want dis seker maar van die kinders kom uit slegte omstandighede by hulle huise. So baie van hulle het so half en half dieselfde probleem. Baie kinders huil hierso oor hulle goed en die kinders is baie sterk hierso, en hulle praat met mekaar want hulle verstaan min of meer hoe dit is met mekaar so hulle kan met mekaar praat en hulle is half op dieselfde page meeste van die tyd. Ja, ek meen hier is druggies en alles in die skool en verstaan toe ek in die skool gekom het, was ek soos wow, oke, wat gaan hier aan? Want ekt gehoor hier soos drugs en goed in die ksool maar ek't dit nie rerig ernstig opgevat nie. Maar toe ek hier inkom is dit toe heeltemal anders. By 'n normale skool, die kinders is nie blootgestel aan al hierdie goed nie , die kinders word sterk gamaak want van ek in die skool gekom het is ek al so blootgestel aan dagga en drank en al daai goeters en ek't so sterk geword daardeur. En voor ek in die skool gekom het ek glad nie vir myself opgestaan nie. By vorige vriende, almal het op my getrap en goed en ek het baie selfvertroue en goed begin kry want ek't begin beter doen in my skoolwerk en al daai. Dit voel net soos of jy met enige iemand hier kan praat en jy is nie skaam nie. Dis net rerig fantasties om in die skool te wees en ek weet nie, dis maar net hoe	Characteristics of friendship Support and understanding Perceptions of friendships Support and
Her old friends did not appreciate her and		

mistreated her, it had an impact on her self confidence.	almal in die skool met mekaar praat-dis net ja... N: Verduidelik vir my meer daai deel van hoe die kinders met mekaar praat? K: Oke, wanneer ons met mekaar praat, ons weet min of meer waar deur almal gaan en as ons net casual praat, ons verstaan mekaar se humeure en goed. Meeste van die kinders hier is... wat's die woord, ons is meer mature, volwasse as ander kinders in ander skolee. Jy kan rerig hier met mekaar 'n gesprek voer. Dis nie net soos ha-ha hier en daar, maak random jokes en goed nie. Dis rerig jy praat met iemand hierso.	understanding Support and understanding Characteristics of friendship
The children in this school has an understanding of learner impairments	N: Dit klink of daar 'n dieper vlak van vriendskap is hierso as by ander skole. K: Ja, ja! Kinders by ander skole is so shallow en goed, joke en goed en dan lag hulle vir mense wat gebreklik is en so. En hulle weet nie rerig hoe dit is nie. En hierdie kinders in die skool – as jy gaan staan en lag vir iemand – hulle sal jou so uittrap. N: Hoekom dink jy hulle sal jou uittrap? K: Hulle moet, verstaan ons het 'n paar gebreklike kinders in die skool. Paar van ons vriende is ook bietjie gestrem in die brein of so, hulle weet hoe dit is en ja, baie van die kinders hier het ook sussies of boeties wat gestremd is en so hulle weet hoe dit is. N: Dink jy hulle het beter begrip? K: Ja, hulle is baie meer ingelig en die juffrou maak dit ook baie makliker hierso soos hulle werk nou maar soos ons dit verstaan en goed en ja. Dis net baie beter. N: Mmm, ja. Verduidelik vir my hoe is julle vriendskappe? Beskryf in jou vriendekring hoe is die tipiese eienskappe van julle vriendeskappe? K: Soos wat ek sien in my vriendinne. N: Ja, bv ek en my vriende bel mekaar teen spyte van enige iets. Ek kan my vriende 2 uur in die oggend bel en hulle sal daar wees vir my. Verstaan, dis 'n eienskap. Verduidelik vir my die eienskap in julle vriendskappe. K: Ek moet kan lag om my vriende want ek is iemand wat mal is	Experiences of the previous (mainstream) school Support and understanding Support and understanding Characteristics of the specialised school environment Characteristics

	daaroor om te lag. Die ding is tussen ons, dis seker maar vertroue wat invest is, dat ons van mekaar hou en vir mekaar enige iets kan vertel en nie hoef te worry oor wat hulle van ons dink nie. Ons kan onsself wees rondom hulle. Dat ons nie hoef iets weg te steek van hulle af nie en ek kan praat en daar wees vir mekaar. En ook soos om 3 uur in die oggend mekaar te bel. Dit het ook al bebeur, en bel hulle my 3 uur in die oggend en praat met my. Partykeer vloek ek hulle 'n bietjie in die begin want ek wil slaap, maar dan word ek wakker en dan's dit rustig. En ja, as hulle huil moet jy hulle kan troos. Jy moenie hulle pity nie, jy moet hulle help en dan moet jy hulle sterk maak. Dis hoe dit is, ons kry nie mekaar jammer nie en dan beweeg ons aan en maak of niks fout is nie.	of friendship
Trust is an important corner stone of her friendships, probably due to the fact that her trust was abused with her other friends		Support and understanding
	N: Julle wil nie mekaar pity nie. Dink jy dis 'n ding wat uniek is aan die skool?	
	K: Ja, by ander skole luister hulle ook na jou probleme, maar dis ok "cool, ag shame". Hulle deel met almal goed. Die meisies is eintlik so bleh-hulle weet nie eintlik hoe dit is nie. As jy hier iemand iets vertel bly dit daar. Daar is ook 'n paar backstabber hier. Maar jy kry ook ware vriende hierso.	Experiences of the previous (mainstream) school
She feels very strongly about the fact that one should not pity someone or have sympathy, one should rather help them.	N: Jy sê julle wil nie mekaar pity nie, maar julle wil mekaar help. Vertel my so bietjie meer.

K: Ja, moet nou nie wees soos ag shame, ek kry haar jammer nie. **As jy haar wil jammer kry, help haar want dan het jy nie die reg om haar te pity nie want jy worry dan nie r**erig nie. As jy haar jammer kry, help haar. Dis hoe ek dink.

N: Wel, ja. Dit maak baie sin. | Support and understanding |
| | K: Al kan jy dan nie op die beste manier help nie soos 'n sielkundige nie, maar ek't al baie van my vriendinne gehelp wat selfmoord probeer pleeg. Dan onthou ek hulle net dat daar altyd iets is om voor te lewe. So...

N: Ek dink dis 'n stunning eienskap. Weet jy wat is 'n portuur groep, peer group? Dis mos mense van jou ouderdom en jou graad hier in die skool. Eerstens, verduidelik vir my hoe vergelyk jy jouself met jou portuurgroep?

K: Wel, my graad kinders saam wie ek is elke pouse.

N: Ja, jou graad kinders en jou vriende. Maar dink vir my verder as jou close vriende. Hoe vergelyk jy jouself met hulle? Watse | Support and understanding |

	goed gebruik jy om jouself te vergelyk? Is dit voorkoms, is dit hoe jy en hulle doen op skool? Wat is al daai verskillende goeters?	
Academic performance is not important in this school, its more about how supportive you can be and what kind of friend you are	K: Oke, ek weet baie mense gaan oor hoe hulle om ander mense is. Soos hoe hulle aantrek. Soos die nuwe meisie in skool. Almal was aan die begin soos bly van haar af weg. Want sy lyk bietjie weird en goed maar dit gaan nie rerig oor hoe jy aantrek nie. Ek was ook op 'n tyd hierdie groot Emo kind wat niks wou weet van enige iemand nie. Maar niemand moet kyk hoe hulle buite lyk nie, maar hoe hulle binne lyk eintlik. Ons kyk nie rerig na hoe goed doen jy in die skool nie (lag). Dit gaan nie hier by ons oor hoe dom of hoe slim jy is nie. Maar dit gaan tog oor of jy met die persoon kan praat. En of hulle jou gaan stupid vind as jy met hulle praat. Aan die begin toe ek hier gekom het, was kinders ongeskik met my want hulle het my nie geken nie. Maar as hulle jou net leer ken... hulle moet jou net nie van buite af leer ken nie, maar van binne af. Dan leer jy eintlik baie van die persoon en maak jy vriende wat jy nooit gedink het jy sal vriende mee wees nie.	Social comparison

Self-concept

Characteristics of friendship |
	N: Bedoel jy soorte mense?	
	K: Ja. Ek het op 'n tyd geglo ek wil net rondom mense wees wat my wat die heeltyd happy is en wat op 'n sekere manier aantrek en goed soos dit, maar toe kom ek agter dat partykeer kort jy nie nie altyd die lag nie maar die bietjie meer ernstige vriend en bietjie minder die praat. Dis altyd lekker om 'n variety van vriende te hê. En ja, dat ons almal attached is aan mekaar met wie jy kan praat en wat baie van dieselfde omstandighede het.	Characteristics of friendship
	N: Jy't nou nou iets gesê van jou selfbeeld het aansienlik verbeter in terme van jou skoolwerk. Verduidelik dit ietjie vir my meer.	Experiences of the previous (mainstream) school
Her learning impairment had an impact on her self confidence	K: Toe ek in M (hoërskool) was, het ek 30-40% gekry. Dit was baie erg vir my. Ek't later begin glo ek kan dit nie doen nie-ek's dom. My ouers het so gesukkel met my want ek wou later nie eens meer begin leer nie want ek't gedink dit gaan nie werk nie. En ek't heeltemal gedink ek's dom. Geen qualities in my nie. En toe sê my ma'lle vir my ek't ADD. Toe is ek oke, ek is nog meer dom, oke, ek's bietjie retarded. Uhm, toe gaan ek op die internet en vind uit wat dit nou rerig is. En toe gaan ek van M af na sulke terapie goeters toe waar hulle my brein gestimuleer het, of iets. Met sulke terapie goeters, baie goed wat hulle met my gedoen het vir 6 weke lank, en dit het my konsentrasie en balans en alles verbeter. En toe van daaraf het ek stadig meer confidence begin kry. Ek het meer sterk gevoel in myself. En toe ek hier aankom en ek begin ewe skielik soos frikin goed doen, dit was mal. Ek het 80-90% vir	Characteristics of learner impairment

Characteristics of the specialised school environment |

But, due to support she has more self-confidence now	'n toets gekry. Ek was soos wat gaan aan? En toe is ek net van wow, ek kan actually goed doen. En met die vriende hierso, hulle het my al so support. Hulle het my sterk gemaak. Soos C het vir my gesê: hou op met jou ***. Jy's kinderagtig en toe moes ek leer. Gewoonlik was ek soos hhhh-begin huil oor die kleinste dingetjie maar julle het my sterk gemaak hierso. En nou's ek nie meer bang om vir myself op te staan nie. As iets my pla sê ek dit vir hulle. N: So jou confidence het nie net gegroei in terme van jou skoolwerk nie maar jou algemene menswees het verbeter?	Support and understanding
	K: Ja- ek het baie mooier begin aantrek en omgee oor hoe ek lyk. Ja, verstaan E het nou die dag vir my gesê toe ek hier inkom het ek soos 'n tomboy gelyk en goed. En nou gee ek so om, make-up myself en goed. N: Versorg jy jouself beter?	Self-concept
	K: Ja baie. Ek gee baie meer om oor hoe ek lyk. N: Wat dink jy het nog bygedra? Is dit net die confidence of wat dink jy het nog bygedra tot dat jy nou beter oor jouself voel?	Self-concept
	K: Ek dink ek het goeie vriende gekry wat my nie afkraak nie. Een van die redes hoekom ek uit M is, is omdat my vriendinne so nie met my wou... ek het so gewissel van groepe af want ek was – hulle het die heeltyd oor my getrap en ek't dit toegelaat en dan het hulle moeg geword vir my en ek kon dit nooit help nie. **Hulle het my nie verstaan nie en dan's hulle ongeskik en misbruik my en dan laat ek hulle toe**. En ek was al so baie by sielkundiges en goed wat my wil help en hulle kry dit net nie reg nie. En ja...toe was dit vir my baie erg. Toe is ek van screw dit en gaan uit M uit. En ja... toe raak dit net baie beter. N: Ek is baie bly dit het beter vir jou geword.	Support and understanding Experiences of the previous (mainstream) school
Her Christianity is an important	K: Ja, ek is net so bly. En ek het ook baie nader aan die Here geword hier, dis baie weird. N: Vertel my? K: Ek weet nie, nie regtig baie kinders hier is Christene nie en baie is atheiste en goed soos dit. Maar ek weet nie ek het net een dag hier by die skool agtergekom wat die Here rerig in my lewe gedoen het en dat Hy dit soveel beter vir my gemaak het, ek meen waar sou ek nou wees sonder Hom?	

source of comfort to her.	N: Ja, hy loop 'n paadjie met elkeen van ons. En Hy't jou paadjie hiernatoe gebring. K: Ek het altyd geglo, maar nie geglo hy is soos by my nie. Toe ek by die skool kom toe voel ek net soos wow. As ek sad is dan is ek soos screw dit en ek bid. So ja, toe word dit net vir my baie beter. N: Dink jy jou vriende ondersteun jou darem in daai aspek?	
Religious views is another aspect of friendship that has an influence on their relationships.	K: Ja, al ding is soos C-hy is 'n satanis-soort van ding. Ek probeer nie myself teveel by hom inmeng nie. Hy is 'n baie goeie vriend vir my, ek is net bang hy beinvloed my sleg. Want as ek myself blootstel aan hom stel ek myself bloot aan al daai goeters en ja, die ding is al my vriende is supportive, al my vriende is Christene. En hulle het my ook al soos gehelp en goed. N: Dit klink my julle respekteer darem mekaar se geloof sieninge? K: Ja, ons het nie eintlik 'n probleem nie. Maar julle kan so nou en dan iets rude sê en ek hou nie daarvan nie as hulle soos laster en goed nie. Dis irriterend. Dan sê ek vir hulle om stil te bly, dan word hulle kwaad vir my. Maar whatever.	Support and understanding
Her friends has an impact on her self concept	N: Watter rol speel jou vriendskappe in dit wat jy van jouself dink? K: Groot deel want my vriende is my lewe, soos rerig. Ek's so niks sonder my vriende nie. So hoe hulle oor my dink affekteer ook baie oor hoe ek oor myself dink. Wat hulle sê soos: jy lyk nie mooi vandag nie, sal ek dit soos vas glo. Ek sal niks anders dink nie. So dit bly oor wat my vriende van my dink. Dit was nog altyd so. Dis ook wat my so afgebreek het met my vorige vriende. Hulle het sleg van my gedink en dan geskinder en breek my heeltemal af. So ek worry maar oor daai goed. N: Wel, ek wil vir jou sê dis normaal, dis normaal vir enige tiener. Jy het nou gesê vorige vriende het jou baie afgekraak. Wat is anders hierso? K: Mmmm N: Kom ek verduidelik dit so. Jy't gesê jou vriende het jou afgekraak en dit het jou laat sleg voel in jouself. Eerstens wil ek weet wat is anders hierso en hoe beinvloed dit dan nou wat jy van jouself dink?	Perceptions of friendships Social comparison Experiences of the previous (mainstream) school

	K: Ek dink hierso anders is dit net, uhm... daai kinders het nooit goed rerig ernstig opgevat nie. Hulle grootste worries was of hulle lipgloss mooi lyk. Of al daai goed perfek lyk. Hier is dit net meer diep- die kinders worry eintlik oor 'n mens. Ek meen daai dag toe die drug test uitgekom het en ek so uitgefreak het. Die kinders het na my toe gekom en hulle was daar vir my. Ek het dit so appreciate. Waar as ek in M so iets gehad het, het hulle gesê ek probeer aandag kry of so iets. Iets soos dit. Kinders hier is ja... hulle is net daar vir jou. En dis seker maar wat my peace gegee het want dit voel of ek altyd iemand by my het. Iemand om mee te praat want jy kan nie met jou ouers oor alles praat nie. So dis lekker om te weet daar is iemand wat vir jou sal luister.	Experiences of the previous (mainstream) school Support and understanding Characteristics of friendship
	N: Waaroor praat julle met mekaar as julle so praat oor goed? Jy het gesê daar is sekere goed wat jy nie met jou ouers oor kan praat nie. Nou watter tipe goed chat julle, praat julle oor.	
	K: Soos verstaan, wil ek eenkeer seks hê of iets soos dit. Of sê nou ek wil nie drugs doen nie, maar sê nou maar iemand wil drugs gebruik moet jou vriende vir jou sê dis jou keuse. Ek sal dit nie rerig wil hê nie. En ja, hulle moet net vir jou die regte pad wys. Jy praat met hulle oor soos wat die naweek gebeur het. Sulke lekker goed. Jokes maak, wat jy nou nie rerig met jou ouers kan maak nie en ja.	Characteristics of friendship
Her friends accept her despite her learner impairment, she feels understood. In the other school this was not the case	N: Oke, cool. Hoe ondersteun jou mense om jou, jou vriende. Hoe ondersteun hulle jou eerstens en in terme van jou skoolwerk en jou leergeremdheid. K: Nee, hulle is daar vir my. Hulle kraak my nooit af nie en hulle is rerig daar vir my as persoon. Hulle verstaan my. En verstaan ek is bietjie baie uniek. (Lag) Kyk ek is mal. Ek het hopeloos teveel energie en sê die randomste goed. Hulle aanvaar my vir dit. Ek aanvaar my vriende ook. Hulle is ook nou nie almal die perfekste goed nie. Hulle het ook hulle eie goed wat hulle anders maak en ek aanvaar dit. En dis hoekom ek respekteer dit. En dis wat dit ook so lekker maak. N: 'n Leergeremdheid is iets wat keer dat jy kan leer... K: Ja, meeste van die kinders hier het dit mos maar. Verstaan, as jy nie die werk in jou kop kan kry nie, weet hulle dalk hoe want hulle het dieselfde leer maniere en goed. Verstaan ek help vir C, nou met haar wiskunde want sy verstaan nie mooi wat die juffrou sê nie. So dan verduidelik ek vir haar goeters en dan verstaan sy dit want ons verstaan net bietjie meer hoe werk mekaar se koppe en	Support and understanding Perceptions of friendships Influence of LI (learner impairment) on friendship Influence of LI (learner impairment) on friendship

	sulke goed. En dan kan ek meer met 'n picture dit vir haar wys. En vir haar mooi in net 'n maklike manier verduidelik.	Support and understanding
	N: Dink jy dat omdat jy 'n bepaalde leergeremdheid het, dit jou help om jou vriende beter te verstaan want hulle het dit ook.	
	K: Ja.	
	N: En wanneer dit nou by die skoolwerk kom, julle mekaar beter kan ondersteun?	
She has an amazing perspective of being diagnosed with ADD, bing an Indigo child, a new age movement. This has assisted her in accepting who she is and how her learner impairment influences her life	K: Ja, mmm. Ek's bly ek het ADD. Ek sal nooit regret dat ek dit het nie. Dis is cool. Verstaan new age kinders.

N: Vertel my bietjie meer van daai.

K: Uhm, wel ek het op die internet gaan kyk en daar is soos "indigo children". Ons is die new age, verstaan hoerdie kinders wat normaal is, hulle is die ou kinders. Ons is die nuwe kinders gebore. Ons is gemaak om nuwe tegnologie en kunste te bring in die wêreld. Ons is die future. Want net kreatiewe mense is die's wat ADD is. Hulle is bietjie mal in die kop, party kere. En ons is mos baie meer goed met ons hande as wat ons is met soos met ekonomie en al daai mal goeters. Die ding is rekeningkunde gaan nie die future rerig verander nie, maar kuns en tegnologie en al daai goed. Ek meen, kyk vir H. Hy is dalk nie so slim met sy vakke nie, maar jy moet sien wat hy kan doen met 'n foon. Oke, hy is mal goed, hy kan jou foon vinnig regmaak vir jou. Hy kan die kleinste goedjies mooi regmaak. Hy is eintlik so slim en hy kan nog eendag iets groots create. En dis meestal ons kinders. Ons is mos nou die nuwe kinders. Ek weet dit klink soos mean as ek sê die ander mense beteken niks nie, hulle doen. Maar dit voel net of ons die future shape en meer. Maar dis nie 'n siekte wat ons het nie, dis 'n gift. | Influence of LI (learner impairment) on friendship |
| | N: Weet jy hoe bevoorreg is jy om al in die posisie te wees om al so daarna te kyk. Want daar is ander mense wat nie so na 'n leergeremdheid...

K: Ja, ek het ook so party dae gekyk. Tot ek gefigure het wat ek moet myself hieruit kry en ek gaan soek op die internet. Ek het eenkeer na so 'n massage tannie toe gegaan en toe vertel sy my van die goed, toe gaan soek ek verder op van die goed. Dis nogal cool.

N: En het jy info gekry. | Characteristics of learner impairment |

K: Ja.

N: Ek dink ek moet ook so 'n bietjie gaan lees.

K: My pa hou nie van dit nie. Hy dink dis 'n klomp XXX. Maar oke, dit laat my beter voel.

N: Ja, kyk al wat op die ou einde saak maak is hoe jy self daaroor voel.

K: Ja, die ding is toe ek gaan kyk op die internet wat hulle sê van indigo children.. dis presies hoe ek is, soos hoe hierdie kinders is eintlik.

N: Noem so 'n paar voorbeelde.

K: Sjoe, ek het dit so lank terug gedoen, dis soos aan die begin van die jaar. Maar iets soos ons sukkel om te fokus in 'n klas. Ons love dit om op onsself te teken, want dis net iets wat ons kan doen. Uhm, ons moet altyd rondkyk as ons soos praat of iets. Ons kan jou nie direk in die oë kyk as ons praat nie. Uhm, iets van ons is net baie kunstig. Nie net met ons hande nie, ons kan baie kreatief wees soos in ons kop, soos met poetry of iets soos dit. Ons dink aan goed baie op 'n baie anderster manier. Soos ek sal sit in die klas as ek nie meer fokus nie en dink aan my ring. Ek sal soos dink waar kom dit vandaan. Ek sal net soos klein goedjies dink. I mean, die weirdste goed, verstaan. En ek weet dit klink baie grim en goed maar nou die dag sit ek by die huis en my ouers verstaan my nie. Ek sit daar en ek dink waar sal die beste plek wees om iemand te skiet dat hulle sal oorleef. Ek weet nie hoekom dink ek daaraan nie. Ek het daaraan gedink. My ma freak uit, sy dink ek wil myself doodmaak. Verstaan , ons dink maar aan weird goed. Soos baie keer sit ons en kuier en dan vra iemand 'n weird vraag dan antwoord jy maar.

N: Hoeveel van julle in die skool dink jy is indigo kinders

K, Jis,mmm baie. In my klas dink ek H, K,D,S. Ek is nie seker van A en R nie. C dink ek het dit. Jy kan dit sien in soos hoe hulle goed doen. C het definitief. En jis, wie is daar nog wat uitstaan? O ja, P. Verstaan hulle kan nie lank fokus nie maar tog doen hulle goed in skool.

N: Teen spyte daarvan dat julle hierdie kreatiewe kinders is, moet julle conform tot die system.

	K: Ja, dis nog 'n ding vir ons. Ons haat dit om reëls te volg. Verstaan, kyk hoe lyk ek. Ek lyk soos 'n scrum persoon, my hare ens. My hare was al soos pers. Rerig, true story. Ons hou rerig nie daarvan nie. As ons in 'n klas sit, voel ons soos of ons in tronk sit. Dis nie lekker nie. Dis hoekom baie sit ek in die klas. Ek moet baie keer iets doen dan vra ek liewer die juffrou soos of ek kan badkamer toe gaan of iets. Dan dink hulle ek wil gaan rook. Maar ek doen nie, ek wil net gaan rondloop. So die juffou sê altyd vir my ek is lastig want ek wil altyd rondloop. Ek kan nie net daar sit en fokus en kyk na 'n boek nie. Ek kan dit net nie doen nie, of ek raak aan die slaap of dink aan ander goed. So of die juffou moet verduidelik met prente of iets of iets self, soos met skeinat by M het hulle altyd goed gehad en waarmee hulle verduidelik het, en ek het verstaan en goed. Maar ek moet iets met my hande doen, heeltyd. N: Klink my of jy meer die hands on approach het, dat jy die ding voor jou hê, jy moet hom investigate, hulle moet nie net praat, praat, praat nie. K: Ja , ek dink dis hoe meeste van die kinders hier is. Dit help nie as juffou dit net op die bord skryf nie. Sy moet dit soos teken of iets, dit maak dit baie beter. N: Watter rol speel dink jy speel ADD in jou vriendskap? K: Mmm, jis oke. N: Of nie net spesifiek jou ADD nie, maar julle almal se spesifieke behoeftes, leergeremdhede. Watse rol dink jy speel dit in julle vriendskap. K: Ons weet hoe om met mekaar te praat as ek met iemand praat en ek sien sy aandag gaan, sê ek fokus (klap haar vingers). Jy weet ek kan min of meer. Ek sien hulle begin rondkyk, so of course luister hulle nie. So dan vra ek eers wat het ek gesê? Dan is hulle uhh, dan weet hulle nie en uhm, jy maak dit kort en kragtig as jy met jou vriende praat. N: Dis so interresant. K: Ja, hulle gaan nou nie sit en luister an elke liewe ding wat jy gister gedoen het nie. Jy sê vinnig wat jy wil sê want hulle gaan nie lank luister nie, so jy sê wat jy kan inkry. Dis soos 'n 30 second rule of iets. Jy moet sê wat jy kan, na daai tydjie is dit sorry...	Characteristics of the specialised school environment Influence of LI (learner impairment) on friendship Influence of LI (learner impairment)

N: Weet jy, net 'n gedagte, julle mxit mos baie?

K: Ja

N: Uhm, kan julle agterkom, die outjies wat sukkel met lees of skryf, kan jy agterkom dat dit 'n rol speel as jy bv mxit?

K: Ja, hulle vat soos langer om terug te sms. En hulle maak baie spelfoute en ruil woorde om. Ja, soos disleksiese mense. Ja, as ek soos met H praat. Hy ruil baie keer goed om of as hy nie soos weet wat om te sê nie, probeer hy 'n ander woord daarvoor kry. Al daai goed, dis bietjie anders.

N: Maar verstaan julle darem mekaar?

K: Ja, ja, ek verstaan. As iemand soos verkeerd spel kan jy nogsteeds sien wat daar staan. Dis vir my maklik. Maar dis baie makliker om te praat met mekaar.

N: Dit vat minder energie né.

K: Ja, dis lekker om mekaar te verstaan met die hele ADD ding. Julle verstaan net wat mekaar sê, soos die hele wiskunde ding met C. Julle kry net mekaar. Jy sal soos nooit nie verstaan nie.

N: Jy het daaraan begin touch, maar watter bydra maak hou leergeremdheid tot jou vriendskappe?

K: Soos wat?

N: Kom ons fokus eers positief. Watse positiewe contribution maak jou , dit was in is, die indigo child, wie jy is, watter positiewe bydra maak dit tot jou vriendskap?

K: Mmmm, ek weet nie rerig nie. Dis soos wat ek nou gesê het, ons kan mekaar verstaan beter en goed en sien mekaar se punt in dit. Ons het maar soos met die skoolprobleme en dit dieselfde en ons kan met mekaar praat daaroor.

N: Praat julle daaroor?

K: Ja, ek is nou besig om vir C te help en haar skoolwerk beter te kry.

N: Praat julle daaroor, soos C sukkel bv met lees. Praat julle

Characteristics of learner impairment	
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Support and understanding	

	daaroor, jy met jou ADD en sy met haar lees. Praat julle daaroor soos ek sukkel met.... en dit frustreer my?	
	K: Nie so erg nie, maar ek praat met haar daaroor want sy doen baie sleg in wiskunde. Sy ken nie eens die kleintse goed nie. Dan praat ek met haar daaroor en dan sê sy net sy kan dit nie in haar kop kry nie. En sommer net, ons gaan nie so erg daarin nie.	Support and understanding
	N: So julle praat nie so in detail oor julle spesifieke dinge nie?	
	K: Nee, nie so erg nie.	
	N: Oke, is daar nog enige positiewe bydraes wat jy dink...	
	K: Nee dis maar net verstaan mekaar.	
How the characteristics of learner impairment impacts on socialisation and friendship	N: En enige negatiewe bydraes, nie net joune nie maar enige kinders sin?	
	K: Ja, seker maar die aandag afleibaarheid. Ek verloor my fokus. Wat my vriende al geirriteerd geraak het met my is as ons in 'n groep staan of iets dan sal B praat met my. Dan sal ek net wegstap. Want dan hou ek op met luister, en kyk na al die persone om my en dan loop ek net weg. En hy word baie kwaad vir my daaroor. Dis seker maar iets negatiefs.	Influence of LI (learner impairment) on friendship
	N: Gebeur dit baie?	
	K: Mmm, so nou en dan. Dis baie ongeskik en ek probeer dit stop maar dis moeilik.	
	N: Dink jy jy't beheer daaroor?	
	K: Nee, nie rerig nie. Want ek kom dit nie eens agter nie. Ek kom dit eers na die tyd agter. Of ek sal soos loop en dan roep iemand my en dan sal hulle my roep en soos naby my staan en dan sal ek hulle nie hoor nie. Dis nogals annoying maar oke.	Influence of LI (learner impairment) on friendship
	N: Was daar al ooit konflik tussen jou en vriende oor sulke goed? Kan jy voorbeelde noem behalwe B wat kwaad word vir jou.	
	K: Dit was die enigste konflik wat ek al oor so iets gehad het. Nog nie rerig veel nie, ons verstaan maar, want hulle is ook so. So dis maar oke.	
	N: Jy het al baie van my vragies geantwoord. Hoe ervaar jy	

	vriendskap op hierdie huidige oomblik? K: Dis is wat vriendskap al vir my gebring het, wat ek al daaruit geleer het. ek meen ek is bly ek het sulke slegte vriende gehad want ek het daaruit geleer. Ek het baie daaruit geleer. Ek het keuses gemaak en ek leer daaruit. Ek meen ek leer altyd uit my keuses uit. Ek het eenkeer so baie gedrink dat ek oopgegooi het en dat ek hospitaal toe moes gaan. Van daai tyd of het ek nog nie eers eenkeer tipsy geword nie. Ek is nie meer 'n drinker nie. So ... wat nou weer is die vraag? N: Dis nou 'n goeie voorbeeld ne? K: Ja (lag) N: Jy het nou gesê dat jy het baie geleer vanuit jou vorige vriendskappe. K: O ja, mmm dit shape jou. Ek waardeer my vriende nou net soveel meer want hulle sien jou vir wat jy is. Ek vat hulle nie vir granted nie, van hulle in my lewe is. En dat hulle altyd daar is vir my. En dis iemand met wie jy kan praat en kan jokes maak... N: En hulle verstaan... K: Ja. N: Wat dink jy hou die toekoms vir julle vriendskap in? K: Oke, voel, iemand het eenkeer vir my geleer dat jy kry vriende in jou lewe, party gaan uit, party hou bietjie langer, mense bly friends vir lewe, maar baie an jou vriende gaan deur jou lewe wissel. Jy gaan nie altyd dieselfde vriende hê nie. Ek het dit baie geleer. Ek het 'n beste vriend gehad. Toe ek in die skool kom wou sy net nie meer met my kuier nie. En toe is ons nou net nie meer vriende nie. Toe wissel ek af en goed en in die begin het ek met ander mense gekuier. En toe gaan ek na C toe. So dit verskil maar soos jy aangaan en ja. N: Ek wil vir jou 'n voorbeeld noem. Ek en my beste vriend, ons is deur 'n baie moeilike ding saam wat ons verstaan. Ek en sy eintlik, dis so 3 van ons, ons 3 verstaan daai moeilike ding waardeer ons deur is. Niemand verstaan die moeilike ding nie, maar daai ding het ons gebond, ne. Dink jy daar is so iets met julle in die skool? K: Ja, ja, verseker.	Support and understanding Characteristics of learner impairment Support and understanding Experiences of the previous (mainstream) school	

	N: Verduidelik vir my?	
	K: Kyk, ek het nie rerig iemand by die huis nie. My ma'lle is rerig lief vir my en goed. So ek het nog nooit met sulke huis probleme gesit nie. Maar ek het op 'n tyd aan depressie gely so ek weet soos C se pa is oorlede toe sy soos klein was. En Ca se pa is oorlede toe hy klein is. Dit het hulle soos naby aan mekaar gebring want hulle kon praat daaroor. En ja, hulle weet net hoe hulle voel en goed. Ek het nounet met A gepraat, sy is nou op 'n baie slegte stadium, ek was daardeur gewees en ek wet hoe voel sy. Ek kon nie vir haar great advice gee nie, maar sulke goed bring 'n mens nader want hulle kan beter verstaan.	Support and understanding
	N: Ek dink net die feit dat julle begrip het vir mekaar maak 'n verskil.	
	K: Ja	
	N: Dat julle mekaar kan ondersteun.	
	K: Ja, dit is my ding. Ek love dit net as iemand verstaan. Hulle hoef nie advice te gee nie maar as hulle daar is vir my dis al wat ek kort.	Support and understanding
	N: Jy het nounou nogal iets ouliks gesê. Jy het gepraat van 'n variety of friends, 'n verskeidenheid van vriende. Jy het agtergekom jy kan nie net happy vriende hê nie, jy moet ernstige vriende ook hê...	
	K: Ja	
	N: Verduidelik dit bietjie vir my.	
This is a unique perspective for me-to have a variety of friends. Its a mature viewpoint of friendship	K: Ja, dis lekker om fun vriende te hê maar daar is ook daai wat nie rerig ernstig kan wees nie so jy kort ook maar daai wat ernstig kan praat, wat ook al deur daai goed is en ernstig daaroor kan praat. Dan kort jy ook jou net meer vriendelike vriende as jy wil rustig wees en goed, dan kan jy met hulle kuiers. Dis net lekker om verskeidenheid vriende te hê wat soos jy voel, na wie toe jy kan gaan.	Characteristics of friendship
	N: Wat doen julle outjies na skool, buite skool as julle kuier?	
	K: As ons soos gaan kuier, soos na skool soos in die week?	

	N: As jy saam met jou vriende is, watter aktiwiteite doen julle saam?	
	K: Oke, ons gaan Hatfield toe. Gaan ons Chicky monkey of Tenesse toe, maar ons is nog bietjie jonk maar ons kom in so jay. Maar ons gaan doen goed soos braai by iemand sy huis of as ek sal by C gaan oorslaap dan sal ons daar kuier of ons gaan fliek of ietsie gaan drink by menlyn. Ja... dis net lekker soos ons kuier net.	Characteristics of friendship
	N: Wel, ek moet nou vir jou sê ek dink ek het baie van my inligting gekry wat ek nodig gehad het. verduidelik vinnig vir my nog net een dingetjie. Vergelyk jy jouself met jou close vriende?	
	K: Ja	
	N: Wat bedoel jy of op wat baseer jy dit?	
She determines her self image in line with what her peers think of her	K: Op hoe hulle lyk. Verstaan dit kan my soos afsit as ek by C is. Sy is so maer, sy is so mooi gebou. Goed, dan kyk ek na myself en dis soos bleh. Mmm, tog appreciate ek ook myself. Die ding is hoe hulle binne en buite is, probeer ek dieselfde wees partykeer... so ek is maar altyd van kleins af so. Ek wil soos 'n ander persoon wees. Ek weet jy moet jouself accept, want die Here sê jy moenie soos iemand anders wil wees nie, maar dis tog daar.	Social comparison
	N: Is daar enige iets wat jy my nog wil vertel of wat jy dink ek moet weet?	
	K: Ek dink ek het alles vertel.	
	N: Ek waardeer al jou insette, dis rerig kosbare insette wat jy gelewer het. dis baie betekenisvolle goed wat jy gesê het en ek dink dit gaan 'n positiewe bydra tot my studie lewer.	
	K: Ek is bly ek kon help.	
	N: Baie dankie. Is jy... Voel jy of jy enige iets gedeel het wat jou geaffekteer het.	
	K: Ek is oke, ek het al al hierdie goed gedeel.	
	N: So jy is orraait?	
	K: Ja ek is	
	N: Baie dankie.	

APPENDIX D

FIELD NOTES

Field notes protocol	Interview session: Clown
Descriptive Notes	**Reflective notes**
He nervous at the start of the interview	I could note that Clown is nervous. He appeared anxious and I needed to calm him down.
He appears unsure of what is expected of him. He asks if it is going to be difficult questions he must answer	He appeared uncertain. He continually asked if the questions are going to be difficult and if I think he will be able to do it?
His thoughts jump as he answers. It's as if his attention is only focused for a moment or two, then he says something and his thoughts trail along those lines.	Clown has been diagnosed with ADHD. His attention is really distractible. He would be answering a question in the right context, then say something and his concentration would be lost to the question at hand. He would start talking along new lines of thought. As the interviewer, I had to allow this to a certain extend, but at times he would continue completely of the topic. I had to refocus him. I wonder, within a social context, do his friends become frustrated and even irritated by the fact that he finds it challenging to maintain a conversation in one context? I also wonder how it will be, when you have 2 or 3 friends together, with this occurrence? I wonder about the depth of their conversations and meanings attached to the conversation. When I formulated the questions for the

Some of the questions appeared to be too abstract and he did not know how to answer it.	interview, it was kept in mind to keep it age appropriate. I also did not want to stick to the questions in a strict manner. However due to the fact that I had to refocus him often, some of the questions were presented from the protocol. He did not understand the questions and I had to either rephrase them or explain it in easier terms. It appeared as if the initial questions were too abstract. This was something I had not anticipated and had kept in mind for the rest of the interview. I also need to address this in the interview with my second participant.
Some of the responses appear to be answered in such a manner as to impress me.	It felt as if Clown answered some questions in such a manner as to impress me. I cannot however, prove this. Perhaps it is because he wanted my approval?
Field notes protocol	**Interview session: Kitty**
Descriptive Notes	**Reflective notes**
Is much more honest and direct than the other participant.	Kitty was willing to share so much valuable information. She had a good understanding of the context and purpose of the study. I will be forever thankful to her for her contributions. She truly amazed me.
Comes across as self confident and opinionated.	Kitty did not appear nervous before or during the interview. I believe she is self confident in her ability. Socially she

	comes across as well adjusted and well verbally strong.
Appears as if she is more comfortable in this school than her previous high schools.	From her responses to some questions, Kitty seems to be well adjusted in the school she is currently. It appears as if she is more settled and happy here.
She feels strongly about the fact that one should not feel sorry with learners with learner impairments. She feels one should rather assit them in some way.	This was quite an interesting observation for me. Kitty was adamant that one should not feel sorry for learners with learner impairments. She feels that if you feel sorry, you do not really care for the individual. She believes one should rather demonstrate your care by assisting the person in some way, instead of just pitying them.
Is self conscious about her learner impairment. But she has an amazing way of making it more appealable to her (indigo children).	I am amazed at how she has rationalized her learner impairment in such a way so it empowers her. I believe she had to go through various periods of self development and belief in herself to reach this stage.

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The following are questions that would be used to guide the semi-structured interview:

1. Verduidelik hoe sien jy vriendskappe?
2. Verduidelik hoe is julle vriendskappe?
3. Wat is die eienskappe van jou vriendskappe?
4. Hoe vergelyk jy jouself met vriende en ander mense in jou portuurgroep?
5. Watter rol speel jou vriendskappe in wat jy van jouself dink?
6. Hoe ervaar jy ondersteun ander mense jou?
7. Verduidelik watter rol speel leer geremdheid in jou vriendskappe se ontwikkeling?
8. Watter bydra maak 'n leer geremdheid tot vriendskappe?
9. Verduidelik hoe jy moontlik jou vriende beter verstaan as gevolg van jul leer geremdhede?
10. Hoe ervaar jy vriendskappe binne in die skool waar julle tans is?

Appendix E

LETTER FROM THE LANGUAGE EDITOR