Expectations and Perceptions
Responsiveness, content and the issue of Mobile Instant Messaging norms

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ABSTRACT

Today's undeniable presence of social media and mobile devices has impacted ways of communicating. In communication, norms exist on which expectations may be based and to which people try to adhere. Adhering or not adhering to certain expectations can result in issues or misunderstandings. However, through the omnipresence of today's mobile devices, these expectations are constantly present. WhatsApp's introduction of blue ticks sparked a discussion about norms and expectations towards Mobile Instant Messenger (MIM) platforms. While studies have focused on social media, responsiveness, and Instant Messaging platforms, the topic of expectations towards responsiveness on MIM platforms has remained untouched. The question remains what the existing norms are regarding responsiveness, and what consequences these norms have. Based on these questions, two research questions and three sub questions were formulated. The question central to this study was: what are the expectations of young Dutch people (16-24 years old) regarding responsiveness on Instant Messaging platforms and what consequences does this have on IM usage and relationships? The goal of this study was to identify these expectations and consequences and relating them to age, gender, platform, and social tie strength. This explorative study used semi-structured in-depth interviews as a method. Sixteen participants between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four were interviewed. The transcripts of the interviews were coded and analyzed using Boeije's (2002) Constant Comparative Method. It was found that a pattern of expectations existed on which responsiveness seemed to be based. Part of this was one's WhatsApp identity – a personalized expectation largely based on previous behavior. On top of that, it was found that urgency was key and could overrule other influences in creating the expectation of a fast response. WhatsApp was chosen as the number one platform over Facebook. On top of that, tie strength also strongly influenced expectations towards responsiveness, based on a known or unknown WhatsApp identity and knowledge of one's situation. Age was found to have an influence on responsiveness as well as expectations towards responsiveness. The influence of gender was smaller, yet it was found that women were more emotionally affected by patterns of responsiveness that did not fit their expectation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

After receiving a complaint from a friend that I was ignoring him, I began to wonder whether this was my fault or something out of my power. I had forgotten to respond, and he had commented on it after only half an hour. As I asked myself to what extent I was obliged to answer and within what timeframe, I noticed my subconscious started to come up with excuses. It was not the first time that I had encountered such a phenomenon, nor was it the last time. It even extended to me: I now felt irritated or upset when no immediate response was received, let alone when it was both received *and* read by the receiver. The introduction of the blue checkmarks on WhatsApp in 2014 had only added to this phenomenon. However, it now sparked a public debate that had been a dormant one for a long time: were the blue checkmarks, or 'ticks', an invasion of privacy, a form of social control? And was it not by people's social norms that these rules of replying had come into existence?

In this day and age, endless ways of communicating exist, of which many are mediated. Such ways of communication come with norms and expectations. What is considered normal? How fast should one respond? What should be done when no response is received? How often should a particular medium be checked? Social media has become an essential part of daily life for many people. Social media platforms have grown since the nineties and continue to do so today (Ellison & boyd, 2007), increasingly containing Instant Messaging functions. Facebook, as a top social media platform, exemplifies the greatness of social media in this day and age, as it had an average of 936 million users and 798 million mobile users that were active daily in March 2015 ("Company Info: Statistics," n.d.). With the arrival of cellphones, smartphones, and other mobile devices, such platforms have moved from desktop or laptop computers to many other devices. Today, one has the possibility to take their social media or IM platform with them where ever they go. According to Correa, Hinsley and De Zúñiga (2010), Instant Messaging (IM) is included in the term social media "as a standalone feature of available software on the Internet or as an embedded feature of [Social Network Sites]" (p. 248). The recent technological developments such as mobile devices, and in particular smartphones, a constant availability to communicate and thus to engage in social activity have strongly impacted the ways in which people socialize (Ito et al., 2010; Correa, Hinsley & De Zúñiga, 2010; Ellison & boyd, 2007). Because of the increasing availability of mobile devices such as smartphones, IM seems to play an increasingly important part in social life and communication. In 2013, 97% of the Dutch population had access to the Internet, of which 72% had access to a mobile phone (Centraal Bureau voor de

Statistiek [CBS], 2014). On top of that, in the year 2011 69% of the Dutch population between 12 and 25 years old had a mobile device (Sleijpen, 2012). This shows that many Dutch citizens may have easy access to WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. Such large numbers of mobile devices with Internet connections potentially reinforce smartphone-mediated communication, which in turn brings accompanying social norms of use.

The large presence of mobile devices among the Dutch youth asks for a focus on the creation of such social norms of use that have been gradually established surrounding social media. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that as much as these norms say something about the technological platforms, they also present our sociological way of dealing with technology. It must thus be understood that not only did people create these technological platforms, these platforms are also continuously shaped by them (Williams and Edge, 1996; Mosemghvdlishvili & Jansz, 2013). However, one must not forget that media may also shape society to a certain extent as technology can impact the way a platform is used. It is thus a circle of influence in which neither side can be ignored. However, as the "publics are where norms are set and reinforced, where common ground is formed" (boyd, 2007, p. 137), it is important to recognize that this initially social product has enabled new ways of communicating and socializing, and therefore new social rules of communication are needed as are in every form of communication. Today's young adults play an important role in setting these social norms regarding social media, because of their frequent media use, their age-related emphasis on peer socializing, and their position as learners of how this socializing is done (boyd, 2007; Ito et al., 2010).

Responsiveness is a controversial yet interesting element of social media that needs further research. Responsiveness entails "whether the receiver is likely to respond to a message within a certain time period" (Avrahami & Hudson, 2006a, p. 731), which in terms of IM can be referred to as reaction speed. However, in responding to a message, content of a message may influence the reaction speed as it may slow it down, speed it up, or, the other way around, the reaction speed may influence the content of the message. Content of a message may thus be heavily interwoven with this phenomenon, and will therefore also be taken into account in this research. The focus of this study, however, lies with the perceptions and expectations towards responsiveness and content. This will therefore be the starting point of discussing and researching social media norms. As norms may differ between certain groups (Postmes, Spears & Lea, 2000) different sets of social norms may exist that can be applied to one person. However, failing to adhere to the expected behavior can result in problematic situations. A common example of this is when the receiver might not react within

the sender's expected timeframe. Another possible source of misunderstandings may lie in the content and context of a message in relation to the given timeframe of responsiveness. Will a simple "ok" do, or is elaboration needed? Social norms on social media may thus strongly influence expectations and behavior (Ito et al., 2010). This idea is reinforced by the recent update by WhatsApp, as it now, next to the two existing checkmarks that accompanied a send and delivered message, turned checkmarks blue when read by the receiver – a feature that could lead to expectations towards responsiveness, resulting in a form of social pressure. The presence of one's mobile availability data may result in a wrong interpretation of availability or social expectations that may unfoundedly make the receiver appear as ignoring the sender, as demonstrated in the anecdote. On top of that, it can also be seen as a form of privacy violation, as the behavior and availability of the user is accessible to all contacts and even non-contacts. While WhatsApp has recently enabled this feature to be turned off, it has sparked debate on a phenomenon that has long been present, but dormant.

All in all, the focus of this research thus lies on a number of key topics. First of all, it has a focus on (Mobile) Instant Messaging as a form of social media in particular, for it has significantly short reaction times and the possibility for groups as well as personal communication. The second topic of focus is that of socially constructed norms related to, and in dialogue with, new forms of social media, which are formed by many aspects that are yet to be explored. Third, the theme of norms surrounding responsiveness is a focus, as they can influence expectations and behavior regarding elements such as reaction speed, content, and context. This all is positioned in the context of 16 to 24 year olds, as this is an important age group regarding the creation of norms and expectations within the context of social media.

In the Netherlands, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger are such frequently used Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) platforms and are therefore central to this research. In the beginning of 2014 WhatsApp had 9.4 million active users in the Netherlands, which suggests that more than half of the Dutch population uses this form of IM (Wokke, 2015). The platform focuses on text messages, group chats, sending images and videos, and, since 2015, voice calling. Facebook Messenger is a platform that is based upon a service that is part of the worldwide famous social networking site Facebook. Facebook is the biggest social media platform in the Netherlands that had 8.9 million Dutch users in 2014, of which 6.1 million used it daily (Boekee, Engels & van der Veer, 2014, p. 7-8). In 2011, an app was launched that separated the social media app Facebook from its Mobile Instant Messaging platform Facebook Messenger (Facebook, 2011). While these two still belong together, the separation of the two apps can be seen as the birth of a Mobile Instant Messaging platform on its own. In

2014, installing this stand-alone app became mandatory in order to use Facebook Messenger – it could no longer be opened in the Facebook app itself (Page, 2014). Boekee, Engels and van der Veer (2014) show a rise in social media use, demonstrating the importance of social media in everyday life. They also argue that Snapchat and WeChat are on the rise – a possible sign of the importance of (mobile) IM in this day and age. Instant Messaging platforms may thus be critical for research regarding social media norms.

The goal of this study is to identify the norms that exist regarding responsiveness on these two Mobile Instant Messaging platforms. This is done in order to get a look at the general Mobile Instant Messaging norms that exist in the Netherlands. What is more, this study will also look at the consequences that these expectations have on the use of these platforms, as well as the socio-demographic differences that might affect it, different relationships, and the different platforms.

The social relevance of this research can be found in different areas. First of all, because of the notably large availability of mobile devices with a possibility to connect to the Internet in the Netherlands, it is of great importance to this country. The ownership and use of these devices may be a potential source of misunderstanding and conflict as a result of issues, such as differences in norms relating to social or generational groups, or differences between relational ties. Responsiveness may be influenced by a large set of characteristics that may be intricately entangled. Therefore, learning how such MIM platforms are used and understanding their workings and potential are of undeniable importance. A research that is focused on the public's experiences therefore not only benefits from their expressions, but also creates access to an otherwise present but under-discussed topic. This research will not only give insight into social expectations that exist, but it will thus also help grasp the essence of these expectations and their origins, as well as understanding the accompanying issues and conflicts. In acquiring this knowledge, a potential source of insight in the use of social media can be found that may benefit society in helping to predict future developments in expectations, on top of offering insight in their patterns of change in their journey throughout the history of social media.

The scientific relevance of this study is also multifold. First, while responsiveness has been studied in multiple contexts, a study that fully covered this particular topic through in-depth interviews is new to the field. Second, the particular combination of responsiveness and the existing expectations has not been an elaborate focus of study before either. Third, as norms are as ever-changing as its users, identifying them in the light of responsiveness is key and of notable interest to this research field. Finally, the particular context of the Netherlands

is a key characteristic in this research on responsiveness and makes it one of a kind – a similar study has not been conducted in or concerning the Netherlands. Despite the boundary crossing possibilities of social media, the social groups and social roles within them are often more local scaled, especially in the case of IM and friendship-driven networks (Haythornthwaite, 2005; Ling & Yttri, 2006; Ito et al., 2010).

In order to investigate these phenomena two research questions and three sub-questions were formulated. The first research question deals with the expectations towards responsiveness on (Mobile) Instant Messaging platforms, which will be answered by exploring the expectations of 16 to 24 year-old Dutch citizens towards WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. This question focuses on the perception, experiences and ideas of the interviewees towards this subject.

RQ 1: What are the expectations of young Dutch people (16-24 years old) regarding responsiveness on Instant Messaging platforms?

The second research question explores this subject further by looking at the perceptions and behaviors on (Mobile) Instant Messaging platforms and their relation to the previously mentioned expectations.

RQ 2: What consequences do expectations have on IM usage and relationships?

In order to answer these research questions, three sub questions were formulated. The first sub question explores potential differences between the platforms used.

SQ 1: To what extent are the expectations and consequences influenced by the platforms used?

The second sub question explores the role of differences in age and gender.

SQ 2: To what extent do age and gender play a role with respect to the expectations and consequences?

The third sub question focuses on relational ties and their potential role in the expectations and consequences regarding responsiveness. It is important to note that this question is based on the interviewee's perception of their strong and weak ties.

SQ 3: To what extent do strong and weak ties as experienced by the messenger influence expectations and consequences?

Together these research questions and sub questions aim to investigate and explore the existing norms and behaviors on (Mobile) Instant Messaging platforms and the factors by which they are influenced. While the research is exploratory, some general themes were expected. As Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp are different mediums the expectations and uses of the platforms might be different. Also, the expectations might differ per social group. School policies or time schedules might influence one's availability, yet the sender may not be aware. Relational ties could also influence expectations as face to face contact or awareness of one's whereabouts are more likely for close ties, whereas communicating with weak ties could result in politeness or unfamiliarity with another person's expectations. Overall, it was expected that the expectations and consequences would most likely be influenced by diverse themes that are interconnected and interdependent.

First, a section on theory will discuss some of the key elements of the existing theory and previous empirical research on the subject and related themes of this thesis. Second, the method section will elaborate on the method used, explaining the details of this research and the reason for the choice of method. Third, the results section will present the themes and details found in the interview data in a coherent and structured order. Finally, a conclusion and discussion will be offered that gives insight in the previously found results, elaborates on the pros and cons of the research in the way that it was conducted, and offers suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2: Theory

While much has been written on Instant Messaging, responsiveness, and norms in general, the amount of research regarding the expectations and consequences is limited. Therefore, this theory section is split up into eight sections that will separately address important theoretical concepts and theories related to this research: social media and Instant Messenger, continuous conversation, responsiveness, age, gender, construction of norms, and, finally, tie strength. As many elements are strongly linked and intertwined, one may encounter overlap, which was purposefully left in in order to create a coherent image of the issue at hand.

2.1 Social Media & Instant Messaging

Social media has a multitude of definitions, largely all referring to online platforms where one can upload content and/or communicate. One can encounter them in the form of websites, applications, or other forms of media. Today, these platforms have become part of many people's everyday life. What in 1997 started with SixDegrees.com (Ellison & boyd, 2007), and grew with MySpace and Hyves, has now become as large as Facebook, Twitter, and Instant Messenger (IM) platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger.

According to Correa, Hinsley and De Zúñiga (2010) social media include IM services "as a standalone feature of available software on the Internet or as an embedded feature of [Social Networking Sites (SNS)]" (p. 248). Instant Messaging (IM) entails the computer-mediated activity of exchanging messages through an online platform with another group or individual. Despite being part of computer-mediated communication (CMC), referring to "a cluster of interpersonal communication systems used for conveying written text, generally over the Internet" (Baron, 2004, p. 398), IM is unlike to other forms of mediated communication in terms of duration, frequency and interactivity.

What is more, the studied platforms of this research – WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger – can be said to be positioned somewhere in between IM communication and mobile communication as they are a mixture of these different platforms and media. First of all, they are approachable on both computer and mobile phone. Earlier IM platforms such as AIM and MSN Messenger were aimed at the use on computers. However, the past decade, access to mobile phones and internet access on these mobile devices has increased (CBS, 2014), resulting in what seems to be a logically explainable increase in mobile apps and a market towards the continuous conversation in the form of these apps – Mobile Instant Messaging (MIM) applications. While web-based social media and IM platforms are still

strongly used, the development of a mobile app, such as Facebook Messenger as an independent app from the Facebook app, suggests the importance and demand for IM platforms on mobile phones. Secondly, mobile IM services have lowered the cost of communicating (Church & de Oliveira, 2013). Mobile data often exists within a phone subscription plan that does not count texts but merely the amount of kilobytes that one uses. This thus not only allows for an increase in the frequency of texts, but also frees the user from a maximum word count per text. Thirdly, multimedia functions are included in todays MIMs. In a way, even voice calling is included. Fourthly, through the visual confirmation of the message being send, received and read, there is a sense of more "immediacy," "reliability & guarantee" and a "sense of connection" (Church & de Oliveira, 2013, p. 354). One thus knows whether a message possibly being ignored or has not been seen yet – a problematic issue, however, that leads to problems that will be addressed later in this chapter. This sense of fluency, reliability, immediacy, and even privacy will be further explained in the section on responsiveness. Finally, the mobility of a mobile phone app allows for a constant availability and therefore a continuous conversation. The latter will be further explained in the next section, as more information will be dedicated to this.

As a near-synchronous form of media that is often a one-to-one or group form of communication (Baron, 2004; Hu, Fowler, Wood, Smith & Westbrook, 2004; Avrahami, Hudson, 2006b) IM inherently differs from other forms of mediation (Thiel, 2005). It is characterized by a pace that is quicker than, for instance, sending an e-mail, where there are large lapses in time between responses, and talking on the phone, where one directly offers an answer to what the other is saying. In IM, the conversation is flowing is intermittent – meaning to have large spaces in between despite the fact that it is an ongoing conversation (Nardi, Whittaker & Bradner, 2000). On top of that, while other forms of mediated communication include SMS, MMS, e-mail, and voice call, the IM platforms discussed combine many of these functions into one (Hu, Fowler, Wood, Smith & Westbrook, 2004). As Deuze (2012) argues, media is spread throughout and omnipresent. This applies to MIM platforms as well: in a way, they are everywhere, always present, and cannot be turned off.

However, as a computer or mobile mediated platform in most cases takes away physical cues, misinterpretation of messages may become a problem (Haythornthwaite, 2002; Fox, Bukatko, Hallahan & Crawford, 2007; Awan & Gauntlett, 2013). While small symbols with facial expressions (emoticons) exist on some IM platforms that serve the purpose of substituting facial cues or facial expressions, these are not of equal impact (Delfos, 2013). Rather, it depends upon the knowledge one has over the other person in order to correctly

interpret both text and the use of emoticons, as the expressions on emoticons can be understood in different ways (Delfos, 2013). Fox, Bukatko, Hallahan and Crawford (2007) argue that next to this, the speed, possibility to multitask, and informality of IM suggest that facilitation of a conversation is key in this process. This possibility of misinterpretation is key in the issue of construction of norms as such misinterpretations may be based on a misunderstanding or a lack of awareness of norms. Boyd (2007) reinforces this idea of easy misinterpretations, arguing that while people have more control online, their "digital bodies are fundamentally coarser" (p. 129).

2.2 Continuous Conversation

An important term within the area of IM communication is that of the 'continuous conversation' (Berger & Kellner, 1964; Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This idea of being in a conversation continuously entails "a multitude of interactions, united in time through the construction of shared expectations and routines, and a common world" (Licoppe, 2004, p. 138). The basis of this constant contact and conversation that never ends lies within the omnipresence of communication media, as one is now available on many platforms in different situations. Online media now tend to fill the space between face-to-face conversations, which means that despite one's location or time zone, one is now free to communicate and maintain ties at any moment (Wellman, Haase, Witte & Hampton, 2001). The conversation style connected to IM communication, which is characterized by the idea of constant contact, is that of an intermittent conversation style (Nardi, Whittaker & Bradner, 2000) "in which long lapses can occur within what would normally form a single sequence of turns at talk" (Woodruff & Aoki, 2003, p. 171). With long lapses of time in between messages – going up to hours in between – there is an idea of a shared space yet with the possibility of plausible deniability (Nardi, Whittaker & Bradner, 2000). While lapses might suggest pauses between the contact, it in reality does not, as conversations are not necessarily finished – rather they are put on pause. The contact thus remains continuous, as it does not formally stop. Being online constantly, however, undermines the availability state as it makes it ambiguous through purposely going online and the mutual awareness that friends know about their constant possibility to log on (Grinter & Palen, 2002). An extension to WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger may be made in these terms when thinking in terms of people that have constant access to mobile internet versus those who only have access to Wi-Fi.

Continuous conversations, however, can bring consequences. This constant access to a

digital public space – the shared platform or space that is always on (Deuze, 2012) – might result in "contradictory consequences for close friendships" (Hall & Baym, 2011, p. 316). The relational expectations constructed within the framework of mobile phone use can have the effect of leading to (over)dependence and the feeling of entrapment, and may therefore influence the sense of friendship satisfaction (Hall & Baym, 2011). Dependence has a positive influence, whereas overdependence and entrapment – as a result of overdependence – have a negative influence (Hall & Baym, 2011). In a way, this thus reflects expectations towards responsiveness, as the constant exchange of information with friends may give the feeling of restrictedness, privacy invasion, and a lack of freedom – as can be argued to be the case of overdependence and entrapment (Hall & Baym, 2011).

Constant contact, especially with peers, through the continuous conversation can also have other effects. Schofield Clark (2005) argues that it can be seen as "the ever-present worry of needing to perform one-self appropriately, and the twin need to be constantly evaluated as acceptable, or okay, in the context of one's peers" (p. 217). This can be seen as important in relation to the research as the sense of acceptance may be central in peer constructed norms. All in all, the effects on young people can thus range from being relatively positive and constructive to those that are negative and anxiety creating.

2.3 Responsiveness

Continuous contact or expectations alike can result in different norms and consequences. Responsiveness, ranging from the timeframe in which one responds to a message, whether one responds, or in what manner one responds, seems strongly linked to these themes. Questions arise whether, when and how it is appropriate to respond. While IM's intermittent conversation style allows for pauses in between interactions (Woodruff & Aoki, 2003), these pauses may also result in frustrations (Avrahami & Hudson, 2006a; Hall & Baym, 2011).

Knowledge about people's lives, such as schedules, but also about cultural activities, influenced decisions to go online on IM, and thus fuels expectations towards timeframes of availability (Grinter & Palen, 2002). In this way, distinction can be made between high school and college students, as schedules and lives offers them different forms of access to IM (Grinter & Palen, 2002). However, these expectations do not necessarily have to match actual circumstances of availability. Such expectations of responsiveness can be countered with what is called "plausible deniability" (Nardi, Whittaker & Bradner, 2000; Woodruff & Aoki, 2003, p. 171; Avrahami & Hudson, 2006a). This entails the option not to respond to a

message, as the sender does not know where the receiver is and what they are doing, and thus may think that they are not available at the moment. This is made possible because of the lapses in between messages and the lack of contextual information (Woodruff & Aoki, 2003; Avrahami & Hudson, 2006a). To the sender this subtle deception may not be distinguishable as such lapses are quite common in IM behavior.

In their study on e-mail responsiveness Tyler and Tang (2003) found that people not only set expectations in the form of responsiveness images, they also mirror the e-mail rhythm their e-mail partner. On top of that, they argue that expectations come from both sides as the recipient needs to respond in time – the so-called 'recipients burden' – and the sender sets expectations based on previous contact – called a 'response expectation' – in order to know when something has possibly gone wrong and he needs to take action – also known as the 'breakdown perception' (Tyler & Tang, 2003). Such findings could be extended to IM in a way that one could send more messages after having waited for a reaction to the initial message.

So-called 'last seen' functions, as can be found on Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp, show whether one is online or at what time they were online. This may undermine plausible deniability as it gives information to the sender about the receiver that might suggest that the receiver is ignoring the sender. Being online suggest that one has seen the message and is presently in the position to respond. Displaying one's mobile availability can even cause anxiety towards possible false expectations and cases of social pressure (Pielot, de Oliveira, Kwak & Oliver, 2014). However, as Avrahami and Hudson (2006a) rightfully argue "knowing whether a person is *present*, however, does not necessarily provide an indication of whether or not that person is *available* for communication" (p. 732). On top of that, availability statuses may not always be used and or be sufficient (Avrahami & Hudson, 2006a). In the case of Facebook, one can only appear to be offline for certain persons or everyone, but there are no descriptive status indicators. In the case of WhatsApp, there are status indicators, yet they are only visible in the contact list and not within the list of recent chats. They thus cannot be considered of great help unless one would consult the contact list over and over again. On top of that, WhatsApp's checkmarks are commonly misunderstood (Church & Oliveira, 2013), making users think that their message has been delivered instead of just sent, resulting in "enhanced privacy concerns and increased expectations of faster responses to WhatsApp messages when compared to SMS" (Church & Oliveira, 2013, p. 360). Therefore it is not always clear whether someone is in a position to respond. Interestingly, the availability status can also impact the way in which people perceive

incoming communication. Teevan and Hehmeyer (2013) found that in telephone communication a non-available status made people perceive incoming phone calls as more important and thus made them more responsive.

Moreover, Buchenscheit et al. (2014) found that WhatsApp's presence sharing feature can be seen as violating one's privacy, as the information on availability through being able to see whether one is online, offline, and when one was last seen, offers insight into private information such as communication partners and daily routines. Next to that, a recent study by Mai, Freudenthaler, Schneider and Vorderer (2015) on the influence of the 'last-seen' function on IM behavior on Facebook Messenger shows that "fear of ostracism and need to belong were positively related to perceived obligations to answer and expectations toward chat partners" (p. 296). What is interesting is their finding that the expectation of responsiveness towards others is lower than the perceived expectation towards oneself – one felt more obliged to answer quickly, while such high standards were not measured against others.

Today's concerns around the blue checkmarks on WhatsApp could be connected to these arguments. The discussion surrounding these checkmarks, or 'ticks', mainly focuses on the issue of responsiveness. In 2014 WhatsApp introduced a feature that gave people the opportunity to see whether their communication partner has read their message. Whereas such a feature only existed to see whether the message was sent and received, it now showed even more information on the recipient's behavior, leading, as one might argue, to a decreased possibility of plausible deniability. Where before there were issues regarding misinterpretation of availability data, the blue checkmarks may thus possibly have reinforced these problems even further. It must be noted that, next to the possibility to turn one's 'last seen' feature off, one can now also turn off the blue checkmarks. However, the latter function is limited to Android devices, leaving the issue relevant for iOS users. An interesting finding by Buchenscheit et al. (2014), however, demonstrates that people who preferred the last seen feature to be turned off, were those who used the feature to gain information about other people's behavior. However, in order to see one's last seen status, one needs to leave their own feature on. Therefore, they thus willingly left the feature on to have this observatory power.

Studies have shown that different factors may play a role in responsiveness. The activities on the device, the context, other conversations, time, content, gender, and type of relationship all had effect on responsiveness (Avrahami & Hudson, 2006b; Avrahami, Fussell & Hudson, 2008). However, one can also refuse to respond based on lack of prior knowledge

on the content of a message – one has to consciously attend to the message in order to find out its importance (Avrahami & Hudson, 2006a). Notifications, such as pop-up bars and sounds that make the user aware of a certain activity on, in this case, the mobile device, can be considered intrusive (Sahami Shirazi et al., 2014). This could imply a struggle between the perceived importance of human communication on the one hand, and privacy and being free of disruptiveness expectations of response on the other. It should be kept in mind that these notifications and sources of disruptiveness do not only come from mobile devices but from all sorts of daily interactions and alerts – mostly computer mediated that have no "regard to whether the receiver is ready to accept them" (Avrahami & Hudson, 2006a, p. 732).

Negative implications of responsiveness also extent to relational aspects. As mentioned earlier, (over)dependence concerning responsiveness may cause frustration (Hall & Baym, 2011): one is expecting the other to respond based on earlier behaviors (Tyler & Tang, 2003), yet one is disappointed when no answer is received or it takes too long for it to arrive. The same thing can be said the other way around – one may feel entrapped and pressured to answer, as mobile devices are always present and can never be turned off (Deuze, 2012). Combining this with the increasing pervasiveness of smartphones (Oulasvirta, Rattenbury, Ma & Raita, 2012) and the accompanied problematic use (Shin & Dey, 2013), one can see that problematic over use and somewhat addictive behavior, such as frequent checking of texting and (social) apps (Shin & Dey, 2013) can be linked to responsiveness.

All in all, people can have insight in other person's availability in ways such as personal knowledge about one's life or through status information and availability information. This can lead to expectations of responsiveness. Despite the possibility for plausible deniability, issues of privacy and common misunderstandings of 'last seen' features and status updates make expectations towards responsiveness problematic. Recent discussion on WhatsApp's new features demonstrates these concerns. Moreover, issues of (over)dependency and problematic smartphone use add to the problem of responsiveness as they stimulate a possibly problematic level of responsiveness that can have negative implications for the user. In the following sections issues of responsiveness will be linked to socio-demographical characteristics and the constructions of norms, which will make up the argument of this thesis.

2.4 Age and Gender

Age is one of the socio-demographic characteristics that may have an important role in the

use of social media and Instant Messenger. Studies have shown differences in the way people of different age groups use texting (Kim, Kim, Park & Rice, 2007). Because of the gradual shift from texting to using MIM platforms, this could be extended to IM as well. A large number of varying researches have been done on adolescents, teenagers, and young-adults. As an age group that not only adapts to social and technological changes, but also can be said to be a source of these changes, adolescents and young-adults are a dominating group in setting new media norms (Ito et al., 2010). This not only a result of the intense and continuous media use within this age group, but also the importance of peer relationships and socializing as a developmental stage in their lives (boyd, 2007, Ito et al., 2010).

Different developmental stages as outlined by Delfos (2013) show the different focuses, values and problems that young adults deal with in different stages on their way from childhood to adulthood. Coming out of the eight developmental phase of fourteen to sixteen-year-olds, and going into the ninth stage of sixteen to eighteen-year-olds, the focus lies on the development of the psychological identity, after which they move to the tenth stage of eighteen to twenty-five-year-olds, where relationships and sexuality are central (Delfos, 2013). In this process they move from creating an identity to becoming independent, and from "[d]ealing with peers" (p. 122) to focusing on relationships (Delfos, 2013). Such differences in developmental stages might influence their online behavior, and may explain differences in attitudes.

Digital communicational media, including cellphones and IM, give young adults the option to socialize with peers while staying at home (boyd, 2007; Schofield Clark, 2005; Licoppe, 2004; Ling & Yttri, 2006). This gives them more control over their own lives, as they are free from parents, minimizing risks of, for instance, humiliation, are in constant contact with friends, and have the freedom of expression of the self (Schofield Clark, 2005; boyd, 2007; Ling, 2007; Awan & Gauntlett, 2013). Parental restrictions or surveillance that may hinder social development can now, in a way, be overruled by (digital) communication media, as it offers a direct link with peers (Ling & Yttri, 2006; boyd, 2007; Ito et al., 2010).

As a platform for identity construction and play (Thiel, 2005; Livingstone, 2008), social experimentation and learning (Thiel, 2005; Ling & Yttri, 2006; boyd, 2007; Livingstone, 2008; Ito et al., 2010;), and one that is free from supervision (Ling & Yttri, 2006; boyd, 2007, Livingstone, 2008; Ito et al., 2010) computer-mediated communication – from mobile phones, to IM, to SNSs – can be argued to be an significant developmental part in today's young people's lives. Topics such as sexuality (Thiel, 2005), popularity (Schofield Clark, 2005), and privacy versus publicity (boyd, 2014) can be explored thoroughly through

these platforms. On top of that, a plethora of knowledge and creative freedom is available to them (Awan & Gauntlett, 2013).

What is more, computer-mediated communication allows young people to micro- and hyper-coordinate in terms of maintaining social ties and planning and coordinating activities (Awan & Gauntlett, 2013). Micro-coordination can be defined as "the ability to use the cell phone to adjust meeting times and places at a moment's notice" (Schofield Clark, 2005, p. 206) and entails use for planning and coordinating, for instance, meetings (Woodruff & Aoki, 2003; Do, Blom & Gatica-Perez, 2011). Through their synchronous to near-synchronous nature, actions such as voice calling and using IM on a mobile device allow the user to effectively communicate and coordinate while on the go or, as Do, Blom, and Gatica-Perez (2011) put it, "in nomadic contexts" (p. 359). Media switching, as introduced by Nardi, Whittaker and Bradner (2000), which entails the switching from one medium, such as IM, to another, such as voice call, is a tool often used in micro-coordination for the sake of clarity, intimacy, and efficiency (Nardi, Whittaker & Bradner, 2000). Young people's choice of media is depending on the sort of relationship they have with their communication partner, as well as the topic discussed (Lenhart, Madden & Hitlin, 2005; Van Cleemput, 2010). As Wellman, Haase, Witte and Hampton (2001) conclude, "the Internet is increasing interpersonal connectivity and organizational involvement" (p. 450): it is through different kinds of media that one can switch and micro-coordinate.

Hyper-coordination, on the other hand, is defined by Hall and Baym (2011) as "the experience of enhanced, anxiety-provoking relational dependence and engagement through the use of mobile technologies" (p. 317). Coined by Ling and Yttri (2002) this goes further than merely micro-coordination as it entails as a way of self-expression in terms of peer relationships. As Schofield Clark (2005) explains, it refers to "additional, expressive uses of the phone, such as in-group discussion of appropriate phones to use, peer norms of use, and how each relates to presentation of self" (p. 207). Being used predominantly by teenagers (Ling & Yttri, 2002), it is used as a social tool to keep informed and be part of what is happening, as a form of interpersonal confidential communication, and therefore demands accessibility, and indirectly availability, in order to coordinate and, in a way, control one's network of peers (Schofield Clark, 2005). Ling and Yttri (2002) distinguish three dimensions of hyper-coordination. The first one overlaps with micro-coordination and focuses on the place and time of use of the mobile phone and the accompanying social engagement. The second dimension focuses on the "expressive use" where the mobile device "is employed for emotional and social communication" (p. 140). Finally, the third dimension entails "in-group

discussion and agreement about the proper forms of self-presentation vis-à-vis the mobile telephone" (p. 140), which entails rules on how to use it and how it is used to represent the individual. Social rules concerning responsiveness could be seen as a part of this last dimension. This is where the issue of the construction of norms ties in.

The quick adoption of IM (because of convenience, costs and speed) and its usefulness as a bridging communication system between face-to-face meetings (Alison Bryant, Sanders-Jackson & Smallwood, 2006) can be said to be an important development for young people. Important to note, however, is that Awan and Gauntlett (2013) found that young people did not see IM as crucial in their lives, in such a way that it was needed for maintaining social ties and self-expression – something deemed very important by Kim, Kim, Park and Rice (2007) as young people "make the transition from childhood to adulthood and from parent-defined to peer-defined self, all the while dealing with insecurity and changing contexts" (p. 1186). However, it was rather seen as a tool that "made life easier, [yet] they could manage without in their day-to-day practices and lives" (p. 121). On top of that, important conversations that are personal or intricate are still being held face-to-face or on the telephone in an offline environment (Lenhart, Madden & Hitlin, 2005; Mesch & Talmud, 2006).

It is important not to forget the importance of gender as a demographical, but also socio-cultural aspect in this issue. Gender differences can be found in large themes such as overall use: girls make more use of social communicative aspects of computers, whereas boys use the Internet more in general as well as specifically for games (Lenhart, Madden & Hitlin, 2005; Van Cleemput, 2010). However, gender differences can also be found in combination with age. In the age range of twelve to seventeen Lenhart and Madden (2007) found that younger girls were more likely to use SNS in comparison to younger boys, while this is turned around in the case of older girls and boys (fifteen years and older). However, one should keep in mind that this may be different for IM as it may be seen as a more private and different way of communicating. While flirting, especially through the comfortable distance of SNS, was a more likely activity for boys, communicating with friends was a more likely activity for girls (Lenhart & Madden, 2007) – a gender distinction that fits with findings by Thiel (2005) and Baron (2004), but that Ito et al. (2010) do not necessarily acknowledge.

Gender differences can be found in the way IM is used (Baron, 2004; Thiel, 2005; Fox, Bukatko, Hallahan & Crawford, 2007). Thiel (2005) distinguishes differences between teenage male and female users of IM platforms in terms of identity construction and gender performance. She bases this upon Judith Butler's ideas: "[f]emales and males 'perform' what they interpret their gender to be based upon, what culture has taught them is the correct

(heterosexual) interpretation of gender" (Thiel, 2005, p. 182). While preferred behavior in terms of responsiveness may not be so clear in terms of gendered performance, it may certainly be possible that these links are there. Thiel (2005) stresses the importance for girls to be considered nice – a stereotypical female characteristic – and Baron (2004) emphasizes the findings on behavior on asynchronous platforms where girls seem more prone to laugh and please, and be apologetic. On top of that, women are more expressive and talkative (Fox, Bukatko, Hallahan & Crawford, 2007). Males, on such asynchronous platforms, are more prone to be direct and argumentative (Baron, 2004). This reinforces the idea of men as dominating and women as communicative (Fox, Bukatko, Hallahan & Crawford, 2007). One could argue that this could result in a form of gendered behavior in the sense that a quick response, or a message with elaborate or more detailed content, may be perceived as expected behavior. Thiel's (2005) study found that "[d]espite all the empowerment that might be found through online communication, the discourses in IM are largely patriarchal, and often the medium is yet another avenue of exclusion" (p. 188).

Research also suggests that ways of communicating also differs between genders, based upon factors such as content, duration, and other communicative elements. Ramirez and Broneck (2009) argue that communication partners of the same sex had a higher communication quality as those of a different sex. Also in the way in which one chooses to send messages to someone of a particular gender lies difference. Fox, Bukatko, Hallahan and Crawford (2007) found that messages to men contained more words, more turns, and less emotion than messages to women. On top of that, Baron (2004) shows that IM conversation length or duration can also be influenced by gender. Women had longer conversations than men and took more time in ending conversations (Baron, 2004). Differences can also be found in the language patterns used, as can they differ between platforms (Baron, 2004). What is more, according to Avrahmi, Fussell and Hudson (2008) there is a difference in responsiveness between men and women. On average, women appeared to respond faster to IM messages than men (Avrahami, Fussell & Hudson, 2008). Gender can thus influence responsiveness, content, and behavior in a variety of ways. On a final note, it should be kept in mind that personality traits can influence one's behaviors or experiences (Correa, Hinsley & de Zúñiga, 2010).

2.5 Construction of Norms

Social norms can be defined in many ways, and are not static, as they change over time

(Lampe, Ellison & Steinfield, 2008). In order to use this concept strategically, social norms theory is key (Berkowitz, 2005; Baumgartner, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2011), a theory that "assumes that peer influence is based on adolescents' beliefs about the norms that are prevalent among their peers" (Baumgartner, Valkenburg & Peter, 2011, p. 753). In the case of responsiveness, one could thus say that "[b]oth content and form of messaging are variable, socially structured, and subject to emergent norms specific to one's social group" (Postmes, Spears & Lea, 2000, p. 367). Different communication norms exist for intragroups and outgroups, as those constructed within the group are limited towards those within the group and communication outside of that group has other norms (Postmes, Spears & Lea, 2000). Such rules are thus based on a set of norms established within a (peer) group, or outside this group.

Regarding norms, an important distinction can be made between injunctive and descriptive norms, which can be key in defining these norms. Injunctive peer norms refer to "beliefs about the approval of a behavior among peers," whereas descriptive peer norms can be defined as "adolescents' perceptions about the quantity and frequency of a certain … behavior among peers" (Baumgartner, Valkenburg & Peter, 2011, p. 753). The first could refer to a chosen platform, a way of reacting or a way of using language, whereas the second could refer to the quantity of responses as well as the speed. Nevertheless, as Baumgartner, Valkenburg and Peter (2011) stress, what should be noted is the subjectivity of these norms as they are based on "adolescents' subjective beliefs about their peers' behavior and approval" (p. 753). This subjectivity entails the possibility that misconceptions exist about these norms, as they are not based on factual information. However, what is key in the research reported in this thesis is that responsiveness behavior, and therefore norms, are not always explicitly discussed, similar to the case of Baumgartner, Valkenburg and Peter's (2011) research. While their research focused on norms regarding online risky behavior, and was conducted through a quantitative method, they were aware of the possibility of limited knowledge of their participants about the existing norms. This may increase its proneness to misconceptions as well as the lack of clarity about people's expectations and norms. However, it should be noted that openly discussing peer norms towards online risky behavior might be more sensitive than norms towards responsiveness. Responsiveness might not be a very sensitive topic, yet it is not one discussed continuously.

What is, however, important to keep in mind during the search for the construction of norms is that one should avoid the extremes of technological determinism or its social opposite. Social Shaping of Technology theory (SST) by Williams and Edge (1996)

"examines the content of technology and the particular processes involved in innovation" (Williams & Edge, 1996). SST theory therefore argues that technology is shaped by society, both in terms of social and economic factors that contribute to its development and use (Williams & Edge, 1996; Mosemghvdlishvili & Jansz, 2013). This thus suggests, when looking from the perspective of this research, that social media are shaped by people and is thus a social product. However, it must be noted that it also works the other way around: while society has a strong influence on technology, technology may also, to a certain extent, have influence on the way a platform is used. Nevertheless, it is key to recognize the way in which socially shaped technologies such as Instant Messenger have paved the way for new forms of communicating, socializing, and creating social networks. New ways of communicating lead to the need for new subjective norms.

It is thus important to keep in mind that norms, which have been constructed by users themselves and thus not technology, are key in certain behaviors on technological devices. An issue such as norms of responsiveness can be influenced by socio-cultural elements (Avrahami, Fussell & Hudson, 2008). Avrahami, Fussell and Hudson (2008) argue that gender and participant group are an example of how socio-cultural elements affect norms or, in a way, expectations of responsiveness.

As Schofield Clark (2005) paraphrases Swidler (1986): "people commonly operate out of an often taken-for-granted understanding of how things should be done. People acquire this sense of how things should be done mostly as a result of their relationship with other people" (p. 206). This thus means that uses and behaviors based on norms are heavily reliant on social constructions – which, according to Schofield Clark (2005), make it important to look at such issues in terms of peer relationships and behaviors. The construction of these norms may not be visible at first sight: Livingstone (2008) argues that despite the perception of freedom in behavior and choices in media, it is, next to platform limitations, peers that set norms and expected behavior. Boyd (2007) argues that it is in publics "where norms are set and reinforced" and that these norms created by society "only provide the collectively imagined boundaries" (p. 137). These arguments, in turn, point out that there is therefore an undeniable link between the online and offline world in terms of behavior and social norms (Schofield Clark, 2005). Linking this to the earlier discussed age group, one can identify their importance in the constructions of social media norms, especially in terms of IM communication. Not only are they growing up and developing in a world where new media is central and changes in the field happen everyday (Ito et al., 2010), but their generation also significantly contributes to their ability to adapt to social rules and norm changing (Ling &

Yttri, 2006; Ito et al., 2010; Delfos, 2013). Their intense media use and their position in the learning processes of peer socializing make young people even more susceptible to, but at the same time also influencing factors in, the construction of social media norms (boyd, 2007; Ito et al., 2010).

2.6 Tie Strength

As social peer groups are thus central in this discussion (Ling & Yttri, 2002; Schofield Clark, 2005; Ling & Yttri, 2006; Ito et al., 2010), the concept of tie strength, a term that refers to a way of measuring relationships, is key in the current study. Internet mediated communication can function as a way of emotionally deepening or enforcing (real life) relationships (Alison Bryant, Sanders-Jackson & Smallwood, 2006; Awan & Gauntlett, 2013). On top of that, in her article Haythornthwaite (2002) argues that it is the tie strength of a relationship that strongly influences media use and impact – "the ways, means, and expression of communications, … the motivation, needs, and desires for communication" (p. 385). However, "it is the tie that drives the number and types of exchanges, not whether the tie is maintained on or offline, or via any combination of the two" (Haythornthwaite, 2002, p. 388).

Tie strength can be divided in terms of strong ties and weak ties. Tie strength is measured between two individuals in terms of their communication. There are different factors that can be used in combination to measure tie strength. This ranges from closeness, frequency and duration of contact, the source of relationship, and so on (Marsden & Campbell, 1984). As Marsden and Campbell (1984) argue in their research on measuring tie strength, closeness – "the emotional intensity of a relationship" (p. 489) – is considered the most effective way of measuring tie strength. Weak ties are characterized by conversations with a less intimate and supportive character (Haythornthwaite, 2002; Marsden & Campbell, 1984; Mesch, 2009). Strong ties' conversations and interactions, on the other hand, are more intimate, frequent, and personal (Marsden & Campbell, 1984; Haythornthwaite, 2002). Next to strong and weak ties, Haythornthwaite (2002) uses the term latent tie – "ones that exist technically but have not yet been activated" (p. 385) – that can be come weak ties when activated. Contact lists on IM also include such latent ties, referring to those with which communication barely or never occurs (Van Cleemput, 2010). As Haythornthwaite (2002) argues, "[s]ocially constructed norms are more likely to be established and reinforced by those with stronger ties" (p. 389) because of one's visibility through frequency of communication, the need, and thus motivation, for a way of expressing themselves towards

others. This can be combined with Schofield Clark's (2005) argument that constant contact and "increased opportunities to obtain abstracted information" (p. 206) are crucial in the construction of uses and norms.

Studies such as those of Kim, Kim, Park and Rice (2007) and Van Cleemput (2010) have linked certain mediums to types of ties. However, disagreement exists between these studies. Whereas Van Cleemput (2010) argues that strong ties were characterized by a large amount of media (IM, mobile communication, e-mail, etc.) and weak ties were more bound to face-to-face and SNS communication, Kim, Kim, Park and Rice (2007) found that that the strengthening of strong ties was done through mobile communication while the strengthening of weak ties was done through IM. Interestingly, when one compares the 2007 study to today's IM platforms, one can see that WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger are now mobile IM platforms and are thus in between this argument. What is more, research shows that Facebook Messenger is not used with every friend on Facebook as sending messages "requires an investment of time and energy on the part of the sender, it evinces social interaction in a way that friend links do not" (Golder, Wilkinson & Huberman, 2007, p. 13). Friend lists on SNS may thus not represent real friendships or activity on Facebook Messenger. It could be said that this indicates the many weak ties of SNSs and the higher likeliness of strong ties on IM.

Responsiveness may be influenced by the type of social tie. Avrahami and Hudson (2006b) found that 'social buddies' have longer conversations, yet the pace at which they do so is not as fast as their pace with 'work buddies'. On top of that, the messages of colleagues are longer. They go on to imply that this suggests a more focused conversation with colleagues versus a more scattered conversation in terms of attention with their friends. This may be based on themes such as expectations of responsiveness.

Important to note is that group relationships differ from individual one-to-one relationships, and reports of a tension that exists in between these relationships in an environment where the group is around (Haythornthwaite, 2002). Haythornthwaite (2002) argues that rather than the characteristics of a medium, it is "the way in which the medium creates a social network of ties, how its presence sustains such a network, and how its removal disrupts such a network" (p. 386) that is important. This thus may have impact on uses, behaviors and norms on Instant Messaging platforms when looking at one-to-one conversations and group conversations. The establishment of subjective norms and the implementation therefore on such a platform may thus be dependent on the relational context of a conversation – talking to one or talking to many.

Strong ties frequently result in media multiplexity, a term coined by Haythornthwaite (2005), which entails using multiple mediated communicational platforms (Haythornthwaite, 2002; Haythornthwaite, 2005; Van Cleemput, 2010; Hall & Baym, 2011). The more different media used, the stronger the tie, and the other way around (Haythornthwaite, 2002). What is more, one could say that Hall and Baym's (2011) "mobile maintenance expectations" (p. 320) are reinforced and enlarged through the use of multiple platforms. The amount of influence on others is increasing and the degree of privacy is decreasing: the stronger the tie, the more platforms used, the more expectations and (over)dependence. However, one must note that the use of multiple media platforms does not necessarily mean that the frequency or duration of media use increases. The idea that "within a group, use of media conforms to a uni-dimensional scale: those who use only one medium, use the same medium; those who use two, tend to use the same second medium, etc." (Haythornthwaite, 2005, p. 130), illustrates the importance of the age group and their intense and diverse media use: the variety of social media platforms is present, yet the large platforms are omnipresent among peers. Van Cleemput (2010) explicitly refers to teenagers as being "multichannel" to stress their many forms of communicating. The existence of different types and quantities of communication channels should therefore be taken into account when discussing IM use and behavior. Ramirez and Broneck (2009) go even further and argue that multiple channels are evidence of the close resemblance in functions of IM to face-to-face communication. Moreover, media multiplexity also offers a way of continuing communication between strong ties if a medium disappears (Haythornthwaite, 2005).

On a final note, one should not disregard those who do not wish to partake in social media. These so-called non-users or nonparticipants were divided into two categories by boyd (2007): "disenfranchised teens and conscientious objectors" (p. 121), where the first have limited access, and the second refuse to participate for other reasons. However, there are also people who choose to use, for instance, IM, but do not own accounts on SNS – not taking part on SNS sites does not mean that one does not communicate online (Tufekci, 2008).

All in all, relational ties thus affect the way in which people communicate, yet it can also determine the platform chosen and the topics discussed. Moreover, it can be a factor in the construction of norms: whereas strong ties have much influence on social norms of use, weak ties barely have such power. While Avrahami and Hudson (2006b) suggests that people tend to respond faster to people that they do not know very well rather than to those with whom they have strong ties – at least this is the case in a work versus social environment – it should be kept in mind that it may be different among the respondents of this research. While

this could be argued to be because of the need for direct attention at work, this argument will be taken into account in terms of the possibility that it is a form of politeness.

2.7 Central Concepts

All in all, in order to study the research questions a number of key concepts are central. Responsiveness refers to whether one responds, in what timeframe, and in what manner. This is tightly linked with the concept of plausible deniability: the possibility to not respond without the receiver knowing it was done on purpose. Media switching, media multiplexity and micro-coordination are three themes that deal with using other platforms in relation to a previous one. Next to that, hyper coordination and norm construction are central in researching expectations as they deal with use, behavior, and perceiving (subjective) peer norms. The concept of the continuous conversation refers to the never-ending conversation characterized by the omnipresence of media and shared norms and expectations, to which micro-coordination can be linked in terms of using media constantly to micro-coordinate meetings, activities, and other phenomena. Socio-demographics such as gender and age groups are used in terms of distinguishing differences. Finally, relational ties, as the different closeness of relationships, will for the sake of this research be explained as family and close friends for strong ties, and acquaintances and other peers for weak ties. These may potentially influence media use in terms of choice of media, responsiveness, content, and other characteristics.

The sub questions of this research relate to the research questions and central concepts in that they search for differences within the large trends concerning responsiveness. The socio-demographic characteristics of age and gender, as well as the technical limitations or possibilities of certain platforms may influence outcomes, together highlighting the possibility of both social as technological aspects. Moreover, not only may static characteristics influence these findings, also the dynamic tie strength may influence responsiveness and consequences. Therefore, these elements and concepts are specific points of focus.

Chapter 3: Method

The method chosen is key to the investigation of the topic. In this section, the choices and uses of the method will be explained. First, the choice of method will be explained as well as the reason for its usefulness. Second, information will be given regarding the collection of data, the research units, and the sampling methods. Third, the sensitizing concepts will give an oversight of how the theory is used in the research. Fourth, the type of data analysis is given as well as a detailed description of how this affects the research. Finally, reliability and validity will be explored in detail to clarify measures taken to ensure reliability and validity.

3.1 In-depth Interviews

The method chosen for this research is of qualitative nature. The choice for a qualitative method is based on two of the characteristics of qualitative research that are key in this research: its explorative nature and the ability to search for meaning (Gilbert, 2008). While this research is embedded in previous research, it is mainly explorative and aims to find new themes and data. Important to keep in mind is that while some themes are present to structure the analysis, the limited research in the field of expectations and consequences regarding responsiveness has created a necessity for explorative research that focuses on the phenomenon and investigates it thoroughly. As no theory is tested, no confirmative research is needed. The openness and freedom that comes with qualitative research enables the search for meaning and possibly enriches the quality of the data that may be found, as it offers freedom to elaborate and discuss freely. These explorative possibilities and the access to detailed information are key in the search for social norms and expectations, which makes qualitative research a convincingly right choice in the search for an answer to the proposed research questions and sub questions.

It is specifically the focus on norms and expectations that has pushed the research towards interviews. Essentially, the empirical research in this project is about the views and perceptions of the interviewees rather than the actual use. Therefore, the actual use and responses are not key to the study, but rather the way in which these phenomena are experienced and how people talk and reason about it. These experiences cannot be read from data only, neither would it be possible to explore these themes freely in the limitedness of a fully structured questionnaire. Expectations are found in the minds of the respondents, and need an active approach in order to fully engage the respondent in becoming aware of their own use and expectations. Therefore, combining this to the argument for qualitative research,

the choice was made to conduct interviews. The conversational character of semi-structured interviews offers the possibility for a free, non-forced obtaining of data that is based on the interviewee's point of view, which in turn gives space for exploring themes and in great detail (Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2003).

The choice to opt for semi-structured in-depth interviews is based on the limited but existing knowledge on themes regarding responsiveness and norm construction. Therefore, the interviewee may be slightly guided towards topics that the interviewer deems relevant. On top of that, this offers the possibility to compare and contrast, as it decreases the amounts of topics while remaining to offer space to talk about what the interviewee finds important and relevant (Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2003). Through discussing these topics and reflecting upon them, a construction of meaning will come to the fore. This will help define ideas, motivations, themes and expectations towards responsiveness. Some key terms will therefore be addressed in each interview, while the details within each interview may fluctuate freely and in a detailed manner. It is through this way that it is aimed to obtain new insights on experiences and expectations – ones that have not been addressed or found before. The influence of relational ties, different platforms, and socio-demographic elements can be explored in conversation, encouraging active and critical engagement of the respondent. The step-by-step structure of the interview yet openness will create an atmosphere that is similar to an ordinary conversation in which one can discuss and reflect on their own behavior and expectations towards others. These norms will then become more clear and less intertwined, which goes on to stimulate the open conversation that allows for the discussion of details. The space allowed for the interviewees to participate actively and fully contributes to a critical position of the interviewees themselves regarding their own social behavior as well as the possibility to explore the topic thoroughly and passionately. While previous research has used interviews to touch upon the issue of responsiveness (Tyler & Tang, 2003; Buchenscheit et al., 2014), it has not done so extensively. On top of that, expectations and norms in combination to responsiveness have not been discussed in this matter. This research focuses on this particular issue and aims to find themes that explain norms and expectations towards responsiveness.

3.2 Respondents

The data analysis was based on the transcripts of in-depth semi-structured interviews. The choice of particular respondents for the interviews plays an important role. The criteria on

which the interviewees were selected were based mainly on current nationality or residence, age, and gender. First of all, both men and women were selected as equally distributed as possible. This was necessary in order to compare and contrast findings between these two groups. It was important, however, to have similar equal distributions in the age groups. The ages in between 16 and 24 were therefore also equally distributed. This was done by creating three larger categories: 16 to 18, 19 to 21, and 22 to 24. These age groups were chosen as this study focuses on youth, yet the range of ages makes it possible to distinguish possible differences between age groups. What is more, one of the conditions of taking part in this study was living in the Netherlands. This is done because of the scale of the research and the geographical limitations of the researcher. More information on the respondents can be found in Appendix A.

For the sake of this study, a combination of convenience sampling and snowball sampling was used. While the initial plan was to recruit interviewees through schools, two weeks of spring break made this impossible. Therefore, the recruitment was done using the networks of the researcher's acquaintances, while it was made certain that the researcher/interviewer did not know the interviewees. In order to do this structurally, a large selection of people was addressed in order to keep the group of interviewees somewhat diverse. Moreover, an effort was made towards the selection of people from different social groups. This was done in order to prevent a biased answer through being influenced by the same group norms. A choice was made to compare people on a somewhat equal educational level. For this study, the higher levels of the Dutch educational system were chosen. In the Netherlands this entails HAVO/VWO as a high school level, to HBO (University of Applied Sciences) to WO (University). Nevertheless, this limitation will be kept in mind throughout the study.

Sixteen interviews were conducted, of which nine were men and seven were women. Five interviewees were between the ages of 16 and 18, six were between the ages of 19 and 21, and five were between the ages of 22 and 24. All were born and raised in the Netherlands. On top of that, each participant owned a smartphone and was media savvy. All interviews were conducted in Dutch. The interviews were recorded using a smartphone recording feature and transcribed verbatim as quickly as possible afterwards in order to have a fresh memory of the interview, after which they were read, and coded several times using the constant comparison technique. The interviews primarily discussed the current use of the (Mobile) Instant Messenger platforms, but sometimes also touch upon earlier behaviors or possible future expectations.

3.3 Sensitizing Concepts

Sensitizing concepts were derived out of the earlier discussed theory. The main concepts used within the interviews were responsiveness, multiple platform use, expectations, continuous conversation, gender, age, and relational ties. Table 1 shows an oversight of these concepts, their sub concepts and the measures on which the interview questions were based. A more detailed explanation of the theory used can be found in the Theory section of this thesis. The full topic list/interview guide can be found in Appendix B.

Table 1: An oversight of (sub)concepts in relation to indicators

Concept	Sub concept	Indicators
Responsiveness		
	Responsiveness	Reaction speed of self; reaction speed of others; dependence of reaction speed on situation, message, person, platform, etc.
	Plausible deniability	Last seen feature; Blue ticks; Choosing not to respond.
	Privacy implications	Last seen feature; Blue ticks; A sense of one's privacy being invaded.
Use of multiple platforms		
	Media switching	Using other platforms in certain situations
	Media multiplexity	Using other platforms with different people
	Micro coordination	Using other platforms in on-the-go situations
Expectations		
	Hyper-coordination	The dependence of Mobile Instant Messenger behavior on social norms based on groups and friends and others.
	Norm construction	The awareness of the construction of certain norms and the extent to which one is capable of going against them.
Continuous Conversation		
	Continuous conversation	What are one's expectations; on what are expectations based; are there differences between groups and individuals when chatting.
	Micro-coordination	Using other platforms in on-the-go situations; chatting in different situations and switching accordingly.
Socio-demographics		

	Gender	The influence of gender on conversations or reaction speed
	Age	The influence of certain age groups on conversations or reaction speed
Relational Ties		
	Strong ties	Close friends and family
	Weak ties	Acquaintances and other peers

Differences in age and gender were investigated both by comparing and contrasting interviews through the use of the Constant Comparative Method, as will be explained in section 3.4, as well as through the discussion of age and gender and their influence on conversations during the interviews. These were intermixed with the general interview questions. Despite this list of themes, the character of the interviews left room for the interpretations and ideas of the interviewees.

The interviews took 50 minutes on average, of which the longest was 64 minutes and the shortest was 33 minutes. The interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via Skype because of time constraints and distance. Four pilot interviews were conducted in advance in order to test the topic list and prepare for possible answers. The interviewees for these pilot interviews were carefully selected keeping in mind age and gender. On the basis of these pilot interviews, the topic list was altered to reduce length and omit superfluous questions. On top of that, the pilots gave a strong foundation of potential answers, and these answers were taken into account when reformulating questions.

The goal of the research as introduced to the participants was the search for norms concerning expectations towards responsiveness on MIM platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. During the interviews, concepts were presented in approachable ways. The interviews started with general questions about platform use, and continued with questions about general responsiveness, which was discussed in terms of reaction speed. The 'last seen' feature and the blue ticks were also discussed here, which also indirectly touch upon the issue of privacy implications. This was accompanied by questions about plausible deniability, which was discussed in terms of opting out of responding unnoticed. This was succeeded by a question concerning media switching and media multiplexity, which were discussed in terms of using other platforms in certain situations and with certain people. Next, the construction of norms and hyper-coordination were discussed in terms of awareness of the

construction and presence of norms, as well as the dependence of Mobile Instant Messaging behavior on peer(group) based social norms. After that, the concept of the continuous conversation was addressed as the ongoing conversation on messenger and how this relates to expectations. Finally the interviewee was given the option to add any thoughts that had not been discussed. As the interviewees were asked in advance to take note of their Mobile Instant Messaging use, they were well informed and aware of the goal of the study, and were actively engaging in the topic. Important to note is that relational tie strength was discussed in terms of strong ties, meaning close friends and family, and weak ties, meaning acquaintances and other peers. However, if respondents wanted to alter this according to their experience, they were free to do so.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using the Constant Comparative Method (CCM) as explained by Boeije (2002). CCM entails the constant comparing of different parts of the data in different ways. This data analysis method was chosen as comparing and contrasting are critical elements of the research question and its sub questions. Moreover, its structured character provides a tool for the construction of theory that is well grounded in a thorough research. In this particular research, this means that the interviews were compared in five general steps. First, single interviews were fully coded after which they will be internally compared. This way, categories were formed as well as the distinction of how the data differs, what it has in common, what the context of the section is and what is emphasized by the respondent (Boeije, 2002). This step created "a summary of each interview … a list of provisional codes … the distillation of the interview into an inventory of provisional codes or a conceptual profile ... [as well as] memos which describe the analysis process" (Boeije, 2002, p. 397). As a second step, all interviews were compared to each other in order to create a general view. The third step entailed the comparing of interviews within the same group. It must be noted that this step was split into two sections: gender and age. Both age categories and genders were compared. Both step two and three were done in order to improve definitions of concepts, find patterns, and to find what themes are found group wide – essentially it is adding to the earlier found codes, the construction of concepts, through which typologies can be found (Boeije, 2002). The fourth step existed out of a comparison of interviews from different groups. This was once again done in terms of age and gender. Different themes and findings were contrasted against each other and in this process existing themes that differ will be

emphasized, while at the same time similarities between groups may be found. This reinforces and deepens earlier findings and creating coherent concepts. The final step that was taken is that of comparing findings on platforms. Throughout the interviews, answers have been given concerning different platforms. The distinctions between these answers needed to be clarified and conceptualized in order to find an answer to the accompanying sub question. This was done through the comparing and contrasting of findings within and among interview, repeating the first two steps. However, when relevant differences were found between age or gender groups, these were investigated as well, repeating the third and fourth step. Some of the fragments found relevant in the analysis were used to demonstrate arguments and concepts in the results section.

During the first step of contrasting, initial codes and ideas were found, which was done keeping the sensitizing concepts in mind. While the topic list was based on sensitizing concepts, and initially helped grouping information together, different codes were found throughout the interviews, which is where the axial coding came in. The axial coding in the second and third step were aimed at "searching for indicators and characteristics for each concept in order to define that concept" (Boeije, 2002, p. 398), and created concepts that could be used to triangulate the data in the fourth step and fifth step. The themes identified were related to the expectations, behaviors and expressions of norms of the interviewees towards responsiveness, the accompanying content and platforms used. They were categorized into six larger sections based on relationships between concepts and their roles in expectations and behavior.

3.5 Reliability & Validity

In order to try to ensure reliability and validity as much as possible, a variety of techniques were used. First of all, much attention was given to describing and explaining as well as possible the steps that were taken in this research, as well as the paths that lead to the interpretations of the data. Next to that, attention was also paid to give sufficient information in order to repeat or compare the study. This was done throughout the structure of the thesis, but especially in the method and analysis sections. Attention was paid to building solid argumentations of each interpretation and providing the reader with possible counter arguments or deviant cases. This is done in order to stimulate credibility.

Extra techniques that are used in this research are triangulation as part of the CCM method and deviant case analysis. The use of triangulation is embedded in the CCM method

during the step of comparing different groups. Deviant case analysis has been used in order to confirm, expand, or revise a code or pattern and thus improve reliability.

Important to note is that the position of the researcher played an important part in semi-structured interviews (Gilbert, 2008). However, awareness of this position also brought advantages. While the researcher was aware of her own age being part of the age groups interviewed and was aware of the possible bias that comes with it through her own use, this was also used to the research's advantage. The relatively matching age of the researcher to the interviewees in a way created a connection and feeling of mutual understanding and knowledge of the subjects. Certain discussions flowed easier as the interviewees did not feel the need to express themselves in 'layman's terms', but could rather talk using what can be called young adult jargon. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the researcher was also cautious about a false feeling mutual understanding where the understandings of both individuals might differ. The researcher therefore always aimed to ask the interviewee to elaborate, or tried to repeat what the interviewee was saying in order to make sure they agreed on the meaning.

Chapter 4: Results

In this section the results of the interviews will be discussed. First, the general expectations and behaviors concerning responsiveness on WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger will be discussed. Second, phenomena that may influence responsiveness are discussed both in terms of expectations and consequences. Third, additional possible consequences will be outlined. Fourth, differences among platforms will be discussed. Fifth, the influence gender and age will be explored. And finally, the influence of strong ties and weak ties is explained.

4.1 General Expectations and Behaviors

The widely ranging theme of expectations and accompanying consequences can be broken up into different sections. In this first section, the general expectations and accompanying consequences on behavior and use will be elaborated on.

4.1.1 General reaction speed

Generally the respondents argued that they responded within a day, some being more close to an hour or a couple of minutes. Many suggested that they would respond as soon as they saw the message – meaning having read it instead of merely receiving it, which was dependent on their situation.

> "… I think it depends on whether I saw it or not. Or whether I'm busy doing something." (Guido, 18)

> "Then, ehm, I respond later. Well, if I, well, I always respond immediately, but I don't always read it immediately. Sometimes when someone sends a message at midnight and I'm asleep … I will respond in the morning." (Lara, 16)

Regarding responses to their own messages, they expected others to have similar opinions and behaviors. They often considered their own behavior 'normal' and did not expect a peer to respond faster or in a different way. As Guido, an eighteen-year-old male argues:

> "… I don't actually expect anyone to respond faster than me, or anything. … At least, I'm not asking them to, because I don't do it either. … When I, when I, eh actually well, would always respond after only ten seconds, then eh maybe I would ask the same of someone else, but because I don't actually do that either, at least [not with]

things that are not really important or anything, … if I don't respond very fast to [an unimportant message], then I don't expect others to do that either."

Sixteen-year-old female Lara argues:

"Most people have- but when she reads it she does respond immediately. … Well, [whether I am bothered by her late response or not] sort of depends on what I'm asking. But, I just think that, because I don't do it, I find it kind of weird not to have your phone with you, you know?"

These types of answers connect to the idea that these expectations are based on a norm to which they try to adhere themselves, too.

One could thus say while responsiveness strongly differs between people, both in practice and in expectations, opinions towards non-response or slow response were often based on their own behavior. This leads us to the next topic of patterns of expectations.

4.1.2 Pattern of expectations

Several interviewees addressed the idea of a pattern of expectations, which was based upon factors such as previous behavior of the sender, previous behavior of the receiver, internalized ideas of norms, and current activity – both on their mobile phones (online / last seen) as their physical activity (sleeping, working, school, and so on).

"Eh, well, for instance, I assume my best friend to expect [my response] actually. Because if he sends some nonsense, and I don't respond to that, then I expect him to think 'oh, why doesn't he respond?' because I normally would [respond to more urgent messages]." (Guido, 18)

"Yes, cause ehm, it depends on the person, because one person is like- they always have their phone glued to their eyes, and the other, ehm, may have [their phone] in their pocket … And yes, then you will notice a difference – one always carries his phone with him, and the other does not – and then you'll expect one to respond faster than the other" (Manuel, 16)

"For instance, yesterday I sent a message to my eh- roommate- or in the group chat of the house I live in, and one of my roommates was working. And then I'll keep in mind that I think I know he cannot respond, or something." (Sharon, 24)

Guido and Sharon thus demonstrate the importance of previous behavior and the influence of physical activity. People did not necessarily feel forced, but rather felt it was 'normal' to react in a certain way. They adhered to their image of behavior that was considered fitting with a situation, which was reinforced by online and physical activities. Sixteen-year-old female Petra explains the consequences of not adhering to expectations:

> "Yes, people that always respond very quickly are also the ones that, when I- I normally respond fast as well, but if I stop responding all of a sudden, they'll [become annoyed] because they themselves always [respond quickly]."

When the interviewer reformulated her answer and asked whether she thought this was then based on the other person's own behavior, Petra answered:

> "Yes, that too, but also because I respond faster to those who respond quickly themselves."

Petra thus explains how diverging from these expectations may cause irritation, as well as how her own behavior may be influenced by that of others. If one looks closely at this phenomenon, one can see a vicious cycle: the expected behavior is based on previous behavior and one's own behavior, one's own behavior is based on the idea of 'normal' behavior, this idea of 'normal' behavior is then based on the impression of the behavior of peers, and this was once influenced by previous expectation of the subject. The actual behavior works as a form of feedback on the expected behavior.

A term that was introduced by twenty-one-year-old male Valen was that of a *WhatsApp identity*. This includes the previous behavior of ones communication partner, his characteristics and the sender's expectations towards them. Note that while this interviewee coined the name, many others hinted towards their awareness of this phenomenon. He argued:

> "Because, in general, most people, I think, are quite consistent when it comes to responding fast or not, or responding in such an annoying way. … Yes, everyone actually has their own, eh, their own WhatsApp identity." (Valen, 21)

Such WhatsApp identities are bound to the extent to which there is a history of previous communication, and can thus indirectly be linked to tie strength, assuming strong ties communicate more frequently than weak ties, as will be elaborated on in section 4.6. The stronger the tie, the more familiar someone is with one's WhatsApp identity.

All in all, as a vicious cycle, a pattern of expectations forms expectations towards

behavior based on previous behavior of both the sender and the receiver, knowledge about one's current situation, and feedback. One's *WhatsApp identity* forms the basis of expectations towards responsiveness on MIM platforms, but mainly on WhatsApp. The feeling for the need to respond thus came from within the interviewees themselves – an internalized imagined expectation based on people's previous behavior on the one hand, and one's own perspective on the other.

4.2 Responsiveness Influencing Phenomena

In this section, factors that can influence expectations towards responsiveness as well as responsiveness behavior are explained. The themes are: Interest and Urgency, Conversation Style, and Feelings and Emotions.

4.2.1 Interest and Urgency

Urgency is one of the main themes that were found in the interviews conducted. Urgency, often defined as a situation in which a direct answer was needed or preferred, created an expectation among the interviewees of a response as soon as the message was read by the receiver.

> "Yes, I find it important that they read it as quickly as possible. They don't have to respond immediately, but when, for instance, I will cook dinner with my roommates, and I have to do the grocery shopping. And then I want them to be available [for WhatsApp messages] when I ask them "hey, who's joining dinner?" and get a response immediately. So it sort of depends on the kind of question I ask or remark I make and how. What the direct effect would be on me." (Morris, 24)

However, unlike the expectations towards general responsiveness, distinctions were not always made for situations where the receiver 'did not feel like it' or 'did not really have time'. Respondents emphasized that in situations of having little time, they often chose to respond to a message of high urgency anyway – whether it was short or long:

> "Yes, yes, I keep that in mind. If people ask important questions, I try to answer as quickly as possible." (Mark, 19)

> "When it is really important that you discuss, such as in the case of a project for instance, because someone needs it right now, then you will adjust and send a

response sooner, compared to when it is just a fun conversation. [In the latter case] you know that it is not important that you respond quickly." (Sharon, 24)

Mark and Sharon express how urgency is thus also stimulating their own responsiveness – urgent messages are strongly prioritized. Despite the fact that many people chose WhatsApp to send and respond to such messages, others opted for a voice call. If WhatsApp was used to send an urgent message and no response was received, there were three types of reactions: sending more WhatsApp messages, trying to reach the receiver by voice call, or do nothing. These interviewees explain such cases of reacting to urgency and/or non-response:

"… in extreme cases I send another message saying "hello?" or question marks, or else I just call. But then that depends on how important it is." (Jasper, 21)

"… when you really need someone, you will call anyway, or something like that. But well, otherwise, well, I don't respond. I won't send extra messages when someone doesn't respond or something like that. I don't do that." (Ida, 21)

"But if one doesn't respond to voice call, I'd send them a message. I sometimes do that, too. Yes, especially when something needs to be arranged, such as something with a deadline: then I'd call as well." (Illiana, 20)

"That is what I find most annoying about it. Because then I think, well, if you really need someone, you can still just call them, you know. WhatsApp shouldn't be-, eh, yeah I really notice people around me doing that, [saying]: 'yo, he's not responding.' Then I'm like: 'guys, it's just WhatsApp!' You know? … It is just eh… when you really need someone, or someone really needs to be somewhere, then you'll just have to call, I think." (Bert, 24)

Important to note is while some opted for sending extra messages, others perceived this choice as annoying, which were often those who opted for voice call in the first place. On top of that, many assumed that the receivers phone was on 'vibrate'. As one woman noted:

"… but when I call them- for example my phone is just on vibrate, and when someone calls it vibrates, whereas for WhatsApp it doesn't, because I know that a couple of other people do that, too. So often when I call, they will answer the phone or they will see their screen light up, so they will answer the call anyway." (Jolanda, 22)

All in all, interest and urgency are thus key elements in responsiveness. They are top priority

and have the power to unlimitedly overrule. Moreover, voice calling in urgent situations is thus both an expectation as well as a consequence of the existing norms. Urgency is thus a theme that fits both within expectations, as one expects a high form of responsiveness in an urgent situation, as well as a consequence: when a situation is urgent (and there is no response) one may pick up the phone to make a voice call.

4.2.2 Conversation Style

A significant difference emphasized by several respondents was that of different types of conversations. Where the interviewer had merely introduced a distinction between slow mediated conversations with long lapses in between and those of a higher speed with no or short lapses in between, several interviewees explicitly distinguished two ends of the spectrum: a mediated conversation that resembled a face-to-face type of conversation versus a mediated conversation that resembled e-mail type of conversation. As twenty-one-year-old male Valen explains:

> "Then eh, then WhatsApp is more like a sort of [face-to-face] conversation that once in a while, ehm, once in a while is more like an intermediate between e-mail and WhatsApp, but when you barely know someone, and you have a question, then it is actually more like an e-mail, I think."

Twenty-one-year-old male Jasper expresses the norms of a mediated face-to-face type of conversation:

> "Well, sometimes it is like, you will have a conversation like 'hey, how are you doing?' or something like that. Well, when I receive that [message] I try to respond immediately when I have time, because I am not like, well, there- well, unless you are not in the mood at all to talk to that person of course, but it is stupid to eh, yeah, when you're in such a conversation, [it is stupid to] stop responding all of a sudden. That is kind of annoying."

Jasper continues by noting:

> "Looking at it from a social point of view, I don't have sudden high expectations. When I send a 'social' app such as 'hey, how are you?' then I am okay with getting a response only after an hour, because there is no real conversation going on yet. … When you are in a conversation, you have more of like- yeah, you have a sort of a

[face-to-face] conversation. And when that stops all of a sudden, and you get response only after an hour, it is sort of weird. Like 'huh?'"

A mediated face-to-face type of conversation is thus characterized by fast responses and short sentences that resemble a physical face-to-face conversation, in which one can interrupt whenever they want. When 'leaving' this type of conversation, it is expected to notify the other person in order to have them adjust their expectation. The other type of conversation resembles an e-mail type of conversation, which is characterized by longer messages often existing out of multiple sentences. Expectations towards responsiveness in such conversations are low, as it's pace is significantly slower. The participants argued that more thought was put into these messages, and that multiple topics could be discussed in a single message.

"Those slow conversations often are like a long story with explanations all that. For instance, I have a friend with whom I have had a close friendship, but I always have such long conversations with her. So I always tell her what has happened and so on. And she responds the next day with another story." (Jolanda, 22)

"… A long message always takes longer to send than a short message. So when you have 'quick' contact, then a long message is like a sort of 'gap' in your story. You should rather send: sentence, sentence, sentence, sentence. Because then the other person can start reading while you're typing. … While, if I send you a [long message], you'd have to wait, wait, wait, wait, and then all of a sudden *boom* there's this story. And when I send another [long message] afterwards, [the screen] will scroll down, and you can no longer read [the message you were reading and you'll think:] 'oh, where was I?' … It is sometimes hard to express how it's- but indeed, it's either like you're have a conversation or you're e-mailing." (Jasper, 21)

As Jasper and Jolanda demonstrate, expectations are different in these two types of conversations. Another big difference between the mediated face-to-face type of conversation and the e-mail type of conversation is that the first is characterized by a continuous attention for the mobile device, where the first often chooses not to go offline, while the latter does not require the receiver to be online and one may go on- and offline in between.

All in all, conversation styles thus strongly influence the speed of responses, and are in themselves essential to the responsiveness and content of a message. As all the interviewees owned a smartphone, continuous availability is possible to the extent where MIM contact can become a continuous conversation.

4.2.3 Norms of public use of Mobile Instant Messenger platforms

Another point of debate was the appropriateness of using MIM platforms during social events. Overall, it was expressed that it was okay to check one's phone one or twice. However, checking for messages and engaging in MIM conversations 'continuously' was considered inappropriate. This meant that when the sender was aware of the situation of the receiver, a somewhat different expectation towards responsiveness was created:

> "... also when I'm, when I'm with other people, I find it quite anti-social to grab my phone. So then I won't look at it." (Janine, 19)

> "… I notice differences between people like: some will use WhatsApp when they're out having dinner, while with others you'll know like 'oh, that person has planned something fun tonight, so they will certainly not check their cellphone.'" (Janine, 19)

> "… imagine we would be having a drink right now, and you would constantly [look at your phone]. I would find that- I would find that very bothersome, to be honest. … [It would seem like] a very uninterested attitude. I think that is something that's commonly known to people [to be inappropriate]." (Sharon, 24)

Janine's remark also demonstrates how some people will and some people will not adhere to that image, and an expectation based on previous behavior is thus set. Overall, respondents emphasized that they preferred personal contact to mediated contact. Twenty-four-year-old male Bert explains this together with the previous argument:

> "And when you're with- eh, you know I'm like, yo, when someone has something to do or something, or say, you're with friends, then you shouldn't be using WhatsApp. So ehm, yeah, I have this friend who, ehm, who I can never really reach. He has- he's never on WhatsApp, and well, he barely has a phone anyway. And ehm, well, I've talked about it with him, like 'yeah, that's super annoying, right?' … but when I'm around him, and I'm with him, he's a hundred percent present. … So, it's not like he has a phone that he's checking every ten minutes. So that's actually much more chill."

This indicates that participant prioritized the physical and mental presence in a social setting and expected a person to be fully engaged, while it also points to the idea of preferring a personal and private environment during socialization, which brings us to the next theme.

4.2.4 Feelings and Emotions

Feelings and emotions were central to the choice of platform and responsiveness norms. Personal content, including emotional or highly private content, was said by many to not be suitable for WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. First of all, situations where the content of the message would be highly emotional – positively or negatively – should be delivered on another platform as platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook would not get a message across right. Three examples show different emotional states and their impact:

> "Look, … [when you are dating] and there is something important to discuss, and you're not close, then you'd say 'yo, can we Skype for second?' And you'll say 'yo, this or that happened, or this and that' or ehm… No, you wouldn't, ehm, you wouldn't send WhatsApp messages saying 'yeah, and I ehm, I feel very bad cause this and that and eh.' … So when it is really – and the emphasis should be on *really* – so when it is really important, or really awful or when it is really serious, well then you'll call, then eh, then you don't want it to depend on WhatsApp, I think." (Bert, 24)

> "… my friends father died, yeah, and I found it hard, because, well, yeah, I don't see her that often, so I can try to arrange a meeting through WhatsApp, but I find it almost- ehm, I wouldn't be okay with me talking about it on WhatsApp, because that's like not paying enough attention to it." (Sharon, 24)

> "For instance, when you send a message to someone eh in the committee, for instance, saying: 'Well, this and that didn't really go well,' and ehm, and you receive a heated response, for instance – I have never actually experienced that, by the way, but this how I would imagine it to be – then I'd say: 'Well, we can- we can continue this conversation on WhatsApp, but that will only lead to- that, well, you can't really express your emotions on WhatsApp,' so it's better to meet someone. And you could see that as a border: I'd rather quit WhatsApp at that point, and then- well, and then it doesn't really matter to me what the other person thinks. If the other person insists on arguing via WhatsApp, eh, I'd tell them that I just wouldn't." (Valen, 21)

Such situations were argued to require more depth, mutual emotion, and a higher rate of responsiveness. If such situations were discussed on WhatsApp or Facebook, people emphasized the need to respond as soon as possible. This idea could be linked to the theme of urgency, as an emotional matter can be perceived as an urgent matter. As nineteen-year-old

male Mark argues:

> " … when I tell something quite personal [to someone] then I expect a somewhat fast response, but most of the time I am already quite engaged in a conversation with that person." (Mark, 19)

Twenty-one-year-old female Ida reinforces this by stressing the pitfalls of using written communication in personal circumstances:

> "Personal things, those you'd better clear up in person, instead of typing, [because] it will always be perceived differently then when I'd say it in real life." (Ida, 21)

Mark and Ida thus illustrate that private content is another controversial topic. These are also seen as better send through a different, more personal medium. Janine, a nineteen-year-old female, demonstrates this issue, as she went as far as disabling the messages from showing up on her screen. Rather she could only see she had received a message and who the sender was. She did this to ensure privacy. She argued:

> "… imagine someone sends me something personal, and my phone's just on the table, well, just somewhere on the table or something like that, and everyone can read it. Yeah, that's inconvenient for me, but also for the person who sends me things that maybe others aren't supposed to know."

Instead of WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger, it is more common to use Skype or voice call in such cases, which fits to earlier findings (Lenhart, Madden & Hitlin, 2005; Mesch & Talmud, 2006). It seems as if hearing someone's voice thus makes it more personal. Communicating through Skype's video chat adds the presence of physical cues to this.

What these findings suggest is that facial expression and expression in the tone of someone's voice are key in private or personal communication. In cases where such cues were not available, one opted for elaborate discussions that included 'emoji' – little images that aim to express emotions or situations. On top of that, quick responses were key, as seen in the earlier example by Mark.

4.3 Additional Possible Consequences

Aside from the aforementioned influencing phenomena, there are other possible consequences that may be the result of certain expectations and behaviors. This section discusses two:

4.3.1 Annoyance and Solution

The word 'annoying' was used to describe situations regarding responsiveness a significantly high number of times. Respondents expressed a variety of reasons for annoyance, ranging from reaction speed, to non-response, to being criticized for their responsiveness, to receiving certain content.

> "Ehm, well, if I really ask a question that eh I want a response to, then ehm, well, then it is often quite annoying when that person doesn't respond. Especially when that person is actually online." (Manuel, 16)

> "Ehm, yes, other people send- when I for instance read something but didn't actually have time to respond or maybe- well, they'll send me question marks. … They'll do it over and over again. … I find that quite annoying." (Guido, 18)

> "[It's] quite annoying when it's about school assignments, cause then you'd like someone to respond." (Janine, 19)

Feelings of anger or sadness were rarely expressed. Rather it was annoyance that was the main emotion that was mentioned frequently. As a solution to the feelings of annoyance through ignorance about one's situation, one of the respondents expressed the need for a feature that could potentially resolve this situation: the use of a status – a feature that presents one's purposefully set and displayed availability. While such a status is available in WhatsApp, it cannot be seen in active chats. Adding a more visible status, he argued, could potentially solve the situation where one is irritated by not knowing why the other person does not respond, as well as the annoyance from having to explain yourself over and over again:

> "… it would be very useful. So when they would put that on top of the screen next to online or under your name or whatever, people would use it more often. … it could be very useful cause than you could prevent stuff like: 'yes, well, I'm in class now!' 'It says so, right?'" (Jasper, 21)

Such a status could possibly resolve many of the issues addressed by the respondents.

Combining these findings to the earlier discussed argument of emotions, it seems as if

MIM platforms take in a very important position in life. Behavior on such a platform raises annoyance under its users for several reasons – sometimes born out of ignorance of a situation that could be resolved by the presence of a feature that presents one's consciously chosen and set availability. One of the ways to deal with unpleasant emotions or unwanted messages is by ignoring messages. This is where the next theme comes in.

4.3.2 Plausible Deniability of Incoming Messages

All fifteen interviewees that had WhatsApp's blue ticks feature installed had left the feature on – only one had turned it off before. Twelve out of thirteen interviewees with whom the similar function on Facebook was discussed were aware of it, and eight used it. There were mixed feelings about the blue tick marks: some found it somewhat privacy invading, while others enjoyed the benefits of being able to see other people's activity. Sixteen-year-old female Petra describes both sides:

> "Eh, I find it, well, pleasant, because you can just see like 'oh, is he reading it?' and then 'oh, does he answer?' and you can also see whether you're being ignored. But I also just find it unpleasant sometimes, because, I mean, I will read everything first and then I'll answer them one by one. And that can take up to, well, fifteen minutes until I've answered everything, seen or read everything, and then they'll see that I've read it, but it seems to them like I'm ignoring them, which I'm not."

Twenty-two-year-old female Jolanda a looks at the same issue from a different perspective:

> "On the one hand, I find it very useful. For instance, eh, well, when you quickly mention that you'll be there in ten minutes, and you [can] see that someone read it, and you know that that person knows you'll be there in ten minutes. … So that's useful. But on the other hand, well, it can also be very annoying when you see that someone has read [your message], or something, and you know that that person, well, could've responded. Then you're like: 'hmm'. For instance, also when, well, when there's a boy you like, or something … and he reads it, and you think: 'But why aren't you responding!?' [laughs] 'Doesn't he like me anymore, or something?' … No, and ehm, well, what I experience at school, for instance: in group chats you can see when someone has read something. And when I say 'When shall we meet?' or something – that also happened to me yesterday – and then everyone reads it, but no one responds. … And I find that especially- then I'm like: I had rather that function wasn't there,

because … when I don't know whether they saw it, I can't worry about it either.'"

The blue ticks can thus both help one, as well as give one's communication partner the impression of being rejected or ignored. However, nobody expressed extreme dislike against the blue checkmarks. Rather it was seen as a useful feature to make sure your message was read. Surprisingly, twenty-one-year-old male Jasper interpreted the blue tick marks as something distinctively positive. He suggested that:

> "And certainly with those blue checkmarks you have less of an attitude against- you expect less, at least I do. I expect less response such as 'yes, I read it' because I can already see that you've read it. I think that differs from WhatsApp at the beginning [compared to] now."

He positively frames the blue ticks – that were part of a very negative public debate – as a useful tool, yet in a distinctively different way than the ways in which his peers framed it. The recent blue checkmarks may thus contribute to the knowledge of whether a message was actually read, and therefore can ensure the sender that the receiver did in fact not ignore them, but just simply did not read their message. However, one can work their way around this:

> "I can also see when someone sends a message- You can see a preview on your smartphone screen. … And then you see a certain person's question - and I don't feel like responding yet - then I purposefully will not open the conversation, because I think you can only see that it's been read after you've opened the conversation. … So I purposefully do not do it." (Morris, 24)

As Morris demonstrates, blue ticks do not prevent plausible deniability. As many expressed, completely certainty regarding responsiveness is thus not achieved through blue ticks.

WhatsApp's 'last seen' feature was turned on by all sixteen of the interviewees. Only two of them mentioned that they had put it off before. Only nine respondents were familiar with Facebook's similar function, and only three of them used it. The 'last seen' function also had two sides:

> "… Often people respond fairly quickly, but sometimes there's something really important, and you want them to respond immediately, and then you see that they're online, or something, and they just don't respond. And then I'm like: 'But you have to respond!' And then I can be quite irritated about that." (Jolanda, 22)

"I sometimes found that- then you might know that- I can- I might see, for instance, five [o'clock], and I know that someone's working at five [o'clock]. Then I think: Oh right, he's at work. And then I know where he is. … You can check a little … When I don't get a response at all, I'll think "What the heck is this?" [and] then you'll see 'last seen at three o'clock', and that's quite long. [And then you know] he's doing something." (Petra, 16)

"I haven't really experienced people eh- well I have barely experienced that people didn't respond. But when you're chatting with someone, and ehm, then you'll often see 'last seen at a certain time' and then I think 'oh.' Then you can see whether you're being ignored by someone or not." (Manuel, 16)

While some used it to predict someone's situation or whereabouts, others used it to see whether they were being ignored. Blue ticks and the 'last seen' function, especially those of WhatsApp, could thus both create irritation because of the availability of one's presence information in combination with non-fitting behavior, as well as to explain delayed responsiveness.

Another phenomenon that was found through the interviews is the increasing expectation to always have a valid reason for not responding. When someone is physically not in the position to respond, exceptions are made on the pattern of expectations towards responsiveness. This often includes the state of sleeping (not including the moments directly before and after sleeping) or, to a certain extent, working, or other physical activities where there is no access to a mobile device:

"Yes, when someone is working, I understand that they would not respond. … And if someone is exercising, or something, then I find it logical that they don't respond. But when someone's just at home, and I know that person is using their phone, then I'd appreciate it if they just respond. But I also respect it when people, well, don't respond because they just don't feel like it." (Jolanda, 22)

"I often find that you can notice when someone's asleep. I'll look at that. For instance, when it says 'last seen at nine thirty' I'll think: 'oh'. And when that's half an hour ago, I'll think 'oh, he's asleep.' Then I won't send any more messages, neither do I expect a response." (Illiana, 20)

On top of that, some considered school or university to be an excuse as well while others

emphasized that the use of cellphones is very common during classes – which does not mean that it is always allowed. Overall, these excuses were both used by others as well as by the interviewee's themselves. Moreover, while some of the respondents claimed that they found 'just not feeling like responding' to be a good reason to postpone or, in some cases, deny a response, others respondents seemed to disagree:

"… it's not really a valid reason, but [I just didn't] feel like it." (Illiana, 20)

"Yes, it depends of course. See, if you really have something more important to do, than it's okay, but if he has nothing more important to do and he just does not feel like [responding], then I do find it annoying of course." (Jasper, 21)

While most interviewees found that one should be able to choose whenever they felt like responding, some of them still expressed annoyance when a response was 'too slow' or not received at all.

In the end, it was found that a (valid) reason is always needed in order not to respond. The severity of the focus on a valid reason for lack of responsiveness makes it unacceptable to do without one. This demonstrates the extent to which responsiveness is expected and norms are thoroughly interwoven into everyday life. Blue ticks and the 'last seen' feature reinforce this need for plausible deniability.

4.4 Differences Among Platforms

A central question in this research is whether the platforms influence expectations and have consequences for behavior and use. This section describes these differences in detail.

4.4.1 WhatsApp versus Facebook

Fifteen out of sixteen of the respondents expressed that WhatsApp was considered more popular than Facebook Messenger. Facebook Messenger was considered an app that was not always installed on one's phone. A recent update by Facebook that allowed people to install a separate application even resulted in some people discontinuing their use of Facebook Messenger on their cellphones. Others did install the app – some found it had become equal to WhatsApp in use, while others disliked the interface and found it not very user friendly:

"… no, I don't think [that there is a difference between my reaction speed on WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger]. No, because they arrive on my phone in the same way, so … Yes, when I unlock my phone they are both immediately on my

home screen, so." (Jochem, 22)

"Yeah, I always think Facebook is really annoying [because] you- eh these circles popped up on the screen of your smartphone." (Bert, 24)

Generally, WhatsApp thus seemed to be used more thanks to its accessibility and functionality as well as its popular status among the age groups of the respondents. Facebook Messenger, despite being linked to Facebook and its worldwide popularity and success, did not manage to position itself first place in the eyes of those interviewed.

Rather, Facebook was often seen as a second choice. The platform was often used for those of whom the sender did not own a cellphone number, which forced the sender into using Facebook Messenger in order to establish contact. One sixteen-year-old girl even argued that the conversation was moved over to WhatsApp as soon as one's cellphone number was asked. As sixteen-year-old Lara explains:

"… for instance, regarding exchange. Someone from Spain will send a message [saying] 'I am your exchange student' and then I will respond, but I will- yeah I will actually immediately ask: 'yeah, don't you have, ehm, WhatsApp?' you know?"

On top of that, Facebook Messenger was used in order to send URL's, files, images, and to switch from computer to phone.

4.4.2 Expectations

Expectations regarding responsiveness and content of messages strongly differed between WhatsApp and Facebook. Over all, it was found that expectations towards responsiveness on WhatsApp were significantly higher than those on Facebook. As the sender did not perceive Facebook as a primary platform, the expectations were adjusted to the idea that in order to get a fast answer, one ought to utilize the platform that is widely used: WhatsApp. As twenty-one-year-old female Ida and twenty-one-year-old male Jasper explain:

"… I use Facebook more often when I'm on my computer, or something. That's how I would send a message. And when someone responds, well, then I might respond [using the app] on my phone or something. But with WhatsApp, you do everything using your phone. And I'd also always, I think, [choose to] encounter someone through WhatsApp when I really need someone. And when I send a message on Facebook, it is often less important, or less urgent. And well, when I need someone,

I'd rather use WhatsApp than Facebook chat." (Ida, 21)

"Yes, I think so, I think that on WhatsApp eh I would respond immediately, and on Facebook Messenger I tend to delay it much more actually. … But that's also because I use Messenger more often on a computer … also to send URLs via a computer and then I'm like: 'I'll do that when I get home and on my computer again'" (Jasper, 21)

This idea was once again reinforced by the idea that the receiver did not necessarily have the Facebook Messenger app installed on their mobile device. Therefore, WhatsApp seemed a better choice, and one was 'excused' for a somewhat slow response on Facebook:

"Yes, I often expect a quicker response on WhatsApp, I think, because I think that people would check WhatsApp faster than Facebook. … I believe not everyone has that Facebook Messenger- eh- that app, or something." (Jolanda, 22)

"Yes, I think you'd get a quicker response on WhatsApp, than on Facebook. … Because I don't think other people use Facebook Messenger that much." (Sharon, 24)

"[After calling, and texting in urgent situations comes] WhatsApp, I think. But Facebook, well, because… well, I don't know, because I don't think that a lot of people – but that's just my perception – that more people use WhatsApp, and so people will think: 'well, on Facebook one doesn't immediately see [the message].' Because Facebook Messenger, I don't know how your respondents react to it, but I think that more people, in the Netherlands at least, use WhatsApp instead of Facebook Messenger, but I'm not sure." (Bert, 24)

Equally low standards of responsiveness also applied to those of which no phone number was available and thus not belonged to one's WhatsApp network.

As can be seen in the numbers mentioned at the beginning of this section, comparing the 'last seen' and 'blue ticks' functions on WhatsApp to those similar on Facebook, it was found that over all less attention was paid to these functions on Facebook and irritation or disappointment were less frequent. The perceived norms towards responsiveness thus seem significantly stricter towards WhatsApp. In a way, this makes two platforms that in theory are much alike, very different on a norm-constructed level.

All in all, when communicating on WhatsApp one is thus generally expected to respond significantly faster than when communicating on Facebook Messenger. The accessibility of WhatsApp may demand – even if only as an internalized idea – immediate

attention, whereas the possible absence of Facebook Messenger on a mobile device gives space for plausible deniability and leaves room for a delayed response.

4.5 Differences in Age and Gender

Now that we have established patterns with regards to expectations and their consequences, we will focus on differences observed related to the participants' age and gender, as well as the age and gender of those they communicate with.

4.5.1 Age

Opinions on possible differences in behavior between different age groups varied strongly, yet some differences seemed generally agreed upon. Generally, those significantly older than the interviewees were perceived as responding in a different way than the interviewee's peers. When asking whether she had experiences with people who did not respond quickly enough in her opinion, sixteen-year-old female Petra answered:

"Yes, I experience that sometimes, especially with older people!"

Further on in the interview when answering a question on age differences she noted:

"Just when they are older, they use more difficult or fancy words. Or no abbreviations, they don't- they don't know. But also different abbreviations. It sometimes differs among generations."

Other interviewees had similar findings:

"Well, for instance, [when talking to] older people, I use less abbreviations. And eh, well, just more capitals and punctuation, you know. Just like you would normally type [on a computer]. … And [to] my peers [I just type] a little quicker, and a little easier." (Lara, 16)

"Ehm, yes because eh, I think that because adults work more, they have less time to respond, so they'll take more time. … Eh, and then [people of my] own age respond very quickly, in general. And the youngest, eh, such as eh, yes younger people, they respond just, just a little slower." (Siebe, 17)

"I expect a slower response from older people. I expect a slower response from my mother and father compared to a peer. … [That is because] they are- this is more of an

age group that is very occupied with [Instant Messaging] and it's getting more and more. My mother is also using it more and more. … My father isn't. He's quite down-to-earth regarding this. But ehm, at this age I expect people to be engaged in [Instant Messaging]. Not expecting as in: you have to. But rather just assuming that one is more engaged in [using Instant Messenger]." (Sharon, 24)

Language and expectations towards responsiveness were altered. It must be noted, however, that tie strength may play a role in this, as almost all participants talked about strong ties in terms of parents or other relatives.

Expectations and behaviors towards Mobile Instant Messaging platforms also seem to change with age, which did not go unnoticed by the participants themselves. Many commented on how their behavior had changed since they had started:

"So because you have changed platforms, and purely because of, because of age, because you grow older. Yeah, your language use improves, and, eh, different subjects, different interests, so you'll talk about different stuff." (Janine, 19)

"Before, you'd send a lot of pictures and stuff when you were really bored, for instance, and useless conversations. And now it's more like when I want to know something or need something- [it's] just more, I don't know, not as much [sending messages] for fun … Yes, when you're fourteen it's funny to have such a conversation, but now I'm like, well, I don't necessarily need that. And now I have- before I was bored quite often or something, and now I have things to do, so I don't feel the need to have such conversations as often." (Lara, 16)

Behaviors and uses changed, fitting to their (developmental) stages in life and accompanying lifestyles. This is supported by the findings of the comparison between the transcripts of the different age groups.

Comparing the interviews on the level of age, differences were found between the three age groups. First of all, it seems that the responsiveness of the interviewee was influenced by age. Whereas those 18 and younger – and still in high school – argued they had quite a high responsiveness, responding as soon as possible, it was only in the categories 19 to 21 and 22 to 24 that some argued that it could take up to days for them to respond:

"Ehm, it depends. When I know it's a message of someone that needs my answer quickly, I would respond immediately. But otherwise I often just respond when its

convenient for me, and that could be five minutes later, but sometimes it can also be a couple of days later." (Ida, 21)

"I think I sometimes respond immediately, but sometimes I also feel like 'oh, that can wait' and then I may only respond, for instance, one or two days later." (Sharon, 24)

What seems linked to this is the awareness that the older interviewees seemed to have towards their own behavior and expectations. Twenty-four-year-old female Sharon describes the process of awareness regarding Instant Messaging use in relation to age:

"… the older one is, the more conscious they are [of Instant Messaging use] and … it still depends on the character, but eh… well, I think, the older you get, the more conscious you get about it." (Sharon, 24)

In other cases, this was often argued by saying that they know they should not care, they do not think it is fair to have expectations, by expressing their annoyance with WhatsApp's pervasiveness and norms, or even by excusing themselves for their own WhatsApp behavior to the interviewer.

When comparing expectations of those 18 and younger to the two age groups older than eighteen, it seems as if expectations decrease after high school. Whereas generally all five interviewees of the 16 to 18 age group expected an answer as soon as possible, the answers of the interviewees in the age groups 19 to 21 and 22 to 24 ranged from as soon as possible, to only having high expectations in cases of urgency, to an attitude of not caring or not having expectations at all. This latter indifference or awareness can also be seen in the perception towards slow response or no response: in the 22 to 24 age group, four out of five expressed that they did not care. To the question how fast he expects a response, twenty-four-year-old male Bert answered:

"Ehm, well, not fast at all. When I am on Facebook or on eh WhatsApp, I don't expect people to respond fast at all. No, when I need someone or when something's really up, then, eh, then I'll call, or something… Yes, I don't expect- look, I do expect when I am in [a conversation with a high reaction speed] … then I'll expect to get something back."

When discussing a friend that doesn't respond a lot on MIM platforms, but is full of attention in real life, he said:

"[Then] you'll make the world a little prettier, I think. But ehm, so I also understand that I also think that WhatsApp- it shouldn't be a norm that people just think that they have to keep responding on WhatsApp."

Bert thus demonstrates how he is aware of high expectations and how he consciously tries to limit his own expectations towards others. Bert's first remark also introduces another finding: the ease with which one seems to opt for voice call in cases of urgency was found to be higher for those older than eighteen. What is more, some of these frequent callers in terms of urgency even expressed that they would use voice call for other purposes as well, especially when trying to have a more personal type of contact.

Finally, it was generally concluded that differences in use and behavior among different age groups was strongly embedded in their (developmental) stages in life. Age may thus be an important factor in the way one communicates through MIM platforms, both in terms of responsiveness and content. Overall, expectations seemed to loosen up with the increase of age, and awareness grew.

4.5.2 Gender

Overall, respondents did not feel there was a great difference in how they addressed men and women. Differences in approach were assigned to the particular relational tie, the content of the messages, or a possible romantic interest, rather than the mere influence of gender. This could then encourage the sender to increase the frequency of messages, improve grammar and word use, and to put a focus on one's best characteristics. As twenty-four-year-old male Bert and twenty-four-year-old Morris explain:

"Ehm… yes, you know, it sounds super old fashioned when I make a distinction between boys and girls, because I don't want to do that, of course, but then I have- but that is purely because I look at a girl that I like and who I'm dating [in comparison to] just guys who are just my friends. … So I think that is the distinction I'm making here and not necessarily [a distinction between] men [and] women." (Bert, 24)

"I don't think [reaction speed is linked to it]. I think that it eh is not based on gender, but rather on the relationship that you have with that person." (Morris, 24)

These examples show that the change in behavior is often based on tie strength of type of relationship rather than gender in itself. While friends thus often were addressed in a

somewhat similar way, distinctions were made regarding the content of jokes, the issues discussed and the length of conversations. Furthermore, it was suggested that men talk less and are more concise, whereas women talk more and for a longer period:

> "But when I think about it, it might be that of the people listed in my phone, women on average respond faster than men." (Valen, 21)

> "Generally, boys respond somewhat slower. At least, that's my perception." (Siebe, 17)

This in a way fits with earlier findings by Fox, Bukatko, Hallahan & Crawford (2007). However, the interviewees' suggestions were often accompanied with a large amount of articulated doubt whether this was actually true.

Comparing the answers of male respondents to female respondents had less results than that of comparing age groups. One particular finding seems to resonate with earlier findings on general gender differences and social engagement in IM (Baron, 2004; Fox, Bukatko, Hallahan & Crawford, 2007) and reliance upon responsiveness (Hall & Baym, 2011). When comparing the opinions towards slow responsiveness and non-response, all men expressed only to be slightly annoyed or not bothered at all, while all women argued to be quite annoyed by it. Twenty-two-year-old female Jolanda even expressed feeling insecure and rejected by the slow response or non-response of the receiver:

> "Yes, and I especially think, because you can see whether someone read it, and then, well, or least, I start to doubt myself a little: 'did I say something wrong? Or or, ehm, am I not important enough?' Or, well, I will, well, I will think of many reasons why that person wouldn't respond." (Jolanda, 22).

Generally, women thus seemed more affected by behaviors that diverged from expectations.

All in all, aside from the emotion resulting from non-response, gender does not seem to have a strikingly important influence. Tie strength and romantic interest seemed to play a more important role. However, it should be noted that the latter is not necessarily bound to gender itself, but rather to trying to impress, prioritizing certain individuals – potentially linked to urgency – and, in a way, the relational tie strength that exists between two people.

4.6 Strong and Weak Ties

The extent to which there is a difference between strong ties and weak ties was one of the

questions of this research. In this section this question is answered from different perspectives.

4.6.1 Responsiveness

Responsiveness seems strongly influenced by the nature of a relational tie. Many interviewees pointed out a difference in responsiveness between different ties: responses to strong ties were generally faster than those to weak ties. Strong ties, often referred to in terms of family and close friends, often had frequent conversations and were prioritized. When asked whether there were people to whom they would respond faster, twenty-two-year-old Jochem and twenty-one-year-old Ida answered:

> "Yes, close friends. ... Of course … Yes, those with whom I have a lot of contact actually, eh, get even more attention." (Jochem, 22)

> "Eh, for instance my boyfriend, or ehm, my parents, my sister, and close friends or so. Of course I will respond faster to them." (Ida, 21)

The combination of these two – priority and intensive communication – creates the perfect circumstances for a quick form of responsiveness. Weak ties were often considered less important and had less priority, and were therefore responded to later. Combining the less frequent conversations and the lower priority creates a situation in which a slower form of responsiveness is common. However, it should be kept in mind that urgent messages always seemed to have priority, despite the existing tie strength.

When receiving messages, similar rules applied. Strong ties were expected to react faster and thus higher expectations were ascribed to them based upon their previous responsiveness, or WhatsApp identity. Weak ties, however, often enjoyed a more relaxed expectation pattern towards responsiveness, because of a lack of knowledge about their WhatsApp identity. All in all, both expectations and responsiveness were higher towards strong ties, while being lower for weak ties.

4.6.2 Choice of Platform

Relational tie strength was also found to influence the choice of platform used for communication. WhatsApp was preferred for contact with family and close friends, while Facebook was more often used for those less well known. As sixteen-year-old female Petra argues:

"[I use Facebook Messenger when] I need to know something of someone. When I have to ask, but I don't have their cellphone number, [I'll] do it like that. …"

When the interviewer asks Petra whether those who have her number are family and friends, she answers:

"Yes, yes, and also of classmates and such, you know, you have their phone number. … And [I use WhatsApp for] people I know well. But something- well, people who I don't know that well, but of whom I need to know something, then [I'll use] Facebook Messenger. So, then you never have conversations for fun, but you do for more informative [reasons]."

As Petra's argument shows, this may be related to the fact that in order to use WhatsApp, one ought to have the other person's number. However, numbers are not as easily exchanged as Facebook friendships:

"Yes, I don't like Facebook Messenger at all. It is just that I use it for those people who don't have my number, especially in the case of school projects and such." (Janine, 19)

"Well, on Facebook eh I would talk to people I don't really know more easily, because it's easier than before [where you had to] ask a phone number." (Illiana, 20)

Facebook was thus used to contact those whose numbers were not available to the sender, and connect to people that were not very close to the respondent. Nevertheless, both platforms were not limited to either strong or weak ties. Facebook was also used to communicate or share content with friends and family, while WhatsApp contained chats with weak ties for practical and organizational purposes.

Next to the platform, the choice for a certain medium may also be influenced by tie strength. Voice calling and Skype were considered more personal, and as a result some reserved these exclusively for strong ties. While voice calling was common to and frequently used by some, others rather opted for another medium or platform:

"… I think I would be less inclined to call people who I don't really know, than eh than most people that I do know very well. And… yes, and maybe, and for instance people- There are a couple of former members of the ice skating club who already have jobs, and sometimes I get the feeling that, eh… I would disturb them during work

when I call them." (Valen, 21)

"Well, sometimes indeed- some people I call and some people I don't. Ehm, but sometimes I find it easier to call. … It's indeed- some people I would really call, but that's not really a lot of people actually. … [I chose to call people] who are really close to me. So my mom, my dad, my sister, my boyfriend, eh, a good friend, and a side from that [I wouldn't call very quickly]. … I'm afraid to disturb people, you know? With WhatsApp it's so easy, and while I would much prefer voice calling, ehm well, I think that it's less convenient for others." (Sharon, 24)

"If one wouldn't have access to the internet anywhere nearby, then I'd quickly call or text. And I'd [choose] voice call [for] those who I know well, and those who I don't really know I'd text." (Illiana, 20)

Interviewees who did not prefer voice calling expressed that they preferred calling strong ties, and saved calling those with whom they had weak ties only for emergencies. This can be linked to the key factor of urgency.

All in all, the choice of both platform and medium seems strongly influenced by tie strength. Strong ties are characterized by media multiplexity, fitting Haythornthwaite's (2002; 2005) theory, using WhatsApp as a first medium and Facebook, Skype, voice call and other platforms and mediums as additional ways of communication. Weak ties, on the other hand, have less platforms or mediums in common, and are more frequently limited to Facebook.

4.6.3 Group chats

While a variety of opinions were expressed towards groups, some general norms, behaviors and expectations were found. First of all, there is a plethora of groups that one can be a member of, yet two types of groups stand out: the social group and the practical group.

"Well, there are many types of group conversations. There is the sort of sociable group chat. And there is, for instance, for work or projects of what ever there are- and those are often more directed towards practical matters, but there are always still a lot of casual things in between, that's always- you got to keep it fun and social." (Jasper, 21)

"… one group is of course totally different from the other, because one exists out of friends, and the other exists out of, I don't know, some plan-making thing because you're in a project or something. And another group is family, so that is completely

different as well." (Janine, 19)

"For instance, ehm, the group with eh [friend's name] in it … that is not eh- not a group in which you have to respond very quickly and it's always full of funny things and eh, and eh, that sort of things and it is just very sociable eh in that group. But eh, that's not- there are no practical things [discussed] in there, or something. But I also have a WhatsApp group with my committee. Well, those are things that everyone in the group should actually read. … It think there are two types of groups: groups that are somewhat practical, … and [those that are truly and] merely sociable." (Valen, 21)

As Jasper, Janine and Valen's explanations demonstrate, all these groups have different characteristics, and different types of conversations are held in groups that call for different types of behaviors, fitting the findings by Postmes, Spears and Lea (2000).

Second, while some argued that they responded in a similar way to groups as to one-to-one conversations, others expressed that groups were of less importance to them – meaning that the content of the messages were considered less urgent or interesting and responsiveness was lower. The responsiveness towards groups was, once again, largely based on interest and urgency:

"… I think that … I only respond when necessary, otherwise I won't respond in groups. No. In group chats with friends I do, when you- for instance, yesterday we went out for sushi together, you know, and you'll keep contact a little [afterwards]. … So then… but only when necessary, because otherwise I don't feel like responding." (Sharon, 24)

"… when it's sort of practical- you could use WhatsApp for practical things such as a project group, something school related, something work related- then you'd expect a quick response. … Then there's more emphasis on the message. It's not like you're saying 'hey, how are you?' but it's more like 'shall we meet in an hour?'. Well, then you'd like a response whether you're meeting or not within that hour." (Jasper, 21)

Practical groups thus more frequently contained urgent matter, while social groups were often characterized by trivial content with the purpose of fun. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that even practical groups may still occasionally contain 'off-topic' content, which may make the group members less likely to pay attention to the group, and therefore miss out on urgent content.

Nineteen-year-old female Janine proposed a metaphor to explain the dynamics of a group, as she found groups to be significantly different from one-to-one conversations, by opposing the two and explaining its biggest difference: expectation. She argued the following:

"… Groups are like a bomb, even if you are not talking yourself, because normally when you're talking to someone there is a dialogue and as long as you don't respond, the dialogue can't continue. And if you don't respond in a group conversation than it will continue endlessly, often with many people responding, or people reacting a lot or being suddenly very interesting and talking on and on and on and… well, then all of a sudden your inbox is full of it."

This 'bomb' metaphor may explain the reason why urgent messages may get lost and people tend to spend less attention to messages shared in groups. People often felt they responded less in groups and made particular decisions when and when not to respond based on their own situation, their interest, and the urgency of the message. Despite the fact that urgency is still key, groups in general have a relatively lower position regarding the priority to respond.

In conclusion, groups are thus specific forms of communication with their own norms towards responsiveness. Once again, in the case of groups, urgency is key. Different types of groups create different expectations towards responsiveness, and also create different forms of responsiveness. Practical groups are considered more urgent, but the image of the group can be influenced by frequent irrelevant information.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion and Implications

The goal of this research was to explore the norms that exist surrounding responsiveness on Mobile Instant Messaging platforms. Two research questions were created along with three sub questions that gave direction to the research questions. Focusing on Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp, sixteen interviews were conducted among 16 to 24 year old Dutch citizens, who were selected through a combination of snowball and convenience sampling. Using the Constant Comparative Method the transcripts of these interviews were carefully analyzed and linked to one another. While responsiveness is a theme that has been researched in other context, expectations towards responsiveness on Mobile Instant Messaging platforms has not gotten full attention. The choice for the particular age group was based upon the important position of young adults in the construction of norms on social media. Next to responsiveness, other central topics such as tie strength, age, gender, but also continuous conversation and plausible deniability were taken into account in order to create depth and diversity among the topic discussed, as well as to explore a broad variety of possible influences and consequences.

The interviews have provided insight in the expectations towards and their consequences on use and behavior, as was aimed for by the direction of the research questions. While it became clear that the answers of respondents contained a great variety of different interpretations and priorities, and that expectations and consequences were tightly intertwined, a number of themes was found that seemed coherent with the group at large and/or smaller groups. Expectations towards responsiveness were largely based on one's own behavior, the other person's *WhatsApp Identity* (primarily based on one's previous behavior and characteristics), other people's previous behaviors, and are continuously altered by feedback and previous behavior. This expectation can be influenced by a number of phenomena. Urgency was seen as a factor that could overrule all other expectations - a game-changing element that not only creates a stricter expectation towards responsiveness, but also exceeds many of the existing boundaries.

Other phenomena that were both linked to expectations towards responsiveness and consequences were platforms, tie strength, age and gender. While both platforms initially have the same functions, are both web- and mobile-based, and are publicly known, they do not end up on the same place and come with different expectations. WhatsApp is seen as the number one platform for overall communication, while Facebook is secondary and sometimes even seems rudimentary as it is almost completely neglected by some. Next to that, relation

ties could also drastically influence expectations towards responsiveness. In almost all cases strong ties would get priority in responsiveness over weak ties, yet this could once again be overruled by urgency. Differences between age groups were found regarding reaction speed and expectations, which seemed to decrease with age. Gender, on the other hand, had less obvious results, yet it was found that women seemed to be more annoyed by non-response than men. All in all, it was found that there was a foundation of expectations and behaviors that could be influenced by a plethora of phenomena that each had their own intensity and meaning.

This research has demonstrated how expectations towards responsiveness on MIM platforms are diverse but follow roughly the same pattern. The importance of previous behavior in the expectation of future responsiveness has been researched in the context of e-mail (Tyler & Tang, 2003), but can thus be applied to MIM communication as well. Many different factors can impact the expectations. While little research has been done to which this can be compared, this has shown that factors such as urgency, tie strength, platform, age and gender may contribute to expectations and norms.

5.2 Discussion

While this research was conducted with much care and precision, there are some limitations that need to be emphasized in order to create a coherent view of the pros and cons of this research. On top of that, findings of this research have led to themes and issues that require further research and attention.

First of all, it is important to keep in mind the position of the researcher. Despite the many strengths of qualitative research, the researcher's personal biases should always be taken into account, as these may color qualitative results. Second, the use of Skype for some of the interviews resulted in some disruptions in audio and connection issues. While this only affected a small amount of the data, it must be reported as a limitation. Aside from these small inconveniences, using Skype did not lead to different results compared to face-to-face interviews. Third, the analysis resulted in rich detail and interesting differences. However, some of the themes overlapped, which resulted in a less than ideal organization of subjects. While information in the sections on gender, age, tie strength and platforms deserved specific attention, it was often linked to earlier mentioned themes. The overlap in results has been given much thought, but the significance of the sub-questions was convincing enough to put extra emphasis on the somewhat repetitious sections. Fourth, while the particular choice for qualitative research was suitable for this explorative research, and despite the valuable CCM

theory that structured the process of analysis, it has its limitations. Further research could thus possibly quantitatively reinforce the themes and concepts found with quantitative data and discover to what extent these findings are generalizable.

This research was a study directed at Dutch young adults, and may thus not be applicable to other parts of the world, as the same norms may not apply and the same platforms may not be used. Therefore it would be interesting to do similar studies in different countries or on different scales. On top of that, interesting findings were found regarding differences between responsiveness among certain age groups. Many respondents suggested potential differences among those older and younger than the age groups of this research. The ages sixteen to twenty-four are only a limited example and findings suggest that a larger range of ages deserve more attention and will most likely lead to fruitful results.

Furthermore, while the personal characteristics were not taken into account during the study, the researcher has found that these qualities may potentially have a strong influence on the findings. Personal characteristics especially seemed to come to the fore in questions regarding opinions towards responsiveness and emotional implications of non-response, yet these personal traits were not part of the concepts under study. Introversion and extraversion and other personal characteristics could be interesting topics for possible further research within the context of MIM norms.

On top of that, urgency is a central finding that deserves more attention, as the findings within this study have pointed out urgency as one of the most important factors in expecting and delivering response. Further research could therefore be done either in the form of an in-depth qualitative research that further explores the details and consequences of this phenomenon, or a quantitative research that tests the proposed theory in order to reinforce these findings and prove the significance of these qualitative results.

Finally, this study found that existing ideas and perceptions of responsiveness behavior, often personalized and bound to a certain person, could be considered the foundation of expectations towards responsiveness. Urgency, together with other factors such as age, gender, tie strength and platform, may influence and alter these expectations and have accompanying consequences. The use of interviews as a method has been key in discovering these factors and has offered great detail and complexity. Social norms among young adults are ever changing, as is technology. The findings of this research, however, offer a framework through which one can discover these nuances.

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Appendix A: Overview of Respondents

Table A1: Overview of Respondents

Name	Age	Gender (F/M)	Level of education	Place of residence	International Background	Occupation
Lara	16	F	VWO 5	Lichtenvoorde	Dutch	Student and waitress
Petra	16	F	HAVO 5	Lichtenvoorde	Dutch	Student, cashier, and food truck worker
Jolanda	22	F	HBO	Den Bosch	Dutch	Student and cashier
Jochem	22	M	HBO	Nijmegen	Dutch	Student, waiter, and intern
Janine	19	F	WO	Groningen	Dutch	Student
Bert	24	M	HBO	Breda	Dutch	Student and intern
Mark	19	M	HBO	Nijmegen	Dutch	Student and intern
Jasper	21	M	WO	The Hague	Dutch	Student and financial worker in restaurant
Siebe	17	M	HAVO 4	Harreveld	Dutch	Student and waiter
Sharon	24	F	HBO	Nijmegen	Dutch	Student and cashier
Valen	21	M	WO	Wageningen	Dutch	Student
Morris	24	M	HBO	Breda	Dutch	Student and intern
Ida	21	F	WO	Tilburg	Dutch	Student

Guido	18	M	HAVO 5	Lichtenvoorde	Dutch	Student and temporary worker
Manuel	16	M	HAVO 4	Arnhem	Dutch	Student
Illiana	20	F	WO	Wageningen	Dutch	Student

Appendix B: Topic List

Interview guide / topic list

Een introductie van het onderwerp: WhatsApp en Facebook Messenger, met een focus op reactiesnelheid en de bijkomende inhoud van het bericht. Een focus op eigen perceptie en beleving. Meer informatie zal na het interview worden gegeven om beïnvloeding te voorkomen.

De sub vragen die bij iedere vraag staan zijn optioneel en worden gesteld wanneer dit gepast is.

	(Mogelijke) Warm up vragen	
*	Hoelang gebruik je WhatsApp / Facebook Messenger al? Welke platformen gebruik je nog meer? Weet je nog wat je deed om contact met je vrienden te houden voor WhatsApp? Wat vind je het leukste aan WhatsApp / Facebook Messenger?	
	Responsiveness	
1.	Wanneer iemand een bericht stuurt, hoe snel reageer je dan?	
	i.	Afhankelijk van persoon / platform?
2.	Hoe snel vind je dat iemand op jouw bericht moet reageren?	
	i.	Afhankelijk van persoon / inhoud bericht / situatie / platform?
	ii.	Waarop is dat gebaseerd?
3.	Hoe voel je je als iemand niet 'snel genoeg' reageert?	
4.	Wat doe je als iemand volgens jou niet snel genoeg reageert?	
	i.	Waarom doe je dat?
	ii.	Wat voor effect heeft het?
5.	Heb je wel eens commentaar (positief of negatief) van anderen ervaren op de snelheid van jouw reactie?	
	i.	Van wie en hoe/waarom?
	ii.	Wat voor gevoel kreeg je erbij of wat deed je toen?
6.	Waarop baseer je je verwachtingen wat betreft reactie snelheid? [school, werk, sociale activiteiten, evenementen, etc.]	
	i.	Waarom / voor wie?
7.	Hoe gedraag je je in groepsgesprekken?	
	i.	Verschilt dit van een-op-een gesprekken / andere groepen?
	ii.	In hoeverre heeft dit invloed op de reactie snelheid / inhoud?

8.	Heb je op WhatsApp de functie aanstaan waarop je kunt zien wanneer iemand voor het laatst online was? [Zie foto.]	
	i.	Waarom? [Gebruik je dit om naar anderen te kijken?]
	iii.	Vind je dit een prettige of onprettige functie?
	iv.	Gebruik je de soortgelijke functie op Facebook Messenger ook? [Zie foto.]
9.	Heb je gehoord over de blauwe vinkjes op WhatsApp? [Zie foto.]	
	i.	Wat vind je daarvan?
	ii.	Je kunt de functie sinds kort op zowel Android als iOS uitzetten. Heb jij de functie aan of uit staan? Waarom?
	iii.	Kijk je ernaar om commentaar te leveren op gedrag van mensen?
	iv.	Gebruik je de soortgelijke functie op Facebook Messenger ook? [Zie foto.]
10.	Doe je wel eens alsof je iets niet hebt gelezen of gezien?	
	i.	Waarom / hoe?
	ii.	Doen anderen dat ook?
	iii.	Denk je dat je weet wanneer anderen dat doen? Zo ja, vind je het erg?
	iv.	Ben je er wel eens op betrapt? Hoe reageerde men?

Media Switching / Media Mutliplexity		
11.	In welke situaties gebruik je naast WhatsApp of Facebook Messenger ook andere manieren van communicatie?	
	i.	Waarom doe je dat?
	ii.	Verschilt dit per persoon / situatie?
Construction of Norms & Hyper-coordination		
12.	Hoe snel reageren de mensen met wie je WhatsApp-t / Facebook Messenger-t?	
	i.	Verschilt dit per persoon / platform?
13.	In hoeverre hangt jouw reactie snelheid af van die van je gesprekspartner?	
14.	In hoeverre heeft de inhoud van een bericht invloed op de snelheid van jouw reactie?	
15.	In hoeverre heeft de snelheid van een bericht invloed op de inhoud van jouw reactie?	
16.	Zit er verschil in hoe je met mensen van je eigen leeftijd of andere leeftijdsgroepen communiceert via WhatsApp of Facebook Messenger?	

17.	Heeft het geslacht van je gesprekspartner invloed op de manier hoe je met anderen communiceert?	
	i.	Praat je anders tegen mensen van het andere geslacht?
	ii.	Heeft het invloed op je reactie snelheid / inhoud?
18.	Voel je je wel eens gedwongen om binnen een bepaalde tijd te reageren?	
	i.	Wanneer / bij wie / hoe snel?
19.	Voel je je wel eens gedwongen om op een bepaalde manier te reageren?	
	i.	Wanneer / bij wie / hoe?
20.	Zijn er grenzen voor jou?	
21.	Is de manier hoe je WhatsApp & Facebook Messenger gebruikt volgens jou veranderd ten opzichte van toen je met deze platformen begon?	

De geïnterviewde wordt bedankt voor het deelnemen. Toestemming wordt gevraagd voor het gebruik van de opgenomen data. Meer informatie over het onderzoek wordt hierna gegeven.
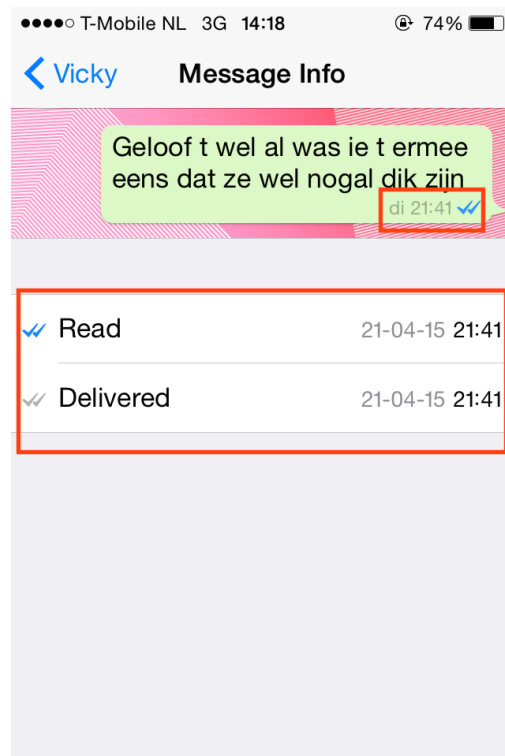
'Last seen' feature WhatsApp:
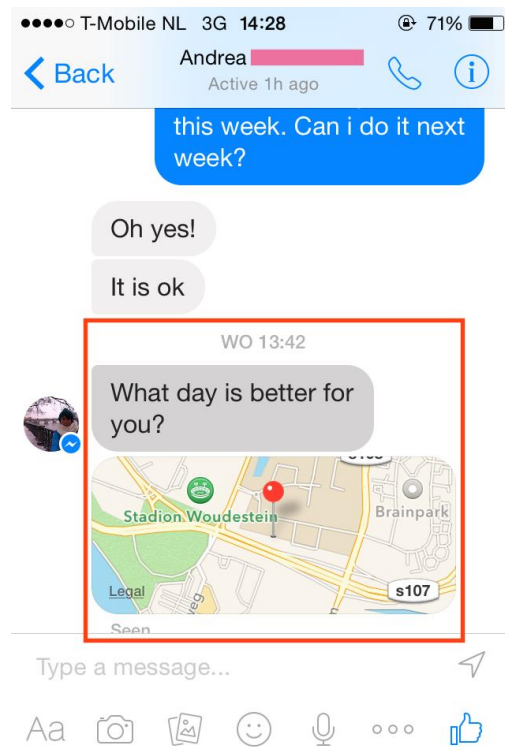

'Last seen' feature Facebook Messenger (mobiel):

'Last seen' feature Facebook Messenger (computer):

Blauwe vinkjes WhatsApp:

Functie zoals blauwe vinkjes Facebook Messenger (mobiel):

Functie zoals blauwe vinkjes Facebook Messenger (computer):