

**RAW PHONES: THE DOMESTICATION OF MOBILE PHONES AMONGST
YOUNG ADULTS IN HOOGGENOEG, GRAHAMSTOWN**

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Abstract:

This dissertation examines the meanings that young adults give to their mobile phones in the township of Hooggenoeg in Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape. The research was predominantly conducted through individual interviews with nine young adults as well as two small gender-based focus groups. Participant observation as well as a close reading of the popular mobile website *Outoilet* also contributed to the study. Drawing on Silverstone, Hirsch and Morley's (1992) work into the meanings attributed to the mobile phone through the domestication processes of appropriation, objectification, incorporation and conversion, the study argues for the heterogeneous roles defined for mobile phones as they are integrated into different cultural contexts.

The term 'raw phones' in the thesis title refers to a particular cultural understanding of respectability in mainly working-class 'coloured'¹ communities in South Africa, as described by Salo (2007) and Ross (2010), in which race, class and gender converge in the construction of the respectable person's opposite – a lascivious, almost certainly female, dependent, black and primitive 'raw' Other. The study argues that in Hooggenoeg, the mobile phone becomes part of semantic processes that define both respectability and 'rawness', thus helping to reproduce social relations in this community along lines of race, class and gender.

A major focus of the study is the instant messaging application MXit, and how it assists in the social production of space, by helping to constitute both private and dispersed network spaces of virtual communication, in a setting where social life is otherwise very public, and social networks outside of cyberspace are densely contiguous and localised. In contrast, gossip mobile website *Outoilet* seems to intensify this contiguous experience of space.

My findings contest generalised claims, predominantly from the developed world, which assert that the mobile phone promotes mobility and an individualised society, and show that in particular contexts it may in fact promote immobility and create a collective sociability.

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Abstract:	ii
Acknowledgements:	iii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: The consumption of mobile phones	5
Chapter 3: The township and everyday life	22
Chapter 4: Methodology	37
Chapter 5: Appropriation findings	48
Chapter 6: Objectification findings	55
Chapter 7: Incorporation findings	68
Chapter 8: Conversion findings	81
Chapter 9: Conclusion	108
References	118
Appendix A: Photographs and images	128
Appendix B: Individual interview schedule	131
Appendix C: Focus group questions	139

Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis examines how the mobile phonesⁱⁱ of young adults in Hooggenoeg in Grahamstown take on the meanings and attributes of the cultural world of the township which they inhabit. It shows how a phone is imagined and acquired with the express purpose of helping its young owner to negotiate aspects of township life, specifically the social constructs of class, gender, race and geography. Focussing on youth culture, the study demonstrates that the ways in which the mobile phone is obtained, displayed and used acquire particular meanings in the process of being ‘domesticated’ (Silverstone *et al* 1992: 16) into everyday township life.

My interest in this topic began with a Jamaican study of the mobile phone by Horst and Miller (2006) that starts off from the premise that neither the users nor the mobile phones should be conceptualised as ‘fixed’. Instead, they consider:

...what Jamaicans have become in the light of their use of the cell phone and what the cell phone has become in the light of its use by Jamaicans. (Horst and Miller 2006: 7)

I too was interested in examining the extent to which people and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) are mutually constituted; in particular I wanted to examine the place of the mobile phone in an impoverished South African community.

I have always been fascinated by technology and from a young age I knew intuitively that technology was more than just hardware, and could have diverse symbolic and social meanings; as a young girl it was a way of bonding with and winning the affection of my father, and later on as an engineering student I became acutely aware of how technology could be used to demonstrate superiority, particularly amongst men. Technology here was also tied to power, not affection, and power at that university at that time was tied to the apartheid state. Terminating my engineering studies I started working for an NGO that promoted technology for liberation, emphasising how ordinary people could appropriate computer technology to achieve particular political ends. Technological determinism, however, always seemed to dominate the debates. After a career in filmmaking and coming into teaching, I now find the same enthusiasm amongst some of my colleagues who see technology as a ‘magic bullet’ (Aker and Mbiti 2010) for social transformation. This study afforded me the opportunity to question this implicit technological determinism by foregrounding the ‘social’ in my examination of mobile phone consumption. It allowed me to

express my belief in human innovation, particularly the ingenuity of people who have very little of material worth, an ingenuity which allows them to reinvent the meaning of technology to suit their social circumstances.

Many studies of ICT assume that ICT in itself creates certain understandings and experiences of the world. They frequently generalise findings that were made in developing countries and neglect to give any consideration of the cultural context of technology appropriation and use. This can be observed in research that conceptualises the mobile phone as a tool of mobility, where portability is seen as creating communication with 'the moving site', and communication is transformed into a 'non-place event' (Gumpert and Drucker 2007: 7). In these studies, the mobile phone is understood as allowing youths to navigate lives in fast-paced urban spaces, symbolising mobility and independence and generally progressing in life (Stald 2008: 145).

Other development-focused studies recognise different contexts for technology use in the developing world but are technologically determinist, with the mobile phone seen as the panacea for under-development (Aker and Mbiti 2010). This kind of optimism about technology transforming society is common. Research on ICT and young people is often couched in 'web-generation discourse' (Hartmann 2005: 143), which assumes that existing power relations can easily be challenged by young people armed with the latest ICT. Often lacking from such studies is any close analysis of how actual people, in different contexts, engage with technology.

History is replete with false projections of technology use (Gitelman 2006). The phonograph was conceptualised as being exclusively for business use while the radio was to be a device that would be used primarily for ships at sea. The telephone was to be technology for listening to music. I am old enough to remember the hype around the marketing of the facsimile machine as a domestic medium which would allow one to transmit instant letters and art to distant family members.

The purpose of my research is to present an ethnographic description of how technology is *actually* used, as opposed to a utopian technologically-determined, 'web-generation discourse' (Hartmann 2005), as well as to question the universality of claims about mobile phones, such as its association with mobility. In contrast to the research on 'mobile phones on the go', this study aims to investigate the meaning of a mobile phone when its unemployed owner is not 'on the go' and does not seem to be progressing in life. What meaning does a

mobile phone have for 20 year olds still living at home with their parents in a tiny house, with no immediate prospects of further education or a job? How is the mobile phone then linked to a personal sense of mobility related not only to the physical geography, but also to social mobility and moving away from a life of poverty?

The questions in the previous paragraph all point to the central research question, which is: What are the various meanings defined for mobile phones by young adults in Hooggenoeg, a township on the outskirts of Grahamstown, and how do these relate to their everyday lives?

To answer these questions, I conducted a series of interviews with young adults who owned mobile phones and lived in Hooggenoeg, an area with newly-built low-income housing (commonly known as RDP houses). It will be described in more detail in Chapter 3.

I combined the findings of my interviews with a range of readings, and looked at the research question through two theoretical lenses: examining firstly how meanings of ICT, particularly the mobile phone, are socially negotiated, based on the values and interests of social life in the space in which they are used, and secondly, looking at how everyday life is structured around class, race, gender and geography for young adults living in townships.

Thesis structure

The thesis is divided into the following chapters: Chapter 2 briefly outlines the approach I use for this study, which is the ‘domestication’ approach to the study of ICT, and its various ‘phases of domestication’ (Silverstone *et al.*1992). Next, it summarises research into mobile phones in everyday life, using the phases of the domestication approach to classify the research. The next chapter theorises the South African township as a social space, looking at issues of mobility, space, consumption and everyday culture and the shaping of people by everyday practice, through the development of different ‘dispositions’ (Bourdieu 1984). Chapter 4 outlines a philosophical approach to the methodology of the research as well as the various research methods used. The findings of the research are presented in separate chapters that each relate to one of the domestication phases: appropriation, objectification, incorporation and conversion. Chapter 5 presents findings on the appropriation of the mobile phone in Hooggenoeg, while Chapter 6 examines how the phone is personalised or ‘objectified’. Chapter 7 discusses how the mobile phone is integrated into everyday routines, while Chapter 8 describes how the mobile phone mediates relationships with the outside world. Chapter 9, the Conclusion, summarises how these findings define various meanings

for the mobile phone and how these meanings are related to the social structures of class, gender, race and geography that frame everyday life in this space.

Chapter 2: The consumption of mobile phones

Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical context informing my study of the consumption of mobile phones as a process of meaning-making. I start by looking at the ‘domestication’ model developed by Silverstone *et al* (1992), which has emerged out of the study of consumer objects and has been adapted to the study of ICT. This approach conceptualises the way in which the ICT device is domesticated to fit into everyday life in a particular space like the home, as a series of consumption processes (Silverstone *et al* 1992). In the final and most detailed section, both international and local research on mobile phone consumption is discussed.

The domestication model for the study of the consumption of ICT

The domestication model analyses ICT as both media and technological objects (Morley and Silverstone, 1990). ICT differ from other technologies, as they are

... crucially implicated in [the] work of social reproduction, not just as commodities and appropriated objects, but as mediators of the social knowledges and cultural pleasure which facilitate the activities of consumption as well as being consumables in their own right. (Silverstone *et al.* 1992: 19)

It is this ‘doubly articulated’ nature of ICT as both technological objects and media which underpins the development of the ‘domestication’ model (Silverstone *et al.* 1992: 15).

‘Domestication’ here evokes a sense of bringing ICT in ‘from the wild’ of the commercial world into a social space where they need to be ‘tamed’ or domesticated into the routines and symbolic world of the household (Haddon 2006: 195). Adopting technology is conceptualised as a process which extends far beyond a once-off purchase. Rather, it is an on-going negotiation in which consumption is not only an individual process but also a social one where our experience of technology is not only shaped by our social context, but technology in turn also shapes our social lives (Haddon 2001 cited in Ling 2004: 27).

The domestication approach was developed in the context of studying ICT in the household, and so this process of ‘taming’ or domesticating a device through the various phases of consumption is often conflated with the home or ‘domestic site’ as a site of study (Helle-Valle and Slette-meas 2008). Despite this, several studies (Lally (2002), Ward (2005), Haddon

(2001) and Pierson (2005) cited in Haddon 2006: 96) have shown its applicability to studying the social life of objects in spaces outside the home. According to Haddon (2001: 50-51) it is advisable, when studying portable devices such as the mobile phone, to look at the social routines, negotiations and rules of public areas and broader social networks outside the home. (Haddon 2001: 50-51). It is the task of the researcher, Haddon (2001: 51) believes, to uncover these routines, rules and networks and relate them to the way in which the object is brought into these different social spaces and domesticated into a world of meaning-making.

The four different phases of domestication (appropriation, objectification, incorporation and conversion) defined in relation to domestic spaces (Silverstone *et al.* 1992: 21), should therefore be re-imagined more broadly, and I will therefore attempt to do so here, by referring to 'the social space' or 'social environment' instead of the household. *Appropriation* begins when the device is purchased and owned (Silverstone *et al.* 1992: 21). It enters the life of the owner who endows it with significance and meaning in terms of its role in the social environment (Ling 2004: 28). However, it is not only the initial moment of acquisition that defines appropriation but the whole process of making an alien commodity into a social object, where it 'crosses the threshold between the formal and the moral economies' (Silverstone *et al.* 1992: 22). *Objectification* follows appropriation and describes how the ICT device facilitates the 'self-creation' of the individual or social space through its display (Silverstone *et al.* 1992: 22). The mobile phone is tasked with communicating the values and aesthetic sensibilities of its environment and owner (Ling 2004: 29). *Incorporation*, the next phase, focuses primarily on how the object is actually used within social space, which may differ from normative uses portrayed in advertising (Silverstone *et al.* 1992: 24). Hence, whereas objectification relates the object primarily to physical space and display, incorporation relates it to time, schedules and routines.

Conversion, the final stage of domestication, refers to the process by which the object defines a relationship between a social space such as the household and the outside world (Silverstone *et al.* 1992: 25). As a process that is the inverse of appropriation, it may be compared to currency conversion, as it converts meaning across the border between two social worlds, so that the very particular meanings of the device in a highly contextual social space are converted back into broader public society (Silverstone *et al.* 1992: 25). Without a successful conversion phase, meanings remain private and insignificant (Silverstone *et al.* 1992: 25).

All these phases are conceptualised as flowing into one another, but are not necessarily chronological and could therefore happen simultaneously or in a different order (Ling 2004: 31). This domestication model of consuming technology therefore prioritises the *social* process of consumption, and eschews technological determinism, arguing that technology can be defined contextually in ways never imagined by the manufacturer. However, the domestication approach is not purely socially deterministic either, and in that way it is similar to the ‘affordances’ approach (Ling 2004: 26). Technology theorists who subscribe to the ‘affordances’ approach conceptualise it as a compromised position between technology and socially determined approaches as they argue that the use of a technological device is constrained by the design interface that allows for specific interactions between society and technology (Ling 2004: 26). This approach however, does not explain why people may invent uses for a device which are contrary to its affordances such as texting, a task difficult to accomplish through the mobile phone’s keyboard interface (Ling 2004: 26). The domestication approach however, defines the interaction between society and technology not merely through the interface, but as a set of ongoing processes related to the values, identities, power relationships and interests amongst people in a social setting (Silverstone *et al* 1992). Therefore, it is very different from the uses and gratifications approach, which conceptualises the interaction between device and user as purely a matter of individual choice, not socially defined meanings (Haddon 2006). In the domestication approach consumption is thus conceptualised as an interaction between subjects and object, between users and technology, in which each dialectically shapes the other.

A summary of the research on mobile phone consumption

I have foregrounded the research done in developing countries (e.g. Horst and Miller 2006, Pertierra 2005, Elwood-Clayton 2005, Donner 2007, Steenson and Donner 2009, de Souza e Silva *et al* 2011) as it is more likely to speak to my own study, and there are now more mobile phones in the developing world than in the developed world (ITU 2009), making mobile phone use in the developing world now the global norm. This new development means that research that is more than a few years old may in fact be under-emphasizing the importance of practices in developing countries when making generalisations of mobile phone use, which I believe further validates my choice of foregrounding research from these countries.

Appropriation

Manufacturers of the mobile phone originally envisaged its ownership being restricted to an elite group of globe-trotting business executives who would use it as a mobility tool to clinch deals while away from the office (Goggin 2006: 3). The mobile phone soon, however became a ubiquitous device and nearly four billion people across the world in a range of social contexts now own one (Ling and Donner 2009: 148, ITU 2009). As a phone is appropriated into these social contexts, it takes on the characteristics and values of the social space (Ling 2004, Horst and Miller 2006).

Thus the study of the appropriation of a mobile phone in the global South thus tends to provide a 'mirror of social values embedded in the relationships between low- and high-income communities and power structures' (de Souza e Silva *et al* 2011: 20). One can therefore start to understand 'containing cultures and environments' which in turn help to define the device's particular meanings (Silverstone *et al* 1992:18). Global inequalities are revealed in studying how faulty second-hand mobile phones in Burkina-Faso are bulk-imported from France and repaired by local traders (Hahn and Kibora 2008: 94), and through this process the mobile phone may become associated with local ingenuity. Local class tensions may be epitomised by a mobile phone from a Brazilian 'favela' which is invariably stolen from a nearby wealthy suburb (de Souza e Silva *et al* 2011: 26). Mobile phones in the favela are probably associated with acts of criminality for the sake of survival. The marginalisation of rural areas is clear in studying rural families in Africa who are frequently given old mobile phones by wealthier urban family members (Hahn and Kibora 2008: 99). Here, the mobile phone may become a symbol of rural-urban family bonds and dependency. Even the inequalities in a family may become clear in studying the household concerned, where the model of a phone may reflect familial hierarchies, as younger siblings get second-hand or black-market phones (Ellwood-Clayton 2005).

The social relationships between different genders can also be studied through the lens of mobile phone appropriation, where the phone makes visible social processes that either reinforce or resist patriarchy. Young women in Palistinian Israel, who receive a phone from an illicit boyfriend are, according to Hijazi-Omari and Ribak (2008), resisting patriarchy and making the phone a symbol of that resistance. In contrast, husbands may acquire mobile phones primarily as tools for wives to stay in contact for safety reasons, so reinforcing

patriarchal notions of dependence on men and making the phone a symbol of control (Castells *et al* 2007: 45).

Notions of ownership also differ according to social context. Where the mobile phone is understood in the developed world to be a secondary phone that enhances individual mobility (Castells *et al* 2007: 718), in developing countries it may have a more stationary and collective meaning and become a home phone (Ureta 2008) or a public phone (Skuse and Cousins 2008). Appropriated into societies where resources are scarce and sharing is a necessity, the mobile phone is here not conceptualised as a personal tool as in developed countries but one that may be shared amongst family (Steenson and Donner 2009), friends (Skuse and Cousins 2008:17) or neighbours (Skuse and Cousins 2007: 196).

Silverstone *et al* (1992: 19) describe appropriation as the transition of the object over the threshold between market and moral economy, where the object's meaning is formed and transformed. One may conceive of an object such as the mobile phone as not only crossing over this threshold from market to ownership during the moment of purchase, but transgressing or approaching this threshold as its owner contemplates selling or pawning it, or as it becomes an object of theft, or in danger of being stolen. While in the Global North ownership may be taken for granted after purchase, in the Global South, such as the Brazilian *favela*, concern that a mobile phone needs to be protected from theft may be uppermost in the minds of owners (de Souza e Silva *et al* 2011: 24). In certain contexts, phones may be predominantly associated with the black market, where traders may reconfigure new phones from the parts of various other models in a process known as phone 'cannibalism' (Barendregt 2008: 165, de Souza e Silva *et al* 2011: 417). In these contexts, appropriation is not just a one-off interface with the market, but a constant interaction with both legal markets and illegal black markets, a continual process of negotiating ownership.

Objectification

The mobile phone is a device used in a social context, and its meaning can therefore be articulated in how it is displayed in this context, through the process of objectification (Silverstone *et al* 1992: 22). One can describe this meaningful display as the personalisation of the phone, where the identity of its owner is communicated through the phone itself, particular media stored on the phone, and the distinct manner in which the phone is carried on the person of its owner.

In some parts of the developing world, any mobile phone can be an important symbol of success and modernity (Castells *et al* 2007: 59). In more discriminatory spaces, particular models of phones can convey particular messages about the fashionability of owners, similar to the way jewellery does, and so convey status and style (Fortunati 2005: 43). Individuality can be signalled by adding home-made decoration to the phone (Skog 2002 cited in Castells *et al* 2007: 159), or even commercially-manufactured phone decorations (Green and Haddon 2009: 99).

Phone customisation includes the media on it that can be displayed to others, such as photographs, videos and games (Haddon 2007b: 2, 3) or ringtones that encapsulate the latest popular music (Horst and Miller 2006: 63). These media can reflect the social identity of the owner, for example a 'heterosexual male identity' may be signalled through the photographs of women on a young man's phone (Ureta and Muñoz 2008: 326). Identities are actively negotiated through social activity, such as the practice of exchanging mobile phone messages, known as 'gifting', which is common amongst young people (Ling 2004: 103). Photographs, ringtones and music can also be 'gifted' via Bluetooth transfer (Haddon 2007b: 2, 3).

Browsing through an MP3 music collection on a friend's phone can become a social activity equivalent to looking at a photograph album together (Haddon and Vincent 2007 cited in Green and Haddon 2009: 37). These social exchanges of media may influence how people communicate. Pictures taken on a mobile phone are often not only envisaged as memories, but taken specifically to share with others, leading to changing photographic practices (Scifo 2004: 366). Photographs are now incorporated into everyday communication, due to the ubiquity of the mobile phone camera where for example, a photograph of an embarrassing situation can be used to tease a friend (Kindberg *et al* 2005: 46). Similarly, video is now used to share experiences (Haddon 2007b: 3). These meaningful exchanges are not limited to media stored on the phone, such as music and photographs, but also extend to the phone log itself, as friends may show off contacts or records of recent calls to convey a sense of status (Green and Haddon 2009: 101).

To convey different meanings at different times, one must learn how to display the phone – whether in a pocket, a special pouch or on the belt (Fortunati 2002 cited in Fortunati 2005: 36). The way the phone is held - in the hand or in the pocket - also becomes significant as a way of communicating a person's social role e.g. whether a supervisor or a worker (Katz and Aakhus 2002: xx).

All of the above practices relate to how particular meanings are attached to the mobile phone through the process of objectification, where the display of the model, the media on the phone and its display in relation to the body may all be meaningful.

Incorporation

Through the process of incorporation, not only does the mobile phone become integrated into daily routines, but routines may change and acquire new meaning through the mobile phone. When mobile phones are thus incorporated into the lives of women, the meaning of the phone is transformed to fit the gender relations epitomized in their everyday routines. Here a phone may be used for 'remote mothering' and so be part of a social world where unequal parenting is considered normal (Rakow and Navarro 1993). The mobile phone may initiate new routines, such as the household chore of charging and polishing a husband's phone, vividly symbolising the lack of agency of a woman who has no access to one (David 2005 cited in Castells *et al* 2007: 47). In the insecure social world of youth culture, mobile phones are extensively incorporated into the cultivation of peer groups through social networking (Green and Haddon 2009: 97), and may build self-esteem by providing quantifiable proof of popularity (Ling 2004: 103). Mobile phones can also be incorporated into identity projects such as being fashionable (Ling 2004: 107) or expressing autonomy from parents (Ling 2004: 99, 100). In the 1990s, texting became an ubiquitous new communication routine amongst youth in Scandinavia, developed by the need to communicate cheaply and discreetly, thus turning phones into non-phones that were hardly ever used for voice-calls (Goggin 2006: 65).

Urry (2000) argues that all communication technology impacts on our daily practices by promoting more mobile lifestyles. This results from the basic need for occasional face-to-face meetings with others in the geographically 'stretched out' social networks that this technology enables (Urry 2000: 231). Mobility tends to increase even more when the communication device is portable, like a mobile phone, as the point of communication also becomes a 'moving site' (Gumpert and Drucker 2007: 8), and users are able to transcend space and time through this 'mobility-creating' technology (Caron and Caronia 2007: 4). In future, mobile phones may enable mobility even more, as designers of mobile devices are continuously searching for new ways to facilitate what they call 'nomadicity', by creating technology that increasingly enables 'mobile, ubiquitous and pervasive environments' (Pellegrino 2007: 65). Advertising messages may further promote the mobile phone's ability to increase mobility, with pay-off lines such as the Nokia E7's - 'Success is staying in touch

on the go' - referring not only to mobile telephony but also mobile internet and mobile social networks (NokiaConnectZA 2011). It can therefore be argued that the mobile phone creates a 'new nomadic identity' for the user (Caron and Caronia 2007: 6). Stald explains:

The portability of the mobile phone makes it possible for the user to access and exchange information independent of place, of physical location, while being on the move. We are mobile, the device is mobile with us, but above all information is mobile, meaning that it is available independent of time and space, accessible from wherever you are with your mobile transmitter and receiver. (Stald 2008: 145)

However, Castells *et al* (2007: 250) point out that this primary association between mobility and the mobile phone does not take into account that in the developing world this is often the only phone the user possesses, and its adoption has resulted in the radical increase in personal connectivity, so that now one may argue that connectivity is a much more important consequence of adopting the mobile phone. As the mobile phone is constantly on the person of its owner, each mobile phone owner may now be reached at any time, which has resulted in owners often engaging in continuous communication or 'perpetual contact' (Katz and Aakhus 2002)

According to Ling (2004), 'perpetual contact' has resulted in the 'softening' of schedules and the replacement of fixed appointments with frequent 'micro coordination' or 'hyper-coordination' as people use the phone to re-schedule. A text or voice messages may be accessed at a different time to when it was left, so that the mobile phone may be seen as helping to usher in an era of 'timeless time' where the past, the present and the future exist simultaneously (Castells *et al* 2007: 250). Place and time become de-linked in the previously passive spaces of commuting, where mobile phones bring downtime to life as 'Lazarus time', enabling commuters to engage in activities such as checking e-mail instead of sitting and waiting (Green and Haddon 2009: 77, 78).

Mere ownership of a mobile phone, however, does not guarantee that one may transcend space and time, as it is not economically possible for many people, especially in developing countries, to engage in 'perpetual contact', due to the cost of a call (Duncan 2010). Instead, mobile phone users in developing countries have developed ways to communicate for free in a very limited way, embracing practices such as 'beeping' or 'flashing' where a call is intentionally dropped before it can be answered to send a particular message (Donner 2007) or a 'please-call-me' message is customised to communicate something else besides the request for a call (Kreutzer 2009: 22, 23). Due to their limited nature these practices generally provoke the other party to call back, and the rules of which party is expected to return calls

have acquired meanings that reflect the social rules of gender and patronage (Donner 2007: 7). When calls are not returned, poorer people who rely on returned calls to communicate are thus not always in 'the network' or in 'perpetual contact', leading to feelings of powerlessness and frustration (Duncan 2010). As new ways of making contact have developed, so too have new ways of avoiding it and managing availability, thus defining when it is acceptable not to answer a call or give out a number (Green and Haddon 2009: 102) or how to keep a conversation short (Kaschula 2009). In this way, 'spatial and temporal boundaries are created and defended' through the incorporation process (Silverstone *et al* 1992: 25). A mobile phone can indeed create a treasured private spaceⁱⁱⁱ in a crowded and stressful public world (Ito and Okabe 2005, Kreutzer 2009: 24).

Castells *et al* (2007: 171) argue that due to technology such as the mobile phone, the nature of our society is changing; it is now normal and acceptable to disengage with those who are present in the same physical space or the 'co-present', and retreat into a space of one's own making, a parallel 'space of flows' in which one can interact with a social circle of choice, enabled by technological devices such as the mobile phone (Castells *et al* 2007: 251). Meetings are no longer determined by who can be 'co-present', as the 'absent present' may be drawn into a conversation through a mobile phone with a group of 'co-present' colleagues or friends, creating a hybrid 'virtual/real' space called an 'augmented flesh meet' (Ito and Okabe 2005: 17). This experience of space shaped by individual choice and not geography may be enhanced through using the phone for the consumption of media, thus creating a private space in public, which Raymond Williams calls 'mobile privatization' that

...strengthens separation, seclusion and isolation while offering virtual commonality, intimacy and connection... (Groening 2010: 1 344).

Now that social interaction is driven by choices enabled by the mobile communication network, not only the physical proximity of the people surrounding one, Castells *et al* (2007: 250) argue that it will inevitably lead to an increasingly individualised 'network society'. While the mobile phone may be associated with an 'individualised' modern lifestyle, it is conversely in some societies also deeply embedded in a range of religious and supernatural practices^{iv} (Castells *et al* 2007: 73, 74).

This section has focused particularly on how the mobile phone is integrated into the schedules and routines of its owners, and how this relates to social meanings in this space. Here we have seen how the mobile phone can become a lifeline to a social circle, a tool for

coordination, or a way of escaping the world of the co-present. The next section will focus on how the mobile phone allows the user to interact with the outside world beyond the social space. While this discussion may relate to similar practises as the ones discussed in this section, the emphasis is on the relationship with the outside world, not the routines of the owner.

Conversion: the mobile phone as portal to the world

While it may be relatively straightforward to study the domestication process of conversion of ICT in the home through examining the display of and talk about ICT outside of the home (Silverstone *et al* 1992: 25), how does one study the conversion of the mobile phone outside of the social space of the peer group? It may be possible that people rarely move out of their social space, and do so more often virtually than physically, as they did in my study.

Recognising that conversion relates to communicating the meanings associated with ICT (as developed in the highly contextual social space) back into a broader public space, I would like to argue that this occurs not only through talk and display but is also performative. The way in which people in a particular social context use their mobile phones to interact with people outside this social context, could therefore also communicate various meanings about what is considered appropriate use of this device. These kinds of interactions with people outside the social circle may occur specifically through the use of the mobile Internet.

The mobile Internet has been adopted as primary internet platform, particularly in the East and the developing world (Castells *et al* 2007: 36), and significantly for this study, also by young people from low-income areas in South Africa (Kreutzer 2009: ii). In studying the mobile Internet, I will focus on how the meanings attached to the mobile phone in Hooggenoeg are converted back into the broader public space through social networks, writing practices, peer surveillance and bullying practices.

Social networks and social capital

Despite the fact that the term ‘social networks’ is nowadays generally used in relation to Internet applications, this term actually predated the internet and refers to all a person’s social circles, offline or online. Social networks may develop differently in different social spaces with different emotional and social needs, either favouring strong ties between family and good friends, or alternately weak ties with acquaintances (Goodman 2005). In contrast to those with predominantly ‘strong ties’ in their social networks, those with many ‘weak ties’ are able to access much more new information coming to them from the non-overlapping

social circles that characterise such ‘weak ties’ (Granovetter 1973: 1372). While strong ties with family and friends may provide valuable emotional support, they do not offer the access to opportunities that ‘weak ties’ provide (Granovetter 1973: 1378). Bourdieu (1984: 184) coined the term ‘social capital’ to describe the value of social ties and the ability to translate them into material advantage through rituals of obligation, and therefore one may argue that many ‘weak ties’ with their access to new opportunities, lead to an increase in a particularly valuable type of social capital.

Mobile phones tend to prioritise ‘strong ties’ as constant communication between virtual cliques can lead to these cliques emotionally barricading themselves into an experience of the world that can be described as ‘walled gardens’ of ‘bounded solidarity’ (Ling 2008: 163). There is some concern therefore that mobile phones may lead to a decrease in weak ties, as people start to prioritise mobile phone communication, at the expense of ‘weak ties’ made face-to-face with new acquaintances (Ling and Donner 2009: 25). Despite this general trend, one exception has been documented in Jamaica, where the mobile phone has been shown to nurture ‘weak ties’ through the common practice of ‘link-up’, in which casual acquaintances are routinely added as contacts and frequently contacted in very short ‘link-up’ phone calls (Horst and Miller 2006: 89). While this may lead to doubts about whether one can generalise findings on social capital and the mobile phone to developing countries, research in South African society seems to concur with the general claim that social networks favour ‘strong ties’ with family and friends (Goodman 2005).

Social networks and space

Globally today the mobile Internet is dominated by social networks, and the smartphone with its built in GPS has also made geo-tagged location-based mobile social software (MoSoSo) widely used, through platforms such as Dodgeball, Centrl and Four Square to enable users to hook up with friends in the vicinity (Goggin 2011: 117). There are however, certain MoSoSo software which are not limited to sharing with friends and thus promote broader audiences, such as Flickr and South Africa’s The Grid, allowing people to upload news and photographs related to a location, which anyone can browse (Walton 2010b: 36). These MoSoSo sites are thus similar in character to ‘community networks’ which allow residents to post information about a specific geographical location (Kavanaugh *et al* 2005, Carroll and Rosson 2010, Erickson 2010).

Public private lives and friends who have never met

Most social networking sites can be accessed on personal computers as well as on mobile phones, such as Facebook (Green and Haddon 2010: 94). What distinguishes these sites from face-to-face communication is that they are able to blur the divide between private and public life through a number of features that make this possible (boyd 2007: 9). Firstly, the feature of ‘persistence’ means that conversations can be recorded and kept and are not restricted to being synchronous (boyd 2007: 9). These sites also have a feature of ‘searchability’ so that a like-minded person’s digital profile can be found as well as a ‘replicability’ feature so that what is said can easily be copied (boyd 2007: 9). Finally, the feature of hosting ‘invisible audiences’ means that large numbers of strangers may ‘overhear’ a communication and interpret it out of context (boyd 2007:9). Through these specific features, private processes are brought into the ‘mediated public’ sphere, which may be part of the reason that adolescents embrace social networking, as it provides a rare training ground for social life skills (boyd 2007: 10). Users are not only able to create social identities and differentiate themselves from others, but research also suggests social networks promote the nurturing of social capital (Adler and Kwon cited in Green 2010: 96).

Media such as mobile phones seem to disrupt the normal formation of social networks (Granovetter 1973) by allowing not only for the formation of strong ties with family and friends, but also with complete strangers. Strong ties presumably depend on in-depth sharing of emotionally meaningful experiences with a like-minded person. Hitherto people may have depended on personal introductions to meet such people; now a social networking site’s ‘searchability’ facilitates finding a person with shared interests (boyd 2007: 9). Where ‘searchability’ is not built into the medium, finding people with whom to make meaningful friendships via the mobile phone may develop in ingenious ways. In the Phillipines, ‘text mates’ are found by ‘accidentally’ messaging to incorrect numbers or by consulting ‘text mate’ listings in comic books (Ellwood-Clayton 2006). However, this lack of ‘searchability’ means that these mediated social networks are less public, and therefore favour private conversations instead of the kind of ‘mediated public’ ones that boyd (2007) is referring to. Despite MXit (South Africa’s Instant Messaging or IM application) being an Internet based application that could easily have built in these features, it lacks the ability for ordinary users to access the ‘mediated public’ that boyd (2007) describes (Walton and Donner 2009: 7). However, despite the interface favouring the private, MXit users can be discovered at select times through MXit chatrooms or Multimix, or rely on introductions from friends (Walton

2010a: 59). This dependency on introductions and lack of public virtual space on MXit has limited the potential for debate compared to other mobile social networks accessible to South African users (Walton and Donner 2009: 8). MXit is the most popular networking application in South Africa, with over 15 million members, probably due to its low cost.

As MXit is not a website but an instant messaging (IM) application, it may be more useful to examine it in the light of research into instant messaging. Researchers into IM in the USA, extrapolate their research to make general claims that instant messaging among adolescents favours the development of strong ties with those whom the users already know offline (Lewis and Fabos 2005: 482, 487; Stern 2007: 1). This is consistent with how mobile phone communication in the West is generally conceptualised to affect sociability (Ling 2008). South African research about MXit suggests that it differs from general mobile phone sociability here, in that it not only supports the nurturing of 'strong ties', but allows for both the 'extension of social networks' as well as staying in touch with 'close friends' (Walton 2010a: 57). It is unclear however, if Walton (2010a) is here referring exclusively to offline-online relationships and thus excluding online-only relationships when she speaks of 'close friends'. As she does not describe any online-only contacts as having particular emotional depth, it seems likely that she is assuming that an online-only relationship precludes 'close friends' or 'strong ties'. However, if one defines 'strong ties' on the basis of time spent together and emotional investment, as Granovetter (1973: 1361) does, there are examples of longterm online-only friendships that have been observed in computer-mediated environments (McKenna *et al* 2002 cited in Chigona *et al* 2009:3) as well as in mediated spaces formed through mobile communication. In Japan, women develop intimate relationships with online-only female friends through sharing personal moods and feelings via picture e-mail on their phones (Ishii 2004: 54) and in the Philippines online-only 'text mates' develop friendships based on sharing SMS advice, or even intense SMS sexual relationships (Pertierra 2005: 29, Ellwood-Clayton 2005: 206). As these online-only friendships exist in virtual space only, this means that regular physical proximity is no longer a condition for initiating and maintaining 'strong ties'.

Identity construction and imagined audiences

The desire to interact with online-only 'MXit friends' seems to wane as teenagers move on to university, where they tend to delete these types of MXit contacts from their phones and only retain offline-online friends such as old school friends (Chigona *et al* 2009: 6). One possible explanation for this relates to social needs: that they may have made new friends, and may

therefore not need so many online-only friends anymore. However, social networks serve not only social needs but also help construct identity, as friends in the network may become an ‘imagined audience’ for the performance of identity (boyd 2007: 14). The ‘imagined audience’ is constructed by choosing as online friends those with particular characteristics, which help the user to take on a particular identity (boyd 2007:14). As users enter a new stage of their lives, such as leaving home for university, they may literally delete the ‘imagined audience’ that was integral to old identity experiments, which could explain Chigona *et al*’s (2009) findings. MXit’s architecture may facilitate identity experimentation even more so than other social networks where there are shared communication spaces, and its private nature may enable the simultaneous ‘trying on’ of different identities with different contacts. MXit contacts tend to be predominantly with the opposite sex and may be grouped under different descriptions, which has resulted in young people developing their own personal contact folksonomies (Walton 2010a: 53). Walton (2010a) lists various MXit categories used for women: sweet gals, *amaCherry*, *amarhuzu* (rough gangster girls), *iziqava* (older girls), good hoes, *amalady*, and fewer categories for men: *ixhegs* (older men) or *ezomnotho* (rich ones). These categories suggest particular sexual identities that young people take on in relation to the ‘imagined audiences’ that the categories suggest. Identity construction on MXit necessitates frequent interactions with others, as unlike social networks with ‘mediated publics’ (boyd 2007: 9) MXit does not facilitate public platforms (Walton and Donner 2009).

Writing and identity

Unlike face-to-face communication, where one can feel part of a group merely through a physical presence of the body (Wellman 2001 cited in Lewis and Fabos 2005: 475), in online groups you need to ‘write yourself into being’ (Sunden cited in boyd 2007: 12). Particularly amongst low-income youths, language is the cheapest way to distinguish oneself as hip and modern (Barendregt 2008: 166). Teens write themselves into a ‘textual world’ where in-jokes about this world on IM become essential for social relations and status in an environment such as school (Lewis and Fabos 2005: 486–487). South African research indicates that while MXit teens do chat about school, they mainly use MXit for romantic chats (Walton 2010a: 48). MXit may make the entry into adolescent sexuality easier, as boys in particular find it easier to flirt on MXit than they do face-to-face (Walton 2010a: 67), and girls use MXit to experiment with sexual relationships in a distant, safe way (Bosch 2008: 16–17). Valued writing on MXit means the ability to tell stories and dramatise the everyday (Walton 2010a: 57), which can be tricky when one is managing several conversations simultaneously.

Beginners often become confused, and the special acronym language used on MXit does not help, which means that these beginners are easily spotted, leading online-only 'MXit friends' to either delete them or relegate them to a neglected category (Walton 2010a: 66).

Surveillance as everyday practice

While surveillance is conventionally understood as a hierarchical process where a powerful watcher gathers information from passive individuals who are watched, 'peer surveillance' describes data gathering that is not necessarily hierarchical and which emerges from online social networking (Albrechtslund 2008: 6). Young people in the IM landscape quickly become aware of the importance of surveillance, where they not only realise that they are being monitored but also look out for specific clues to monitor others (Lewis and Fabos 2005: 489). Peer surveillance over MXit can include looking at profiles, and paying close attention to conversations with contacts (Walton 2010a). This type of peer surveillance can therefore assist in building an identity by making sure that the 'imagined audience' is perfectly in tune with the imaginary person the young user would like to be, making sure that associations with the 'wrong sort' do not happen. In South Africa, this peer surveillance may mean monitoring the 'race' of your contacts. Bosch's (2008: 18) study, for example, found 'coloured' girls refusing to accept MXit contacts who were black Africans. Surveillance can also screen for 'rude' as well as 'ugly' contacts, who may then be deleted from their MXit (Walton 2010a:61). Getting someone to send a photograph therefore becomes a constant powerplay between girls and boys, where no one wants to send a photograph first and face the possibility of being summarily deleted (Walton 2010a: 50). When a 'moral panic' emerged as media reports revealed that MXit was used to lure and abduct young women (Chigona and Chigona 2008), in response girls developed particular techniques to detect potential danger, such as noting when a contact professes love and makes suggestive comments too soon (Walton 2010a: 64) and avoiding older men as contacts (Walton 2010a: 61).

Teenagers using IM can also use surveillance to exercise power over their peers by posing as another person and then reporting back to others about the reaction, as well as gossiping across simultaneous chat threads (Lewis and Fabos 2005: 491). While this kind of IM identity theft or simultaneous gossip threads are not mentioned in the South African research on MXit (Bosch 2008, Chigona *et al* 2009, Walton 2010a), users do seem to make use of MXit to relay hurtful gossip to a person who they do not want to confront with this face-to-face (Walton 2010a: 62).

Cyber-bullying

Peer surveillance can also be used to exercise power over others in anti-social and hurtful ways, such as the British practice of ‘happy slapping’ where violence against others is planned, filmed with a mobile phone camera and then posted online (Green and Haddon 2009: 123—124). Incidents such as the filming of sexual abuse on mobile phones and gangs who use the phone to coordinate the stalking of rape victims have also been noted in Australia (Spry 2010: 15). Internet bulletin boards, as well as unofficial school websites, are accessed via mobile phones to trade insults in Japan, where cyber-bullying may be so intense that it can lead to suicide (Spry 2010: 19). Home-made pornography has become commonplace in Australia, where young people send naked photographs of themselves as part of a courtship ritual, also known as ‘sexting’, where these photographs often get shared amongst others at school after a relationship ends (Goggin 2010: 127). These practices contribute to the ‘moral panic’ which has developed around use of the mobile phone by youths (Goggin 2010: 124).

One-way communication —downloads and information

Despite the upsurge in collaborative content production, a large part of the Internet still serves Web 1.0 practices where users only consume information. While social networking dominates the use of the mobile Internet, it is also used to access information through sites such as Google and Wikipedia (von Tetzchner 2010). Internationally the mobile Internet is used for downloading media (Katz and Accord 2005), primarily games (Katz and Accord 2005: 408—410) and videos (Katz and Accord 2005: 413). In South Africa, the downloading and sharing of ringtones via Bluetooth is popular amongst youths (Kreutzer 2009: 69—70). Downloaded items that reflect American popular culture are often used as an expression of urban ‘non-ethnic’ identity (Bosch 2008: 14). Generally the mobile Internet is used more for social purposes than Internet on the PC (Green 2010: 94). In countries where users have primary access to the Internet via their mobile phones, they may use the mobile Internet in ways that are more similar to desktop use. In South Africa, besides social networks such as Facebook, MXit and Twitter, users also favour sites such as Google, Wikipedia and Youtube to obtain information (Von Tetzchner 2010).

It is clear from the above that the mobile phone allows the owner to interact with the wider world in multiple ways. In essence the mobile phone blurs the divide between public and private to create new hybrid spaces (Castells *et al* 2007). Through these interactions,

contextual meanings associated with specific mobile phone practices are extended and converted back into public meanings.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored how the mobile phone as consumer object can have a host of meanings associated with it, and how these meanings are developed through several phases related to Silverstone *et al*'s (1992) domestication approach. Through the process of domestication in its various phases, the mobile phone becomes part of a social world and an object infused with meaning related to the values and interests of that world. In order to understand this social world and the values and interests that make up its moral economy, the next chapter will explore the nature of the environment in which the young people of Hooggenoeg find themselves.

Chapter 3: The township and everyday life

The 'moral economy of the household' expands into 'everyday life'

Unlike the uses and gratifications approach, where the meaning of a device originates in the individual, according to the domestication approach, its meaning is socially negotiated (Haddon, 2007a). In their initial work regarding the household, Silverstone *et al* (1992) referred to this site of social meaning as the 'moral economy of the household' (Silverstone *et al* 1992: 18). It is the site of the reproduction of the space, facilitated by ICT, where the social world recreates itself through 'class, ethnicity and geography' (Silverstone *et al* 1992: 19). Subsequently, the term 'moral economy of the household' has not been used, as domestication studies have expanded to look at other spaces (Haddon 2007a), and perhaps also as a result of the term 'moral economy' having a different meaning in economics (Thompson 1971).

I would like to retain this notion of the social reproduction of a contextual social space. By extending Silverstone *et al*'s (1992) limited notion of the 'moral economy of the household' to less contained social spaces such as the streets, one arrives at Lefebvre's (1991) notion of the 'everyday' as a collection of social practices and relationships which both reproduce and shape the 'production of space'. For Lefebvre, capitalism not only determines social relations in economic life, but penetrates 'into the details of daily life' to create a new 'bureaucratic and commercialised' culture (Highmore 2002: 113). Here everyone experiences alienation as possibilities for fulfilment and meaning in everyday life are erased by defining time spent away from work as idleness (Lefebvre 2005: 78). As human creativity and control is replaced by capitalist production and commercialisation, the everyday inevitably becomes boring (Highmore 2002: 129).

For Lefebvre, everyday life is defined by repetition of practices, a combination of the 'daily chores' as well as the 'routinized pleasures' which enable one to endure them (Highmore 2002: 128). In this chapter, I will firstly discuss the production of space through daily practices in everyday life. This will then be applied to 'the township' as a particular type of space. Then I focus on consumption and its relationship to everyday life amongst young

people living in townships. Lastly, I examine how social structures such as class, race and gender are reproduced through everyday practices that create particular dispositions.

Practices of mobility and social interaction

The practices of mobility characteristic of particular eras of history produced very different experiences of space (Baumann cited in Clarke and Doel 2004: 36). Pre-modern traditional space was experienced mainly on foot and was thus detailed and well-known closer to home and defined by landmarks of people's homes and the physical landscape (Baumann cited in Clarke and Doel 2004: 36). Modernity, with its associated urbanisation and displaced urban commuters, meant that space was no longer experienced as contiguous and intimate. Instead it became dispersed nodes of places where landmarks were labels on a map and a neighbourhood was just a place to live, not a space of social ties (Allen cited in Morley 2000: 177).

Globalisation changed the experience of space further so that it became characterised by 'stretched out' webs of social networks that span the entire world (Massey 1994: 154). Not everyone experiences this global mobility, so that it may be more correct to speak of 'glocalisation', where the world becomes global for the privileged mobile minority, yet stays local for the vast immobile underclass (Baumann cited in Clark and Doel 2004: 37). 'Glocalisation's' simplistic dualism however, does not recognise that the poor may indeed in some cases be very mobile yet have very little power over their mobility, and Massey's differential 'power geometry' model may therefore be the best model to describe space in the era of globalisation where differential access to power and mobility is defined by class, gender and race, and modify spatial experience (Massey 1994: 149).

In South Africa, living in the townships produces such a raced 'power geometry'. Despite some integration amongst the middle class, most black African and coloured South Africans still live in racially segregated townships that have poor-quality housing and very few amenities (Bray *et al* 2010: 23). Even those residential areas built after the democratic transition have generally remained 'racially segregated' (Muyeba and Seekings 2010: 6). Interaction between different parts of the city and hence different races was curtailed through Apartheid town planning and transport systems which created a 'disarticulated' city (Schensul and Heller 2011: 81).

Therefore, despite township mobility including extensive commuting, the 'disarticulation' prevented the formation of social networks across the city, creating a sense of space

favouring local social ties. This localism may have been further promoted by the constant pedestrian movement on the streets that characterises township life (Mbembe, Dlamini, and Kunou 2004). While middle-class South Africans experience their social community as separate nodes traversed by car journeys, township social community is experienced as a contiguous space where the neighbourhood is integrated into everyday life (Bray *et al* 2010: 101). This particular spatial sociability is further nurtured through economic hardship, which makes it important to build strong ties with those who are in close proximity: the neighbours (Bray *et al* 2010: 101). The symbolic difference between the township and the suburb is graphically captured in the novel *Coconut*, by Kopana Matlwa:

No toddlers with snotty noses and grubby hands play in the streets of Little Valley Country Estate. Groups of teenage girls in bright T-shirts, old torn jeans and peak caps do not sit on the front lawn pointing and gossiping about the guys that walk past the gates of their homes. Older sisters do not play the wailese loud, so that those who know the tune can sing along as each mops, dusts and sweeps their house clean. In Little Valley Country Estate the neighbours are the cars parked in driveways and the children are the tennis balls that fly over the wall and into your pool. (Matlwa 2007: 89)

The anonymity that defines middle-class society is produced not only by modern technology such as the car or the walls around houses but through a culture of public anonymity that precludes staring or drawing attention to oneself (Garland-Thomson. 2009). This non-staring culture has its history in the acceptance of social mobility among the middle classes so that status is conceptualised as neither fixed nor visually marked, but instead within the reach of every ‘gentleman’ (Garland-Thomson 2009: 49).

The bohemian flâneur defied this middle-class social norm and boldly practised staring as modernist entertainment (Highmore 2002: 141). Outside the modern space of the city, in traditional spaces where people know each other and are defined by belonging to a collective society, the anonymous staring, such as we find in flânerie, is not possible. Here, Goffman explains, staring performs an important function in reproducing the morals of a community, and the stigmatizing stare is used to signal moral judgement (Garland-Thomson 2009: 104). In response, the person being stared at engages in ‘face-work’:

... a staring encounter through which we perpetually renegotiate our self-esteem and status, making us exceedingly vulnerable to each other. (Garland-Thomson 2009: 104)

Face-work, Goffman (1972) explains, comes into play when a person’s ‘metaphorical face’ is in danger and they are no longer seen as respectable, for example when information is revealed that compromises the image they present to society. Staring at another person’s face

can therefore indicate that such a ‘face-work’ negotiation is in process and therefore be a signal that the person’s metaphorical face is wrong (Goffman 1972).

This kind of communal staring is evident in the *passeggiata*, a ritualised Italian walk marking the end of the working day, in which everyone participates to look and be looked at (del Negro and Berger 2001). Here, Goffman’s (1972) ‘stigmatizing stare’ is the privilege of the widows. From the sidewalks, their ‘marginal gaze’ and gossip guards the respectability of the community, who all file past in a walk where they acknowledge each other and so express their interdependence (del Negro and Berger 2001). Like these rural Italian towns, smaller township, or township blocks may be characterised as what Raymond Williams (1969) calls ‘knowable communities’, where everyone in a geographical space is known to anyone else (Bray *et al* 2010). This may mean that township residents are also continually subject to the ‘stigmatizing stare’ and the process of ‘face-work’, to reproduce communal morals through a process of continuous judgement.

This kind of visual judgement may be avoided by constructing private space, a spatial activity that is not only a product of architecture, but also of media consumption, through the practice of ‘mobile privatization’. Whether township residents use media to avoid judgement by others would therefore be a relevant question.

Everyday practices of media consumption and space

The media allow families and individuals to shield themselves from the outside world yet to have unlimited access to it (Williams cited in Groening 2010: 1 342). ‘Mobile privatization’ is a term coined by cultural theorist Raymond Williams to describe this phenomenon, where one may observe a broader public without leaving the ‘shell’ of the home (Hills 2009: 10). As media transformed from domestic to portable, Williams’ notion of ‘mobile privatization’ was reinterpreted to not only bring the public world into the private living room but also making the public world private with the help of portable media so reinventing ‘the world as your living room’ (Groening 2010: 1 331). Joggers who first used the Sony Walkman to create a ‘private bubble’ provoked criticism for disobeying the social acknowledgement expected in a public space (du Gay *et al* 1986). Today, as portable media such as the mobile phone have become ubiquitous, it has become normal for users to ‘have the possibility of social interaction without the burden of social obligation’ (Groening 2010: 1 344).

In the townships of Grahamstown, media can provide some ability to isolate one’s family from a dangerous public world, prompting shack dwellers to install satellite television to keep

their children off the streets (Jijana 2011). Despite this example of mobile privatization, township homes, as has been shown above, are less isolated from neighbours and the public world than their suburban counterparts, and public issues such as poverty, politics and violence may enter the home not just through the media but also through the door. While it may be easy here to connect with the public world through the media, it may not be so easy to use the media to construct a private world devoid of social obligation.

This local integration does not preclude more remote spatial connections, and communication media that link the township to the national and the global space are ubiquitous (AMPS 2009). These global flows have provided a tool with which youths can reinterpret and re-imagine the township by comparing it with other places represented in the global media, a process of spatial comparison described by Thompson as ‘symbolic distancing’ (Strelitz 2003: 5). The global media not only provide reflexive notions of difference but also of recognition of self, where it can be used by South African township youth to help form identities and differentiate themselves from others, so that the social spaces they inhabit become heterogenic and unbounded (Strelitz 2004: 638).

Hooggenoeg as a local/global space

Hooggenoeg, with its 11 streets and 224 houses can be characterised as a ‘knowable community’ (Williams 1969) as all the inhabitants know each other, and most have attended the same school. Just like many other township spaces it is a localised social space, shaped by the social pedestrian lifestyle here and its ‘disarticulation’ (Schensul and Heller 2011: 81) from the rest of the town. Hooggenoeg is on the remote windswept rim of the Grahamstown bowl, nearly an hour’s walk away from the town centre. In a telephone interview with the author on 29 November 2010, Mr. K. Xamleko, Makana Director of Housing stated that because houses here were built in the early years of democracy before standards were developed, they are even smaller than the current minimum size for low-cost housing. Thus walking to town may serve as reminder of the class position of Hooggenoeg’s residents, as they see the houses getting bigger and the environment more affluent towards the centre of town. Nearly 16 years after the end of apartheid, Grahamstown suburbs are still predominantly white and businesses in town still mainly white-owned. This is a stark reminder that despite the freedom of democracy, there is very little equality here.

Mobility is further limited: despite a taxi driver residing in Hooggenoeg, there is no taxi rank. Taxi routes entrench a spatial ‘disarticulation’ (Schensul and Heller 2011: 81) between

different parts of Grahamstown as journeys always have to end or start in the main taxi rank despite this resulting in huge detours. The central business district and the predominantly white suburbs, collectively referred to as 'town', where the taxi rank is located, thus claim a geographical centrality and authority, also evident in its monopoly of most economic activity. This construction of centrality promotes a uni-directional mobility similar to other areas of South Africa where poor residents enter rich neighbourhoods but rich residents hardly ever enter poor neighbourhoods (Bray *et al* 2010: 167). As a township in a relatively small town in the Eastern Cape, South Africa's poorest province, it is further marginalised and disconnected from globalised cities. At the same time, however, Hooggenoeg is a surprisingly globalised and mediatised space, where in every house I entered the television was on seemingly for the entire day and the youth I observed were highly practised not only in using their mobile phones but in a whole range of media such as television games, flashstick based video and audio players, and even computers. Hooggenoeg not only has global media but global migrants: six Pakistani traders have set up shop in the township.

Despite the consumption of global media, Hooggenoeg, with its limited mobility and social and economic disarticulation, seemed to promote an insular local sociability. What mitigated this was that as a relatively new area, most people had social networks that extended to the areas they had moved from. Despite the area being known as a 'coloured area', in a telephone interview with the author on 29 November 2010, Mr K. Xamleko, Makana Director of Housing stated that it was conceptualised by the municipality in 1995 as Grahamstown's first 'non-racial' suburb where coloureds and black Africans would live together. Hence, 'coloureds' and Africans from the informal settlement 'Sun City' as well as Africans from the backyards of Tantiyi and Fingo Village had been allocated homes next to each other, and one can assume that many still keep ties with these other township areas. Furthermore, informal and family ties extend beyond Grahamstown, as many people from Sun City were migrant labourers on farms and still have close connections with these rural spaces.

Whether the mobile phones will reflect the inward-looking localised character, the broader town-based and regional connections, or the globalised character of this space, is a key concern of this research.

Consumption and everyday life

While the spaces of everyday life are often not central to economic activity, they are still shaped by capitalism (Lefebvre cited in Shields 2004: 209). Commodity culture has become

the essence of 'capitalist modernity' and penetrates the details of daily life (Lefebvre cited in Highmore 2002: 113). Just as in Levebre's post-war France, where 'restructuring' introduced a consumer culture that became synonymous with modernization (Highmore 2002: 113), South Africa after apartheid has experienced a similar radical penetration of consumer culture, which some attribute to the neo-liberal economic policy, the Growth Employment and Redistribution Plan (GEAR) ,which privileged the market in society (Everatt 2000: 31–32). Everatt explains how this policy translated into consumption penetrating the everyday life of the political leadership:

Furnishing market forces is not simply a policy shift but a lifestyle choice. The new ruling elite adopted many of the unsavoury habits of their predecessors, most notably conspicuous consumption. Black empowerment deals have created a thin stratum of black multi-millionaires who live like their white counterparts. No 'revolutionary discipline' was applied to ANC cadre as they took over government, imported cars, houses in the wealthy suburbs, cigar-smoking, designer-label clothing and complaints about MP's salary levels rapidly became the norm. The signals have not been lost on young people. (Everatt 2000: 32)

In a society increasingly defined by class, consumerism is becoming more important for both young people who live in townships and their parents^v, as symbolic markers of worthiness. Young people have high expectations of social mobility, and they associate their own identity as urban citizens in the new democracy with upward mobility (Cooper 2009: 25). Here, their own material success is seen as inevitable and part of a curve of progress tied to recent history where the new democracy, and their family's urbanisation, are primarily conceptualised as enabling increased consumerism, which is visualised to rightfully continue in their own upward social mobility (Cooper 2009: 25). This however becomes less and less likely, with more than 40% of young people in the 18 to 24 year old bracket neither studying^{vi} nor employed (Cloete 2009: 10).

While South Africa is one of the most economically unequal countries in the world (Klugman 2010: 154), and young people are increasingly becoming poorer (Makiwane and Kwizera 2008), young people in the post-apartheid years do not seem interested in challenging such inequalities through politics (Selikow *et al* 2002: 24). Township youths seem to subscribe to McNamee and Miller's 'myth of meritocracy': trusting that a place in the middle-class is within their reach despite their lack of middle-class resources (Swartz 2010: 100). Failure may constantly undermine their sense of personal worth, leading to a sense of hopelessness (Swartz 2010: 100). To reclaim their self-worth, young people may find other strategies to acquire these consumer goods, which may include criminal behaviour (Cooper 2009: 33). For young men in particular, the lack of employment may lead to violence (Bray *et al* 2010: 254).

This violence is frequently perpetrated on women and children, so that ‘South African men have gained a reputation as the world’s leading perpetrators of sexual violence’ (Leclerc-Madlala 2009: 64). Violent behaviour may be further fuelled by alcohol and drugs such as marijuana and mandrax, which are seen as ‘pervasive and sabotaging’ influences in townships (Swartz 2010: 118). This makes the township a very dangerous place, where ‘alcohol-soaked violence’ is common and many die accidentally after a drunken brawl (Swartz 2010: 38). Grahamstown falls into the Cacadu district, and a recent survey found this to be the district in South Africa in which one would most likely be murdered, with 42 murders in Grahamstown alone in 2010 (Jijana 2011).

Faced with all these difficulties, it can be very hard for young people to succeed and achieve a life of independence^{vii}. While research on what it takes for young people from township backgrounds to succeed is minimal, Ramphele (2002: 39, 54) suggests that those who make it do so because of their ability to avoid such debilitating aspects of the township social space. This may point to the importance of social identities shaped by an engagement with space.

Dispositions, young people and the reproduction of social structures

The everyday, as Lefebvre explains, is constituted by the constant repetition of social practices:

Everyday life is made of recurrences: gestures of labour and leisure, mechanical movements both human and properly mechanic, hours, weeks, months, years, linear and cyclical repetitions, natural or rational time. (Lefebvre 2005: 18)

These routines, especially those encountered in early childhood, create particular expectations of the proper cultural ordering of space, and therefore create a ‘lasting disposition’ which Bourdieu calls the ‘habitus’ of what is proper to display and perform in a space (Bourdieu 1984: 82). This habitus corresponds to the social position which an individual occupies in society, and creates a ‘matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions’ which allow the individual not only to recognise and repeat those but also to develop new ‘practices structured according to its principles’ (Bourdieu 1984: 82).

As the ‘habitus’ results from ‘the homogeneity of conditions of existence’ (which include tastes, sexual division of labour, cares, strife and domestic morality) that are common to people in the same culture and class, and as it operates outside of conscious intention, it operates outside of rational argument through emotional reactions such as disgust, and is hence more powerful (Bourdieu 1984: 78, 80). In this way, Bourdieu argues, the social

structures of society such as class, race and gender are generally not reproduced through overt struggles between different groups, but predominantly through relationships between individuals and those sets of dispositions that relate to social structures, the habitus:

Through the habitus, the structure which has produced it governs practice, not by the processes of mechanical determinism, but through the mediation of the orientations and limits it assigns to the habitus's operations of invention. (Bourdieu 1984: 95)

Through the habitus, certain social positions are tied to particular rules regarding the proper occupation of space, so that practices which happen in the space acquire a symbolic meaning related to a 'fundamental scheme' which organises actions and objects (Bourdieu 1984: 91). Bourdieu poetically captures how the external world is invested with meaning; at the same time, meaning is made from the relationship of objects in space:

The mind is a metaphor of the world of objects which is itself but an endless circle of mutually reflecting metaphors. (Bourdieu. 1984: 91)

One may therefore expect the environment of the township to be replete with metaphors for the young people who have grown up there and have been shaped by the dispositions which give this world meaning. Indeed, while there has been no documentation of a township 'habitus', there has been some research that has shown how different moral identities attributed to young people are related to what is seen as proper to display and perform in the township space (Swartz 2010, Salo 2007, Lindegaard and Hendriksen 2009, Ross 2010). I would like to propose that the moral identities documented by Swartz (2010) in Langa, and Salo (2007), Lindegaard and Hendriksen (2009) and Ross (2010) in predominantly 'coloured communities', can be related to two sets of dispositions, which I shall refer to as the '*kasi habitus*' and the '*ordentlikheid habitus*'.

The '*kasi habitus*'

In the black African township of Langa, in Cape Town, Swartz (2010: 69) identifies a range of moral identities for young people that are associated with engagement with social space. The different spatial engagements span the spaces of the home, the township streets and marginal criminal spaces. Firstly, those who withdraw from the streets of the township and spend most of their time at home, only living for school or church, are known as the *Mommy's Babies* (Swartz 2010: 70). Swartz explains how this label is gendered in reference to a young woman in her study:

For young women who were labelled as mommy's babies, the label seemed less derogatory than when it was used to describe young men. In fact, many admired the sheltered existence of young women like Mhoza. (Swartz 2010: 70)

In contrast to the immobility of the Mommy's Babies, the *Right Ones* or *uLungileyo* are able to engage with aspects of township sociability such as that manifested in street life, shebeens and sexual relationships, but are not consumed by it and spend significant time at home focusing on their education (Swartz 2010: 72). Their relative sociability is further signified through consumer culture expressed as fashionable dress. Unlike the Mommy's Babies, the Right Ones are considered stylish, worldly and independent yet discreet in their monogamous sexual activity, and this combination of independence and restraint means that they often become role models to others (Swartz 2010: 72). Where the Right Ones are seen to resist the more hedonous influences of the space, the *Kasi boys* and *Kasi girls* go with the flow of the township or *kasi*^{viii}, and are shaped by street life, as Swartz explains:

A Kasi boy or Kasi girl was one who drank excessively, partied all the time, had the latest branded gear, and lived life on the *edge* of addictions and crime. These young people (both young men and young women) had multiple sexual partners in full view of the community, often got involved in violent conflict resolution (stabblings) and partook liberally in smoking drugs. (Swartz 2010: 74)

While youth is commonly considered an age of rebellion and sexual experimentation, this kind of deviance which undermines social advancement, may be particularly evident in working-class youths who see this as an expression of allegiance to their working-class communities (Willis 1977). While Kasi boys and *Kasi girls* are notorious for their bad behaviour and may use illegal substances or steal the occasional mobile phone, they are not professional criminals like the *Skollies*, who engage in fulltime criminal activity such as housebreaking, rape and selling hard drugs (Swartz 2010: 76). While *Kasi* boys and *Kasi* girls party in the streets, they avoid the marginal and dangerous areas of the township that the *Skollies* occupy (Swartz 2010: 76). These *Skollies* are feared, and display their anti-social demeanor in their unfashionable appearance: often dirty and scarred (Swartz 2010: 77). Young female prostitutes, the *marbasha*, are not called *Skollies*, but they are considered to be as anti-social and corrupt as the *Skollies* (Swartz 2010: 77). Others who are stigmatized and ostracised are those who are seen to be accumulating inappropriate wealth or enjoying success, who are accused of making pacts with supernatural forces (Ashforth 2005: 69 – 72). Amongst the young people Swartz (2010: 123) studied, belief in witchcraft was ubiquitous.

I would like to argue that the 'fundamental scheme' (Bourdieu 1984) of this habitus values sociability, as the most accepted groups — the Right Ones and the *Kasi* boys and girls — are integrated in street life and use style to express this sociability, thus showing the importance of consumer culture as part of this disposition. While the Mommy's Babies and the *Skollies* and those accused of witchcraft exist on the margins, the Right Ones and the *Kasi* boys and

girls embrace township life in all its facets, and may tolerate or even embrace promiscuity and petty crime, as long as no-one is seriously harmed. This sociability may relate to the concept of *ubuntu*, in which a valued humanity is constructed through interaction with others. Social goodwill shown towards others characteristic of *ubuntu*, is sustained by the need to avoid inciting jealousy in others, which may lead to the inflicting of malice through ‘witchcraft’ (Ashforth 2005: 89). Ashforth (2005) cautions that an ubiquitous belief in witchcraft should not be misinterpreted as a lack of rationalism in Africans as it often exists in tandem with modern lifestyles and a belief in science. In fact belief in witchcraft has increased post-apartheid as a way to explain increased social inequality by scapegoating others for one’s relative misfortune (Ashforth 2005). Hence much of everyday life for those of such disposition will involve efforts to minimise social jealousy, as jealousy is seen as a direct cause of witchcraft.

The ‘*ordentlikheid* habitus’

In urban and rural ‘coloured’ communities in the Western Cape, moral identities are also related to the way in which young people engage with the social space, but here the disposition that is most valued is the one associated with being ‘respectable’ or ‘*ordentlik*’ (Salo 2007, Lindegaard and Hendriksen 2009, Ross 2010). Respectability may serve as a way for working-class people to differentiate themselves from constructions of the lower classes as morally suspect and vulgar, and to cancel out this class ‘mark’ by adopting a particular disposition of respectability, with associated practices signifying a caring morality and asexual decency (Skeggs 1997). The very British understanding of respectability that Skeggs (1997) describes, is somewhat different from the understanding of *ordentlik* in South African predominantly ‘coloured’ communities, which is primarily defined as neighbourliness and reliability, and being ‘the same’ in terms of personality under various circumstances (Ross 2010: 39). A person who is constantly inebriated but maintains a congenial sociability to others in the neighbourhood can therefore be considered respectable or *ordentlik* by neighbours (Ross 2010: 42). This respectability is gendered: whereas in both women and men it is manifested through conviviality, neatness and good manners (Ross 2010: 57), in women it is particularly tied to sexual propriety (Lindegaard and Hendriksen 2009: 32). The respectability of young women in particular can be of great concern to a neighbourhood, as it reflects on the neighbourhood as a whole (Salo 2007: 170 — 171). Here,

respectability for a young woman is tied to mobility; she is expected to stay at home and not to wander the streets, and the term '*rondloop*' when attributed to a young woman encompasses a sense of straying from the path of morality (Ross 2010: 48). Ross notes that the surveillance of women's patterns of movement is not only carried out by men:

Women were also cruel in their assessments and kept minute accounts of one another's behaviour. For the most part, *ordentlike* women were identified on the basis that they kept to themselves, kept their homes neat and tidy, catered to the needs of their menfolk and when they ventured outdoors, walked decorously along established paths to close friends and kin. (Ross 2010: 62)

Walking around aimlessly is associated with having lovers, purchasing drugs and making trouble through spreading gossip (Ross 2010: 62). Through its articulation with class and race, gender occupies a particular space of restrained mobility here that is very different from the relative freedom of mobility and space that white women enjoy in South Africa.

Young women who are not *ordentlik* are described as *rou* or 'raw', indicating 'unfinished, incomplete, anti-social' and 'being not fully human', which suggests an uncultivated person (Ross 2010: 42). Not being *ordentlik* may result in using racial name calling such as the term *Boesman*^{ix} to call attention to a person's supposed lack of civilised behaviour and blackness (Ross 2010: 49). Respectability is therefore racialised, and being respectable means not only constraining mobility, but also trying to eliminate any Africanised features of the body, such as darker skin and kinky hair (Erasmus 2001: 13). Erasmus explains what respectability meant for her on a personal level:

I had neither 'sleek' hair nor *boesman korrels*. Hairstyling and texturising were (and still are) key beautification practices in the making of womanhood among young coloured women. In my community practices such as curling or straightening one's hair carried a stigma of shame. The humiliation of being "less than white" made being "better than black" a very fragile position to occupy. The pressure to be respectable and to avoid shame created much anxiety. (Erasmus 2001: 13)

Being 'better than black' here signifies both a moral position as well as a class position that was associated with better opportunities as a result of apartheid systems, such as job reservation. The roots of this notion of being morally 'in between' black and white can be traced back to Victorian progressionism, a belief held by many of 'mixed race' in the late 19th century; that the 'characteristics' of one's 'race' could be gradually overcome through investment in self-improvement, so eventually placing one on an equal standing with the race at the top of 'the great chain of being' (whites in general, and white upper-class British in particular), a notion of progress which justified moral superiority over blacks while at the same time allowing one to reject racism (Adhikari 2005: 8—10). Describing this process according to Bourdieu's understanding of different types of capital, we may see how

respectability becomes a quest to acquire the symbolic capital of the dominant i.e. recognition, which is attempted through an investment in their cultural capital, while forgetting that ‘the body and body dispositions carry the markers of social class’ (Skeggs 1997: 82); and in apartheid South Africa, the black body could never be equally valued. Despite it being based on incorrect premises, respectability as a disposition allowed people to morally sustain their ‘middle’ position in apartheid society. This sense of occupying the ‘middle’ position has survived into post-apartheid generations of ‘coloured communities’ where it is still reproduced through powerful emotions such as the shame Erasmus describes above, to replicate old class and race divisions (Adhikari 2005: 6, 10). This is how social reproduction works: a particular disposition is not established through rational argument, but through emotions like disgust — emotions that the disposition evokes through moral debasement of the habitual practices and attributes of members of other social groups (Bourdieu 1984: 80).

Distinguishing oneself from those at the bottom of society, which an investment in respectability provides, offers real material advantages. The importance for those in lower classes to closely guard their reputation is recognised by Himmelfarb as: “every misstep, any misfortune or imprudence could be catastrophic” (Bottero 2004: 28). In South Africa, a lack of *ordentlikheid* and its associated subservience in a farmworker, could result in being sjambokked by the white farmer (Ross 2010: 40). In social positions that are stigmatised in the society, whether this is being black or working-class and female, respectability needs to be constantly emphasised to combat stigmatisation (Skeggs cited in Bottero 2005: 113). Respectability in ‘coloured’ Western Cape communities can protect women from the physical and sexual violence that can easily be inflicted on a woman who is not considered to be so (Lindegaard and Hendriksen 2009: 34). When a woman is raped or assaulted a respectable reputation will ensure support from neighbours and prevent accusations of having ‘asked for it’ (Ross 2010: 62).

While respectability allows one to acquire status within a lower-class community by mimicking some of the practices of the dominant such as dress and demeanor, outside this community this may lead to constant anxiety of being discovered, as acquiring the disposition and cultural capital of a class is virtually impossible for those raised outside of that class (Skeggs 1997: 87). The irony of this is that as the lower class person’s ability to mimic the disposition improves, they start to adopt the hated pretensions of the dominant class, pretensions that constantly invoke inferiority since they take for granted ambitions which are

outside the reach of those from the lower class (Skeggs 1997: 87). These kind of pretensions of ‘placing oneself above others’ are, not surprisingly, described as ‘acting white’ in a South Africa still defined by racial inequality (Bray *et al* 2010: 163). Performing respectability therefore involves a constant tension: where disassociating with the *rou* and its labels of blackness, vulgarity, and dependency, can easily slip into positioning oneself as superior and thus *hoogmoedig*, *hoity toity* or ‘acting white’ (Ross 2010: 59), and so an attempt at inscribing oneself into a position of status in a local community may therefore just as easily result in a symbolic expulsion from that community.

Respectability is a disposition associated with class and is therefore also performed in the display of material goods in the home (Ross 2010: 48) or in wearing glamorous designer dresses and having beauty treatments for respectable functions such as the matric dance (Salo and Davids 2009: 46). Where previously respectability was associated with being able to manage a budget and having a sense of frugality, now it is increasingly being redefined as the display of consumer goods (Salo and Davids 2009: 46). Nevertheless, there are limits to the display of wealth, and people have to be careful that the symbolism of the display does not invoke being *hoity toity* or ‘*hoogmoedig*’ and that one stays simple or ‘*nederig*’ (Ross 2010: 39). This precludes adopting ambitions that are not seen to be realistic for one’s class, and which can therefore be dismissed as pretentious (Bourdieu in Skeggs 1997: 87). A young South African in a ‘coloured community’ with a desire to study may be defined as acting above his or her station and be punished for this through a stigmatizing process young people there call ‘visionkilling’ involving publically calling into question their likelihood of achieving their vision (Bray *et al* 2010: 126).

The fundamental scheme of this particular disposition can therefore be traced back to 19th century notions of race, respectability, one’s proper station in life and the value of self-improvement for progress (Adhikari 2005: 8—10). This association between the knowledge and practices of a colonial culture and human value seems to perpetuate a precarious in-between identity as ‘better than black but less than white’ (Erasmus 2001: 13).

Conclusion:

This chapter has described the nature of everyday township life, outlining how social practices such as walking, social interaction and media consumption assist in the production of the township as social space. It has examined how the everyday is permeated with consumer culture, in which personal relationships become defined in terms of meanings

associated with commercial goods. Finally, it has shown how social dispositions are constructed in relation to habituated spatial arrangements and social practices — Bourdieu's (1984) notion of the 'habitus' — which helps to reproduce social order. Now that the social space of the township and its everyday practices and identities have been conceptualised, the question one needs to consider is this: what does the mobile phone become in this space?

Chapter 4: Methodology

Introduction

In South Africa today, four out of 10 young adults aged 18 - 24 are neither employed nor studying (Cloete 2009) and in low-income areas, the ratio must be significantly higher. This makes their lives a significant object of social concern. It seems that the central role which mobile phones have been found to play in the lives of South African teenagers in recent years (Kreuzer 2009, Bosch 2008, Walton 2010a), persists and that now, as these teenagers have grown up, their mobile phones must still remain important to them. Studies which explore mobile phones and young adults in South Africa are restricted to the privileged minority of university students (Chigona and Chigona 2008, Chigona *et al* 2009). This study therefore provides the first insights into a less privileged —and hence more common — South African young adulthood, and what mobile phones mean in this new life stage. It also provides a counterpoint to international research on mobile phone consumption amongst young adults, where patterns of mobile phone use by young adults are explained in terms of their newly-acquired mobility and wealth (Ling 2004); wealth and mobility are however not a reality for a significant proportion of South African young adults (Cloete 2009).

This research aims to engage in debates on the appropriation of mobile phones amongst youths in low-income areas (Kreutzer 2009, Horst and Miller 2006, de Souza *et al* 2011). While there are many areas of Grahamstown where conditions are as bad if not worse than in Hooggenoeg, with many out-of-school youth who are not working or studying (Møller *et al* 2001, Møller 2008), the area was selected for reasons of language: understanding the nuances of communication is important for qualitative research focused on meaning (Fontana and Frey 1994: 366). All Hooggenoeg residents are fluent in Afrikaans, which is also the first language of the researcher.

A note on translation

As linguistic code-switching is common in Hooggenoeg, the young people found it very natural to switch between Afrikaans and English during the course of the interviews. To offer the reader who understands Afrikaans the benefit of the original with its true idiomatic expression, Afrikaans quotations are presented intact in the text with English translations appearing in footnotes. Hooggenoeg Afrikaans — in common with working class township Afrikaans (Dyers 2008) — incorporates English words and differs somewhat in terms of

pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar from what is considered ‘standard Afrikaans’ in South Africa. This means that specific decisions had to be made about how to represent the language. I decided not to foreground the dialect by adapting the spelling to reflect phonetic pronunciation, but rather to focus on preserving the sense by italicising English words used in Afrikaans sentences and using ‘standard Afrikaans’ spelling^x. In this way, the intended meaning is reflected in the English translation. To assist in clarifying these few instances of meanings of the dialect, help was enlisted from a colleague who comes from a similar community in Grahamstown.

The research question

My research attempted to answer the following question: What are the various meanings of mobile phones as negotiated amongst young adults in the township of Hooggenoeg, and how do these meanings relate to their everyday lives?

Following the domestication approach discussed in Chapter 2, this question was broken down into four sub-themes focusing on the four different phases through which meaning is attributed to mobile phones (Silverstone *et al* 1992). What meanings do mobile phones acquire when they are appropriated by these young adults in this space? What are the meanings associated with the display of the mobile phone in the social space? How does a mobile phone convey meaning in relation to the routines of everyday life? What meanings are provoked by the various processes of communicating with the wider outside world using the mobile phone? Each of these questions will be examined in terms of class, race, gender and geography as social relations such as these penetrate the values and interests of everyday life in each social space (Lefebvre cited in Highmore 2002: 113).

Methodology

The nature of this research question and its reference to meaning-making, everyday life and social space, by implication, places it within the ambit of qualitative research, which generally focuses on questions of meaning and social context (Maxwell 1996: 59). In contrast, quantitative methods can only explain statistical variance — i.e. the extent of phenomena, how it compares with other situations, what probably causes it, what variables influence each other to what extent — and not highly contextual processes such as the process of meaning making (Maxwell 1996: 59).

However, presenting the choice of methodology as only a pragmatic question of suitability could obscure some of the broader debates. One needs to recognise that qualitative research emerged from a philosophical critique of the quantitative approach (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 271). This critique was based on phenomenology and rejected the research approach inspired by the natural sciences that characterised quantitative research, in which socially-removed researchers examine human responses to the particular hypothesis they have proposed, focusing on scientific methods such as ‘variables, control, measurement, experiment’ (Bryman 1988:12— 13). Instead, phenomenology maintained that human beings could only be studied by using their interpretation of the world as a starting point (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 271). As Lindlof explains:

For the qualitative researcher, humans infuse their own actions, and the other actions and worlds to which they have access, with meanings. Meanings are not mere accessories to behaviour. Rather, it is the fact that we reflect on our completed actions, and imagine possible future actions, that make what we do meaningful. (Lindlof 1995: 6)

These meanings can be explored if one looks at understanding the world from the point of view of the person being studied. It is this ‘insider’ or ‘*emic*’ perspective that is central to qualitative research, which focuses on understanding, not explaining the social world (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 270). Where explanations look for cause and effect, understanding instead prioritises making sense of people’s behaviour from their point of view. Focused on the meaning made by the research subjects, qualitative research resists imposing categories and concepts from outside, and instead uses categories and concepts from the point of view of the subjects (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 273).

As these personal categories and concepts are tied to the broader context through a process of meaning-making, qualitative research argues that the meanings made by individual subjects can only be understood in their concrete natural context (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 272). This means that unlike quantitative research, qualitative research does not start off with a fixed hypothesis, but instead works inductively by steadily using the thick descriptions gathered to make further abstractions and eventually hypotheses (Babbie and Mouton. 2001: 273). It is based on an intense focus on the particular, which is described in extreme detail through a process of ‘thick description’ or ‘a rich detailed description of specifics, as opposed to ‘summary, standardised descriptions of quantitatively measured variables’ (Geertz 1973 cited in Babbie and Mouton. 2001: 272).

In order to understand the rich contextual world of meaning related to mobile phones in Hooggenoeg, this then explains why I decided to adopt a qualitative approach, which is consistent with most studies using the domestication model to study how people consume ICT (Haddon 2006: 195).

Data Collection Methods:

A four-stage research design was adopted to examine how young adults integrate mobile phones into their everyday lives:

- qualitative content analysis
- semi-structured in-depth individual interviews
- limited participant observation
- focus group interviews

The decision to use more than one method, otherwise known as ‘triangulation’ was to enhance validity and reliability, where weaknesses of one particular method could be compensated for by the other (Denzin 1989 cited in Babbie and Mouton 2001: 275).

The order in which I had initially planned to conduct the research methods, starting with focus groups and then proceeding to individual interviews with a select few participants, proved considerably more difficult than I had anticipated. The young people seemed very reluctant to introduce me to others in their age group, which I initially assumed was due to their lack of trust in me. Over time, I realised that it was symptomatic of their lack of trust in each other and that this was an important characteristic of the neighbourhood, which seemed to display particularly low levels of social capital. This was why I decided to do individual interviews first and later set up small focus groups of young people who were comfortable with each other. Leading up to and concurrent with these interviews, I also did a qualitative content analysis of a mobile website, or ‘WAPsite’ popular in Hooggenoeg.

Qualitative Content Analysis

During the course of the exploratory interviews I became aware of the mobile website *Outoilet*, which seemed to be an important mobile media source in Grahamstown’s coloured community (Keen 2010). Therefore, before I formalised my individual interviews, I consulted the *Outoilet* Grahamstown website to get some insight into the community, doing a very basic qualitative content analysis or close reading. Even studies that focus on consumption and reception of media need to have knowledge of the media product in order to conduct

meaningful conversation with the interviewees (Schroder *et al* 2003: 154). I continued to visit the site as often as I could during the course of the research, copying posts to store for later analysis. As *Outoilet* only displays about 150 posts at a time, this means that the site is regularly flushed of data, making it important to store data separately.

The sample was therefore conducted non-systematically, as I arbitrarily copied screens off the Grahamstown *Outoilet* website over a period of six months, during the period that overlapped with my research. The sampling also overlapped with a moral panic over *Outoilet*, which therefore allowed several postings reflecting on the merits of the site to be captured.

While the names in *Outoilet* posts evidently are particularly meaningful to people living inside the knowable community of Hooggenoeg, real names are not needed to make theoretical points in this thesis. Despite the fact that the names have already appeared in a public forum, *Outoilet* was clearly publishing outside of South African law, as the content was often either an invasion of privacy or defamation. The names of anyone mentioned on the *Outoilet*, Grahamstown wapsite were therefore changed.

I conducted a very broad reading of the Grahamstown *Outoilet* website, scanning the posts for specific themes that I had encountered in the literature on similar spaces, such as respectability, mobility, race, class, gender, culture, and social capital. To assist my understanding of some of the community dialect and SMS-style abbreviations, I consulted a colleague who is an ‘insider’ in a similar community in Grahamstown and regularly consults *Outoilet* herself. This information provided important data not just for the Conversion findings, but also general information about Hooggenoeg, such as the ubiquitous belief in witchcraft here, which were then integrated into the interview questions.

Semi-structured in-depth individual interviews

Thirteen out-of-school young adults living in Hooggenoeg between 18 and 24 years were interviewed for this research project, through nine individual interviews and two focus groups, and these young adults are identified consistently by the same pseudonyms throughout the results. I conducted semi-structured interviews (Deacon *et al* 1999: 65), which were loosely structured around an interview guide based on the four processes of domestication of technology, but allowed for interjections and follow-up questions by the interviewer (See Appendix B). This allowed me to reference the issues raised by the theoretical literature around domestication as well as those in their everyday lives and social

identities, while at the same time allowing me to respond to particular ideas, metaphors and issues as they were raised by the interviewees. I also collected a series of images from mobile phone brochures and asked participants whether these people could be from Hooggenoeg, which provided further information on their perceptions of their neighbourhood, as well as what is considered normal use for mobile phones in everyday life there.

The sampling was specific in nature, limited to the geographical area of Hooggenoeg and to out-of-school young adults between 18 and 24. This kind of sampling is known as 'purposive sampling' and is particularly suited to qualitative research which focuses on the specific and the particular (Deacon *et al* 1999: 50). For practical reasons young people were recruited for the study through the 'snowball' method, which is frequently used in cases where the 'social knowledge and personal recommendations of the initial contacts are invaluable in opening up and mapping a tight social network' (Deacon *et al* 1999: 53). Hooggenoeg certainly is a tight social network, spanning a small geographical area where all the young people have attended the same school and all know each other. The initial contact was carefully considered, and I decided not to approach young people through church or community leaders or their ex-teachers, as I did not want to be associated with authority figures that might be objects of antagonism. Instead, I contacted a hip-hop musician living in the area, who was working with one of my students on a film.

Eight individual interviews were set up: however, in three of the interviews a cousin, a brother and a friend respectively joined the discussion. Due to my difficulty in setting up focus groups, I embraced the formation of these spontaneously-formed pair discussions. I collected data from four young women and five young men in these individual interviews, conducting interviews that lasted between 40 minutes and two-and-a-half hours. The relatively small size of this sample is consistent with qualitative research where larger samples may limit the intensive insights one is able to acquire in a study (Deacon *et al* 1999: 43).

While I specifically requested that all the young people own mobile phones, two did not. One young man interrupted an individual interview with his cousin, and although he did not own a mobile phone, his father was a money-lender who used mobile phones as collateral, and he provided very interesting information about this phenomenon in the community. There was also a young woman who had recently destroyed her mobile phone when her relationship

with her boyfriend ended. I decided to continue with the interview, as I thought that this conflation of a relationship with the mobile phone was particularly interesting and relevant to the research.

To increase validity, the researcher needs to be recognised as the most important ‘instrument’ in the research process, and generating rapport between the researcher and the researched can generate more ‘truthful and credible inter-subjectivity’ (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 273). I presented myself as a non-judgemental person with a sense of humour, interested in listening to the interviewees’ opinions. Through my own television documentary work, I have realised that many young people of all backgrounds often do not have anyone to listen to them without being judgemental, and they tend to open up when they encounter a listener.

All the individual interviews were recorded and transcribed. I used the software programme NVivo to set up a coding system based on the themes outlined in the previous chapters dealing with the existing literature on the consumption of mobile phones, township spaces and the everyday lives of young South Africans. I then proceeded to code each interview transcript using NVivo. It is important to note that this software programme does not in any way negate the researcher’s role in analysing the data but is simply a powerful tool for storing, coding and searching complex data (Bazely 2007: 7). Simply using the literature as a coding framework is not sufficient, however, as qualitative research calls for the use of themes that emerge from the data (Bazely 2007: 41). This is why the coding framework was expanded when I encountered what seemed like significant themes in the transcripts. The software then assisted in retrieving all data that was similarly coded, providing opportunities to compare each set of theme-related data with the existing literature. Relying simply on thematic coding, however, can be criticised for missing some instances of ambiguity or contradictory opinions, but the alternative of conducting a content-analysis process on the transcript is extremely time-consuming and beyond the scope of this study (Lundt and Livingstone 1996: 96).

Participant observation:

Participant observation is a research method where participation in an event is necessary to generate more information through observation (Deacon *et al* 1999: 251). During my initial exploratory interviews, two young men in the study visited me on the Rhodes University campus and requested my help with a mobile website for their hip-hop band. During the

individual interviews, one of the young women invited me to adjudicate and take photographs for a fashion show fundraiser in the Hooggenoeg community hall (see Appendix A). I used both these opportunities, lasting a few hours each, to engage in very limited participant observation.

To create the website for the young men, we used various photographs, graphics, and songs all of which were transferred from their mobile phones via Bluetooth. They discussed this media and its merits, in the process of setting up the website. In this way I was able to observe their expertise in the sharing of media, and to get some insight into the type of media that may be stored on mobile phones in this township. I also retained copies of their media.

At the fashion show, the judges' table faced the audience and I was thus able to observe the young people in the audience without them necessarily knowing this. As photographer, I was able to observe the practised nature of posing for photographs in Hooggenoeg and its association with the mobile phone, implicit in the assumption of several young people at the event who asked what kind of phone my digital camera was. I made extensive field notes directly after the event, related to some of the themes in my research, and also kept copies of the photographs. During the interval I went outside and observed many young people ambling through the streets while listening to music on their mobile phones and briefly stopping at corners to socialise. Insights from the participant observation thus contributed to my understanding of photographic practices, the importance of the evening 'stroll' and the sophistication of media use on the young adults' mobile phones, and these understandings were then integrated into the themes developed in the interview analysis. The individual interviews and participant observations were then followed up by having two focus groups of young men and young women, respectively.

Focus groups

The focus group is a method of group interviewing where a group of people discuss particular issues defined by a monitor, who is also present to steer the conversation (Lundt and Livingstone 1996: 79). I wanted to assemble focus groups of about six to eight young adults who socialise with each other, to ensure that they were comfortable with each other, which allowed for more natural conversation (Philo 1990 cited in Deacon *et al* 1999: 56). However, the young people denied that such large natural groups of out-of-school youths existed, and were unable to assist me in assembling groups of this size. I therefore conducted two small focus groups comprised of three young women and four young men, respectively. As my

individual interviews revealed that the most important role of the mobile phone was related to relationships and sexuality, I chose to separate my focus groups by gender, to minimise unease.

The composition of the focus groups did not completely reflect the research design. In the young women's focus group one member did not fit the age criteria of the sample: the baby one young mother had to bring with her, who occasionally disrupted conversations by crying or distracted the participants in other ways. This also however provided an opportunity to observe how motherhood is very much part of these young women's lives. As in the individual interviews, not all the focus group participants met the criteria of mobile phone owners. One young man did not own a phone, but as it had been so difficult to assemble the focus group, I did not insist that he leave, as I wanted to begin the discussion. His presence was not a hindrance, but indeed seemed to improve the humour of the group, as my unsuccessful attempts to get him to comment on general social life in the area were met with great amusement by the other young men. Soon thereafter he fell asleep on the couch. Reflecting back on this I considered that he may have been under the influence of marijuana.

The reliability of data increases in a focus group: unlike the individual interview where the emphasis is on the relationship between interviewee and researcher, the relationship shifts more to the other members of the group, who may call each other to account. Lundt and Livingstone explain:

The group acts as a context that challenges, asks for elaboration, and demands examples of claims people make. In rhetorical terms, the group acts as if inducting an inquiry, and there are, therefore, reliability checks in the operation of pragmatic norms for communicating in groups. (Lundt and Livingstone 1996: 93)

It is important to note that reliability in focus groups cannot be compared to quantitative indices of repeatability as the measure of reliability, but is related to the 'rate of information gain', and when people start repeating information the researcher can be confident that the terrain is sufficiently covered (Lundt and Livingstone 1996: 92). The thematic content is therefore the measure of reliability, not the properties of the individuals comprising the groups. While I only had two focus groups, when comparing the focus groups and the interviews, there were several instances of similar experiences. The discussion schedule for the focus groups (Appendix C) was based on some of the issues that emerged prominently from the individual interviews, thus ensuring further reliability.

To ensure that participants are relaxed and comfortable, the setting should be as informal as possible (Lundt and Livingstone 1996: 82). I clearly did not achieve this during one of the preliminary interviews conducted at a fast-food restaurant in town, where the participants expressed self-consciousness about their dress and unease at what they perceived to be ridiculously inflated prices. I therefore decided to have the focus groups at the homes of the young people in Hooggenoeg, as I thought that more middle-class spaces of town or on campus may make them feel out of place and very conscious of their own class position.

I steered conversations to examine how young people's mobile phones have become meaningful in terms of their everyday lives in Hooggenoeg. Focus groups are a good tool to explore this kind of contextual information; as Lundt and Livingstone explain:

Focus groups can reveal underlying cognitive or ideological premises that structure arguments, the ways in which various discourses rooted in particular contexts and given experience are brought to bear on interpretations, the discursive construction of social identities, and so forth. (Lundt and Livingstone 1996: 96)

Discussing everyday life, particularly relationships, is inevitably very personal. It is important to consistently be ethical, observing informed consent, the right to privacy and protection from harm (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 273). In this study, all participants are anonymous and designated by pseudonyms, and I always made them aware of the audio recorder, except in one instance where a participant started speaking after the focus group ended, about teenagers sharing home-made sex videos on their mobile phones. Unwilling to interrupt his comments, I therefore only requested permission to record retrospectively, which was granted.

While critiques of the focus group have pointed to its inability to measure cause and effect (Lundt and Livingstone 1996: 89), this is not the object of this study, which seeks rather to understand the relationship young people have with their mobile phones, and the meanings of the phone as a product of this relationship. Other critics have pointed to the 'false consensus effect' where participants have long discussions on topics unimportant to them as individuals or which express extreme positions that they may not hold as individuals (Lundt and Livingstone 1996: 95). This does not however represent a contradiction for researchers who study the social construction of meaning under different social conditions, such as the focus group and the individual interview. As Lundt and Livingstone point out:

...researchers using focus group methods are often more interested in socially expressed and contested opinions and discourses than in eliciting individual attitudes. (Lundt and Livingstone 1996: 95)

The focus group interviews were recorded and transcribed and then analysed in a similar way to the individual interviews, using thematic coding, with the help of computer software, to uncover particular patterns in relation to the existing literature.

Conclusion:

The four-step design presented in this chapter may seem too elaborate for the limited research possible in a half-thesis, but one needs to take into account that both the participant observation and qualitative content analysis were very limited and mainly served to inform the interviews, and the bulk of the research is embodied in these interviews. The next four chapters will outline the findings that resulted from following these various approaches.

Chapter 5: Appropriation findings

The next four chapters discuss the results of the research undertaken amongst out-of-school young adults living in the low-cost housing area on the outskirts of Grahamstown known as Hooggenoeg. The results of individual interviews, observations and focus groups have been synthesised to show how the domestication of mobile phones as a process of meaning-making, relates to the everyday lives of the young adults in this space. The findings are therefore structured according to the various phases of the domestication model:

appropriation, objectification, incorporation and conversion. This chapter focuses on appropriation, whereas objectification, incorporation and conversion will be dealt with in subsequent chapters.

The appropriation phase of the domestication approach follows the device as it crosses the boundary from the commercial world as a market product, and enters the social space where it is redefined as part of its owner's world (Silverstone *et al* 1992). The findings collected in Hooggenoeg show that the process of appropriation reflects everyday life in this space, reveal economic relationships of dependency, and highlight the precarious nature of owning a mobile phone in this area where violence and crime place both the phones and their owners in constant danger.

Here, I examined the way in which the phone is acquired and how this process is bound up in 'social values embedded in the relationship between low- and high-income communities and power structures both legal...and illegal' (de Souza e Silva *et al.* 2011: 412). The structures in Hooggenoeg that I refer to below include family, work, welfare and credit structures.

Appropriation and Relationships

The ways in which young people manage to acquire their phones in Hooggenoeg often reflect their precarious economic circumstances and their reliance on welfare. As is the case with growing numbers of youths in the rest of the country (Bähre 2011) many of the young adults here are dependent on the grant money of others. Young people who survive on grants still however expect to own phones: Beronice persuaded her grandmother to use her pension money to buy her a mobile phone, while Verosa bought hers with her child grant. Those who exist exclusively on grants are differentiated from those with working family members (or who are working themselves), through the features of their phone models. A mobile phone with special features like Internet access is unaffordable unless one has a bank account and/or

formal credit, which is the exclusive prerogative of those with permanent full-time jobs. Xolile and Garth could not afford the kind of phones they wanted with no regular income, but bought them through others who were employed and could therefore access credit facilities. If one does manage to get employment, it may mean, like Ezme, one will mark the occasion by purchasing an expensive phone, particularly if one's state employer offers a mobile phone subsidy as part of the pay package. Here, the mobile phone becomes a perk of the workplace and an induction into the world of credit purchases. In contrast, the unemployed young people I interviewed generally had to rely on parents and guardians for adequate but not quite fashionable mobile phones, thus marking their status as dependents. Here the nature of the mobile phone becomes a symbol of the relationship. Young people may exert substantial pressure on parents to purchase phones they cannot really afford, and responding to this pressure, parents may get themselves into debt:

- Garth: Jy kry die *spoilt* mens wat sal *nag*...
- Anton: Ja.
- Garth: Vir 'n nuwe *phone*... as hulle die *phone* het, miskien het dit 'n 310, of 'n Nokia 1100, dan' sal hulle *nag* om te sê, as hulle hulle vriende sien, met 'n..'n Motorola V360, dan sê hulle "No, ok, *you know what*, my *phone* het nie *colour* nie, het nie *web* nie, hy't nie MP3 nie, *MOST importantly*, hy nie MP3 nie. So, ok fine...dan gaan ek na my parents toe gaan, *I have to have the V360*, die *latest* een, *it doesn't matter, even if it is a thousand, but I just have to have it*. En dan ... sekere ouers sal hulle in die skuld op sit.¹

The precarious nature of ownership

As formal loans are unavailable to those without regular income (Siyongwana 2004), parents in Hooggenoeg use community loan sharks, also called '*skoppers*', who lend money at exorbitant interest rates and take possession of the lender's identity book and bank card until

-
- ¹ Garth: You would get that spoilt individual who will nag.
- Anton: Yes.
- Garth: For a new phone...if they have a phone already, perhaps a 310 or a Nokia 1100, then they'll nag, to say, when they see their friends with a Motorola V360 then they'll say 'No, OK, you know what, my phone doesn't show colours, it can't access the Web, and it can't play MP3s – MOST importantly – it can't play MP3s. So, OK fine...then I go to my parents: 'I have to have the V360, the latest one, it doesn't matter, even if it is a thousand, but I just have to have it'. And then...certain parents would put themselves into debt.

the loan is repaid. The *skopper* plays a central role in the acquisition and loss of mobile phones in Hooggenoeg. Shane's father (who is Freddy's uncle) is a *skopper* who lives close to Hooggenoeg, and who pawns phones for cash, allowing his customers a week's grace to return the cash:

Interviewer: Nou maar as jy NIE jou geld bring nie?

Freddy: Dan meen dit mos jy wil nie jou *phone* weer terug hê nie...

Shane: Hy't *ten phones* daar... ek weet nie hoeveel fone wat in daai huis rondlê nie...mense is verkromp met *al* die fone. Die *plugs* is vol van die fone!²

These phones are pawned for a fraction of their value, often to obtain money for alcohol; alcoholism is a widespread problem in this community. The local *skopper* in Hooggenoeg, according to the two young men above, short-circuits the process by pawning phones directly for alcohol, at significantly higher prices than alcohol in town. The alcoholism of this community means that not only are phones pawned or sold for alcohol, but they can easily be stolen at the taverns:

Amanda: Jy moet eintlik weet met wie jy uitgaan want daar's sekere vriende van jou, joh! Hulle's jou vriende nou - maar as jy dronk is, dan roof hulle jou self! Dan sê hulle: 'nee hulle weet nie... wat het gebeur nie'.³

Thami: Ja. Hulle steel, dan verkoop hulle dit daar agter. Daar is 'n huis daar waar hulle die fone vat. As jy kom en jy soek drank, jy verkoop jou *phone*, dan kry jy drank. Daar agter.⁴

² Interviewer: And what if you DON'T bring your money?

Freddy: Then it means you don't want your phone back, doesn't it?

Shane: He's got ten phones there...I actually don't know how many phones are lying around there...people are crowded by all those phones. The plugs are all full of phones.

³ Amanda: You actually need to know who you're going out with because there's certain friends – wow! they're your friends for now – but when you get drunk they will even rob you themselves! Then they say later they don't know what happened.

⁴ Thami: Yes, they steal it then they go and sell it back there. There's a house where they take the phones to. If you're looking for drink, you come and sell your phone and you'll get it.

Inside the community, phones may be stolen during pick-pocketing in the tavern, but it seems that for those in the ‘knowable community’ (Williams 1969) within the boundaries of the 11 streets of Hooggenoeg, violent muggings are unheard of and young adults enjoy relative safety. However, in other areas, both young men and women have been severely beaten up when their phones have been stolen. Xolile was robbed a few hours after purchasing his last phone, and was beaten with an iron rod incapacitating him for two weeks (during which he was unable to eat solids for several days). Beronice has also been robbed on more than one occasion:

Beronice: Ek was al twee maal geroof. Ek was *ge-gunpoint* toe vat hulle my eerste *phone*. Tweede maal toe vat hulle weer my *phone*. ... Toe haal hulle die *gun*...toe hulle die *gun* uithaal toe los ek maar alles, want ek het hulle gesê hulle kan die *phone* vat, dan moet hulle vir my net die *SIM card* gee. Toe wil hulle nie. Toe trap en skop hulle my *unconscious*. Toe lê ek net daar.⁵

The loss of a SIM card means not only that others are unable to contact one, but also the loss of one’s personal phone directory, the MXit handle and all its associated MXit contacts. That Beronice was willing to negotiate for her SIM card at gunpoint clearly shows its importance to her. These stolen phones may then be technically reconfigured to bypass any password blocks, and then resold in a parallel market, similar to parallel markets for stolen phones in South America (de Souza e Silva *et al* 2011: 13). In Hooggenoeg, the phone enters a black market, which relies in part on foreign traders who are highly skilled at ‘cannibalising’ (Barendregt 2008: 165) phones:

Beronice: Is die Pakistaners, hulle vat die fone daarnatoe en dan maak die Pakistaners die fone oop.

Interviewer: O, en dan?

Beronice: Dan kan hulle weer die phone gebruik en hulle eie *pin* daar insit...of *security code*.⁶

⁵ Beronice: I’ve been robbed twice. It was at gunpoint that they took my first phone. The second time they took my phone again... But this time it was hard. When they took out the gun...when they took out the gun I just left it, because I was telling them they must take the phone, and just give me the SIM card. But they didn’t want to. So they kicked me, and trampled me underfoot, until I was unconscious.

⁶ Beronice: It’s the Pakistanis, they take the phones there, and then the Pakistanis open up the phones.

Interviewer: Oh and then...

Freddy: Hulle vat dit *town* in, na die anders toe daar, dan word hy sommer daar in die glas vensters gesit. Hy's nou duurder, nou daar by hulle...dis seker by hulle sewe honderd, agt honderd – maar jy't hom vir 'n honderd rand verkoop hier in die lokasie.⁷

In this way, the phones are again re-appropriated into poor communities where people cannot afford new phones. Some young people like Anton, may choose to buy such second-hand phones (which may or may not be stolen goods), especially if they are, like him, able to obtain old parts and 'cannabalise' their phone themselves:

Anton: Dan kry ek 'n *phone* vir my daarso...want meeste van die *phones* daar is *second-hand* en dis twee keer minder die prys, wat die *original* prys van die *phone* is. So dan kry ek die *phone cheaper*, dan probeer ek net, as die *phone* vol krappe is, vir hom...*like*, miskien 'n nuwe *face* kry, ek doen hom self op, kry 'n nuwe *keypad*...Nou lyk dit soos 'n nuwe *phone*.⁸

Intimate phone battering and abuse

Where people may be brutally attacked when their phones are stolen outside the boundaries of the community, it is in the intimate spaces of jealous lovers' tiffs that the mobile phone itself is most at risk. If one juggles many lovers, like Danny, one is keenly aware of the vulnerability of one's phone during a breakup.

Danny: Glo my, hulle *destroy phones*. So as jy 'n uitval het, jy hou altyd jou *phone* weg. En *especially* as jy 'n uitval het oor iemand, dan is jy seker op MXit. Nee, daai *phone* vlieg uit die deur uit. Hy VLIEG daar uit. So die beste altyd as ek 'n uitval het, ek maak seker al luid my *phone*, ek haal hom nie uit my sak uit nie, ek praat, of ek stry dat ek

Beronic: Then they can use the phones again and enter their own security PINs in there. Or a security code.

⁷ Freddy: They take it to town, to the others over there then it gets put into the glass windows there. Now it's more expensive, over there by them...it's probably seven hundred, eight hundred – but you sold it for a hundred rand here in the location.

⁸ Anton: Then I'll get a phone for me there... because most phones there are second-hand and it's two times less the price, of what the original price for the phone was. So then I'll get the cheaper one, then I'll try, if it is full of scratches, to get it...like perhaps to get a new face. And I'll do it up myself and get a new keypad. Then it looks just like a new phone.

klaar kom. As ek nou weggaan, dis DAN wat ek eerste my *phone* uithaal.⁹

Break-ups such as these can be caused by the phone itself, where something as simple as an unidentified message can result in its destruction.

Beronice: En partykeer is dit miskien net 'n boodskap wat deur gekom het en nou ken jy nie daai nommer nie, en dan is dié een jaloers, dan gooi hy jou *phone* teen die muur.¹⁰

While this 'phone battering and abuse' is often aimed at a partner's phone, the violence can extend to the violent party's own phone that is shared with a partner. Verosa's boyfriend did not own a phone, but shared hers so that he could telephone his father. When they broke up, it was she who destroyed the phone, not him:

Verosa: Nee, ek...ek het hom SELF gebreek. Ek was siek vir my boyfriend, en toe's hom pa se nommer was ook hier op die *phone*. En toe breek ek die SIM kaart. Toe dink ek, ek nou moet maar die *phone* ook breek¹¹

In these instances, the destruction of the phones suggests that they had become the embodiment of the relationship, and the anger and violence directed at the partner also extended to abuse of the phone.

Phone sharing

While a relationship is stable, the intimacy of the partners can be reflected in their sharing of an intimate object: the mobile phone. Ezme and Beronice both spoke of sharing their phones with their boyfriends and allowing them to go off for several hours or even days with the

⁹ Danny: Trust me, they destroy phones. So if you're having a break-up, you keep your phone away. And especially since, if you're breaking-up, then you're probably on MXit. No, then that phone flies out the door! So, it's best always, when I'm breaking up... I ensure that even if my phone is ringing, I don't take it out of my pocket. I talk or I argue, and I get it over with. It's only when I leave, that I take out my phone.

¹⁰ Beronice: And sometimes it would just be a message that's come through and that you can't identify the number, and then that one's jealous, and then he throws your phone against the wall.

¹¹ Verosa: No, I... I broke it myself. I was sick of my boyfriend, and then his dad's number was also on the phone. So then I broke the SIM card. And then I thought I'd better break the phone too.

phones. In Ezme's case her boyfriend had his own phone, but it did not have the same advanced features. This meant that the couple often swapped phones in a type of reciprocal phone intimacy:

Ezme: Hy het 'n *phone*. As ons *change* haal ons onse *SIM* kaarts uit. Dan gee ek my *phone*, dan vat ek hom *phone*. So ons *change* nog.¹²

Young men, such as Xolile, were however adamant that they do not share their phones. Below he is hinting at a secret life on his phone that he conceals from his girlfriend:

Xolile: I keep it to myself, the phone belongs to me, confidential stuff, confidential stuff! Even, even my girlfriend doesn't touch my phone, hands off! She has her own phone.

Many young people in Hooggenoeg do not own phones, or have very basic phones, according to the participants. A mobile phone may then be shared with a friend while being used for a specific purpose, under close supervision of the owner. Freddy sometimes lends his phone to a friend who enjoys playing games on it. The sharing of the phone may reflect relationships of inequality and dependence: Verosa, for example, when she no longer owned a phone, had once again to visit the room at the back of their family home to borrow a phone from her employed sister, her sisters' boyfriend, or their 12-year-old daughter. Family members may share phones out of a sense of obligation toward one another, but this practice may create its own tensions. Danny pawned his phone while out partying.

Danny: And then I realised the day after that, that I can't stay without a phone. Because I mean I gave the people, like, my aunt's, like, phone number. And she couldn't take it because it kept on ringing...every day and every minute... because I always had my phone ringing. So now I had to get home and she would tell me: 'You have so many missed calls and I'm sick of these people calling' and all that, so man, after that, I decided to get myself THIS phone.

The findings above reveal that mobile phones in this social environment are appropriated in specific ways that are contextual to the everyday lives of the young participants in this particular social space. In the next chapter, we will examine how the display of the phone relates to the social space and its values.

¹² Ezme: He does have a phone. If we exchange phones then we take our SIM cards out. Then I give him my phone and I take his phone. So we still exchange phones like that.

Chapter 6: Objectification findings

Objectification is a phase of the process of domestication of ICT that relates to how the device acquires meaning in the way in which it is displayed (Silverstone *et al* 1992). I examine here the findings that relate to the display of the mobile phone amongst young adults in Hooggenoeg, which includes the display of the phone itself, the media on the phone, and the way in which the phone is held. These are then related to everyday practices such as spending time with friends, courtship, negotiating the dangers of the street, and also to the social structures of race, class and gender, as well as physical geography.

The mobile phone itself

Young people in Hooggenoeg can be very conscious of the fact that they are called ‘*plaasnaars*’ (peasants), by people from other older ‘coloured areas’ of Grahamstown. This name-calling is related to Hooggenoeg’s seemingly rural living conditions, with its un-tarred roads^{xi}, but probably also relates to the the origins of many people from Hooggenoeg. In an interview with the author on 13 July 2010, Jonathan Walters, former ward councillor circa 1990 for the ‘coloured areas’ stated that many of Hooggenoeg’s inhabitants originated from the informal settlement ‘Sun City’, where a substantial number of evicted farm workers had settled^{xii}. Young people here can be conscious of how their phones may carry the signs of their neighbourhood’s relative deprivation marked by its dusty roads.

Interviewer: OK, en mmm... sou jy sê daar’s ‘n manier wat mens kan sien of iemand se *phone* van Hooggenoeg af is?

Beronice: Ja, dis lelik, want dis vol krappe. As dit miskien val hier buite, daai klippe los merke op die phone. (Tilts her own phone sideways) Soos jy kan sien hy’t DAAR geval. En die screen is nou altyd vol stof daarso en hier ook waar die *camera* lens is, dis altyd vol stof. So, jy sal dit altyd moet skoonmaak.¹³

¹³ Interviewer: OK, mmm would you say there’s a way one could tell if someone’s phone was from Hooggenoeg?

Beronice: Yes it’s ugly, because it’s scratched all over. If it were to fall down outside here, those stones will leave marks on the phone. [Tilts her own phone sideways] As you can see it fell there. And the screen is always full of dust and here where the camera lens is it’s also full of dust, you have to clean it all the time.

Various phone models signify fashion in Hooggenoeg, just as they do internationally (Fortunati 2005). Young men in Hooggenoeg seem very aware that a phone may signify one's worth to young women, and that some phones may signify the ability of the young man to provide for her and offer a ticket out of poverty, something he may not necessarily be able to do.

Interviewer: Wat sal vir hulle *impress*?

Anton: Ag, ek dink die *touch phone*. Want hoe duurder is dit, die *phone*...hoe duurder kos dit, hoe meer dink hulle dat jy iemand is wat geld het en... dat jy as jy sulke foon kan bekostig dat jy haar enige ding, *like*, [kan] bekostig wat sy soek.¹⁴

While the above comment may not seem judgemental, women who associate with wealthier men in this community are assumed to be sexually promiscuous, and hence '*rou*', as we shall see in the findings relating to conversion in Chapter 9. Here, then, the display of a particular phone may provide associations with (dis)respectability. Respectability involves a tension between distinguishing oneself from others in the community while still being part of that community. The slide phone that Ezme purchased when she became the only young woman in her community with a relatively good clerical job, reflected her new economic position, but she was adamant that it was not a sign that she had changed: '*...n phone kan my nie verander nie, ek bly dieselfde*'¹⁵. While Ezme however accepted that she was still the same humble person she had been before, she chose to distinguish herself from people who lived in Hooggenoeg: Ezme performed her respectability by pretending to be from somewhere else:

Ezme: Nou as mense miskien daar onder my vra, sê nou maar vra daai persoon waar bly ek, dan sê ek altyd '*Nee*', miskien '*Ek bly in Bouke Street*', ek sê nooit ek bly in Hooggenoeg nie. Want as jy sê jy bly in Hooggenoeg, word jy net geklas soos Hooggenoeg se mense,

¹⁴ Interviewer: What will impress them?

Anton: Oh, I think the touch phone. Because the more expensive it is — the phone — the more expensive it is, the more they will think you are someone who has money...that if you can afford such a phone, you can afford to buy her anything she wants.

¹⁵ Ezme: A phone can't change me, I'm still the same.

Hooggenoeg se meisies. Hulle sê mos Hooggenoeg se meisies is baie sleg, koop hulle net twee biere dan is hulle beentjies oop.¹⁶

The sexual promiscuity which Ezme refers to could reflect a reality where poverty and consumer culture have made it acceptable for 'sex to be bought with gifts' (Selikow *et al* 2002: 25) or it may be that working-class femininity here is stigmatised as promiscuous, just as it is in the United Kingdom (Skeggs 1997: 115). Ezme was clear that, unlike the young women from Hooggenoeg, she did not walk around or stand on corners, suggesting that she may be performing the restricted mobility which symbolises respectability or '*ordentlikheid*' in such communities (Lindegaard and Hendriksen 2009: 34, Ross 2010: 63).

While young women like Ezme risk being labelled 'hoity-toity' as a result of owning 'fancy' phones, it does not seem possible to try to feign any distinction from others in this community without owning a mobile phone. Verosa is 24 and lives with her mother, did not complete her primary school education, is illiterate, unemployed, without a male partner and has two small children. Any of these facts could be cited as proof of lower-class status, yet some fellow-residents choose to isolate her lack of mobile phone ownership as proof that she is not better than other residents.

Verosa: Nee die mense hier...ek sal sê dit is paar van hulle: 'Ja...jy hou jou beter maar jy het nie 'n *phone* nie', en al daai goeters.¹⁷

The model of phone a person displays seems to strongly symbolise social standing in the community. Phones that indicate the fashion of the previous year, such as 'the slide' have according to the participants much less standing than newer 'touch' phones, and the large older phones or '*bakstene*' (bricks) can be so embarrassing to own that they are not used in public. Verosa considered the featureless basic phone model she used to own as not being a '*regte*' (real) phone because of its inability to play music or take photographs, showing how

¹⁶ Ezme: Now if people living down there would ask me...say a person asks where I stay. Then I would perhaps say: 'In Bauke Street'. I never say that I stay in Hooggenoeg. Because if you say you live in Hooggenoeg, you are classified like the people from Hooggenoeg, the girls from Hooggenoeg. They say Hooggenoeg's girls are very bad, just buy them two beers and their little legs open up.

¹⁷ Verosa: No, the people here...I would say there's a few of them who'd say: 'Yes you act like you're better than us, but you don't have a phone' and all of that.

media functions are now seen as integral to the definition of a mobile phone amongst these young people. Thus it is not only the model of the phone but also the size of the memory card which conveys status. Interestingly, contrary to the international trend of smaller phones being more fashionable (Haddon 2001: 51), some young men in this study expressed a particular preference for large phones that would not go unnoticed. This may be because none of them would wish to be mistaken for the kind of person who does *not* own a mobile phone.

Media on the mobile phone

Music

Many of the young adults seemed to use their mobile phones more as media players, prioritising media use over the phone's communicative functionality; for them having a smartphone with a large selection of music on the memory card — but no airtime — is common. As with young people everywhere, music is a very important form of expression and identity construction for these young people. They did not seem to use their mobile phones as radios, but rather used the phone's ability to personalise a music collection by saving MP3 music tracks on their mobile phones, in order to construct a specific identity.

Freddy's music confirms his popularity in the street where he lives, and he speaks proudly of how he and his friend Ashley are always the first to download the latest popular house tracks. These tracks are then 'gifted' (Haddon 2007b: 2— 3) to other young people in Hooggenoeg and so Freddy is able to construct an identity as a generous person in his neighbourhood. In contrast to Freddy, who uses his music to achieve local status, Danny's identity formation has much further geographical reach, and he uses his eclectic music tastes to demonstrate his mobility across a range of social spaces, from the Xhosa^{xiii} townships to the privileged spaces of the private school St Andrews College and the residences of Rhodes University. Not only does Danny speak idiomatically fluent isiXhosa and Afrikaans, he was raised in the white home where his mother worked as a cleaner, and has a decidedly white English dialect. The music collection on his phone boasts this vast 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu 1986) which, besides the standard Hooggenoeg staples of house music and hip-hop, also contains kwaito, classical music, rock and punk. While Beronice may not be as physically mobile, growing up in Hooggenoeg and interacting with Xhosa friends (such as Danny, an ex-boyfriend), has made being anti-racist an important part of her identity, which she also constructs through her music choice:

- Interviewer: So wat dink jy sê jou *songs* omtrent jou, watter soort mens jy is?
- Beronice: (laughs) Dat ek nie *racism* is nie. Ek hou van alles.
- Interviewer: So dis 'n *multi-faceted phone*...of 'n *multi-racial phone*...of hoe sal jy dit beskryf?
- Beronice: 'n *Phone* wat van alle...OK, laat ek dit ek dit so stel: meeste wit mense hou van blues, Xhosas hou van kwaito, en *coloureds* hou van R&B en rap en hip-hop - meestes. So...my *phone* het van alles...kwaito, R&B en ...blues. [laughs]¹⁸

In the Hooggenoeg community some young people are not only skilled at finding and consuming music through their phones, they also produce it themselves, with the mobile phone as an integral part of this production. Two of the interviewees, Anton and Garth, were part of a hip-hop crew who recorded lyrics about their life in Hooggenoeg and mixed these to beats at the house of a friend in town who owned a Personal Computer. They carry around all their music on their phones, including a shorter version of one of the tracks that explicitly mentions Hooggenoeg, so that they can send it to people who don't believe they are musicians, either via Bluetooth or over MXit. They derived particular pleasure from the fact that many MXit friends had never heard of Hooggenoeg, and that the multilingual mix of Afrikaans, isiXhosa and English hip-hop was very novel to anyone who heard it.

Wallpaper photographs, phone photographs and videos

The mobile phone's most visible media are the wallpaper photographs that young people choose to display on the faces of their mobile phones. Amongst most of these young participants, and according to them, the most popular wallpaper image is the photograph of the owner. These young people often choose photographs that represent an ideal identity, which may contrast with the reality of a mundane everyday life:

-
- ¹⁸ Interviewer: So what do you think these songs say about you, what kind of person are you?
- Beronice: [laughs] That I'm not for racism. I like everything.
- Interviewer: So it's a multi-faceted phone...or a multi-racial phone...or how would you describe it?
- Beronice: A phone of all...OK, let me put it like this: most whites like blues music, Xhosas like kwaito music and coloureds like R&B and rap and hip-hop – most of them. So...my phone has everything...kwaito, R&B and ...blues. [laughs]

Beronice: [showing photograph of self in a pink dress on her phone] Soos met dié foto, toe ek so opgedress gewees het, het ek rerig mooi gevoel en van myself gehou...¹⁹

These snapshots, capturing moments of special significance, may be changed frequently, as Ezme does. As the only one in the sample with full-time employment, it makes sense that most of her photographs feature her at work functions. She particularly likes those displaying moments of mobility, such as a work social at the beach and a visit to another office in a nearby town. This practice of displaying one's own image is also common amongst young men. Their photographs may at times involve a lot of effort in terms of conceptualising a particular look and pose inspired by a favourite celebrity, dressing up and directing a friend to take several photographs until the perfect image is captured.

Danny: Die meeste mense wat *hip-hop like* jy gaan sien dat hulle 'n *cap* het en so 'n *baggy jeans*, hy wil mos nou daai bietjie *gangstergeid* he. En dié wat nou meeste van die *Italians* en die *goeters like*, gaan...hulle *like* nou bietjie *formalrig* aantrek. Nou al wat hulle gaan aantrek ...hulle gaan bietjie *hemp* en iets aantrek, gaan bietjie *formal* lyk, nou sit hy nou soos iemand wat *suitable* is. So dit *depend* in wat jy *like*.²⁰

These photographs not only feature as the mobile phone's wallpaper, but are also exchanged to signify sexual interest, either via MXit, Bluetooth or through a rather coy ritual where the phone is physically entrusted to the person fancied. When I first witnessed this, the girl's passing of her phone in a small bag with Rastafarian colours was so awkward that I assumed I was seeing the surreptitious passing of marijuana. I soon realised however that I was witnessing a more contemporary youthful ritual: the young man who received it pulled out the girl's phone from the bag, gave it to the friend next to him to take a photograph and then automatically moved into a hip-hop pose. After the photograph was taken, he passed the phone with the precious picture back to the smiling girl, who examined it immediately and then waved shyly at him. Where the young girl herself could have merely taken a picture of

¹⁹ Beronice: [showing photograph of self in a pink dress on her phone] Like with this photo, when I was dressed up like this, I really felt beautiful and I really liked myself...

²⁰ Danny: Most people who like hip-hop, you'll see them wearing a cap and some baggy jeans – because they want that bit of gangster style. And then those who like the Italian look, they're going to dress up a bit formal. The only things they'll wear are...they'll dress up in a shirt or something, to look formal. Then he'll sit there like someone who's *suitable*. So it depends on what you like.

the young man she fancied, this ritual seemed a lot more seductive, entrusting a potential lover with her most personal and precious possession, and allowing him to physically handle it. Interviews confirmed that it was common practice for both young men and women to pass their phones around soliciting photographs in this way, suggesting a haptic element to the practice of photography in this community. It was also common to engage in matchmaking by sharing photographs of such posed portraits amongst friends.

These young people were furthermore also adept at manipulating visual images, adding text and visual effects such as selective blurring to the image through a phone application called Frames. These practices of posing, taking photographs and manipulating them suggest that communicating through photography has become ubiquitous here, a practiced ritual of cultural expression amongst young people in this community. Putting a photograph of yourself on your mobile phone is however not just an exercise in morale-boosting or flirtation, it can fulfil a very important role: that of branding the phone with the face of its owner, for security purposes. This makes it much more difficult to steal, particularly if the phone is password-protected and the face therefore un-erasable. Amanda branded her phone in this way, with a password that locked the phone screen on the image of her face, which forced the criminals who stole it to seek technical expertise with the foreign traders, known as *Kwarras*^{xiv}, to unlock it:

- Amanda: Toe vat hulle die *phone* Kwarras toe, toe ken die Kwarras ook nie die *password* nie!
- Thami: Toe sê die Kwarras hulle het nie geweet dis haar *phone* nie, maar die gesig was daarop.
- Amanda: Toe moes hulle hom nou net terug bring, want hulle kon niks met die *phone* doen nie.²¹

The practice of branding the mobile phone with the owner's image seemed to change when the owners become parents. All the young parents I spoke to, who had previously branded their mobile phones with their own image, now had photographs of their children as

²¹ Amanda: Then they took the phone to the foreigners, but then the foreigners also didn't know the password!

Thami: Then the foreigners said they didn't know it was her phone, but her face was on it.

Amanda: Then they had to just return it, because they could do nothing with the phone.

wallpaper; the mobile phone proudly displaying their parental love. A wallpaper image can also show other loves: Garth, for example had selected the logo of his band.

Similarly, videos on the phone can display particular passions, and while many young people have music videos on their phones, making one's own videos is also common practice.

Freddy's friend Ashley often travels to Port Elizabeth to visit family and returns with videos he has made of cars 'drifting' (doing handbrake turns), which he proudly shares with friends. Anton showed me a video he had made to turn the out-of-order phone booth in Hooggenoeg into an object of satire. The videos on Danny's mobile phone were created by women who persuaded someone to film the two of them together, to signal their sexual interest. His nonchalant attitude to these videos seemed to show an emotionally disengaged masculinity. He has several of these videos on his phone.

Danny: But I didn't take those videos, they used to be videos that people took or videos that my girl asked someone to take while we are together, making out or something like that. It's just videos. But *ja*, I don't really keep videos, cause I mean, I've never seemed to like the use of videos.

While romantic relationships in Hooggenoeg seem to generate phone media, in contrast, a break-up for these young people seemed to involve the ritual erasing of all traces of media that mark the relationship as well as getting a new number. Crystal's recent break-up was still evident on her phone when I interviewed her: her celibacy was marked by a phone with a new SIM card, and she had erased all photographs, videos, SMS love messages, leaving only one sad R&B song.

SMS Love Messages

When asked whether she had any downloaded love messages, Ezme immediately located them on her mobile phone and started reading them out with an intensity that had been absent from the matter-of-fact and rather dismissive way in which she had engaged with the rest of the interview. Her voice quivered as she immersed herself in the words:

Ezme: [reading from phone] As we grow up we learn that even one person that wasn't supposed to even let you down, will have your heart broken probably more than once and its harder every time. You break hearts too, so remember how it felt when yours was broken. You fight with your best friend, you blame a new love for the things an old one did. You cry because time is passing too fast and you eventually lose someone you love. So take too many pictures, laugh too much, and live like you've never been hurt.

She continued to read several other messages in the same manner. These downloaded SMS love messages, which may seem like clichés to some, provided Ezme with the opportunity to express vulnerability and tenderness, and a space where she did not have to erect emotional barriers to defend herself from accusations of acting ‘hoity-toity’. They were clearly very important to her. While she had received these messages from various people who had downloaded them, interestingly she did not send them on, or download her own: but they sparked an intense period of creativity where she just had to grab her phone, record her feelings and so compose her own love messages in response. Although both she and the other party were Afrikaans-speaking, she was adamant that English was the only language appropriate for these messages.

Phone menu language:

In this community, as in many ‘coloured’ communities in South Africa, the type of Afrikaans one speaks identifies one in terms of class or race, and ‘*suiwer*’ (pure) Afrikaans, associated with whites and some middle-class ‘coloureds’, is different from the ‘*kombuis*’ (kitchen) Afrikaans spoken in working-class areas (Stone 1995: 280). The version of Afrikaans that mobile phone manufacturers offer for the display of menus on mobile phones in South Africa is defined by dictionaries originating from the apartheid era, which is known as *Algemeen Beskaafde Afrikaans* (Generally Civilized Afrikaans), a term which was coined to exclude the Afrikaans spoken by black servants (Giliomee 2004: 372). While white Afrikaners had an emotional investment in keeping Afrikaans pure (McCormick cited in Dyers 2008), black speakers of the language have tended to accentuate its ability to incorporate elements from other languages, in a type of language *bricolage* (Stone 1995). Black Afrikaans is thus closer to the original creole nature of Afrikaans and is still a language that hybridises and incorporates and allows for diverse interaction, very different from the purist and exclusive project of Afrikaner nationalists. Criticised from their schooldays that their Afrikaans was just a ‘*kombuistaal*’ (kitchen language), all of the young people interviewed were adamant that they would never be competent enough to use the Afrikaans menus on their mobile phones.

- Interviewer: En...dan watse taal is jou *phone* op?
Beronic: Engels
Interviewer: Hoekom het jy dit Engels gesit?
Beronic: Afrikaans is moeilik. Dis *difficult*...
Interviewer: Is dit 'n stywe Afrikaans?

Beronice: Ja. En ons Afrikaans is...sê maar dis *broken* Afrikaans, want ons... meeste van ons kleurling ons praat nie regte moedertaal nie, ons praat *broken* Afrikaans. Soos jy kan nou oplet, ek praat nie suiwer Afrikaans nie.²²

While it is debatable how many people who are not English first language speakers would indeed bother to adjust the default settings for language on a mobile phone in South Africa, where English dominance is naturalised by such defaults, what was clear was that for these young people considering adjusting the language settings on the phones seemed to provoke anxieties associated with ‘race’ and their marginal position in South African society.

Mobile phone logs

In Hooggenoeg, these young people are accustomed to showing off their log of phone contacts and recent calls to others, as young people do in other countries to quantify popularity (Green and Haddon 2009: 101). When I expressed interest in their contact lists, two of the young women launched into monologues in a rapid, seemingly practised fashion, going through every contact on their contact list and briefly categorising such person – and later other interviewees confirmed that this performance of the contact list is a common activity in their community. Here, however, the purpose of displaying the phone log is not only to demonstrate popularity but also to prove sexual propriety and hence ‘*ordentlikheid*’ in young women. It seemed common practice for family members — such as Beronice’s cousins and Amanda’s father as well as all of the respective boyfriends of the young women interviewed — to frequently inspect these young women’s mobile phones. The ‘inspectors’ would look at new contacts that had been added, recent phone calls or messages that had been received and from whom they had come. These inspections prompted young women to engage in a range of contra-surveillance tactics which included constantly deleting received messages, clearing their ‘sent messages’ folder, and labelling phone numbers of young men in their contact list with the names of their female friends. They also made a point of not

²² Interviewer: And...mmm... what language is your phone set to?

Beronice: English

Interviewer: Why did you set it to English?

Beronice: Afrikaans is difficult. It’s difficult...

Interviewer: Is it a formal Afrikaans?

Beronice: Yes. And our Afrikaans is...just say it’s broken Afrikaans, because we, most of us coloureds we don’t speak proper mother tongue, we speak broken Afrikaans. Like you may have noticed now I don’t speak pure Afrikaans.

saving photographs sent by young male admirers to their phones, so that these could not be discovered and deleted during ‘phone inspections’:

- Thami: Ek het nie ouens se fotos hier by my nie. So hy kan niks *delete* nie.
Interviewer: Stuur hulle nie vir jou photos op MXit nie?
Thami: Dan *SAVE* ek dit op MXit.
Beronice: Dan *save* 'n mens dit na jou *gallery*²³

MXit’s privacy features foil these inspections, keeping no record of a young woman’s collection of photographs or of her conversations, which otherwise would be stored on the mobile phone log and easily detected by ‘phone inspectors’.

- Xolile: I mean, you are going to receive calls and see that number: OK, this person has called that person. And maybe an SMS: some days you forget to delete an SMS from your phone...But MXit !
Danny: The minute she logs off you can’t see it.
Xolile: You can’t trace nothing, everything is dead.

Danny and Xolile were adamant about their right to privacy on their own phones, but their exasperation at their inability to inspect the phones of young women using MXit reveals the double standards surrounding phone privacy for men and women generally in this community. The privacy features of MXit and its association with flirtation mean that these young women are under constant pressure from their boyfriends to delete this application:

- Beronice: My MXit word *time and again gedelete* dan sit ek dit net weer op.²⁴

While the young women also sometimes inspect the phones of the young men, it seems that this must be done more surreptitiously, for example while the phone is charging or while the phone is borrowed to play a game. This culture of ‘phone inspections’ is so much part of everyday life here, that a young person here may assume that it is common across South Africa. When I asked Danny to select an image from my phone brochures that reminded him of people in Hooggenoeg, he scornfully chose an image that to me appeared to be a couple

²³ Thami: I don’t have photos of guys here on mine. So there’s nothing for him to delete.

Interviewer: Don’t they send you photos on MXit?

Thami: (Smiles) Then I save it on MXit.

Beronice: Then you save it to your [MXit] gallery.

²⁴ Beronice: My MXit gets deleted time and again, but then I just put it on again.

appreciating a photograph on the young woman's mobile phone (see Figure 1, Appendix A). Danny, however, was convinced that this was a 'phone inspection'.

The manner in which mobile phones are carried

For these young people from Hooggenoeg, the way in which a mobile phone is carried, communicates a relationship between its owner and the space that is being traversed. In the streets of Hooggenoeg, the phone is often carried in the hand, where there is no immediate threat of theft, and it can easily be displayed to others. As these young people move away from the safety of the 'knowable community' (Williams 1969) however, they become more protective of their phones, tending to keep them in a front pocket. While the young men described openly wearing their mobile phone's headphones during the relatively safe journey to town, some of the young women were more careful: Thami has chosen her braid extensions to be the perfect length to hide her headphones.

At night, being outside of the familiar neighbourhood becomes even more dangerous, and phones are hidden further away. Danny and his brother Xolile's experience of space and race are intertwined, as the way in which they are racially identified changes depending on their geographical location. This is because these brothers, like many young adults in Hooggenoeg, do not easily slot into old apartheid categories. Here, a hybrid generation of young adults call themselves 'Mix' and are fluent, or nearly fluent, in both Afrikaans and isiXhosa. While other South African housing projects, where people formerly defined as 'coloured' and Xhosa live together, have shown no such levels of integration (Muyeba and Seekings 2010), Hooggenoeg may have succeeded because many 'coloured' families originated from farms where they had actively participated in traditional Xhosa ceremonies. While Danny and Xolile may often identify as Xhosa in Hooggenoeg, their extended family who live in the 'Xhosa township' of Fingo Village consider them to be 'coloured'. The brothers associated their blackness with a sense of belonging and safety that changed depending on where they were and that was expressed in how they carried their phones. When they went to Extension 6 or Joza, townships which they had no connection to, they were acutely aware of not belonging:

Danny: I only get paranoid when I'm in Joza or stuff like that... especially Extension 6. I mean me and a few friends of mine from Rhodes went to Extension 6 and I honestly ... no offence to you [looks at interviewer]...I mean I'm black, and I felt white! But I'm like: 'I'm surrounded by black guys!' Whatever...I felt white. I felt like an alien!

'Cause, these guys from Rhodes are like: [puts on helpless voice]
'Danny, you can...'

Interviewer: You are going to save them.

Danny: *Ja*, and I'm like: 'Dude, this is acting...I can't do this'

Interviewer: So there you would hide your phone?

Danny: Totally!

Xolile: There you keep your phone inside. I left it on; my phone kept on ringing. I said, 'I'm not going to answer it!' I kept it in my pocket. We were even afraid to buy booze inside ...we had to call the chick from church and say 'Do you mind buying [for] us?' And I was like: 'This is NOT happening!'

We have therefore seen how the meanings associated with the display of the mobile phone for these young people are related to the particular social structures that produce everyday space here in Hooggenoeg. In the next chapter I will focus on the incorporation and conversion of mobile phones amongst these young people from Hooggenoeg.

Chapter 7: Incorporation findings

The incorporation phase of an ICT relates to the study of how the device is incorporated into the space, in particular through the routines of everyday practices (Silverstone *et al* 1992: 24). In this chapter, the findings that relate to the incorporation of the mobile phone into the everyday lives of the young adults are discussed in relation to social structures such as race, class and gender and the concepts discussed previously such as mobility, perpetual contact, the blurring of public and private space, and the individualisation of society. These findings are structured according to three distinct patterns of daily routines that were identified amongst the young people interviewed. Firstly, young adults who were working or studying have busy days full of commuting and scheduled tasks. Secondly, the lives of young mothers are generally centred on the routines that structure their children's lives. Lastly, unemployed young adults who are not mothers have endless time that needs to be filled.

The employed and student participants

This group used their mobile phones at particular times, which reflected the scheduled nature of their day. Their mobile phones were integral during the commuting to and from work or college, when Xolile and Thami mostly used them to listen to music. These two therefore engage in 'mobile privatization' (Williams in Hills 2009) in which portable media are used to avoid any interaction with strangers en route to work. Ezme's phone is used intensely during her three-hour commute to work (she works in a neighbouring town) and she attends to emails during the early hours of the morning when MXit friends are generally all asleep. This is an example of 'Lazarus time' where she is bringing 'downtime' back to life again (Green and Haddon 2009: 77— 78).

Once these young people arrive at work or college, their mobile phones are set on silent for most of the time until the lunch break, when they check and respond to messages, and re-set to silent after lunch until the commute home when mobile phones reappear. While these youths may prioritise work and study here by putting mobile phones away, they do stay on, so there remains some symbolic element of being able to sense the vibration of incoming calls and messages and thus retain a limited aspect of 'perpetual contact' (Katz and Aakhus 2002). Ezme and Thami both had access to computers, which meant that unlike many other young people in Hooggenoeg, their perspective on the Internet was not limited to the mobile

Internet. They were active users of PC-based e-mail and Facebook and generally browsed the Internet on these PCs, not on their phones.

Once these three arrive back home they are often too tired to engage in any social activities and their phones are similarly 'disengaged' in social activity, compared to the rest of the group. When I met her, Thami had uninstalled MXit, as she was writing exams. Listening to his brother bragging about his wild social life of parties and girls, Xolile tried to convince me that he too was once like this. His working life now was so all-consuming that he continually had to make social sacrifices such as the best friend's wedding the previous weekend he could not attend because of a weekend shift. As opposed to his brother's wild social life and constant MXit chatter, he rationed himself to one particular online-only 'MXit friend' to whom he spoke late at night about his problems.

Mothers

Ezme's maternity leave has altered her phone use substantially. She has decided that during this period she would prioritise her baby and not her mobile phone:

Ezme: Maar omdat ek nou meer saam met my kind nou spandeer, kan ek nie nog MXit nie, want dit gaan my aandag van die kind afvat en ek moet maar net vrede ... So ek so meer tyd saam met my kind spandeer, daai vier maande... as moontlik, om nou MXit nou en al die skinder goete, is nie meer belangrik nie.²⁵

The unemployed mothers however do not have this sense of limited, precious time. For them motherhood is difficult and often renders them immobile.

Verosa: Maar dan voel dit so — jy kan nie alleen gaan nie — en die kinders hou my agter en ietsie soos daai. Ek... ek wil dit nou ook sê, ek is spyt ek het vroegtydig kinders gaan soek.²⁶

²⁵ Ezme: And because I spend more [time] with my kid now, I can't MXit as well, because it will take my attention away from my child, and I just have to make peace...So I try and spend most of the time with my kid, these four months...as much as I can, and now to MXit or do that gossip stuff, that's not important anymore.

²⁶ Verosa: But now it feels like — you can't go out alone — and the kids are holding me back or something like that. And I would just like to say now, that I regret that I wanted kids so early in my life.

Mobile literacy

Verosa cannot attend literacy classes during the day because she has to stay home with the children. For the short period that evening literacy classes were held at her church^{xv}, she could attend while her mother, who works during the day, babysat. It appears that the social status associated with the mobile phone has influenced her desire to be literate: she started going to literacy class because she was ashamed that she could not send an SMS like other acquaintances. She measured her improvement in terms of phone literacy, describing how her writing had improved so much that her sister could make out some of her SMSes, even though the sister's boyfriend still laughed at them. According to participants in the focus group, Verosa was no exception:

Interviewer: Maar daar is hier jongmense in Hooggenoeg wat ook nie kan lees of skryf nie, né?

All: Ja!

Thami: Klomp.

Beronice: Is baie van hulle, daar is baie kinders hier wat nog nie eers hoërskool *gereach* het, wat by die huis is.

Interviewer: En dan kan hulle nie eens MXit nie?

Thami: Nee, hulle ken MXit.

Amanda: Tjommies wys hulle: 'Jy moet nou so maak, dan moet jy so maak...'

Thami: En by MXit jy skryf mos nie vol uit nie.²⁷

Here the mobile phone, through SMS and MXit, seems instrumental in creating a culture of reading and writing in everyday life.

²⁷ Interviewer: But then there are many young people in Hooggenoeg who can't read or write, isn't it?

All: Yes!

Thami: Lots.

Beronice: There are many of them, many kids who did not even reach high school who stay at home.

Interviewer: And then they can't even use MXit?

Thami: No, they can MXit.

Amanda: Their buddies show them: 'You must do like this, then you do like this...'

Thami: And with MXit you don't have to write things out in full, of course.

Baby phones

All the young mothers allowed their babies and toddlers to handle their mobile phones and like any baby whose mother has such a 'toy' they were constantly wanting them. When Verosa had a phone, her toddlers played games on them; she was happy that this kept them away from the dangerous streets. These habits however placed the phone at risk. Amanda's phone was constantly in her baby's mouth, and Crystal's toddler had lost her phone's memory card. While the mothers kept the babies busy, fed and changed, they struggled with boredom themselves. There were no baby-groups to attend as there are in middle-class white suburbs; in fact young mothers who were not related seemed to actively avoid each other. Instead, they spent their time watching television and using their mobile phones, so practising 'mobile privatization' in the stationary understanding that Williams had of it (Hills 2009: 10), accessing the world from the living room both with the television and the mobile phone.

Amanda: Nadat jy die *soapies* gekyk het...daarna begin jy te *mix*.²⁸

Here, killing time with the mobile phone continues throughout the day, just as we shall see it does for the unemployed group below. Looking after a baby or small child meant however that the mothers could never totally immerse themselves in this. Amanda related how she and other friends who were mothers were unable to go out at night, which strained their relationships with the fathers of their babies, or broke couples up altogether. Inevitably, their relationships with the fathers of the children changed, and on the phone the relationship was now defined by the exchange of baby photographs. Freddy's wallpaper proudly boasts a photograph of his seven-month-old daughter.

Freddy: Ja ek gaan kuier elke dag, mevrou. (Leans over and shows photo of baby on mobile phone screen)

Interviewer: *Oh wow!* En het jy net daai *photo* van haar?

Freddy: Nee, ek het genoeg mevrou, op my *phone*.

Interviewer: O, OK. So jy't klomp *photos* op jou *phone* van haar?

Freddy: Ja, die meeste fotos is haar, is haar né.²⁹

²⁸ Amanda: And after you've finished watching the soopies...then you start to mix.

²⁹ Freddy: Yes, I go and visit every day ma'am. [Leans over to show photograph of baby on screen]

Interviewer: Oh wow! And do you only have that photo of her?

Freddy: No, I have enough, Ma'am, on my phone.

Interviewer: Oh, OK. So you've got many photos of her on your phone?

Freddy: Yes, most of my photos are of her, you know.

The unemployed participants

The young people who were unemployed and not mothers had very different rhythms to their lives. Their days were spent finding things to do to fill the time, and they recounted even missing the structure they had had during their school careers.

Beronice: Dis nie lekker by die huis nie. Dis beter by die skool, dit hou jou besig. By die huis, dis vervelig. Jy maak skoon, dan is dit nou klaar skoon dan het jy niks om te doen nie.³⁰

Beronice did some domestic chores, but except for Freddy (an only child), none of the young men had any such responsibilities and instead the staple daily fare of this group was consuming a variety of media. Several of the young people related playing games for a few hours every day, and the researcher observed some Playstation machines in their homes. They also watch several hours of television at a time, sometimes playing a mobile phone game simultaneously. In the afternoons younger siblings ran around the neighbourhood fetching flashsticks containing films from other homes to watch with their older siblings.

Interacting with children gave these young adults a sense of meaning, as they were able to do important work such as organising dance groups to keep the children off the streets. Beronice often helped her younger sister with homework. As some girls had been raped on the way to the library, her younger sister did not go there anymore and Beronice instead used Google on her mobile phone to access information for school projects. The young people also spoke of social time in the afternoons, visiting cousins, fathers visiting babies, and card games with friends. In between all of this, there is MXit:

Beronice: Wanneer ek *bored* is en alleen, dan's ek heelyd op MXit. Dan hou dit my *company*.³¹

Beronice logs onto MXit six times daily, briefly chatting to contacts in the morning, over lunch, and in the afternoon, and then spending considerable more time chatting in the

³⁰ Beronice: It's not nice at home. It was better at school, it kept one busy. At home, it's boring. You tidy up, but then it's tidy and there's nothing to do.

³¹ Beronice: When I'm bored and lonely, then I'm on MXit all the time. It keeps me company.

evening, sometimes until late at night, sometimes spending from 5pm until 1am. When I asked her if this was unusual she laughed and replied that in fact, unlike her, some people were addicted to MXit and could spend the whole day chatting online. Others confirmed this:

Verosa: Party MXit sommer die hele dag. Daars 'n ander meisie in [inaudible], daar MXit sy heel nag en dan staan haar oë net so dik. Dan sê hulle dis nie die wind nie, dis die MXit, want jou oë is mos heelnag oop.³²

Young people use MXit to counter the stresses of everyday life and their crowded living conditions, just as Japanese youth do (Ito and Okabe 2005):

Danny: Sometimes I wake up talkative and ... no one... then I just wake up in a mood. You know how you wake up you just in a bad mood. Then I charge my phone and I sit and I listen to music —not so loud — and I just mix, the whole night.

It is clear that young people here are in ‘perpetual contact’ (Katz and Aakhus 2002) with their MXit contacts. While they may often not have airtime to phone or SMS, with a few cents they can still be communicating on MXit. To initiate a MXit conversation with limited airtime, they engage in a type of ‘beeping’ behaviour (Donner 2007) which entails sending a please-call-me message with a key word that refers to MXit, such as ‘login’ in the space provided which results in the contact logging onto MXit. While ‘hyper-coordination’ (Ling 2004) is mostly done through a please-call-me message or an SMS, to gather friends at a street corner, for example, it is through MXit that more meaningful contact is sustained: so meaningful that Beronice prefers the company of the phone to actual friendship in her neighbourhood:

Beronice: Ek sit in my huis, ek gaan nie dood gaan nie, ek sit in my huis. Ek het nie tjommies nodig nie, ek het die *phone*.³³

In Hooggenoeg, young people may attempt to engage in ‘mobile privatization’, where they may walk around with earphones attached to create their own world and where, as Anton

³² Verosa: Some even MXit the whole day. There’s another girl in [inaudible] there, she MXits for the whole night and then her eyes become really puffy. Then people say it’s not the wind that did it, but it’s MXit, because she kept her eyes open for the whole night.

³³ Beronice: I’m sitting in my house, I’m not dying, I’m sitting in my house. I don’t need buddies, I have my phone.

says, in the absence of a friend his phone 'keeps him company'. In this 'knowable community' which facilitates gossip (Williams 1969), it is not really possible however to block out being observed by the outside world, or to 'mediate the other' (Hills 2009: 10) as there is no middle-class culture of 'public anonymity' (Garland-Thomson 2009).

The contiguous nature of the space is constructed through practices of everyday life which involve the constant criss-crossing of the eleven streets by community members on foot, many of whom are unemployed and seldom leave the neighbourhood. The public nature of every space, where friends and family may enter one's bedroom at any time, for example, means that the mobile phone has a special significance for young adults with secrets, epitomised by Danny when he says: 'My phone is my only privacy'. This concept of the phone as private makes it quite normal for these young men to store home-made sex videos on it:

Clinton: *Ja, I've taken, ja I've been in one video. But, ja...don't think I'll ever do that again!*

Danny: *Dis normal nogal vir ons youth, ons vat dit normally. Maar waar daai ek nie like nie, is dat jy vat 'n video van jou en iemand, dan bluetooth almal nou die ding.*³⁴

The one time that the phone is not on the owner's person is when it is being charged. This has prompted Danny to negotiate a rule with his family that no-one will touch his phone at this time, even if it rings, on the basis that it is his right not to have 'invasion of privacy'. Freddy carries his charger with him wherever he goes, so that he never needs to leave his phone unattended.

The mobile phone is also used to sustain the hope of employment and a future: Anton regularly checks his phone for SMSes from colleges to which he has applied, and Garth, an up-and-coming young musician, uses his phone to network with people who may want him to perform at their gigs.

Once the day is over and night sets in, the unemployed young adults dominate the space, especially the young men: those working and studying have other priorities. This is the time

³⁴ Danny: It's rather normal for our youth, we consider it normal. But what I don't like, is that you take a video of yourself and someone, and then everyone ends up Bluetoothing the thing.

to go for a 'stroll' or 'take a cruise'— walking in groups of friends or 'crews' of young men (with the occasional girlfriend or sister) along a specific route, sometimes with a few dogs tagging behind:

Danny: Ons gaan begin by die eerste straat en dan loop ons so deur die strate. En dan...dan draai jy so daar in die laaste straat. Dan vat dit omtrent vir jou tyd, somtyds vat dit 'n uur of meer, somtyds vat dit minder as 'n uur, dit all *depend* op hoe haastig jy is.³⁵

This snaking 'stroll' with its set starting and end points, seems similar to the Italian *passeggiata*, a ritual promenade dating back to the Middle Ages where townsfolk would parade up and down the centre of town to see and be seen (del Negro and Berger 2001: 5). While in Italy, widows stand on the sidelines to demonstrate their modesty and virtue (del Negro and Berger 2001: 15), here in Hooggenoeg this space is reserved for young women who stand in front of their gates watching the young men pass by. One of the main functions of the stroll in Hooggenoeg is courtship. While out strolling, the young men frequently stop where other groups have congregated at corners, or where girls stand in front of their gates, to find out what is happening or to flirt. Mobile phones seem essential here, and a phone like Freddy's which can play music very loud may provide a soundtrack to which the 'crew' can dance as they move along. Even more fashionable is a new 'box' that plays MP3s, in which young people take turns putting the memory card from their phones, to play their music. While the crew is walking, they are also all on MXit, finding out what is happening elsewhere in town and adding MXit contacts if a flirtation goes well or the MXit contact of a love interest if it can be procured from a mutual friend.

As has been shown in other research (Walton 2010a) MXit here is used mainly for contact with the opposite sex and is associated with flirting. Danny is often irritated when young men ask for his MXit contact: he and his brother see this as a 'gay thing'. While Danny is not homophobic (he has one gay friend) he does not like men 'to approach me in the way a girl would do'. While all the participants could, after some contemplation, think of one person who would reject a contact on the basis of race, as happens in Cape Town (Bosch 2008), they

³⁵ Danny: We start with the first street and then we walk through all the streets. And then you turn back when you get to the last street. It takes quite a bit of time, sometimes an hour or more, sometimes it takes less than an hour, depending on how much of a hurry you are in.

said that this was generally not true of their community: while it may be more common in other ‘coloured areas’ of Grahamstown (like Ghost Town), it was rare in Hooggenoeg.

The mobile phone, mobility and space

The use of the MXit on the move allows for various experiences of space and layers of real/virtual communication. As this ‘crew’ moves around, they are also chatting about a range of topics amongst themselves, and drawing their MXit contacts into the conversation in an ‘augmented flesh meet’ (Ito and Okabe 2005: 17) different from those in Japan, in that these meetings happen on the move.

- Anton: Dan praat ons daar oor daai *topic*, dan is dit: ‘Jy moet hoor wat sê dié ene op MXit’. En dan is hy: ‘Wat sê hy nou?’ Daar *compare* ons daai.
- Danny: Dan sê dié ene: ‘Kyk hier, *watch*’ hy gaan nou dié vir dié ene skryf, dan sien jy wat gaan dié ene sê. Dan sê daai ander ene ook: ‘Kyk hier ek gaan ook hier skryf’. So dan eindig ons nou, ons voel ook nie die loop nie, want *because* ons almal is nou *serious* op die MXit.³⁶

The shared space of the ‘augmented flesh meet’ which connects those close and remote in conversation stands in direct contrast to the private space MXit can create for lovers in the co-present to avoid the scrutiny of others, a type of ‘private parallel booth’ for two away from the ever-present eyes and ears of the community. Danny, known jokingly amongst his friends as a ‘player’ and a ‘bad boy’, has mastered this art on MXit. He is admired for his ability to get girls to come out ‘fifty-fifty’; this means that instead of just standing and waiting for a young man to approach her, a young woman will physically show her attraction by a symbolic act of mobility, in which she moves towards him and meets him halfway down the street. The request for a ‘fifty-fifty’ is made to the girl down the street via MXit, and Danny is so confident of success that he announces his plan to his ‘crew’ beforehand:

- Danny: So instead of me going the full length I’ll stand like a quarter away from her house, and then I’ll stand there and I’ll say: ‘Do you mind

³⁶ Anton: Then we’ll be discussing a certain topic, and then it’ll be: ‘You should hear what this one says on MXit’. And then he’ll go: ‘What’s he saying?’ and then we’ll compare what people are saying.

Danny: And then the other one would say: ‘Check here, watch’ and then he’ll be writing to someone else to see what they have to say about it. And then the other one will also be going: ‘I’m also going to write something here’. So then we end up not really feeling like we’re walking, because we are all being so seriously busy on MXit.

coming out fifty-fifty?' Then she'll come, now the girl, and I'll be like: 'Oh, like Yes!' and it's always like that...

Danny uses MXit to create a 'private parallel booth' with another person who is co-present in other social spaces as well; at weddings, for example, girls communicate with him without the knowledge of his current girlfriend. The most interesting use of this 'private parallel booth' was Danny's technique of conducting a secret first date amongst a crowd of friends, where everyone else may be oblivious to the budding romance. Here, he describes a school girl who wanted to meet him and came to join him and other friends to smoke a hubbly-bubbly pipe at a house in another area close to Hooggenoeg:

Danny: And she came with her friend now, and she's really shy. So I had to remain on MXit, 'cause she wanted to remain on MXit, because she wanted to sit with us, but she was too shy, because like all the girls are there, like, and she was too shy to, like, talk to me, communicate face to face, she wanted to communicate over MXit while she's sitting over there and I'm here. And so it was like: 'I'm OK with that', 'cause most of them do that. And well after they get used to me they'll like be OK, come up to me.

One can clearly see here the mobile phone being used to perform Goffman's 'front stage' and 'backstage' performances (Ling 2008: 69), where the interaction with friends is the 'front stage' and the interaction with the girl through MXit is the 'backstage', which here happens simultaneously. In this space, the social rules do not allow Danny to disengage from the 'co-present' (Ling 2004), but oblige him to maintain an engagement with those around him while he also secretly manages sociability online, a juggling act of various conversations.

Phones and security on the boundary

As there are few places to socialise in Hooggenoeg besides the tavern, many young people move down the hill to other areas. Returning through the bushy areas is dangerous: the 'crews' lie in wait to commit robbery. The mobile phone can here be used to assist with security (Ling 2004:99), but if one sends a message to a young man for help, one needs to be careful that the telltale light of the screen is not visible to others in the dark:

Beronice: Dis nie 'n regte pad nie, al die paaie Hooggenoeg toe is deur die bos.
Amanda: En dan kan jy miskien iemand kontak om te sê: "Wag vir my hier bo ek is nou hier onder."
Beronice: Of: "Kom haal my halfpad". Maar dit hang af ook of jy *airtime* het, as jy nie het nie moet jy hom maar 'n *please-call-me* gee

Amanda: En as hy nou nie *respond* nie, dan is dit nou maar net jou *bad luck!*³⁷

We can clearly note here that young people in Hooggenoeg are not in ‘perpetual contact’ (Katz and Aakhus 2002) and that poverty can result in a lack of contact at critically important times (Duncan 2010). If one does not have a friend to contact, a torch can be an essential feature on a mobile phone if one is returning home at night, which is why Anton specifically looked for this when purchasing his first phone as a young teenager:

Anton: Die *flashlight* het ek nodig [gehad] want hmmm meeste plekke.. *like specially* hier in onse area, daar is, is bosse, dis omhels met bosse en waar daar bos is, *like*, is dit pikswart en meeste van die *council* se P-ligte [is] nie in daai plekke nie. En nou, mens kan nie sien hoe jy loop, waar jy loop [nie], en jy kan miskien vir enige ding verwag, *like*, wie hier die bos uitspring, of wie vir wie kan seermaak, of jy kan geroof word. So daai foon het gehelp om, *like*, in donker plekke [te] loop, want ek kan skyn waar ek donker is, en jy kan sien wie kruip agter wat weg. ‘Daar’s ‘n skelm’, iets soos daai, dis hoekom ek van daai *phone* gehou het.³⁸

Worried parents frequently call young people on their mobile phones when they have not returned home late at night. When Danny was younger he was involved in many fights, and his mother still becomes worried when she hears people fighting in the streets at night:

Danny: Om seker te maak ek is *safe*, dan vra sy altyd “Waar's jy? Ons gaan die ligte afsit, ons gaan nou slaap”. Of as jy nou *gunskote* hoor van mense wat baklei, die eerste ding wat sy doen is sy bel my. Om te sê: “Hei, daar word gebaklei, waar is jy? Want ek hoor mense baklei, is jy nie by die baklei nie?” Meeste van die tyd ja, hulle gebruik my

³⁷ Beronice: It’s not a real road; all the paths to Hooggenoeg go through the bush.

Amanda: And then you could contact someone to ask: ‘Wait for me up there, I’m just down here.’

Beronice: Or: ‘Come and fetch me halfway’. But it also depends if you have airtime, if you don’t have you’ll just have to send a please-call-me.

Amanda: And if he doesn’t respond, then it’s just your bad luck!

³⁸ Anton: I needed this flashlight because hmmm most places...especially here in our area, there are bushes, it’s surrounded with bushes and where there are bushes it’s pitch dark and mostly there are no council P-lights in those places. Now one can’t see where you’re going, and one can expect anything, anyone can jump out of the bush and hurt you and you can be robbed. So that phone helped one to walk in dark places, because I could shine on dark spots and one can see who’s hiding behind what. ‘There’s a thief’, something like that, that’s why I liked that phone.

phone om my nader te kry, as hulle voel dat iets is nie reg hierbo is nie.

Clinton: Ja ek sal dit so sê.

Anton: Dieselfde hier. Mens se ouers hou nie òp bel nie. Dan vra hulle “Waar is jy?” En dan's dit laat dan gaan hulle elke vyf minute bel: “Waar's jy, wanneer kom jy huis toe?”³⁹

It is likely that those will be the only words spoken by parents during such a phone call: high costs of phoning have radically shortened patterns of conversational interaction amongst poor South Africans (Kaschula 2009). The phone calls that I observed in this community were very short, consisting of about two or three exchanges; the young people confirmed that this was the norm. Back at home and in bed, on weekends, this practice changes and young people like Xolile may talk for a lengthy period to take advantage of a midnight-hour free-call service that one of the networks offers. Otherwise, they will generally go to bed logged onto MXit.

Conclusion:

In this chapter I have explored how mobile phones are incorporated into the everyday routines of these young people. As Lefebvre (2005) has argued, routines produce particular spaces. The routines of the three different groups create very different experiences of space which are navigated with the help of the mobile phone. The workers and student experience the controlled world outside Hooggenoeg where they have very little power, through the restrictions this places on their phones, interspersed with journeys of commuting where their phone is used to isolate them from others. The mothers stay in the domestic space of the home, where the mobile phone allows them to fill the time and keep up some connection with the outside world. The unemployed similarly use the mobile phone to amuse themselves until it becomes time to create the very local and communal space of the stroll in the

³⁹ Danny: To be sure that I'm safe she would always ask: 'Where are you? We're going to put out the lights now, we're going to bed.' Or if one hears gunshots of people fighting, the first thing she would do, is she would phone me. To say: 'Hey, there's fighting, where are you? I can hear people fighting, are you at the fight?' Most of the time, yes, they'll use the phone to get me closer, if they feel there's something not quite right up here.

Clinton: Yes, I'd say so too.

Anton: Same here. One's parents just don't stop phoning. Then they'll ask: 'Where are you?' and if it's late they'll be phoning every 5 minutes: 'Where are you when are you coming home?'

evenings, where the mobile phone may help extend or privatise this communal space. A phone on its own, however, is not enough to navigate the dangers on the borders of the community, especially without the luxury of 'perpetual contact'.

Chapter 8: Conversion findings

Through the conversion phase of the domestication approach, the meanings defined through various negotiations in the social space are moved across the borders of this space into the wider public world (Silverstone *et al* 1992: 25). I will therefore look at various processes which involve the mobile phone that allow communication for these young people beyond the social space of Hooggenoeg extending to a range of other spaces. Here, I begin with broader Grahamstown, where I look at how MXit and the gossip network *Outoilet* are used to facilitate communication with networks of young people mainly from other ‘coloured’ areas of Grahamstown. I then look at the broader world of South Africa, and how these young people extend their social networks and their geographical reach through online-only ‘MXit friends’. Finally, I look briefly at interaction with the international world outside the borders of South Africa, which is limited primarily to download sites. I then reflect on the meanings of the mobile phone that develop through these interactions with the wider outside world.

The immediate outside world

This section explores how the mobile phone allows the young people to interact with the wider world immediately outside Hooggenoeg i.e. within Grahamstown, and how this relates to the meaning of the mobile phone. In Hooggenoeg, just as in other townships (and seemingly even more so in coloured townships) communication in the neighbourhood is often characterised by gossip (Bray *et al* 2010).

Outoilet

In the previously ‘coloured’ areas of Grahamstown, gossip seems to be particularly facilitated on the mobile phone through the mobile website *Outoilet*’s Grahamstown pages. While MXit may also be used to communicate gossip between friends, as an Instant Messaging (IM) site the sender is generally not anonymous^{xvi} and messages are relayed between individuals, not communicated publically and anonymously to the whole community as it is on the *Outoilet* site. *Outoilet* is a mobile website or ‘WAPsite’ that has become notorious in South Africa due to its associations with pornography, its crude gossip and its lack of accountability to any legal structure^{xvii} (Baadjies 2010, Peterson 2010, Malala 2010a). This notoriety peaked during the course of this study, when the site was linked in November 2010 to the distribution of a rape video filmed at a Johannesburg school (Van Wyk 2010), resulting in a moral panic in the media and subsequently various mobile phone signal providers blocking access to the

site (Jones 2010). Despite these blocks, people in Grahamstown seemed to figure out ways of continuing to post to the site for several months, yet over these months posting decreased dramatically, dwindling from several pages of posts a day to one post every week or fortnight. The time period of the research thus provided an opportune moment to examine the social function of *Outoilet* at the time.

Outoilet is organised according to different categories that include the geographical provinces in South Africa, which link to various sites related to towns, or specific areas of towns like townships. Each specific area's site contains several pages of posts about this town that can be read, and a space for the user to type in text that will immediately be posted to the last page. One could argue therefore that it is a type of 'community network', since it features information about a specific geographical area, and allows users to post information there (Erickson 2010, Carroll and Rosson 2010, Kavanaugh *et al* 2005). This shows that one does not need the fancy GPS technology that some (Erickson 2010) may deem necessary for such a community site to exist. In contrast to the benign and socially helpful function that mediated community networks fulfil in the literature (Erickson 2010, Carroll and Rosson 2010, Kavanaugh *et al* 2005), all references to *Outoilet* foreground its malicious location-based gossip, slander and pornography (Baadjies 2010, Peterson 2010, Malala 2010b). Such gossip and anti-social activity is facilitated not only by the anonymous nature of its host (Malala 2010a), but also due to the anonymity it allows users, who are able to assume a different pseudonym every time they log on. People often use the name space on the screen as an additional communicative space for all sorts of messages such as indicating their emotions e.g. 'disgusted', or to show that they are replying to someone else's post, with '2' indicating a shortcut for 'to' for example '2dronkie'. Sometimes a name will be used, but generally this indicates the name of the person who is the topic of the post, not its author. The site therefore has no 'searchability' (boyd 2007: 9), making it impossible to attempt identifying users through their posting history; but as anyone with access to the Internet can access 15 pages^{xviii} dedicated to the town, there is extensive scope to access 'invisible audiences' (boyd 2007:9) making the website ideal for gossip.

The Grahamstown site, judging from personal observation over the research period, is mainly comprised of posts written in a SMS form of Afrikaans, with frequent reference to specific street names and areas, all of which are all located in historically 'coloured areas' of Grahamstown. This suggests that in Grahamstown, *Outoilet's* participants are mostly from historically 'coloured areas'. The site mainly features crude gossip regarding sexual activity

and infidelity (and denials of such allegations) as well as inquiries into the sexual availability of people viewed as potential romantic partners. The explicit sexual nature of the site and the crude references made to women led me to incorrectly assume that the authors of the site are predominantly men:

- Interviewer: Want soos dit nou vir my gelyk het is dit baie mans wat vir vrouens uitskel.
- Beronice: Is vrouens wat mekaar uitskel. Is meisies wat naar is met die ander meisies.⁴⁰

Other young people speculated that equal amounts of men may also post on the site. Although they focused on the gossip in the interviews, my research on the site showed that a small proportion of the posts were more benign and community-orientated, such as invitations to sporting events, talent shows and *braais*, and good luck messages sent to matric students.

***Outoilet*: defining bonds and boundaries**

Gossip was common in the Hooggenoeg community long before the introduction of the mobile phone. Now, however, with the help of technology like mobile phones and *Outoilet*, gossip that may have dissipated over time and space could spread to the entire community in a succession of waves, as people read it on *Outoilet*, debate it with others and send it on further with the help of MXit— a type of community broadcasting. Such broadcasting was important as not everyone had a web enabled phone to access *Outoilet* themselves, and MXit allowed one to draw attention to an *Outoilet* post which could disappear off the site as new posts bury older ones. Danny describes how people would gather together to look at *Outoilet* and then disseminate the gossip:

- Danny: Uh, what most of them did is like one of them would be on *Outoilet*, the rest would be on MXit, sending out this, this, this and saying: ‘Go to *Outoilet* and you should see this: this and this and this’ ... That’s how they used to do it. So one’s got the info, and the others are like sending the info out.

Gluckman argues that gossip is primarily about creating ties of intimacy between the gossipers through the telling of ‘moral tales’ and that the subjects of the gossip are secondary

⁴⁰ Interviewer: The way it looks to me is that there are many men telling women off.

Beronice: It’s women who are telling each other off. It’s girls being nasty to other girls.

to this (Gluckman cited in White 1994: 76). As gossip characterises the social values of a specific place as lived practice, outsiders cannot join in, and thus gossip defines bonds and boundaries (White 1994: 76). One may conceptualise the gossip site *Outoilet* as a space for socially replicating the values, social ties and boundaries that characterise the social spaces of historically ‘coloured areas’ of Grahamstown.

Crystal was able to bond with her friends through accessing gossip on *Outoilet* and reading this out to her friends on the street corner, as she was the only one in her group with a mobile phone that could browse the web. She immediately stopped this practice however when she was mentioned on *Outoilet*. She had appeared on *Outoilet* a month prior to the interview, and tearfully explained that since then she had retreated to the confines of her home. I had collected many *Outoilet* Grahamstown posts in the period leading up to the interviews, and so was able to locate the one mentioning Crystal.

26.08 11:12] Ayoba
Soek info vn crystl wt hi in hooggenoeg bly, sy het laas mario se piel gesyg, ek wil he sy mt myne ook syg asb,ek bly ini 5de laan

I am looking for information about Crystal who lives here in Hooggenoeg, she has been sucking Mario’s dick and I would like her to suck mine too please, I live in 5th Avenue.

The post above is not presented as gossip but an expression of interest from another young man in Hooggenoeg. According to Ezme, male identities are often assumed by women to ensure that the gossip is especially hurtful, while also functioning as gossip:

Ezme : Want somtyds skryf ek en dan *pretend* ek ek is 'n man. Want dan ek's 'n vroumens. Want ek wil nie weet dat ek skryf van jou nie. Miskien ek het miskien nou gisteraand vir julle twee gesien nou seks het. Nou ek gaan sê ek is die ou wat gisteraand jou lekker so en so en so gemaak het.⁴¹

Lewis and Fabos (2005) describe American teens who exercise power over their peers by posing as another person. The introduction of uncertainty through this culture of ‘identity hi-jacking’ can add to the pleasures of consuming the gossip by allowing its audience to produce

⁴¹ Ezme: Because sometimes I would write and then I’d pretend I’m a man. But then it actually is a woman, because I don’t want you to know that I’m writing about you. Maybe I saw you last night when you two were having sex. Now I’m going to pretend I’m the guy who had a nice time with you last night.

different interpretations, also known as increasing the ‘producerly’ qualities of the text (Fiske 1989). Here, Crystal may have the community not only debating the veracity of the gossip and whether the oral sex really occurred, but also whether this is a genuine request by an interested young man; and if it is, who can the young man in 5th Avenue possibly be? These discussions may provide further opportunities for the creation of the ‘bonds and boundaries’ that Gluckman describes (Gluckman cited in Smith 1994). From Crystal’s perspective, these uncertainties are bound to provoke anxiety. If she did indeed have oral sex with Mario, this may lead her to conclude that he bragged about it to his friends and sees her as dispensable and ‘easy’, and thus hurt her feelings. If she does indeed have romantic feelings for a young man in 5th Avenue she may wonder if he betrayed her with this posting. Even if she was indifferent to this gossip, she could not be seen walking in the direction of 5th Avenue without people speculating that she was en route to perform oral sex again. This gendered cyberbullying thus leads to an attack on reputation that may affect not only the self-esteem and reputation of young women but also restrict their mobility.

Peer surveillance

Through the gossip and the resulting discussions about the *Outoilet* post, one may witness a process of stigmatisation, in which the subject of the gossip becomes the subject of visual scrutiny or ‘facework’, which signals that the subject’s ‘metaphorical face’ is incorrect (Goffman 1972). This may be why those who are the subject of gossip prefer to remain indoors. Crystal’s friends did not rally to her defence, but merely alerted her that she had been mentioned on *Outoilet*, thus enabling the process of ‘facework’ to begin. She chose not to interact with the post because as Beronice sets out below, a reply from an injured party does not stop people talking, but increases the deliberation, as it adds another dimension to weigh up and so fans the flames of the discussion:

Beronice: Soos partykeer is daar boodskappe van een wat nou seer gekry het op *Outoilet*. Want hoe sy nou, of hy nou, vertel was hier... dan verduidelik hy of sy vir jou meer. Want... of sy probeer vir jou sê wat die eintlike storie is en hoekom dit so is aangaan. En dan dink jy vir jouself: ‘Dit is altyd... daar is altyd ‘n tweede storie behalwe die een’, want nou is daar twee kante van die storie. Nou probeer jy die storie uitvind hoe dit eintlik is, en dan sien jy ook ja, ‘n mens sien darem die persoon is nie skuldig, of sy is skuldig, in die verhaal in.⁴²

⁴² Beronice: Like sometimes there are posts from one who was hurt by *Outoilet*. And then he or she would tell...then he or she would explain things to you.

The ‘peer surveillance’ (Albrechtslund 2008) that characterises *Outoilet* extends to places far away from where the incident occurred. The contiguous nature of the community is now extended beyond its borders, where people become infamous for their sins and so the ‘knowable community’ (Williams 1969) broadens out further afield as people are pointed out and gossiped about.

Clinton: For instance, it happened to me, I was walking down there uhh...Bauke Street...the dogs were chasing me and then I kicked the dogs and I kicked them really [gestures big motion with foot]...only to find out that a girl that's living there by the Albany lounge down there... she saw me at the library she asked me is my name Clinton, I say yes. She said: “No, man” she sees that I'm on *Outoilet* kicking dogs and doing what-what...”Why was I kicking the dogs?” Nou, ek het nog maar geskrik. Hoe weet sy, maar sy bly daaaaar? [points to far away]⁴³

Another part of the process of being featured on *Outoilet* are the threats that lead up to the actual post:

Danny: Ja, but Wazi says she is going to put me on the web and I’m thinking it’s still going on. *Outoilet*, jirre, man, it’s really odd.

***Outoilet* and Respectability**

None of the interviewees, however, would actually admit to posting anything on *Outoilet* themselves, or having any friends who do, which suggested that it is a practice which is seen as unacceptable. Most would only admit to accessing *Outoilet* after a bit of coaxing. Like Crystal, Ezme was adamant that she chooses not to respond to posts on *Outoilet* and instead remains at home, embracing an immobility due to the mobile phone, an act that seems incongruous with claims that the mobile phone enhances mobility (Urry 2000, Caron and Caronia 2007):

Because...or she will tell you what the real story is and why it is happening. And then you’ll think to yourself: there is always...there is always another story, because every story has two sides. Then you’d try and establish what the real story is, and then you’ll see whether the person is guilty or not.

⁴³ Clinton: And then I got a fright. How did she know, but she lives over *there*? [points to far away]

Ezme: Maar die ding is deesdae mevrou sien — die jaloesie. En mense skinder onder mekaar. En toe dink ek: ‘Wat's die moeite, sit maar in die huis in, dan dat daar nie van jou geskinder word nie’.⁴⁴

Here, Ezme is avoiding the ever-present eyes of her community, and the stigmatising process of ‘facework’ (Goffman 1972). This may involve others watching her keenly for evidence of a lack of respectability which could invalidate any airs she may have acquired or is perceived to have acquired (acting ‘*hoog*’ or ‘*lekker*’), upon securing a relatively ‘high-class’ clerical job. When asked about the topics of gossip on *Outoilet*, she related how these would emphasise previous dependence on others, and could create rumours that she used to beg for food from the rest of the community:

Ezme: Ja,so... En jou hou jou ‘lekker’ maar jy vergeet waarvandaan kom jy. Jy het by ons miskien 'n bietjie suikertjies gevra. Sulke skinder.⁴⁵

Dependency on others, suggested in this description of relying on others for hand-outs of sugar, is part of the identity construct of those who are seen to be ‘*rou*’ (Ross 2010). Being ‘*rou*’ also includes sexual promiscuity (Ross 2010), a trait that was attributed to Mieta, a young woman from Hooggenoeg due to marry a soldier. As a married woman, she would be sharing his R6000 a month salary – a huge sum for people in these areas — and would clearly be moving out of her class. Many users of *Outoilet*, Grahamstown, were posting to the site about her supposedly sexually promiscuous character. Beronice was adamant that Mieta was being punished because she was from Hooggenoeg and not supposed to ‘get ahead’ in life. Her friends explained that people could just not see any logic in the marriage proposal:

Thami: Dan sê hulle Mieta weet nie wie's haar kind se pa nie...en daai man van haar wat met haar gaan trou daar onder is n mallerige man omdat hy gaan trou met haar en so daai.

Amanda: Hulle weet nie hoekom hy met haar gaan trou nie.⁴⁶

⁴⁴Ezme: But the thing is these days Ma'am you see...the jealousy. And people gossip among each other. And then I thought: ‘Why bother, sit inside the house, then you are not gossiped about’.

⁴⁵ Ezme: Yes, like that... And you're acting all fancy but you forget where you came from. You used to come and borrow sugar from us, perhaps. Gossip like that.

⁴⁶ Thami: And then they'll say: ‘Mieta doesn't know who's her child's father’...and: ‘That guy of hers who's going to marry her is a crazy kind of guy since he wants to marry her’, and stuff like that.

Below is one of the *Outoilet* posts which show how sexual promiscuity is attributed to Mieta in an extremely crude fashion:

Voetsek (20:04 - Sep 18)
mieta jy weet ek het jou om julle draai genaai toe vee jy jou af met die hond se kombers

Fuck off (20:04 - Sep 18)

Mieta, you know I fucked you around the corner and then you wiped yourself with the dog's blanket.

While people who are acting 'hoog' as a result of their imminent class mobility like Mieta suffer a range of insinuations about their sexual behaviour, those women who have a sexual life also lose their status in the community. Without any sense of irony, Danny — who had bragged extensively about his concurrent girlfriends pursued only for sex and abandoned as soon as this has occurred, had the audacity to condemn Hooggenoeg young women for having many lovers. The double standard for women is further accentuated by the term 'kind' (child) to refer to a grown woman, similar to the way the term 'babe' may be used in other communities:

Danny: Dan kom jy by 'n 'kind' ...ek gaan nou nie naam noem nie...dan is sy seker deur almal, die meeste van die seuns, maar dan het sy nog steeds daai *attitude* en 'n manier om haar hoër te hou.⁴⁷

The *Outoilet* posts directed at Mieta at that time not only attributed sexual impropriety to her, but also alleged that she had AIDS.

2mieta@co (16:31 - Nov 07)
Jule gaan sleg vrek van die aids lae slegte vuilpoes hoer bitche

To Mieta and company (16:31 - Nov 07)

You are going to die badly from aids you low vile dirty cunt prostitute bitch

As sexual impropriety is attributed to Mieta as punishment for her transgression of class boundaries, it becomes logical to associate her with HIV/AIDS as well. The *Outoilet* posts of that time also focused on her black and tribal attributes. This post below, addressed to Mieta,

Amanda: They don't know why he'd want to marry her.

⁴⁷ Danny: Then you'll get to a babe...I'm not going to name any names...then she's probably been through everyone, most of the boys, but then she still has that attitude and way of acting high and mighty.

is seemingly a response to a previous post in which Mieta commented on Chandre's hair. Here, Mieta is compared unfavourably to Chandre, as Chandre has a goodlooking boyfriend with a nice car and has straight hair. The final blow in the unfavourable comparison is that Mieta is a Khoisan:

Whe Mieta tieta (21:42 - Oct 30)
Chandre se bf is foken mooi het jy die kar gesien jy prt van 5cent kop jt n
2cent kop sy het dan glade hare jz dam n goysan

So there Mieta tieta

Linda's boyfriend is fucking gorgeous, have you seen the car? You talk as if you're a 5 cent head, you're just a 2 cent head, because she has silky hair and you're a Khoisan.

In these communities, gossip can therefore be conceptualised as a 'disciplinary mechanism' (Foucault 1989) which punishes people who act 'hoog' i.e. take up subject positions that entail social mobility, and so express ambition that is seen as inappropriate to their station. In Hooggenoeg, these young people describe the process of bringing such individuals down to their proper place as 'afdruk', providing a clear picture of pushing a person down into their proper class position. They are not pushed down into '*ordentlikheid*' which would emphasise their status in this community (Ross 2010), but instead are stigmatized and punished through the discourses of racism and sexism that question their sexual propriety, describe their blackness, and point to previous incidences of dependency, and thus suggest their true nature as '*rou*' or '*laag*'. Furthermore, having AIDS is here also added to these associations, showing how the disposition is incorporating modern prejudices and so suggesting that it must be impossible to occupy any moral position in this community as an openly HIV-positive person. While the above examples may appear to outsiders to be individual acts of cyberbullying, young people from Hooggenoeg recognise *Outoilet* and its gossip discourse as part of the social practice of '*afdruk*'.

Anton: Outoilet! Druk die mense se lewens af. Is wanneer iemand 'n status het, miskien 'n bra het 'n hoër status, hy't meeste goete wat die ander bra nie het nie, en nou as hy net een ding verkeerd doen, en die mense wat nie van hom hou nie sien net daai verkeerde ding, dan is dit op Outoilet. Daar is mense van Hooggenoeg, seuns van Hooggenoeg wat hulle *like* haat, wat hulle hoog hou. Nou dink hulle alles draai om hulle, nou word hulle raak gesien. Hulle is mos nou die ouens wat

skyn, nou word hulle raak gesien. Op *Outoilet* word dit nou sleg gepraat van hulle. Dis wat gebeur.⁴⁸

This process of '*afdruk*' is a form of class policing where a person who has gone too far in adopting the pretensions of the dominant class in order to distinguish herself from others is punished for the shame she causes to those who are not able to do so. This results in her not only losing the position of status granted to her by the community, but having it thoroughly undermined by unmasking her true nature as that of a '*rou*' person, so that it is no longer possible to retain any public presence without experiencing similar shame.

Despite Hooggenoeg's relative racial integration where for several months prior to this study two white men also lived in this township, 'hoity-toity' behaviour is associated with whiteness and described as 'acting white'. When a white person chooses not to accept this social place of dominance, like Amanda's sister-in-law, it seems to disrupt what is considered normal to such an extent that it has to be discussed on *MXit* to help people make sense of it:

Amanda: So is my skoonsuster ook. Sy's 'n blanke. Nou elke keer aan die begin eers, dan is dit: 'Hoekom nou?', 'Waar kom jou broer aan haar?', 'Hoekom het sy vir 'n coloured gesê "ja"?' , 'Wat het jou broer wat ons nie het nie?' So gaan die seuns aan, en die meisies, en ek het nie antwoorde nie. Gaan vra hulle self! Dan gaan jy uitvind...

Interviewer: So dink hulle sy is beter dan?

Amanda: uhh (affirmative)

Thami: Nou haar broer raak nou vet. Hulle sê dis deur...

Amanda: ...die boerekos wat hy vet raak. Hy was alreeds op die Wap. Die *Outoilet*, hulle sien die boerkos maak hom vet.

Beronice: Maar sy eet dan soos 'n kleurling, daai?

Amanda: Is so, sy's nie hoogmoedig nie, sy's soos 'n kleurling. En sy praat ook nie Engels nie, sy praat Afrikaans. En sy aanvaar my broer se kind as haar eie. So is dit.

Interviewer: OK

⁴⁸ Anton: *Outoilet!* It drags the people's lives down. It's like when someone has a high status, like maybe a brother has a higher status, he's got most of the stuff that other brothers don't have, and now if he just does one thing wrong, and the people who don't like him see him doing that wrong thing, then it will be on *Outoilet*. There are people of Hooggenoeg, boys from Hooggenoeg who they like really hate, who act 'hoity-toity'. They think the world revolves around them, they're the ones getting the recognition. Now they are the ones who shine, who stand out. So then on *Outoilet* they are spoken badly of. That's what happens.

Amanda: Dis 'n *topic*, daai! Nou moet ek aanhou verslag gee. HOE nou en WAT nou. En dan dink ek: 'Joe, nee.'⁴⁹

Writing oneself into being

The questions which others pose to Amanda suggest disbelief that this relationship could sustain itself. Here, the reference to this being a 'topic' means that it is discussed on MXit with great interest. 'Topic' is often used by these young people as a verb in relation to MXit and denotes being able to create interesting topics that evoke animated and opinionated discussion amongst MXit contacts. Writing on MXit in such a way as to make everyday life interesting has become a valued skill (Walton 2010a: 57). As Amanda's interview shows above, MXit is also used to discuss issues that span the entire Grahamstown area, which means that its use should also be explored in understanding interaction with the immediate surrounding world of Grahamstown.

A good MXit contact introduces a topic every now and then to keep a conversation going, while a 'bad' one has to be prompted continually. Here, the young women talk with exasperation about the work that often has to be done to keep a young man chatting:

Thami: O, hier? Nee die mense hier hulle verwag jy moet aanhou die *topic*, jy moet aanhou die *topic*. Nee, ek *delete* hulle sommer.
Beronice: Jy moet elke keer dit opbring.
Thami: Dis net, hulle groet: 'Wat maak jy?' Dan moet jy aanhou nou *topic*. Dan moet jy wat...aanhou iets uit te haal om oor te praat.
Amanda: Jy raak mos uit *topics* uit partykeer.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Amanda: My sister-in-law is like that too. She's a white. Now at the beginning it would always be: 'But why?', 'Where did your brother find her', 'Why did she say yes to a coloured', 'What does your brother have that we don't have?' That's the way the boys carried on, and the girls too, and I didn't have any answers. [I said:] 'Go ask them yourself! Then you'll find out.'

Interviewer: So did they think she was better, then?

Amanda: uhh [affirmative]

Thami: Her brother's getting fat now. They say it's because of...

Amanda: It's the '*Boere*' food that's making him fat. He has been featured on the Wap already. On *Outoilet* they said that the *Boere* food makes him fat.

Beronice: But she eats like a coloured, doesn't she?

Amanda: That's right, she's not high and mighty, she's like a coloured. And also she doesn't speak English, she speaks Afrikaans. And she accepts my brother's kid as her own. So that's it.

Interviewer: OK

Amanda: Now that's a topic! And now I have to keep on giving reports. What's happening, how things are. And then I just think 'Really, no.'

Danny seemed very aware of the general expectations of sociability on MXit and when he was online but unable to respond to messages from regular friends (because he was chatting intensely with new girlfriends) ensured that he changed his MXit status to 'busy' to indicate they should not expect a response. The young women in the focus group explained that those young men who are not able to 'topic' but instead just ask vague questions, may be punished by having the conversation cut off. Here, it is clear that MXit allows young people to 'write themselves into being' (Sunden cited in boyd 2007: 12), facing social censure if they do not. It is quite possible that the incident that puzzles Anton below could be related to his inability to 'topic'.

Anton: Partykeer wil die mense ook nie *chat* met jou nie..[dan] is hulle maar net doodstil en sit hulle daar op MXit ..en dan vra jy: 'Wat gaan aan?' en dan's mens skielik kwaad vir jou ..dis hoekom, *like*... MXit is, *like*..is... is *unpredictable* wat op MXit aangaan.⁵¹

This insistence that others contribute to the conversation may be about more than expectations of particular social skills. The information these young women gather about the community through *Outoilet* and MXit are important to control the fidelity of young men.

Danny: If you have a girlfriend its five seconds after that she will be calling you, telling you dude, rumour has it you with someone else and this and this and this. So it's not wise to have a girlfriend in Hoogenoeg.

In contrast to Danny, Anton is confident that he will never be featured on *Outoilet*. His reason for this points to what is considered normal, and what saintly, for young men in this community:

Anton: Huh uh, nog niks nie. Ek is 'n *saint*.

⁵⁰ Thami: Oh here, No people expect you have to keep on [introducing] the topic, keep on [introducing] the topic. Then I just delete them.

Beronice: It's up to you to bring up something each time.

Thami: They'll just greet: 'What are you doing?' Then you have to keep on topic-ing. Then you have to keep coming up with something to talk about.

Amanda: You would even run out of topics at times.

⁵¹ Anton: And sometimes people also don't want to chat to you...[then] they are dead silent and just sitting there on MXit...and then you ask: 'What's happening?' And then all of a sudden that person is cross with you...that's why, like...MXit is, like is...it's unpredictable what's happening on MXit.

Interviewer: O, ek weet nie of ek dit glo nie!

Anton: Ek is 'n *saint*, honestly ek is 'n *saint*. Ek het nog niks *criminal records* in my lewe nie. So daai is genoeg vir my om [dit] te *prove*.⁵²

Outoilet and Witchcraft

Living with criminals is normal for these young people: for example Beronice's Sundays could be spent either in church or visiting her beloved dad in jail. Other things are much more to be feared. While the art of '*skelling*' someone with a volley of insults may hurt, it is in some ways regarded as an art in this community. What makes people really fearful is resentful silence; this is equated with witchcraft:

Anton: Mense meeste van die tyd... as iemand iemand haat hy sê nie ek gaan jou toor nie, hy gaan stil bly, dan gaan hy jou toor. Dan gaan jy net sien hier kom snaakse goeters uit, jy sal nie weet van wie af is dit nie. Dis wat gaan gebeur.⁵³

Every person interviewed was absolutely convinced about the existence of witchcraft.

Beronice: Die toor hulle kom plant dit miskien voor die deur voor jou hek, of as hulle miskien van jou hare kry. Of enige iets miskien jou naels, dan toor hulle jou, of jou *sweat*...⁵⁴

In South Africa's black African communities, stress symptoms, psychological problems, inexplicable sexual attraction or peculiar strokes of good fortune can be collectively ascribed to witchcraft (Ashforth 2005). Beronice related how she had been bewitched just prior to her matric exams, which manifested as a strange listlessness combined with feelings of panic. Luckily her grandmother 'recognised the symptoms' and took her to a '*slimdokter*' (traditional healer) in Fort Beaufort who, at some cost, provided Beronice with a green plastic

⁵² Anton: Huh uh, nothing yet. I'm a saint.

Interviewer: Oh, I don't know if I believe that!

Anton: I'm a saint, honestly I'm a saint. I have not had a single criminal record in my whole life. So that's enough to prove that.

⁵³ Anton: People most of the time...if someone hates someone else, he won't tell you that he's going to bewitch you, he's going to be quiet, then he'll bewitch you. Then you'll just see all sorts of weird stuff coming out, you won't know from who it's coming. That's what's going to happen.

⁵⁴ Beronice: Mmmm the magic, they'll come and plant it in front of the door in front of your gate, or if they maybe get hold of your hair. Or anything, maybe your nails then they'll bewitch you, or your sweat...

bangle to counter the bewitching, and she went on to write the exams. This belief in witchcraft is evident in posts on *Outoilet* which frequently deal with ‘*toor*’ or bewitching:

26.08 21:21] Toor Ek hoor rademeyerstraat se mense loop by so goeie toordokter in kenton on sea kan iemand my se wil ook gaan want ek soek werk tog spoeg my nat bobbejane van die straat
--

26.08 21:21 Bewitching

I hear Rademeyer Street’s people are visiting a good witchdoctor in Kenton-on-sea. Can someone tell me about it too, because I also want to go because I’m looking for a job. Tell all, baboons of the street!

Where one could interpret this post as a straightforward request for information from a superstitious person seeking employment and who would like to know more about the strong magic people from Rademeyer Street use, knowing some of the culture of *Outoilet* and ‘identity hijacking’ could also lend it a different interpretation. This may indeed be a comment from someone resentful of the success of people in Rademeyer Street, who is posing as someone who needs magical assistance to procure employment. The reference to the need for witchcraft in order to find employment, suggests that this post is about people who have recently acquired jobs. Here the reference to the *toordokter* (traditional healer who practises witchcraft) suggests that such people found employment purely because of witchcraft. This person knows they have travelled to Kenton-on-Sea recently, and that others in the community also know this. Sprinkling the text with these known facts may enhance credibility. As a ‘supernatural’ baboon is the most common familiar associated with witches, this reinforces the witchcraft allegation and suggests that there are also witches living in Rademeyer Street. This reference to witchcraft can therefore actually be read as a statement which raises questions about whether these people are really worthy of holding such positions and a way to undermine the individuals involved. It can therefore be read as a criticism and punishment for ‘acting above’ one’s station, and thus a statement about social mobility and class.

Class consciousness and immobility

While the discourses of gossip and witchcraft on *Outoilet* and MXit constrain social mobility by relating it to a fixed social station in life, contradictory discourses of individual self-empowerment and success also circulate here. Danny and Anton had undergone training by a local NGO in ‘motivating the youth’ and they were passionate that success could be achieved through individual effort and merit. This sounds particularly ironic when uttered by Anton, a

seemingly bright young man, who has completed his schooling and is now unemployed and still living with his parents:

Anton: Since almal nou *freedom* het, is is dit nie meer *unfair* nie, jy kan van *scratch* af gaan, om 'n beter lewe vir jou te maak. Jy kan nie die heelyd sit en iemand *blame* nie. Dit hang van jou af of jy hard gaan werk om daar te kom, of jy gaan opgee: jy gaan net terugsit en kyk hoe 'n witmens ryk word.⁵⁵

As Swartz (2010) explains, this individualised approach to success, or meritocracy, may lead young people to blame themselves for their inability to achieve success, and masks the fact that success often relies on middle-class resources such as quiet, stressfree spaces and superior education. In Hooggenoeg, where most families lived in informal settlements a few years ago and hence lack the respectability of those long settled in proper houses, young people may be conscious of the fact that those from other 'coloured areas' in Grahamstown look down on them:

Beronice: Meeste mense kyk neer op Hooggenoeg, hulle dink nie dat Hooggenoeg se mense kan ook uitgaan en wys hulle... hulle is altyd hoe kan sê, hulle ...hulle dink nie Hooggenoeg se mense kan ver kom nie. Hulle kan net hier sit en vergaan. Maar dis nie waar nie, dis wat jyself as mens van die situasie maak.⁵⁶

As a way of reclaiming self-worth, performing respectability becomes increasingly important when communities are stigmatised (Skeggs 1997), and Hooggenoeg's status as less than other surrounding areas may make respectability particularly important to perform here.

Interestingly, Beronice's comment equates social mobility with actual mobility, showing how for young people, not having opportunities is conceptualised as being stuck, just sitting and decaying.

⁵⁵ Anton: Since everyone has freedom now, things are no longer unfair; you can start from scratch to make a better life for yourself. You can't just sit around the whole time and blame someone else. It depends on *you* if you're going to work hard to get there, or if you're just going to give up, just going to sit back and watch how a white man gets rich.

⁵⁶ Beronice: Most people look down on Hooggenoeg, they don't think the people of Hooggenoeg can go out and show they are...how can I say, they...they don't think Hooggenoeg's people will get very far. They can only sit here and deteriorate. But that's not true, it depends what you make of the situation.

Through *Outoilet* in particular, the relationships that define the borders of communication inside this community seem to mostly continue following the borders historically placed there by apartheid. The presence of people inside these communities who have relationships with people from black African townships in Grahamstown is however continuously making these borders more porous, creating doorways into other social worlds. The mobile phone, through MXit, facilitates the building of such relationships with nearby areas, as we can see in the case of Danny who frequently links up Hooggenoeg men with township women by passing on their MXit contacts. Only a few of the young people had MXit contacts with people in town, thus demonstrating the disconnected geography in this space. Here again, Danny was the only one who traversed this social space, making connections as he went along. He seemed to look down on others, who could not imagine friendships that stretch that far:

Danny: Want hulle dink as jy van hier af is, jy kan nie vriende het wat van *suburbs* af is nie. Jy kan nie vriende het by *varsity* nie. Jy moet...jy gaan net seker van hier af het, of wat. So hulle *isolate* hulleself van ander mense. Hulle vergeet dat by die *varsity's* en daai goete, is ook mense wat van dieselfde plekke af kom, en mense van die *suburbs*, seker hulle het ook seker eerste hierso gegroei, toe gaan hulle...So die meeste mense hulle dink nie ver nie...hulle dink net hier naby.⁵⁷

Generally then, for these young adults from Hooggenoeg, town becomes a place to visit, walk around in and perhaps work, but not a space of friendship. This lack of social ties reinforces the boundaries between the township and the suburbs. Beyond Grahamstown lies the excitement of the unknown, from the small rural towns to the thrill and danger of cities such as Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg. The next section will explore their relationships with these distant towns and cities.

The world beyond Grahamstown

While *Outoilet* is used primarily for gossip within a geographical space such as a town, it can sometimes be used to communicate between towns in South Africa. This is frequently done

⁵⁷ Danny: But they think if you are from here, you could not possibly have friends from the suburbs. You have to...you will probably only have some from here, or something. You can't have friends at the university. They forget that at the university there are also people who come from these kind of places, and some people in the suburbs they grew up in places like these before they moved there...So people don't think very far...they only think here, nearby.

in the form of requests for the contact information of long-lost family. In Hooggenoeg a mother was able to re-establish contact with her daughter in Oudshoorn through *Outoilet*.

Online-only 'MXit friends' and the 'imagined audience'

Regarding communicating with people across South Africa however, MXit is generally the medium of choice for these young people. While some may communicate with family or old school friends, it seems that most of their contacts in other places are people they have not met face-to-face and who are thus online-only contacts, generally referred to as 'MXit friends'. These online-only 'MXit friends' are not selected on the basis of social obligation, which suggests that they may be related to identity formation. Online-only mobile phone relationships have been shown to assist in identity formation in Japan (Habuchi 2006: 176). This suggests that the character of a young person's 'imagined audience' (boyd 2007: 14), may therefore be read from the nature of their 'MXit friends'. Urban MXit users in Cape Town have many other urban online-only 'MXit friends' across South Africa, but very few rural online-only 'MXit friends' (Walton 2010a: 57). While Walton (2010a) explains that this is due to fewer youth having access to MXit enabled phones in rural areas, it may arguably be because urban youth as Cooper (2009: 25) suggests, do not want any association with the rural world, as it is urban identity only that has come to define success amongst young South Africans. In Hooggenoeg, 'MXit friends' were much more important to these young people than local friends whom they actually knew, suggesting a disdain for the local.

Garth: Ek *chat* met mense van *out of town*, ek het nie tyd vir mense hier nie. [laughs] Hulle is *boring*. En meeste ken ek al, so dit is *boring*... Dit is beter om met iemand anderste te kommunikeer wat jy nie ken nie.⁵⁸

Of Danny's approximately 150 contacts, about half are people he has never met and who mostly do not live in Grahamstown. His Grahamstown contacts are classified according to a folksonomy of seduction, and reflects his gigolo identity: previous girlfriends are categorised as 'Exes', current girlfriends as 'Customers', older girlfriends as '*Masugars*' (sugar mummies) and those he has his hopes on as 'Chicks 2B'. In contrast, Danny's contacts from other places (mainly big cities) are grouped according to the names of the cities, thus

⁵⁸ Garth: I chat to people from out of town, I don't have time for people from here. [laughs] They are boring. And most of them I know already, so it's boring... It's better to communicate with someone who you do not know.

replacing a sexual fantasy with a decidedly urban geographical one. While Beronice has local women as MXit contacts, her male MXit contacts are all from elsewhere:

Beronice: Ek het groepe, wat ek gemaak het. Bo is dit my tjomies en dan's dit 'The Guys' is van mense is mense van ander plekke soos Joburg, Durban, mmm Bedford, Beaufort, plekke nie van Grahamstad nie.⁵⁹

These urban online-only 'MXit friends' can fuel urban fantasies. Danny believes that Grahamstown is too small for him and that big-city life is the life he was meant to live. Sharing their stories of a life of big parties and flashy cars, his urban MXit friends help him to imagine a different life:

Danny: Well MXit is like a lot of towns because people will tell me like: 'Yo, you won't believe what's in the town tonight and what's going on', you know. Then I will picture myself being there and knowing that those sorts of stuff don't like happen in Grahamstown. Like you don't get...I mean do you get a chance to see that? You don't get to see famous people, you don't get to be like in a... I'm a party animal, [I] go to wicked parties, and [I'm] surfing it with the craziest DJs... And so for me it's like, you know, I've got this, I mean, deeper desire just to be there.

Symbolic distancing

Here the 'symbolic distancing' (Thompson cited in Strelitz 2003: 5) created by MXit friends makes Danny acutely aware of how quiet and provincial life in Grahamstown is, making him want to relocate. As communication through the mobile phone is interactive, and his urban MXit friends are able to expand on the differences of life in the big city compared to Grahamstown and address him directly, this may accentuate the experience of 'symbolic distancing':

⁵⁹ Beronice: I have groups that I've made. At the top I have my buddies and then it's The Guys: people from places such as Joburg, Durban, mmm Bedford, Beaufort, places that are not here in Grahamstad.

Danny: That's why I want to lead a big city life, because most of my contacts they normally tell me, yoh the way you live your life and what have you, you should like try and living a big city life, and try and take on like a bigger challenge... something that is more demanding, something that will push you to your max.

'Symbolic distancing' not only enables the youths to compare the social life here with the city, but also to gain new perspectives on their own lives by getting information from MXit friends about the different opportunities available in different towns:

Danny: Jy leer baie hoe's die lewe daai kant, is daar enige...meer *opportunities* daai kant as hier? Gebruik hulle hulle *opportunities* meer? Hoe voel hulle oor die lewe?' Om te sien dat ons ...in elke dorp is die *situation* nie dieselfde nie. Nou *compare* jy jou lewe...en die ander persoon se lewe...om uit te vind dat, OK, is ons meer *fortunate*, of is ons *less fortunate*? Jy kyk alkante toe. En met dit...*you know exactly* waar jy is en waarnatoe jy gaan.⁶⁰

Danny and Clinton decided to join the local ANC youth league to try and improve the conditions in Hooggenoeg. Not only were they treated as outsiders by the local ANC Youth branch, but they were criticised in Hooggenoeg for acting 'hoog' ('hoity-toity'). Danny has become aware of the relative lack of social capital and apathy in his community through communication with his MXit friends:

Danny: Nou die mense wat nie die plek ken nie, as jy vir hulle *explain* dan vra hulle vir jou hoe lewe jy in so 'n plek? Hoe's daai goete? Is daar mense wat sê dat hulle *community councillors* is? Is daar mense wat *try* om te help en goeters? [...] En somtyds moet jy jousef afvra, is daai rerig 'n lewe, want daar is mense wat heelyd hierdie plek afdruk.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Interviewer: Why is it better to have friends that are far away?

Danny: Oh mmm, I would say, you learn a lot from someone who isn't here.

Anton: Yes

Danny: You learn what life is like over there, are there any...more opportunities over there than there are here? Do they use their opportunities more? How do they feel about life? To find out...in every town the situation is not the same. Then you compare your life...and the other person's life...to find out that: OK, we're more fortunate, or we're less fortunate. You look both ways. And by doing this, you know exactly where you stand, and where you're going to.

⁶¹ Danny: The people who don't know this place, will then say, when you explain to them what this place is like: 'How can you live in a place like that? How's that then? Are there people who say they are your community councillors? Are there people who try to help or something like that?'[...] And sometimes

Performing non-racism

In South Africa, diversity is not just manifested in terms of geography, but also in terms of race, with people of different 'racial groups' still living very different lives. Here, the imagined audience of online-only 'MXit friends' places Beronice in very diverse company and creates a multi-racial world that resembles South African urban suburbs or soap operas, not townships. She lists her online-only 'MXit friends' of different races as if they were a complete set of collectable action figures ready to play with:

Beronice: Ek het baie Xhosa contacts. Ek het wit contacts, ek het *Indian* contacts, en ek het *coloureds*, so ek het alles. En ek *chat* met almal en ek geniet dit.⁶²

Coming from Hooggenoeg with its relatively diverse racial identities, differentiates these young people from other online-only 'MXit friends' who are intrigued when they realise that Anton is actually Afrikaans *and* Xhosa. When he gets caught up in the moment, and starts interacting with them as he communicates in Hooggenoeg using a mixture of Afrikaans and isiXhosa words, they suddenly realise that he is different:

Anton: Ja dit...is 'n deurmekaar, hulle gaan vra waar vandaan kom die taal, is dié nou *rich masala*, of is dit jou eie taal wat jy nou opmaak?
Interview: En as hulle nou eers ontdek, jy is nie honderd persent Xhosa nie, behandel hulle jou anders?
Anton: Dan... gaan hulle... meeste van hulle sal, like, wat kan ek sê, is *like*: 'Wow, dis die eerste keer wat ek, like, sulke dinge hoor. Hoe's [die] lewe? Om altwee *cultures* te lewe'... Dan wil hulle hê, miskien ek moet hulle Afrikaans leer as hulle Xhosas is, maar as hulle *coloured* is, wil hulle hê ek moet hulle Xhosa leer... Ek ken altwee tale.⁶³

you have to ask yourself: 'Is this really a life, because people here are just dragging down this place'

⁶² Beronice: I've got lots of Xhosa contacts. I've got white contacts, I've got Indian contacts, and I've got coloureds, so I've got everything. And I chat with them all, and I enjoy it.

⁶³ Anton: Yes it...it's mixed up, they're going to ask where does this language come from, is this a rich masala, or is it your own language that you've made up?

Interview: And when they discover that you're not hundred percent Xhosa, do they treat you differently?

Anton: Then...most of them will, like, what can I say, it's like: 'Wow, that's the first time I hear of something like that. What's that life like – to live two cultures? Then they want me to teach them Afrikaans if they're Xhosa, but if they're coloured, they want me to teach them Xhosa....I can do both languages.

Social capital, weak and strong ties and 'lifelines to the blind'

In this way, young people from Hooggenoeg start realising their strengths and that they have linguistic and cultural translation skills others may not share. They may start to become language teachers like Anton, or pupils – Garth is currently learning Tswana from a MXit contact. Online-only 'MXit friends' can also extend each other's social capital and instead of having information that everyone has (which is the nature of information in a knowable community) online-only friends can give each other access to information that originates in a whole new non-overlapping social network, so improving their opportunities (Granovetter 1973) . Amanda was told about an employment opportunity in another town by an online-only 'MXit friend':

Amanda: Ja, soos wanneer was dit? In dié jaar in het ek met n meisie *gemix*, van die Baai, ja, Toe vra sy my het ek 'n *computer course*, want hulle stel mense aan in die Baai in die Hof. Toe se ek ek's nog besig met die *course*, toe sê sy: 'O nee, dis oraait', maar sy gaan vir my uitluister en toe se ek: 'OK, nee, dankie'.⁶⁴

Anton specifically chooses online-only 'MXit friends' from big cities hoping they will be able to pass on information about employment opportunities:

Interviewer: So dis belangrik om vriende in groot stede te hê?
Anton: Om kontakte te hê in 'n groot *city*, want *maybe* sien nou jy sukkel om mee 'n *job* te kry, hulle gaan jou bel of SMS en sê vir jou ek't 'n *job* vir jou dié kant... kom oor... kom na die plek toe... so, dis belangrik.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Amanda: Yes, like, when was it? I was mixing in this year with a girl from Port Elizabeth, yes. Then she asked me if I'd done a computer course yet, because they're appointing people at the Port Elizabeth court. Then I told her I was still busy with the course, and she said: 'Right, that's OK, but she's going to keep her ear to the ground for me' and then I said: 'OK, right, thanks'.

⁶⁵ Interviewer: So is it important to have friends in big cities?
Anton: To have contacts in a big city, perhaps they will see you are struggling to find a job, and then they're going to phone you or SMS you and tell you: 'I have a job this side...come over...come to this place'...so it's important.

The 'MXit friends' discussed above can all be classified as 'weak ties' (Granovetter 1973) in that their conversations are based on information, as opposed to deep emotional sharing. Two of the young people I spoke to however revealed deep and meaningful relationships or 'strong ties' (Granovetter 1973) with a special 'MXit friend' they had never met face-to-face, where the relationship has lasted months or even years. Beronice's online-only MXit young man is still at school, and she knows a significant amount about his family life, as she communicates with him on a daily basis. As opposed to the gossipers of Hooggenoeg, who make her feel ashamed of her ambitions, he continually encourages her.

Beronice: Ek en hy vertel mekaar baie goete en dis lekker om met iemand te kan praat, miskien sê maar jy voel af en jy praat met daai een. Nou wil jy nie hier...hy probeer, hy praat jou moed in, dat jy nie kan af voel nie, sê maar jy voel alles kom nou neer op jou.⁶⁶

When she feels particularly depressed, and he is not logged onto MXit, she sends him a please-call-me message to do so, and he may do the same when he needs to talk to her. In this way, she has someone with whom to share her problems, when there is no-one at home to talk to. Here, it is not only the ability to talk to someone about a problem (such as a phone helpline) that is empowering, but the reciprocal process of being able to help someone else. Danny points out that when he gives 'MXit friends' advice about their problems, he feels good about himself:

Danny: Then you end up like being in a place where you feel like you're drawn away, completely away from your problems, you're just now in a different world, where you're doing something different, where you're helping.

These relationships with 'MXit friends' are outside the knowable community, and hence outside the gossip networks. If one thinks of the gossip and witchcraft as dense strands of a net which trap the young person and assist in 'pulling them down', the online-only 'MXit friend' can be conceptualised as a 'lifeline to a blind helper' which acts as a counter-force. This is because a close online-only 'MXit friend' can offer emotional support that can help

⁶⁶ Beronice: He and I tell each other many things and it's good to have someone to talk to, maybe you're feeling down and then you talk to him. Then you don't want there...he tries to, he encourages you, so you don't feel so down anymore, when you're feeling like everything in your life is collapsing.

one endure the accusations: when others push one down in jealousy in one's own community, they pull one back up. These online-only 'MXit friends' can be described as blind because they are oblivious to gossip. While it may indeed be possible for those from another town to visit the Grahamstown Outoilet site to 'check up' on an online-only MXit friend, none of the young people seemed to consider this possibility. This may be because 'face-work' where a person is observed and judged, is a process that takes place offline here. When one becomes the subject of gossip, the online-only 'MXit friends' are therefore not party to the process of 'facework' (Gofmann 1972), which may be more hurtful in its stigmatisation than the gossip itself. As online-only 'MXit friends' tend to be of the opposite sex, the intense emotional online-only connection can become an intimate one, where people start talking of 'MXit boyfriends' and 'MXit girlfriends'.

'MXit boyfriends' and 'MXit girlfriends'

Xolile explained that he has a 'real' girlfriend here in Grahamstown and that the relationship has lasted for about six months, but due to his work he does not see her very often and when they do see each other, they do not talk very much. In contrast, he communicates with his online-only 'MXit girlfriend' almost every day, relating all the details of his life. They have been 'together' now for nearly two years and in this time the relationship has progressed from text-based chatting to the exchange of photographs and lengthy phone calls:

Xolile: *Ja, I mean, most of the time we do call each other with the Vodacom free minutes at midnight. We talk [for] hours and hours and hours. So, we actually, I am actually her MXit boyfriend and she said that she is my MXit girlfriend. Ja, so.*

While Xolile's 'MXit girlfriend' knows everything about his real girlfriend, his baby son from a previous relationship and details about his family, his real girlfriend does not know of her existence. What has helped this young woman and Xolile understand each other is that she comes from a similar community that is both Afrikaans and Xhosa, both 'coloured' and black. They often fantasise about Xolile moving there, even though she also has a 'real' boyfriend.

Xolile: *She is really like asking me and telling me how about maybe don't you want then to relocate maybe to the Northern Cape? Maybe not this Upington but up into the Northern Cape. I mean there are more opportunities here, like, [than] in the Eastern Cape. [...] And I said to her maybe, I don't know, I would have to think about it, maybe go through some stuff, maybe think, because I do have a baby, I have a son.*

Not everyone in this community views these online-only ‘MXit boyfriends and girlfriends’ as seriously as do Xolile and Beronice. Here, the possibility of authenticity for a relationship that has no co-present physical component is questioned by Garth:

Garth: *Mixit* is 'n game. So ek sal se...kyk daar's sommige mense wat *pretend* net so op MXit, so jy kan se OK ek het 20 *girlfriends* op MXit omdat jy met hulle *chat* en hulle nou sê: ‘Nee, dis oraait ons kan *meet*’ en al daai dinge, maar dit maak nie 'n *difference* nie want dis mos 'n *game*.⁶⁷

Clearly however, for Xolile and Beronice these are deeply important relationships based on emotional support and open communication. ‘MXit friends’ like these are hard to find, and most turn out not to be what one has hoped for, just as in real relationships, but they have the advantage of no ‘messy’ break-ups, as any online-only ‘MXit friend’ can be sent packing instantly, back into cyberspace, if they are too demanding or badly behaved:

Beronice: Miskien wanneer hulle vir jou sê... hulle *insult* jou ...hulle sê vir jou jy's lelik of so iets, of jy ‘hou jou lekker’ maar jy is nie ‘lekker’ nie. En dit is nie mooi nie. So, dan *delete* ek hulle.⁶⁸

As there is no ‘searchability’ (boyd 2007) on MXit, young adults in Hooggenoeg rely on others to pass on MXit contacts, and often accept contact requests from people they do not know at all who may have found their MXit handle on the introductory MXit page, where handles are listed briefly. They need to screen these contacts to see if they are respectable. Here, textual clues in the writing are used as markers that someone is ‘*hoog*’ or ‘*rou*’, and these are then used as criteria to select MXit friends:

Anton: *Like*, jy kan sien aan iemand, hoe ‘n mens *chat* as iemand ‘rou’ is. As iemand ... ‘n ‘rou’ mens, jy sal sien as *like*, way hy *chat* wanneer hy baie vloek en die dinge[dan] moet jy weet die mens is nie reg nie ... die mens is baie ‘rou’. Wanneer iemand *like* net...*cool* en *calm* is en

⁶⁷ Garth: MXit is a game. So I’ll say...look, there are some people who pretend, right, on MXit, so that he can say: ‘OK I have 20 girlfriends on MXit’ because he’s chatting with them and they are telling him: ‘It’s fine, we can meet.’ And things like that, but that doesn’t really make a difference, because it’s just a game.

⁶⁸ Beronice: Perhaps when they are talking to you, they insult you...they say you are ugly or something like that, that you’re acting fancy but you’re not that fancy. And that’s not nice. So then I delete them.

reg *chat* ...dan [sal] jy weet: Nee, dié een is op [die] regte pad
[laughs]⁶⁹

Surveillance of MXit contacts

Just as in other parts of the country (Walton 2010a), these young women are aware of the dangers of MXit friendships and are wary of MXit friends who make suggestive comments too soon or who are significantly older than they are. They are particularly wary of people who ask for meetings, as reports in the media have created a ‘moral panic’ around MXit and abductions (Chigona and Chigona 2008).

Beronice: Ja ek was al een MXit *contact* van my wat al *geoffer* het om om vir my te betaal het 'n *ticket* Durban toe. Toe sê ek, ek *trust* dit nie eintlik rerig nie, want dit kan gevaarlik ook is, kom ek daar en dan is dit *fake*. Toe *refuse* ek, toe sê ek.

Interviewer: Wel en toe wat sê hy toe?

Beronice: Wel hy was *disappointed* en toe *delete* hy my. [laughs]⁷⁰

While research based in Cape Town documents how young men avoid having male MXit friends as such friendships were seen to lead to violence (Walton 2010a:62), several male participants viewed men who tried to establish male MXit contacts as homosexual.

Interestingly, it was a young woman, Crystal, who avoided MXit because of a fear of violence, after witnessing a friend being threatened by her online-only MXit boyfriend’s ‘real’ girlfriend. The friend assumed she was communicating with her MXit boyfriend, only to be confronted by messages from the girlfriend threatening to come to Grahamstown to ‘beat her up’. The anonymous world of MXit was also used as a testing ground for fidelity. Esme’s boyfriend secretly became her ‘MXit boyfriend’; she only discovered this after she agreed to meet the online boyfriend, and then understood why he had avoided sending her a

⁶⁹ Anton: Like you can see from the way someone chats if that person is ‘raw’...a ‘raw’ person you would know from the way they chat. When they start swearing and other things you will know that person is not right...that person is very ‘raw’. When someone is just...cool and calm and chats right...then you will know, right, this one is on the right path [laughs].

⁷⁰ Beronice: Yes, I did have one MXit contact who offered to pay for a ticket to Durban for me. Then I said I didn’t really trust it, because it could be dangerous, what if I get there and it’s fake. Then I refused, I told him.

Interviewer: Well, and what did he say then?

Beronice: Well, he was disappointed and then he deleted me. [laughs]

photograph. As Walton (2009: 50) notes, sending photographs can become a powerplay here, as the one who is judged as unattractive first will face immediate deletion. Xolile was in an awkward situation, as he had nurtured an online-only MXit relationship for a long time with a woman who not only chatted well but also sent him airtime. Then her photograph changed everything:

- Xolile: On MXit she like chats, she actually became my girlfriend. And when she sent me the 'pic' I was, like...
- Danny: Oh, God...
- Xolile: She was like, thirty eight. And I couldn't say to her, listen, you ugly, I can't date you. I couldn't.
- Danny: That was a bit harsh.
- Xolile: She actually asked me: 'So what did you think?' And I was like: 'No, you beautiful. It's what I expected'. So I, ja. [Sighs]

While all the young female participants professed that they did not send out any photographs, particularly those showing themselves clad in underwear or naked photographs, Danny claimed this was not true of everyone in Grahamstown:

- Danny: I had a lot of photos where some were butt naked, I've got some that are just sexy that I deleted, because I mean the problem is, my sister used to go through my phone. And then she would ask me a lot about ...And this 'pic' and this? And people normally send it over MXit to my phone and she'll say: 'OK, what you doing doll?' And I'd say: 'I'm bored.' And she'll say: 'Well I'll send you a "pic" that will excite you.' Then I'll ask if I can save it to my phone and she'll like: 'OK'. But then someone else will go on your phone or one of my friends will go on my phone and like: 'Dude, what's going on?' So I decided that: 'Ja, maybe not so much.' Ja, but I do have, like, some.

The world beyond South Africa

The participants seemed to have a very limited interaction with the international world through their mobile phones. When they access international websites, it is a one-way encounter in which information flows into Hooggenoeg through the downloading of media. Many of the young adults were proud of their proficiency in surfing the Internet, using it to create an intellectual identity. Anton described his tendency to Google information he encountered on television programmes as part of his character as someone who is 'into knowledge'. He likened his love for general knowledge acquired through documentary films and the Internet with his identity as a Hooggenoeg resident, where he was continually exposed to new knowledge through daily contact with a range of cultures and languages. Garth expressed a similar identity, but he chose to use a metaphor that also included mobility:

Garth: Dit is *basically* wat ons *about* is...want om te *explore* is die beste. Want so begin jy goete te ken en so word jy blootgestel, of stel jy jouself bloot aan iets anders. *Instead of* die normale ding wat jy maar ken, waar jy nou gewoon is. Is beter om iets vreemd te ken of te hê.⁷¹

Here, the mobile phone is a tool that makes exploration possible and allows one to travel virtually beyond Hooggenoeg and even South Africa.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have explored various spaces of virtual interaction that the participants venture into. Interactions in the dense hyperlocal space of Hooggenoeg and the ‘coloured areas’ of Grahamstown were characterised by gossip that reproduced social relations. On the national level, interaction allowed for some escape and fantasy as these young people expanded social networks and experimented with flirtation. Beyond South Africa, interaction was minimal and fulfilled mainly a symbolic function.

⁷¹ Garth: That’s basically what we are about...because to explore is the best thing. Because that way you start to understand stuff and so you become exposed, or you expose yourself to something different. Instead of the normal stuff that you know. It’s better to know or to have something foreign.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

Introduction

This research revealed a rich set of data related to many aspects of the everyday lives of these young people from Hooggenoeg and their mobile phones. I discovered a world which was unlike any other in the literature on South African townships, where apartheid 'race' categories were often fluid, and many young people defied labelling and referred to themselves as 'Mix' or even poly-racial, saying: '*ek val most nou alkante toe*' (I'm all of those). Here Xhosa rituals were also Afrikaans rituals: '*bos toe*' (circumcision ritual) and '*voormense*' (ancestors) were common terms, and language in general switched easily between Afrikaans and isiXhosa.

The novelty of the ethnographic material and the lack of research on the area made it difficult to locate reference points. However, through the interviews and literature (Ross 2010, Salo 2006 and 2007) I was able to identify one of the key structuring elements of everyday life here, which I refer to as the '*ordentlikheid* habitus' where race, class and gender are articulated through notions of respectability which is also related to mobility. This enabled a focus on class, race and gender, and social mobility, linked to physical mobility, and through the latter to space. As mobile phone research is similarly structured in relation to space, mobility, and various demographic categories (e.g. Castells *et al* 2007), this provided interesting possibilities for the examination of the research question, which links these two research foci. As young people in Hooggenoeg adopted both 'coloured' and Xhosa identities, I also consulted research which described moral identities in a typical 'Xhosa township' (Swartz 2010) that I describe as a '*Kasi* habitus', which provided an insight into the importance of local sociability evidenced in the Hooggenoeg evening stroll, as well as ubiquitous beliefs in witchcraft which make it imperative to avoid provoking jealousy in others.

The focus on the study of everyday life, particularly the work of Lefebvre (1991, 2005), enabled me to pay close attention to seemingly mundane practices in which the mobile phone was involved, such as walking, social interaction and observing others, and relate them to social meaning in this space and broader social relations that characterise our society. Lefebvre's (2005) focus on consumption meant that there were clear synergies with the domestication approach, which here enabled me to track the various processes of which the

mobile phone was part, enabling it to become ‘domesticated’ (Silverstone *et al* 1992) into the lives of young people in Hooggenoeg.

The research question set out at the beginning of the research was, ‘What are the various meanings of mobile phones as negotiated among young adults in the township of Hooggenoeg, and how do they relate to their everyday lives?’ This question was broken down into four sub-themes relating to the different phases through which the meaning of mobile phones is constructed (Silverstone *et al* 1992):

- What meanings do mobile phones acquire when they are appropriated by these young adults in this space?
- What are the meanings associated with the display of the mobile phone in the social space?
- How does a mobile phone convey meaning in relation to the routines of everyday life?
- What meanings are evoked by the various processes of communicating with the wider outside world using the mobile phone?

<p>What meanings do mobile phones acquire when they are appropriated in this space?</p>
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The mobile phone’s appropriation amongst these young people in Hooggenoeg is similar to that in many places in the developing world where patterns of appropriation are defined by economic relationships (de Souza e Silva *et al* 2011, Donner 2007, Hahn and Kibora 2008). The findings revealed that the mobile phone is often associated with dependence, whether this is dependence on welfare or on the funds of parents or grandparents. This correlates with the broader economy, where young people are becoming increasingly dependent on parents and grandparents due to the increase in households receiving welfare (Bahre 2011) and the lack of employment for young people (Cloete 2007). The phone is also related to the rapidly expanding credit economy (Siyongwana 2004), where a sought-after phone with ‘features’ signifies access to credit facilities, either formal or informal. The willingness to reroute money from grants and to incur debt to acquire a phone points to the value the mobile phone has for these young people, and suggests that as in Jamaica (Horst and Miller 2006) here communication is often perceived as more important than other basic necessities. For the informal money-lenders or ‘*skoppers*’ who benefit from such loans the phone becomes a form of currency, which can be pawned for cash or exchanged directly for alcohol. This

makes it a dangerous object for young people to possess, which may incite not only theft, but also serious assault.

As in other countries in the Global South, mobile phones can become part of a black-market economy, where ‘cannibalising’ of mobile phones and appropriating them through parallel economies embedded in crime are common (de Souza e Silva *et al* 2011, Barendregt 2008). In Hooggenoeg, skilled black-market foreign shopkeepers are able to erase any traces of ownership and re-sell mobile phones at a higher price, therefore associating the second-hand phone with foreign technical skill, which some young people from Hooggenoeg struggle to imitate. While phones are not as extensively shared as they may be in other parts of the developing world and South Africa (Ureta 2008, Skuse and Cousins 2008), they are occasionally shared amongst family and friends, thus defining them to some extent as collective objects. Sharing a mobile phone with a lover seems to be an expectation placed upon young women in this study, but not the young men. What seems new in the findings is the common practice for these young people of ‘intimate phone battering’ where arguments between couples result in the destruction of the mobile phone. Further research may indicate if this is indeed a particular South African practice and related to patterns of gender violence here, apparently the worst in the world (Leclerc-Madlala 2009).

What are the meanings associated with the display of the mobile phone in the social space?

The choice of phone model, the media displayed on the phone, and the way in which the phone is carried all have specific meanings amongst these young people that are related to the values of their social world.

Typical of international research (Castells *et al* 2007, Fortunati 2005), the mobile phone amongst these young people in Hooggenoeg is related to status. While various material possessions may increase a person’s respectability, if its owner seems to be distinguishing herself too much from the rest of the community, for example by pursuing employment opportunities out of reach of most other residents, then the display of a ‘fancy’ phone may provide further evidence that this person is acting ‘hoity-toity’ or ‘hoog’.

In Hooggenoeg one may also see evidence of how media on the phone is used for the construction of particular identities, seen elsewhere in the world (Horst and Miller 2006, Ureta and Muñoz 2008, Ling 2004), and this is often a communal process between peers

where media on the mobile phone is exchanged through Bluetooth (Haddon 2007b). Through music stored on the phones, the young adults express identities based on their relationship with Hooggenoeg as a space, seen in Freddy's local parochialism to be have the most sought-after music in his street; Beronice's and Danny's eclectic music collection signifying a cosmopolitan identity related to Hooggenoeg's fluid 'racial' and linguistic culture; and Anton and Garth's identities as artists inspired by the unique qualities of Hooggenoeg as expressed in their own multilingual hip-hop tracks. Through photographs, the mobile phone becomes associated with multiple identities as fantasies are played out through the poses owners strike (See Appendix A). The reality of a treasured job, however, enables them to replace these with images of real status and a professional identity. Wallpaper photographs here may however be starkly functional too, as a way of protecting the mobile phone from the ever present threat of theft.

Where Italian research mentions changing photographic practices with the change-over from cameras to mobile camera phones (Scifo 2004), in Hooggenoeg the mobile phone was the only camera that young adults seemed to know, as first-generation photographers. They had invented a range of photographic practices that included haptic posing rituals that transformed the phone into a sensual object embedded in practices of flirtation, while practices of photographic manipulation and sharing via Bluetooth make the phone into an instrument of technical proficiency and creativity. Video was used to record local happenings or satirise everyday conditions. New writing practices such as the composing of SMS love messages also emerged, which may have been a rare expression of vulnerability for young women in this community.

The phone media may, however, also have negative associations. Language settings on the phone can be a reminder of these young people's marginality in the South African racial order. The phone logs here are also meaningful: but in contrast to signifying status, as they do for European youth (Green and Haddon 2009), here they become a way of tracking infidelity, a means of disciplining young women in particular. At the same time, however, they can symbolise the proficiency of young women in configuring phone logs to elude this control by their partners.

Whereas the way the phone is carried may convey status (Katz and Aakhus 2002) or style (Fortunati 2005) in Europe, in Hooggenoeg it may symbolise perceptions of safety and a sense of belonging, associated with different racial identities which may shift according to the

different spaces that are traversed. In the display of the mobile phone we therefore witness the expression of particular identities that are deeply contextual to this space and its economic realities and history, expressing notions of respectability, post-apartheid racial identity, and everyday creativity.

How does a mobile phone convey meaning in relation to the routines of everyday life?

The nature of Hooggenoeg as a 'knowable community' (Williams 1969) provided particular types of social interaction and mobility patterns that seemed to temper the arguments for the mobile phone as a tool facilitating mobility (Urry 2000) or for promoting individualism (Castells *et al* 2007). In contrast to Scandinavian research (Ling 2004) these young people do not need to connect with friends who live far away to hyper-coordinate appointments, as sociability extends primarily to those in the immediate neighbourhood, especially for mothers or the unemployed. Unlike the young adults described by Stald (2008), most of these young adults did not see themselves as successful, independent, and 'on the go', using their mobile phones to juggle work and play as they criss-cross the city. Instead, for most of the participants the mobile phone is used to make it easier to stay home and get through the day, thus in fact, facilitating immobility. When these young people do venture into the streets, their pedestrian mobility is ritualised in a communal courtship stroll akin to the *passegiata* (del Negro *et al* 2001). Here, the mobile phone is not used to micro-coordinate (Ling 2004), as their predictable evening stroll needs no such hyper-coordination^{xix}. Instead, they use the mobile phone to create opportunities for identity formation and flirtation, and to create particular types of virtual/real meeting spaces. These young men are able to create an 'augmented flesh walk' with the mobile phone in which MXit contacts from other parts of town are drawn into the conversation with the 'crew' as they stroll, similar to the Japanese 'augmented flesh meet' (Ito and Okabe 2005: 17). MXit also enables the creation of 'parallel private booths' in which two lovers or potential lovers can communicate privately while they are interacting publically. This creation of privacy is significantly different from the practice of 'mobile privatization' (Williams cited in Hills 2009: 10) which allows one to use the media to block out interaction with the co-present while relying on middle-class social conventions of 'public anonymity' (Garland-Thomson 2009) to avoid surveillance by others. Instead, the practice of constructing a virtual 'parallel private booth' recognises that 'public

anonymity' is generally not granted in this social space and that people may not accept being ignored at the expense of the mobile phone, and therefore that a 'façade' of public engagement or 'front stage' performance (Goffman 1990) needs to be maintained, while a private 'backstage' interaction on the mobile phone is created simultaneously, and sometimes surreptitiously, in these 'parallel private booths'. The incorporation of the mobile phone into a ritual such as Hooggenoeg's evening stroll, which foregrounds the co-present, the local and the communal, may draw into question the claims by Castells *et al* (2007) that the mobile phone promotes an individualised, disconnected society. Here it is clearly facilitating a mobile collective local ritual in the co-present.

Amongst these young adults from Hooggenoeg, 'perpetual contact' is mainly cultivated over MXit, thus creating a powerful writing culture in this community which encourages those who are illiterate to embark on a process of literacy education. Situations of danger indicate that these young adults do not always have the luxury of 'perpetual contact', evidenced in first world research (Katz and Aakhus 2002), as they can't afford the airtime to ensure it, because many of them are unemployed (Duncan 2010). The mobile phone may facilitate independence and safety in the rest of the world (Ling 2004), but here this is contingent on having the means to purchase airtime, or the ability to contact a friend using a please-call-me message. In Hooggenoeg the mobile phone may even undermine safety, as it may be the reason the owner is violently assaulted.

The mobile phone therefore acquires a variety of meanings through the process of incorporation that are very different from those constructed for it by young people in the developed world. Especially amongst unemployed youth, mobile phones become associated with idleness and inactivity; the flirtations and sociability of the evening walk; the creation of privacy in a space where this is near impossible; the desire for literacy; the negotiation of everyday criminality; and NOT being in perpetual contact.

What meanings are evoked by communicating with the wider outside world using the mobile phone?

In the immediate space of the historically 'coloured areas' where *Outoilet* is used, the mobile phone does not necessarily create the 'individualised society' of Castells *et al* (2007), but instead may create a space of collective surveillance that socially reproduces the collective norms of the 'knowable community' (Williams 1969). Massey (1994) argues that a space can be defined as a web of relations to other places. In the immediate space of Grahamstown, as

in other spaces, the gossip and witchcraft accusations creates local 'bonds and boundaries' (Gluckman cited in Smith 1994), creating a web of relations through *Outoilet* with those in the historically 'coloured' areas, and thus perpetuate old apartheid spatial associations. This process of racial boundary creation co-exists with a contradictory process of integration of Hooggenoeg youth into greater Grahamstown, where these young people transgress apartheid boundaries by engaging in everyday face-to-face social encounters and by exchanging MXit contacts with others in town or other townships including historically Xhosa townships.

Outoilet may socially reproduce hegemonic constructions of class and gender by punishing those who distinguish themselves from others in this community through their social mobility, by questioning their 'respectability', thus putting into motion a process of 'facework' (Goffman 1972) where the socially mobile person is scrutinised by the whole community for any sign of 'rawness', which may lead them to withdraw from the public gaze into the home. The subjects of 'face-work' seem predominantly female, suggesting that this is a gendered as well as a classed activity. As opposed to the claims of the mobile phone's potential to contribute to democratic practices through hyperlocal journalism (Cameron 2007), and the claims that mobile phones may result in economic development (Aker and Mbiti 2010), here mobile phones may encourage perpetual hyperlocal *paparazzi* who report on private lives and rumours and who may target the socially mobile in order to punish them for transgressing class boundaries. This discouragement of taking up opportunities can actively work against the economic development of these young adults. This 'dragging down' process operates by attributing qualities associated with being 'raw' to those who have ambition, who are said to be 'acting high' or 'hoity-toity' in order to discourage them from pursuing ambitions deemed to be above their station. Discourses of racism, sexism and classism are mobilised on the mobile phone to 'drag down' such a person by 'revealing' a secret 'raw' life of promiscuous sexuality, blackness, economic dependency or HIV/AIDS infection, and thus questions the morality and therefore the real worth of the ambitious young person. The withdrawal of young people into immobility in the home as a result of mobile phone-based gossip contradicts the claims that mobile phones promote mobility (Urry 2000, Caron and Caronia 2007).

As writing now becomes an increasingly important form of communication, just as in the United States (Lewis and Fabos 2005), the ability to dramatise the everyday (or the ability to 'topic', as it is called in Hooggenoeg,) becomes an increasingly valued skill amongst these

young people. Here those who transgress the boundaries of respectability such as Amanda's brother in marrying a white woman, provide sought-after material on which to 'topic'

Communication interactions that transcend the borders of Grahamstown occur frequently through online-only 'MXit friends' from other cities and towns. These online-only MXit friends can be used to construct 'imagined audiences' (boyd 2007), which help construct identity, and amongst these young adults this is often a multi-racial urban audience, suggesting their desire to adopt a cosmopolitan urban identity. This is very different from the racial exclusivity in selecting MXit contacts encountered by Bosch (2008), revealing the fluid post-apartheid racial identity of many young people in Hooggenoeg. These online-only 'MXit friends' can facilitate a process of 'symbolic distancing' (Thompson cited in Strelitz 2003) that allows the young adults to compare their prospects with those of young people in other areas in South Africa. It can also allow them to display their unusual multilingual cultural capital. What may be the most important difference between online-only 'MXit friends' and physically co-present friends, is that the latter are all part of the 'knowable community' (Williams 1969) and its gossip and surveillance networks, while online-only 'MXit friends' may be similar to the spatially 'stretched-out' (Massey 1994) relationships that define modern middle-class society. Here online-only 'MXit friends' will therefore be blind to the processes of scrutinising respectability through peer surveillance, or to the judgement inherent in the gossip culture, and this is probably why trust and intimacy can easily develop, particularly as the medium of writing excludes more intrusive visual processes like 'facework' (Goffman 1972). Several of the young adults described how interacting with MXit friends has helped to build their self-esteem when gossip networks in Hooggenoeg were 'dragging them down', which is why I describe online-only 'MXit friends' as 'lifelines to the blind'. The lack of 'overlapping social circles' (Granovetter 1973) in these online-only 'MXit friends' may also promote social capital and access to new opportunities such as employment and study contacts. Examples of sharing such opportunities however seemed to be rare and it appeared the primary purpose of online-only MXit friends was sexual flirtation, identity formation and emotional support, similar to findings in other parts of South Africa (Walton 2010a). The intensity of the relationship may develop, nurtured increasingly by exchanges of information such as photographs and voice calls, so that it is possible for a relationship with a 'MXit boyfriend' or 'MXit girlfriend' to have substantially more emotional depth than an intimate face-to-face relationship. Here, the fantasy of a romantic partner can be tied to the fantasy of escaping Hooggenoeg and travelling to the other space, so that the geography of South Africa

becomes conceptualised as a collection of romantic escapes or a ‘geography of love’, which contrasts with the virtual networks of envy and surveilled streets that characterise the disciplinary ‘geography of envy’ of the local environment.

In terms of their interaction with the world beyond South Africa, the young people did not establish any social networks, showing that Grahamstown is very much a ‘glocalised’ space where the globalised space of Rhodes University is ironically close to the seemingly localised Hooggenoeg (Baumann in Clark and Doel 2004). Instead of pursuing global interaction, these young Hooggenoeg adults engage with global cyberspace in a very limited way, through downloading media and surfing websites such as Wikipedia. For some of them, though, this Internet surfing became an expression of the diversity of culture and language in everyday life in Hooggenoeg re-imagined as a cosmopolitan knowledgeable worldliness, as they compared their ease with finding information on the mobile Internet to the openness Hooggenoeg youths have in embracing diversity in their everyday lives. This romantic notion of the space co-exists with the extreme cynicism with which young people describe the jealousy and deprivation of the ‘dragging-down’ process. In these harsh judgemental surroundings it may indeed take great courage to reinvent one’s marginality and hybridity as a source of pride, as Garth does in describing himself as an explorer, who embraces diversity both on the streets and in cyberspace.

One may therefore conclude that in their interaction with the world beyond Hooggenoeg, these young adults define the mobile phone in contradictory ways. On a local level, it may primarily be defined through gossip to become a disciplinary tool for the policing of class and gender and the suppression of ambition. Here, it facilitates collective processes of stigmatization, which may lead to immobility for those who are stigmatised, thus questioning Urry’s (2007) claims that mobile phones tend to promote mobility. In interactions further afield, it may become a way of transcending fixed identities, and re-imagining a different self, creating relationships that may offer long-term mutual emotional support and the nurturing of fragile egos, and as a way of not only expressing, but celebrating and validating their hybrid, multilingual Hooggenoeg identity.

Conclusion

This study has found that Hooggenoeg as a township supports the formation of racially fluid identities which, to date, do not seem to be described in the South African literature. Here apartheid essentialised racial identities still exist, but they can be alternated or simultaneously

inhabited. The in-depth ethnography needed to do justice to this post-apartheid, post-‘coloured’ identity formation is however beyond the scope of this study and merits further research.

The mobile phone has become ‘domesticated’ (Silverstone *et al* 1992) into this unique social space where the meanings associated with the device have been defined in line with the identities, values and interests that characterise social life amongst these young adults. While the mobile phone here becomes associated with sociability, safety and independence, romance and status, as it is amongst other young people (Ling 2004), for these young adults in Hooggenoeg it also becomes associated with the disposition of respectability and the practices of class and gender policing, thus assisting in the social reproduction of the space. In this culturally hybrid space, the mobile phone has become part of everyday witchcraft allegations, which may similarly assist in social reproduction through isolating those whose fortunes seem better than what is perceived to be ‘natural’ here and making everyone wary of provoking jealousy in others.

While the mobile phone can be defined as an immobilising instrument here that promotes being stationary, it can also be liberating and facilitate an imaginary mobile identity, where Hooggenoeg’s hybrid character is reimagined as a cosmopolitan mobile urban South Africanness. As capitalist society has negated the possibilities of value and fulfilment in everyday life through the creation of the categories of ‘work’ and ‘leisure’ that define everyday life as mere idleness (Lefebvre 2005:78), it is understandable that unemployed young people may become alienated and unmotivated. Here, the mobile phone has helped young people to endure and find some value in the everyday, through a range of creative processes that include music, photography and writing, as well as immersing themselves in expanding their social networks and embarking on romantic adventures. While these creative activities provide powerful ways for young people to express their identity and find meaning in life, they cannot solve the material problem of their alienation and social conditions. One cannot ignore the conditions of dire poverty in Hooggenoeg. As Møller and Radloff (2011) argue, what people in Grahamstown’s townships are desperate for, are decent jobs and decent income.

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Appendix A: Photographs and images



Figure 1: Photograph from mobile phone brochure commented on by Danny as a typical 'phone inspection'



Figure 2: Mobile phone displayed prominently by young man from Hooggenoeg.



Figures 3, 4 and 5: The mobile phone is an integral part of socialising on the streets in the evening for young people in Hooggenoeg. Children mimic their older brothers and sisters with hand-me-down phones.



Figures 6—15: Hooggenoeg fashion show in the community hall. Mobile phone photography is part of everyday culture here. When I took the photographs with a digital camera, several young people were curious to find out 'what kind of phone' it was. The DJ copied the images to his computer at the end of the event, and he bluetoothed it to their phones in the next few days. A week later, one young woman had bluetoothed a photograph to a photograph printing machine in town, and showed it to me in her photograph album.





Figure 17: *Outoilet* main page with links to provinces in South Africa. Note the slogan: "The only place u can gossip without anybody knowing who u r"



Figure 18: *Outoilet* Eastern Cape lists towns from which users can navigate to gossip pages



Figure 16: The original *Outoilet* logo displays a man reading the newspaper on the toilet. He has since been replaced by adverts for porn sites



Figure 19: *Outoilet* Grahamstown page, displaying one of 15 pages of gossip for the town, and providing a space for a user to enter a name and message without having to log on, so enabling them to use a different name every time, if needed (Part of the image blurred to protect identities)

Appendix B: Individual interview schedule

Demographics:

Hoe oud is jy?

Wat is jou van?

Weet jy enige iets van jou familie se geskiedenis. Waar kom julle vandaan?

Waar het jou ouers gewoon voor hulle Hooggenoeg toe gekom het?

Woon jy nog jou hele lewe hier?

Hoe is Hooggenoeg se mense? Hoe sal mens nou as jy iemand erens anders raakloop kan sê jy moet van Hooggenoeg af wees?

Is jy 'n tipiese Hooggenoeg mens? Hoe is jy anders?

Wat doen jou ouers?

Is hulle tipiese Hooggenoeg mense?

Hoe oorleef mense hier in Hooggenoeg?

Is daar goeie goed om te sê oor Hooggenoeg as 'n plek?

En slegte goed?

Wat's die beste en die slegste dele van jou lewe hier?

So hoe bly jy besig?

Watter taal of tale praat jy by die huis? Praat jy nog ander tale?

Apartheid is verby, maar mense gebruik nog die ras terme. Waar pas jy in?

Wat beteken dit om 'coloured' te wees? Hoe herken mens iemand as 'coloured'?

Sien jy jouself so?

Baie mense hierso neem deel aan *ceremonies*, soos nou om die *abakwetu* terug huis toe te verwelkom en daai. Wat beteken dit vir jou om tradisioneel te wees en seremonies by te woon? Glo jy in tradisies? Watters? Wat dink jy sê dit oor jou?

Het jy 'n *boyfriend/girlfriend*? Vertel my oor hom/haar. Van hierso in Hooggenoeg?

Wat is jou ideale *boyfriend/girlfriend*? Sal jy liever 'n *boyfriend* of *girlfriend* van erens anders af hê? Of wil jy jou hele lewe hierso bly?

Het jy enige kinders? Wie kyk na hulle?

As jy nou volgende jaar kan *imagine*, waar sal jy graag wil wees?

Dink jy jy staan 'n goeie kans om dit te *achieve*?

Appropriation:

Watse soort *phone* het jy nou?

Waar het jy jou *phone* gekry?

Hoeveel het dit gekos?

Hoe het jy die geld bymekaar gekry?

Hoekom wou jy die sort *phone* hê?

Deel jy jou *phone* met enige iemand?

As jy jou *phone* verloor, hoe sal mense weet dis joune?

Is jou *phone* soos jy jou voor die tyd ingedink het dit sal wees?

Wat *like* jy die meeste omtrent jou *phone*?

Het jou vriende ook die soort *phone*?

Wat dink jy sê jou *phone* omtrent jou?

Is dit jou eerste *phone*? Wanneer het jy jou eerste *phone* gekry?

Hoe is dit anders as dié ene? Het jy ook verander sedert jy jou nuwe *phone* gekry het?

Objectification

Is daar 'n manier wat mens kan sê net deur te kyk hoe iemand hulle *phone* vashou of net hoe die *phone* lyk en waste *photos* en goeters daarop is dat daai person van Hooggenoeg kom?

Hou jy daarvan om jou *phone* bietjie te *flash* en daarmee *off* te *show*?

Is jou *phone* fashionable?

Watse soort mens het nou jou soort *phone*?

Wat dink jy dink ander mense as hulle jou *phone* sien?

Hier is 'n paar mense van *phone adverts*. Wie van hulle, as jy nou realities is, lyk asof hulle van Hooggenoeg af sou kon kom? Wat laat jou so dink?

Wat is nou regtig 'n *uncool* manier om jou *phone* te *carry* as jy nou buite rondloop.

As jy nou *spaza* toe loop, of as jy *town* toe gaan, wat maak jy met jou *phone*?

Watse *ringtone* het jy? Watse *soort* music is dit? Wat sê dit oor jou?

Het jy MP3s op jou *phone*? Speel jy ooit jou MP3s vir jou vriende? Wat dink hulle daarvan?

Dra jy *earphones* met jou *phone*? Is dit *cool* om *earphones* te dra?

Het jy 'n *wallpaper photo*? Wat is dit van? Kan ek dit sien? Hoekom het jy daai *photo* gekies? Wat sê dit van jou?

Het jy 'n *camera phone*? Watse *photos* vat jy met jou *phone*? Wys jy die *photos* vir enige iemand? Wanneer?

Het jy enige videos op jou *phone*? Watse soort? Wys jy hulle ooit vir ander mense? Wat is die laaste video wat jy nou *gshare* het? Vat jy jou eie videos?

Deel jy die goed op jou *phone* met ander mense, sê nou maar met *Bluetooth*? Watse soort goed deel jy – *games*, videos?

Deel jy ander goed – so sal jy 'n SMS *aanpass*?

Hou jy daarvan om oor jou *received calls*, jou *messages* en jou *contacts* te *chat* met ander mense – soos nou vir hulle te wys wie jy almal op jou *contact list* het of wie nou vandag vir jou gebel het?

Wat is *private* op jou *phone*? Kan jou vriende jou *phone handle* en daardeur gaan as hulle goed wil *share*?

Kan jy van die goed op jou *phone* soos van jou *photos* en videos met my *share* met *Bluetooth*?

Watse taal is jou *phone* in? Het jy ooit gedink om dit op Afrikaans of Xhosa te sit? Hoekom?

Hou jy daarvan om vir andere te wys wat jou *phone* kan doen?

Waar en wanneer is dit nie OK om jou *phone* uit te haal nie? As jy by iemand kuier, kan jy sit en MXit? Wat van in die kerk? By 'n *ceremony*? Terwyl jy besig is om te vry?

Maak jy partykeer asof jy besig is met jou *phone* net sodat jy nie met iemand hoef te *chat* nie?

As jy vir iemand *text* en hulle *text* nie onmiddelik terug nie, raak jy *upset*? Is dit anders vir jou vriende as ander mense?

Deel jy jou kamer by die huis? Sal jy op jou *phone* besig wees as julle altwee nog wakker is? Sal jy dan met jou kamermaat *chat* en sê waarmee jy op die *phone* besig is? Hoekom nie?

Is dit vir jou makliker om romanties te wees met *texting* as om met iemand te praat? Hoekom?

Incorporation

Voel jy asof jou lewe te vinnig of te stadig verbygaan?

Wat doen jy meeste van die dag?

Vat my deur jou dag? Soos nou gister... Watse soort goed doen jy elke dag?

Nou wanneer in die dag kom jou *phone* in die *picture*?

Wat doen jy meeste met jou *phone*?

Gebruik jy partykeer jou *phone* as jy niks het om te doen nie? Wat doen jy dan?

Kyk jy ooit terug na jou *phone* om die vorige dag te onthou – soos ou *messages* of *received calls* of jou *contacts*?

As jy nou vir iemand wil contact, hoe besluit jy nou of jy gaan SMS of jy gaan MXit of jy gaan *phone*, of as jy ‘n *please-call-me* gaan stuur? Is dit anders vir ‘n *girlfriend* as vriende? Familie? Jou ma en pa?

Watse soort mense sal jy MXit? En vir wie sal jy nooit MXit nie?

SMS? nie?

Please-call-me’s? En wie nie?

Voice calls? Wie nie?

Antwoord jy please-call-me’s of missed calls?

Hoe kry jy jou *airtime*?

As jy nie *airtime* het nie, gebruik jy jou *phone* vir enigeiets?

Het jy al ooit vir iemand *airtime* gestuur?

Forward jy messages, soos grappe of lovepoems?

Gebruik jy *apps*, soos die *map appss*? Hoekom?

As jy nou terugkyk na jou skooljare, gebruik jy nou jou *phone* op ‘n ander manier?

As jy nou kyk na hoe jy jou *phone* gebruik, wat dink jy sê dit oor jou *priorities* in die lewe?

Conversion:

Socialise jy meestal hierso in Hooggenoeg?

Waar woon meeste van jou vriende?

Het jy ouer broers en susters? Wat doen hulle nou? Is hulle nog hierso?

Wat van die res van jou familie?

Bly jy maar die hele dag hierso in Hooggenoeg? Hoe dikwels kom jy uit die plek uit?

Waarnatoe gaan jy dan? Hoe kom jy daar?

Wens jy ooit jy kan wegkom uit Hooggenoeg uit?

Watse soort plek imagine jy dan dat jy in kan woon? Is dit 'n plek hier in Grahamstown?
Erens anders in South Africa? Of *overseas*?

Hoe *compare* dit met waar jy nou woon?

Wat sal jy dan daar doen?

Hoe is die mense van daardie plek anders as die mense hier?

Is jou MXit *contacts* meestal van hierso in Hooggenoeg? Watse soort mense is jou MXit
contacts? Is dit meestal *potential romantic contacts*?

Van waar is hulle? Vertel my bietjie van hulle

Hoe het jy hulle gekry as *contacts*?

Praat julle ooit oor Hooggenoeg? En oor die plek waar sy/hy bly? Is die mense anders daar?

Droom jy ooit jy woon waar jou MXit *contacts* woon? Dat julle *involved* is en jy het soontoe
getrek?

Dink jy MXit *contacts* kan *develop* tot 'n regte *relationship*? Het dit al met jou gebeur?

Hoe weet jy nou dat dinge word serious op MXit met 'n *girl*/ ou? As julle fotos begin stuur?

Watse soort *photo* stuur jy? Kan ek dit sien?

Stuur jy dikwels vir iemand fotos, of is een foto genoeg? Of *depend* dit op wie dit is en hoe
dit gaan? Het jy MXit *photos* op jou *phone* op die oomblik?

Wanneer kyk jy na die MXit *photos*?

Hoe besluit jy of jy iemand se *contact* gaan *accept* op MXit? Hang dit af van hulle profile?
Of hoe julle *geintroduce* is? As jy nou dink hoekom jy hulle *gereject* het, hoekom was dit?

Waarna kyk jy op iemand se *profile*?

Watse taal MXit jy in?

Hoeveel ure spandeer jy elke dag op MXit?

Is daar nie ander goed om hier in Hooggenoeg of hier in Grahamstown te doen nie? Soos die *talent show*?

Wat van Outoilet, kyk jy ooit daarna?

Is dit nie vir jou belangrik om te weet wat aangaan en wie praat oor wie, selfs al is dit partykeer skokkend nie? Sê nou maar hulle praat oor jou?

Het jy enige voorbeelde dan van hoe mense hier in Hooggenoeg deur Outoilet benadeel is?

Het hulle al ooit oor jou gepraat op Outoilet?

Het jy al iets op Outoilet gepos? En jou vriende? Watse soort goed?

Het jy vanoggend gekyk?

Is dit meestal 'n Grahamstown *'coloured' site*? Hoekom dink jy so?

Hoe voel jy daaroor dat enige iemand na die *site* kan kyk, soos ek nou?

Dit is nogal onbeskof. Maar miskien voel mense dit is meer eerlik? Wat dink jy?

Dit lyk asof dit meestal mans is wat op Outoilet post. Lyk dit vir jou ook so? Hoekom dink jy dit is so?

Daars baie mense van die *army base* ook wat oor dit *communicate*? Wil elke girl hierso 'n *army* ou hê?

Dink jy meeste mense hierso sal 'n *site* soos Outoilet *uitcheck*?

Dink jy nie Outoilet is soos Cheaters nie, dit hou mense in lyn wat op hulle *partners cheat* nie? So is dit 'n goeie ding?

Het jy al ooit Outoilet gebruik om uit te vind wat gaan aan in 'n ander plek of 'n ander skool?

As ek nou kyk na wat hulle oor Hooggenoeg sê, dan praat hulle baie oor toorgoed. Glo mense hier in Hooggenoeg in toor?

Hulle praat ook baie of dit OK is om met wit *army* ouens of Xhosa ouens uit te gaan. Wat dink jy daarvan?

Dis nie alles skinder nie, daar's ook nuttige *community* nuus soos oor die Brumbies klub en die *talent show*. Hoekom dink jy daars nie meer sulke nuus nie?

Wat is die mees belangrikste *community* organisasies vir jou? Gebruik hulle Outoilet?

Gebruik jy die *web*? Vir wat? Wat dink jy sê dit van jou?

Watse soort lewe sal jy vir jou kinders wil hê?

Appendix C: Focus group questions

Identity

Hoekom is die outjies soveel meer positief in Hooggenoeg as die *girls*. Is dit *tough* om 'n *girl* te wees hierso?

Ek het baie meer *fancy phones* by die ouens gesien. Het die ouens meestal meer *fancy phones*?

Mense hierso hou baie van R&B, *house* en Hip-hop – wat baie Amerikaners feature. Hoe voel jy oor Amerika?

Dit voel vir my asof mense in Hooggenoeg baie nader aan *Xhosa* mense voel as wat *coloured* mense in die Kaap sal wees. Baie van die mense praat van Hooggenoeg mense as mense wat oral kan inpas en van almal se tale en *cultures* weet – julle het baie *knowledge*. Stem julle saam dat dit die *attitude* is wat maak dat julle goed is met nuwe goed leer soos *applications* op die *mobile phones*?

Maar ek het al gehoor dat party ma's hierso baie oor hulle wit kinders met hulle reguit hare is. Dink party mense dit is beter om meer soos die wittes te wees?

Sal jy ooit sê – ek is nie *coloured* nie, ek is nie *Xhosa* nie, ek is *black*?

Dink julle die *politicians* doen 'n goeie *job* vir die mense van Hooggenoeg?

Wat doen jy self om dinge beter te maak?

Het jy enigeiets *political* op jou *phone*?

Appropriation

Baie mense kry die *phones* omdat dinge veiliger sal maak en hulle families gerusstel dat hulle OK is, lyk dit my. Is dit reg?

Maar wanneer mense eers die *phone* het is dit asof dit meestal gebruik word vir *romance*...

Dit lyk vir my asof 'n *phone* en 'n mens se *love life* baie keer ampere een en dieselfde ding is, dat mense hulle *phones* heeltemal sal verander of selfs destroy as hulle *relationship* oor is.

Phones klink ook asof hulle soos ‘n ATM kaart is – jy kan enige tyd jou *phone* gaan verkoop vir geld of ‘n drankie by die Pakistanis of die skoppers.

Het mense wat nie drink nie beter *phones*?

Hoe bekommerd is jy dat iemand jou *phone* sal steel?

Objectification

Ek was baie *impressed* met die *party vibe* toe ek hier was Saterdag. Veral hoe mense in die strate loop en gesels en heelyd met ander mense op die *corners* ontmoet. Dis asof die mense *laps* doen – het julle ‘n naam vir hoe die jongmense so in die aand rondloop?

En die *phones* was soveel deel hiervan – ek het klomp mense sien loop met hulle *phones*...

Wat doen mense alles met hulle *phones* as hulle so in die aand uitgaan?

Luister mense net hulle eie musiek of ook radio? Dit lyk my dit is baie *fashionable* om jou eie musiek te share, en om die eerste een te wees met nuwe *music*...

En mense kyk nogal na mekaar se *phone* ook, ne?

Van die ouens het my vertel hulle vat videos van funny goeters hier in Hooggenoeg soos die stukkende *public phone*. Neem julle ooit *phone* of videos van local goeters.

Ek het gesien hoe outjies ‘n meisie se *phone* vat en ‘n *photo* van himself afneem sodat daai meisie sy *photo* sal kan hê. Gebeur dit nogal baie?

Dit lyk my mense is goed met *pose* – en veral die ouens strike nogal ‘n hip-hop *pose*. Watter soort *pose* het die *girls*?

Dit lyk my as jy ‘n meisie is sit jy of jouself op die *wallpaper*, of jou kind...hoekom jouself?

Incorporation and Conversion

Ek hoor mense sit baie op die *corner* en een kyk Outoilet en die ander Mixit

En daar’s ander *WAP sites* ook soos Thulas

En hulle is baie gemeen met meisies spesifiek, lyk dit my...

Party mense se dis ‘n *coloured* gewoonte om dit te doen.

Dit moet nogal *nice* wees om met iemand te chat wat vir niemand anders hierso gaan skinder oor jou nie, soos jou MXit *buddies*.

Fantasize julle ooit julle gaan weghardloop en trou met jou MXit boyfriend en êrens anders bly?

Maar party mense het ook MXit *contacts* hier in Hooggenoeg.

Baie van die mense wat ek mee gepraat het MXit ook met Xhosa outjies, julle voel nie julle moet bly by *coloured* outjies nie

Party mense MXit vir ure en ure...

Maar *phone* oproepe hier is maar kort.

Ek was verbaas om te hoor dat party mense goeters Google op hulle *phone* en selfs Wikipedia gebruik

Julle is nogal *technical* vir meisies, ne?

Watse sort goeters gebruik julle nog baie op julle *phones*...

Party apply selfs vir *colleges* op hulle *phones*

Maar as jy kinders het is jou *options* minder...is dit nie?

Is jou phone private?

Gebeur dit ooit met julle dat jou ou jou *phone* wil *inspect* en wil sien wie het jy gebel en *messages* gestuur?

Party ouens wil selfs nie dat meisies moet MXit nie. Dink jy dit sê jy's 'n flirt as jy MXit het?

Watter deel van jou lewe is *private*? Wil jy graag meer *private* lewe, of wil jy meer jou *problems* deel?

Het jy al ooit probeer help met anders se probleme?

Dink jy die *politicians* of die *council* kan iets doen oor die *problem*? Behoort hulle?

ⁱ As this is an arbitrary apartheid construction based on essentialised understandings of race, I indicate it in inverted commas, although many still choose to identify themselves using this term.

ⁱⁱ I have chosen to use the term ‘mobile phone’ as it has become increasingly used in the literature out of recognition that its alternative, ‘cellular phone’ refers to specific cell technology that may become obsolete.

ⁱⁱⁱ Body language can signal a private conversation on the mobile phone with the ‘absent-present’ and away from those ‘co-present’ (Green & Haddon 2009: 57—59). When, however, the mobile phone is used surreptitiously, it can be used to create what Goffman would call a ‘backstage’ performance (Ling 2008: 63). Goffman differentiated between ‘front stage’ performances where certain activities are emphasised to create an impression, and ‘backstage’ where this performance may be contradicted, but is invisible to the audience for the sake of impression management (Goffman 1990: 113).

^{iv} In the Philippines, mobile phone owners can subscribe to text messages from God and communicate with the dead, in China, people pay large amounts of money to acquire certain ‘lucky’ mobile phone numbers, while in Nigeria, phone calls from certain numbers are thought to cause people to drop dead (Castells *et al* 2007: 73).

^v This increased consumption has increasingly been financed by debt, whether through formal credit or informal moneylenders, known as ‘*skoppers*’, who generally operate from their homes in poor communities (Siyongwana 2004). With interest rates of up to 50% many find it difficult to repay these ‘*skopper*’ loans, despite methods of humiliation and violence that may be used to coerce people to do so (Siyongwana 2004).

^{vi} While education increases career prospects, jobs for matriculants in South Africa have decreased and few African (15%) and even fewer ‘coloured’ young people (12%) are embarking on tertiary studies (Makiwane & Kwizera 2008: 228).

^{vii} Despite the fact that welfare has greatly expanded, payments are generally restricted to parents and grandparents and with scarcity of employment this has meant that young people are increasingly likely to stay on in the parental home and be dependent on parents (Bähre 2011: 12). This has exacerbated inter-generational tension and made it more common for young adults to be described by older people in their community as lazy (Bähre 2011: 12).

^{viii} *Kasi* is derived from the Afrikaans word for township: *lokasie*

^{ix} This is a racial term, which refers both to living in the wilderness (from Afrikaans *bos*) and to a San heritage.

^x Local use of grammar and vocabulary have however been preserved, for example the use of the possessive ‘*hom*’ as in ‘*hom foon*’ and local vocabulary such as ‘*kind*’ (child) to indicate young woman.

^{xi} Hooggenoeg’s roads have since been tarred with labour from the area, through a municipal project called Operation *Fak’iTar*, completed in early 2011.

^{xii} Several of the young people interviewed had relatives still living on farms as farm workers.

^{xiii} The anglicized term ‘Xhosa’ is used to refer to ethnicity, while the prefixed term ‘isiXhosa’ refers to the language.

^{xiv} ‘*Kwarras*’ is derived from the Xhosa term ‘*amakwere-kwere*’, a derogatory term for African and Pakistani foreigners.

^{xv} Those classes stopped when the Verosa’s new pastor arrived at her church, and now they only pray for illiterate people like Verosa.

^{xvi} Generally these young people knew who their local MXit contacts were. While MXit users may at times use handles so they are not identifiable even to those who know them and so maintain an anonymity (Walton 2010) this anonymity is at least consistent so that one person would use the same handle over time, whereas one person could have a different handle everytime they logged onto *Outoilet*.

^{xvii} The website’s domain is located on a domain hosted by a platform to create one’s own mobisite, which is located in Russia and the former Soviet Union, making any legal action from South Africa virtually impossible.

^{xviii} These 15 pages are regularly refreshed as more recent information is added, and the older information is just flushed away, gone forever.

^{xix} While young people do use their phones to find out about events occurring in other parts of town, these seem not to require precise scheduling, thus while there is some form of coordination it is very different from the micro-coordination that Ling (2004) describes.