



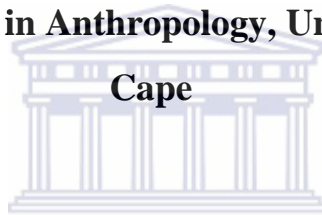
UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

**The Social Uses of Internet Enabled Cell-Phones among Young
Women in Eersteriver**

Department of Anthropology & Sociology

**A mini thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts in Anthropology, University of the Western**

Cape



**UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE**

By: Lara Tracy Leoschut

Student #2945589

Supervisor: Professor Heike Becker

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that *The social uses of the internet enabled cell-phone among young women in Eersteriver* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Lara Tracy Leoschut

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KEYWORDS

New social media

Personhood

Cape Town

Eersteriver

Respectability

Social interaction

Gift giving

Cell-phones

WhatsApp

Facebook



ABSTRACT

The central research question this thesis explores is whether or not the availability of new social media alters the concepts of gendered personhood in working-class neighbourhoods on the Cape Flats. The arguments I will present all speak to my central argument that there is not only a relationship between “good” daughterhood and new social media, but that this relationship consists of young women in Cape Town namely Eersteriver, using their internet enabled cell-phones as a means of exploring the social and virtual realm without putting their title of a “good” or “respectable” girl at risk. I will incorporate comparative arguments from different bodies of academic literature which speak to the key question and arguments presented in this thesis so as to provide a global perspective. A brief socio-economic history of the area will also be included in this thesis so as to provide some social context for my research. This thesis shows how young women of Eersteriver use the freedom, privacy and anonymity that they believe the internet and social media freely offers, to push the boundaries of good daughterhood and respectability. This thesis further demonstrates how social media have changed young women’s understanding of what social interaction is as well as their “doing” intimacy. I further show that their very interaction via their internet enabled cell-phones is a social form of gift giving. This research is particularly important because it is located at the intersection between gender issues and the study of new social media. This study explores how new gendered subjectivities emerge from performances and representations of personhood in new social media such as WhatsApp and Facebook, and how understandings of “good” daughterhood and respectability are altered and thus crafted into these practices. Literature in this area of research is still on the rise, so I am confident that this study will make a valuable contribution to this growing body of literature which speaks to young women and new ICTs.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

As a young girl growing up in a working class¹ community on the Cape Flats, my friends, my cousins and I were taught from a young age how a girl was supposed to behave to be regarded as a “good” girl. We were taught this by our mothers, grandmothers and aunts. The boys were socialized by the men in the community. As young girls who later became young women we were socialized, in other words taught to behave in certain ways that was acceptable to our family and social structure. We were thus also warned against the kind of behaviour that was not acceptable for a girl and later young woman. Even when my family and I relocated to a middle class² area at the start of my academic career, the ways I was taught to behave was engraved in me. Since most of my friends were from working class neighbourhoods I was still able to hear their mothers and even my own, make reference to a good girl which in the Afrikaans language was referred to as an *ordentlike meisie* which generally translates to a decent girl or a girl that deserves respect from the rest of the members of her family or neighbourhood because of her decent mannerisms.

I became increasingly aware of how almost all aspects of social life were becoming influenced by technology, especially with regards to cell-phones and social media. The underlying premise always was that technology made things easier, especially communication. Based on my own observations I knew that new social media was influencing young women but I was eager to discover to what extent.

During the proposal stage of this thesis, when the only concrete idea I had was that I wanted to explore the role of the cell-phone in the lives of young women I was invited to the social gathering of a friend in Eersteriver³. Since I only knew the host of the gathering and no-one else I found myself on the outskirts of a number of cliques that had begun to form and was overhearing various conversations that were going on between the young people and older persons at the gathering. I used this opportunity to attentively observe my surroundings and noticed some of them were playing music through their cell-phones:

¹ A socio-economic term used to describe people in a social class marked by jobs that provide minimum wage and that require minimum skill or physical labour. Unemployed persons are often included in this group.

² A socio-economic term used to describe people in a social class that is between the working class and upper class. Persons from this class include professionals, highly skilled workers and lower and middle management.

³ A working class neighbourhood in the city of Cape Town.

Stuur gou vir my dai song (send me that song quickly) I heard one young man say to a young woman who was playing a house⁴ song loudly through the speakers of her cell-phone. My gaze then shifted to a conversation between a young woman and an older woman when my ears caught the sound of a familiar word: *ordentlik*. The concept of *ordentlikheid* had been on my mind for a while since I had been reading up on respectability and found the work of Salo (2003) and Ross (2010) who write from an anthropological perspective, to be the most insightful. I was on the outskirts of this conversation but what I could make out was:

“As my kind die dag met n meisie huistoe kom moet sy ordentlik wies. Ek vati drama nie”

(The day my child brings a girl home, she must be decent/respectable. I don’t tolerate drama”)

This vignette of my personal experience opens up my investigation of the phenomenon of new social media and its influence on young women and good daughterhood. The central questions in this thesis thus looks at the extent to which new social media may or may not have altered concepts of social interaction as well as whether or not new social media has altered concepts and practices of what it means to be a good girl.

By the beginning of the twenty-first century the cell-phone, which in the last several years, has had the benefit of a confounding degree of adoption especially among young people, officially overshadowed its landline counterpart (Goggin, 2006:1). This is especially true for South Africa since the rise in cell-phones resulted in many people disconnecting their landline telephones⁵. After the year 2000 South Africa, along with other developing countries have adopted a new kind of communication tool: the mobile phone (Pelckmans, 2009: 24). South Africa, and many other parts of the world has seen major technological transformations within the last few years, especially with regard to mobile phones and the ways in which people, specifically, young people use them to interact with one another and other individuals. In the early 2000s, many young people were using GPRS⁶ enabled cell-phones. GPRS enabled cell-phones provided users with access to the internet before “smart-phones” were introduced. The rise in Internet enabled cell-phones (often referred to

⁴ A genre of electronic dance music that is the standard music played in South African night clubs currently.

⁵ This is especially true for myself and many people I knew. By 2007 we no longer had a landline in our home since everyone in my home owned a cell-phone.

⁶ GPRS stands for “general packet radio service” and was the first popular data standard for cell-phones. Bosch (2008) writes about young women and their use of GPRS enabled cell-phones.

as “smart-phones”) since 2011⁷ has in turn given rise to an array of new forms of communication and has thus resulted in the cell-phone and social media playing a major part in contemporary social life among young people in the 21st century, since it has become the most popular of all communication tools.

Through new internet, cell-phone and virtual technologies and innovations, young people have been exposed to an array of prospects for education, exploration, and social engagement (Burton & Mutongwiza, 2009:1). Mobile phone activities are both contemplative and integral of broader socio economic reconfigurations (Archambault, 2009) and can therefore serve as an original avenue to explore broader social issues such as how the recent rise in technological advances of the mobile phone has altered the ways in which young people, and young women in South Africa, and specifically Cape Town re-create moral economies to hold onto their sense of “good” personhood.

The rapid increase of online social networking sites and social applications such as Facebook, BBM, Twitter, WhatsApp, and others that are being used by more and more young people on their smart-phones has caught the attention of not only parents, but scholars, policy makers and youngsters themselves - the conclusion always being that something “new” is happening (Livingstone, 2008:4). This is confirmed by Bosch (2011:30), who argues that the swift increase of “new media” such as online social networking sites and cell-phones creates contemporary areas of investigation. While there have been some studies done on the social uses of cell-phones by Bosch (2008;2010;2011), Motau (2013), van Pinxteren (2012), Livingstone (2008), Archambault, and Pype (2013)⁸ to name a few, a focused anthropological study, especially on the social uses of the cell-phone among young women and whether the use of internet enabled cell-phones may alter gendered urban moralities and normative personhood among young people on the urban periphery of a South African city has not yet been done.

⁷ Although many sources see the rise in smart-phones since the first Apple iPhone was launched in 2007, smart-phones became increasingly popular among young people in Cape Town in 2011, after the Blackberry 8520 gained popularity among young people after being released early in 2010. I make reference to the Blackberry brand since based on my observations and personal experiences as well as that of my friends and interlocutors; this was the internet enabled cell-phone that set the tone for young people and their relationships with smart-phones and social media in Cape Town.

⁸ I discuss the studies of these authors in great detail in chapter two of this thesis.

In 2009 Pelckmans (2009:23) stated that communication technologies are progressively beginning to play a major role in social and cultural interactions and claimed that research on the affects of information and communication technologies (ICTs) on social life centred primarily on western, urban contexts. Almost a decade later, in the fast changing environment of communication technologies a study on the social uses of the cell-phone among young women in South Africa, and specifically Cape Town, is an important avenue of anthropological exploration. Similarly Humphreys (2005:810) suggests that cell-phones offer an exclusive prospect to investigate how “new” social media both reflect and affect the social world.

1.1 Research Context: Anthropology at Home

As I have previously mentioned, South Africa - along with the rest of the world, has witnessed major transformations in the technological realm. Many of these transformations involve the cell-phone. Not only has this device changed in terms of its appearance, modern day cell-phones now come with cameras and are internet enabled. What is more, various social applications are now easily accessed and operated via these internet enabled smart-phones by many young people. The upsurge of internet enabled cell-phones has in turn led to an elevation of various new forms of communication which has consequently resulted in the cell-phone and social media playing a major part in contemporary social life among young people in South Africa.

The use of cell-phones has rapidly spread to even the most remote areas in Africa over the last several years (De Bruijn, 2010). Subsequently, prospects relating to the cell-phone’s potential for social and economic changes, growth and improvement, even at the everyday life level, are high. The notion that internet enabled cell-phones and new social media are changing ways that young people engage socially is very interesting, especially when it alters gendered behaviour in its process. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the late 1990s Salo (2003) identified ways that young women were expected to behave in the working class township Manenberg, to be considered “good” or “respectable”. Internet enabled cell-phones as we know them today were not present during the time Salo was conducting her research in the late 1990s. New technology and social media used by young people in working class townships or neighbourhoods today may thus be new to some of the adults in townships or neighbourhoods like Manenberg or Eersteriver. This may make it difficult for some of the adults to understand and monitor young people and their use of

social media since the ways young people use their cell-phones may be unrestricted and unmonitored (Bardenhorst, 2011:1).

Instead of studying a culture and society that is completely different to my own in a faraway location, I chose to assume the role of the native anthropologist. I decided to do anthropology “at home”. I focused the anthropological gaze on the location I considered to be home – that is – the South African society, and more specifically the fragmented Capetonian society. Given that South African anthropologists have been doing anthropology at home for a very long time, I will be more specific about my use of this term. In this thesis my use of the ideology of anthropology “at home” refers to a number of factors. These factors include being a young woman myself, being a “native” in the world of social media, as well as the fact that I myself grew up with the ideology of *ordentlikheid*. All these factors in addition to my doing research in my own society makes up the premise for my doing anthropology “at home”.

I also placed the anthropological gaze onto the people with whom I shared an age bracket classification by being part of the South African youth population. In doing so, this study intends to explore how young women in the working class neighbourhood Eersteriver are making use of cell-phones and thus social media to widen their social networks and break away from the restrictions of “respectable daughter-hood”, and whether the availability of the “new” social media (to be operated on cell-phones) has changed the concepts of personhood identified by Salo in her 1990s research. In other words, this study seeks to explore young women’s use of contemporary modern mobile phone technology in contemporary South Africa, against the backdrop of particular moral restrictions of gendered personhood that requires them to be respectable and “good”.

1.2 Aims of this Thesis

While the social uses of cell-phones are a topic of growing concern to sociologists and communication researchers like Castells (2001;2007) and Murphie and Potts (2003) as well as anthropologists and media studies researchers like Archambault (2011;2012), Pype (2013) and Bosch (2008;2010), few anthropological studies on *how* the social uses of the cell-phone affects perceptions of social interaction among young women and the implications it may have with regards to their personhood has been done. This study thus aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on young people and their use of

contemporary cell-phones by anthropologists such as Archambault (2011;2012), Pype (2013) and de Bruijn (2008) through an investigation of how the use of social media on internet enabled cell-phones has altered and impacted on notions of gendered personhood in working class neighbourhoods in Cape Town.

This thesis will not only help one gain an understanding of the significant role new social media plays in the reconstructing and deconstructing of a young woman's personhood, it will also widen our understanding about youth and social media in a South African context. Thus far, research on youth and their use of cell-phones in the South African context (Bosch 2008;2010), van Pinxteren 2012; Motau 2013) has explored, among others, how the cell-phone is used as a means to communicate with parents and make new friends, maintain contact in long distance romantic relationships and how it affects migrant labour, as well as showing how cell-phones integrate hearing-impaired persons into the broader hearing society.

1.3 Negotiating Access to Eersteriver and its Residents

The fieldwork for this thesis took place among young women in Heather Park⁹ in Eersteriver (Eersterivier in Afrikaans meaning "first river"), a predominantly coloured, Afrikaans speaking working class neighbourhood in Cape Town, South Africa. Eersteriver forms part of the Oosterberg sub region of the city which is located behind the Stellenbosch hills on the Strand/van Riebeeck road. The neighbourhood is 45km from central Cape Town and 8km from Cape Town International airport. Eersteriver started off as many different farms and expanded vastly after the 1980s. It is home to over 39000 residents who originally migrated from elsewhere when housing settlements started being built in the area. While some of these residents are displaced farm workers, others are foreign immigrants and individuals who had received their homes after being on the housing waiting list for a number of years.

This thesis is based on three months of intensive in-depth ethnographic fieldwork between October and December 2014. However, informally I visited the field for two additional months in September 2014 and January 2015. This thesis aims to update Elaine Salo's research conducted in the Manenberg Township¹⁰ in the new age of communication

⁹ A sub-section in Eersteriver.

¹⁰ A working class township in Cape Town that was created for low income coloured families under the apartheid regime in 1966 as a result of forced removals.

technologies and social media. Even though the two areas are very different in terms of history, Manenberg and Eersteriver are both predominantly coloured Afrikaans speaking working class localities. As indicated in the opening vignette, during the proposal stage of this thesis while attending a social gathering in Eersteriver, I witnessed a conversation between an older woman and a younger woman in which the older woman stated that the girl who her son gets into a romantic relationship with needs to be “ordentlik”. Since I was on the outskirts of this conversation I began to closely observe the surroundings and realised that although very different to Manenberg in terms of connections to central Cape Town, Eersteriver shared some of the characteristics highlighted by Salo’s research in the Manenberg area; the use and importance placed on the concept of *ordentlikheid* being the most prominent. I became very intrigued by the idea of doing research in Eersteriver and wanted to investigate how common and important the ideology of respectability in a young woman’s personhood was in this neighbourhood against the backdrop of what I had read in Salo’s various publications as well as her unpublished though comprehensive PhD thesis.

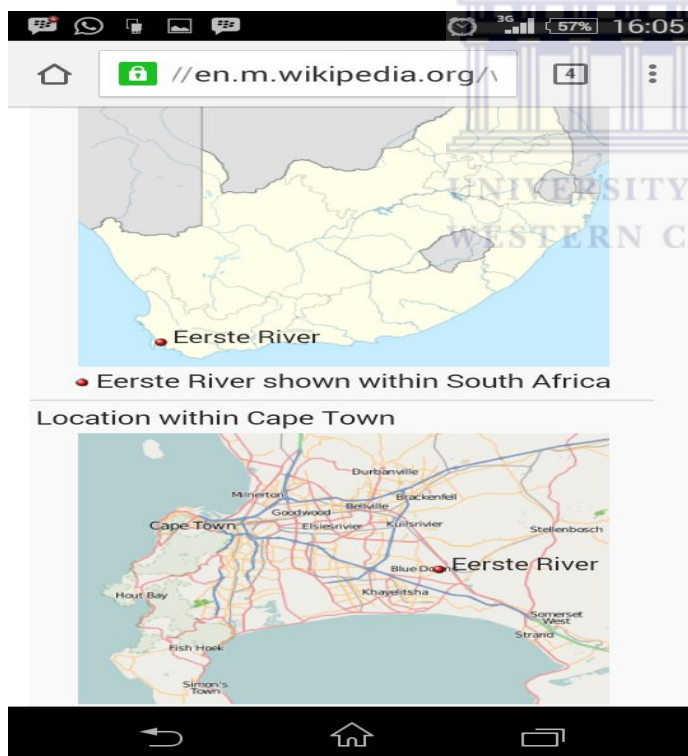


Figure 1: Map image of Eersteriver shown within South-Africa and its location within Cape Town.

I was interested in how young women on the Cape Flats use their cell-phone and thus social media to widen their social networks and break away from the restrictions of “good

daughterhood”. Do they use the cell-phone and thus social media to challenge social gendered boundaries of respectable personhood while not losing their sense of being *ordentlik*? What does the new accessibility to information and communication technology mean for young women and the communities in which they reside? What are the social interactional changes people refer to when they reflect on their cell-phone use? Are changes taking place in social relations? Are changes taking place in local notions of time and space? How do young women act in their everyday lives? Is this different to the way they portray themselves in the virtual world? Who do they contact? Which methods of communication do they use and how frequently? How important is their cell-phone to them? What role does their cell-phone play in their developing of social relationships? Do young women perform their personhood via social networking sites and social applications known as apps in ways that add force to the boundaries they find themselves in? On this basis I chose six key interlocutors Chichi, Prudence, Margo, Danielle, Taryn and Elmore, who live in the Eersteriver neighbourhood to take part in this study. These interlocutors represent young women who have incorporated the internet enabled cell-phone into their everyday lives.

This research included “deep hanging out” as espoused by Geertz (1998) and having informal conversations at their homes or in the street in which they resided after which I took field notes. This was later followed up with formal and directed interviews in which I made use of an audio recorder. Since I was interested in the social uses of the cell-phone and other forms of social media to be operated on the phone, I also carried out a virtual ethnography¹¹ in which I made use of social applications and networking sites¹². I did this in order to keep in contact with my interlocutors while at the same time strengthening my relationships with them individually, as well as to monitor their usage of these particular social applications and networking sites, since these were the most popular social apps being used by the young women I worked with.

1.4 Thesis Chapter Outline

After this introductory chapter to this thesis, **Chapter Two** provides an overview of the key concepts in this study namely, *ordentlikheid*/respectability, personhood, agency and cell-phones and social media. This chapter draws from two main bodies of literature. First

¹¹ Online research that is employed to supplement ethnographic research methods. Chapter five of this thesis outlines the results of my online research.

¹² I explain these in chapter three.

I draw on literature pertaining to gendered personhood and respectability and then I draw on studies that have been done on the social uses of cell-phones and social media among young people in South Africa and globally.

Chapter Three sets the scene for this study by demonstrating the research process of the fieldwork that was conducted. This chapter will show the kind of relationships the girls of Eersteriver have with their cell-phones and demonstrate how they use their cell phones, for what purposes, what they do with them, who they communicate with and in which ways. I will also discuss the kind of social applications they use as well as how frequently and also what kind of information they post about themselves on social apps via their cell-phones. In this chapter I also consider the research process reflectively.

In **Chapter Four** I discuss cell-phone interaction among young people as a form of gift giving. I also demonstrate how social media has modified young women's understanding of what social interaction is. In this chapter I present how cell-phones and social media has provided young people and specifically young women, with the unique ability of doing an *old* thing in a *new* way. The old being social interaction and the new being that it can now occur within a virtual world. In this chapter I also discuss how young people are now able to have dual conversations simultaneously, one in the real world, and another in the virtual world. This chapter also shows how new social media has resulted in new ways of doing intimacy among young people.

Chapter Five looks at the ways in which young women of Eersteriver, use the freedom, privacy and anonymity that the internet and social media so freely offers, to push against the boundaries of good daughterhood and respectability. This chapter builds on Salo's (2003) argument of "good daughterhood" and Salo (2003) and Ross's (2010) arguments on *ordentlikheid* and the boundaries in which these kinds of daughters can exist as well as the spaces they occupy within their community.

Chapter Six will compile all the key findings of the dissertation.

CHAPTER TWO: YOUNG WOMEN, GENDERED URBAN MORALITIES AND CELL-PHONES

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the key concepts in this study namely, *ordentlikheid*/respectability, personhood, and cell-phones and social media. This chapter draws from two main bodies of literature. First I draw from literature pertaining to gendered personhood and respectability and then I draw from studies that have been done on the social uses of cell-phones and social media among young people in South Africa and globally.

I will start with a comprehensive discussion of the work of Salo which I supplement with the work of Ross. I will show how both Salo and Ross consider the concept of *ordentlikheid*/respectability and its boundaries within Cape Town working class neighbourhoods as an essential component in the exploration and understanding of social life and urban moral structure in South Africa. After this I will introduce the concept of personhood and explain why for the purpose of this thesis, I use personhood as opposed to Identity. This will be followed by a discussion of how young women, who push moral boundaries by means of agency, do this while still adhering to the moral structure. Lastly I will present relevant studies that have been done on young people and cell-phones in Africa and abroad so as to provide a global perspective. By doing so, this chapter seeks to make a compelling case for more studies on the ways in which young people and specifically young women, negotiate gendered personhood through the use of social media to be operated on internet enabled cell-phones.

2.2 Gendered Ordentlikheid/Respectability

Salo and Ross have regarded the concept of *ordentlikheid*/respectability as central to their studies. Salo sought to explore the meanings of personhood and agency in the Manenberg Township and showed how understandings of personhood in Manenberg afforded its residents with agency while relating their agency to the apartheid social structure as well as the township history, in that way demonstrating the limits thereof. Salo conducted long time ethnographic fieldwork in Manenberg, a predominantly coloured and Afrikaans speaking township in the city of Cape Town in the late 1990s. Founded by city planners of

the apartheid¹³ era during the late 1960s, Manenberg is a working class residential township in central Cape Town that is located on the expansive Cape Flats in South Africa. Manenberg was a place of relocation for people who were classified Coloured under the apartheid regime and who were forcibly removed from newly declared white areas in Cape Town during the 1960s.

In the media as well as in the minds of many Capetonian people, reports about poverty, crime and lack of decorum, stands out with regards to Manenberg since its establishment. Salo (2004:10) argues that Manenberg residents experienced a deep sense of embarrassment and inadequacy corresponding to their identities as underprivileged coloured people against the backdrop of white superiority during apartheid because of this. Salo (2004:10) asserts that residents of Manenberg created another moral world with a distinct array of values and social associations in an attempt to reconfigure and regain an optimistic sense of personhood. During racial segregation, many Coloured, Black and Indian South African residents were forcefully relocated as per the Group Areas Act of 1950. Salo (2009:14) puts forward that as a result of their removal from the neighbourhoods in which they had lived, adult women living in relocated neighbourhoods constructed a robust ideology of gendered respectability which they embodied in their carrying out and demonstration of motherhood, and enforced this onto young girls. Salo asserts that many women in the Manenberg Township found work in the industries such as the clothing industry in Cape Town, which put them in a position as key breadwinners, which strengthened their positions within families and communities¹⁴. Salo (2009:14) further asserts that the ideology of gendered respectability establishes the confines and restrictions of local communities and prescribes gendered ways of behaving. Salo (2009:14) argues that this ideology of gendered personhood and respectability persists in the post-Apartheid period, only nowadays, young women are finding ways to challenge the confines of gendered norms colloquially referred to as *ordentlikheid* within their local communities.

¹³ Apartheid was a system of racial segregation in South Africa enforced through legislation by the governing party from 1948-1994.

¹⁴ The clothing industry had already gone into decline towards the end of the 1990s with the rise of globalisation and technological advances with regards to factory machinery. This in turn weakened these moral economies and thus allowed for young women to challenge the confines of this weakened moral economy.

Salo (2003:172) argues that *ordentlikheid* is tenaciously gendered, declaring that *ordentlikheid* alludes to the extreme lifetime societal and bodily work that women have had to do to keep *die bos* or the wilderness at bay. Here it becomes apparent that gendered *ordentlikheid* regulates movement and visibility, evaluating some spaces as being appropriate for women to be seen at and others not (Ross, 2010:40). This is confirmed by Salo (2009:15) who asserts that in the working class community of Manenberg, where she conducted research in the 1990s, the morals or goodness of young women were often both moderated and evaluated by the places they were observed at in the locality by the “respectable mothers” as well as the older adult women of that particular locality, whom she refers to as the “respectable mothers”. In other words, the places they were seen at by the “respectable mothers” moderated their behaviour.

Young women who regularly attended school, who did not wear revealing clothes or excessive make-up, who stayed home for most of the day with the exception of running an errand, like going to the shop, were regarded as being *ordentlik* and were thus considered by the “respectable mothers” and in turn the members of their community, to embody a good, and respectable personhood. In contrast, young women who did not attend school regularly, who wore tight and revealing clothes as well as make-up, and who explicitly crossed over the social and physical boundaries of the community, were regarded as disgraceful and disreputable. This shows that the “respectable mothers” within those particular localities, could influence the kind of reputation a young woman would have within that locality.

Based on her long time fieldwork in a shantytown and later new housing settlement on the outskirts of Cape Town, Ross (2010:37) demonstrates that some individuals characterized *ordentlikheid* with reference to respectability indicated by outer appearances, like being clean and tidy for example, while others defined *ordentlikheid* with phrases like having good manners, way of life, being orderly and reserved, behaving with proper conduct, to greet, and being thoughtful. Ross (2010:37) asserts that some respondents even characterized *ordentlikheid* in a way that implied a Christian framework especially since it relates to personal demeanour and gender roles. In the same way, *ordentlike* spaces were repeatedly described as being orderly and noticeably kept in good condition, so clearly, *ordentlikheid* is a relational concept which is typically implemented by women given that it was commonly understood that women were accountable for making certain that their

homes and family life gives the impression that it is respectable (Ross, 2010:37). Ross (2010:640) shows that in some instances the kind of suitable behaviour considered to be 'ordentlik' have been cultured through harsh, often aggressive, practices. This kind of violent socialisation was not practised by the young women's parents exclusively. What this means is that young women were typically socialised by older women into adult habitus by aggressive influence of the spatial routines that are proper for women while still in young adulthood. Similar to Salo's (2009) research findings, these would include dwelling within walking distance from their home. Ross (2010:641) argues that although individuals articulate *ordentlikheid* as a fundamental nature, aggressive socialisation appears to be inherent to its construction. Thus perhaps young women within these communities are punished by either their parents or other respectable members of their communities if they disobey or go against any of the socially constructed boundaries they are expected not to cross.

2.2.1 Young Capetonian Women and Domesticity

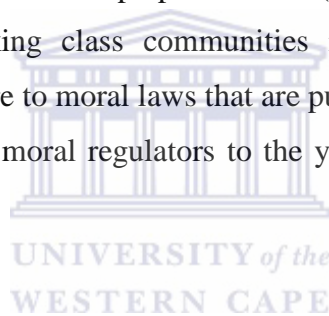
Since the behaviour of young women in working class communities in Cape Town were assessed from the standpoint of the local ideology of domesticity, motherhood and young women's domestic responsibilities were regarded as the feminine ideals. As a result, young women were required to restrict themselves to the home space where they were to spend their free time doing chores in and around the house or looking after younger siblings, in order to obtain a decent respectable and domestic feminine personhood. In instances where they were seen outside of the domestic grounds, the adult women (or respectable mothers in Salo's terms) would ask for explanations for them being out, at the same time as inspecting the way they are dressed to determine whether or not it was fittingly reserved Salo (2003:352). This suggests that young women in working class Cape Town communities are often compelled to limit their mobility to inside the confines of their community except if they were escorted by a group of friends or an older woman. Salo (2003:352) also asserts that a daughter's display of modest behaviour or way of dress suggested a young woman's capability of bringing up her children well and her ability of managing a decent and respectable household.

In contrast to this, Salo (2009:16) contends that some young women crossed the boundaries of *ordentlikheid*/respectability and thus gained a reputation of being 'disreputable', purposefully violating its norms in order to create new norms of their own as oppose to carefully manoeuvring them. As a consequence, they were disapprovingly

regarded as ‘*onnosel*’, or foolish, by the respectable mothers and the submissive young women who were dubbed respectable and decent. From this I would like to infer that even in contemporary Cape Town communities, young women are assessed in view of the local ideology of domesticity that exists within the moral economy of the community in which they reside.

2.2.2 The Making of a New Moral World in Cape Town Neighbourhoods

In her research conducted during the late 1990s among young people in Manenberg, Salo (2010:302) puts forward that some young women had created a separate moral world with a separate series of morals and social associations in an attempt to re-characterize and reclaim a ‘good’ sense of personhood. She points out that it is very important to know that adult women as mothers are crucial to this kind of moral economy in that a person’s relationship with a mother and thus a household, establishes whether or not he or she is acknowledged as a person in the township spaces. Salo (2010:302). What this means is that the adult women in working class communities in Cape Town were seen as respectable mothers as they adhere to moral laws that are put in place for them. As a result, these respectable mothers act as moral regulators to the younger women and girls in the communities.



2.3 Personhood

In this thesis, I seek to uncover how the cell-phone and social media plays a role in the pushing of moral boundaries in working class social life. In order to understand how this would be possible, one would need to consider the agency the young women possessed and how they negotiated their agency within the moral structure of their moral world. The impression this negotiation between structure and agency ultimately has on their gendered personhood is also a crucial element I intend to explore.

Anthropologists such as Fortes (1969) & Karp (1990) use the idiom personhood as a way of unravelling the moral principles and logic that enlightens social life, and the customs and ways of conduct that are coupled with specific social statuses or roles within that particular community (Salo, 2006:5). In simple terms, personhood alludes to the kind of person one’s locality requires one to be. This of course is related to and influenced by one’s social category i.e gender and age, as well as one’s social status within the series of social relationships in which one may be rooted (Salo, 2006:5).

Drawing from fellow anthropologist Fortes (1969), Salo (2006:5) maintains that local concepts of personhood, that is, the locally accepted way of demonstrating one's personhood, places one within the specific historical and social circumstance of a given locality. Fowler (2004:4) adds that personhood is achieved and sustained by means of relationships not only with other persons but also with objects, spaces, animals and beliefs. When referring to my own research I use the term personhood in this thesis and not "identity", for the reason that identity is in my opinion rather limited and cannot capture sociability. Personhood on the other hand allows for negotiation with the social environment. Unlike identity, personhood is understood as a state of continuous transformations to the person for the duration of their life (Fowler, 2004:4). As I have discussed, the concept of personhood has been widely used by anthropologists (see Fortes 1969 and Karp 1989) as a way of unlocking the social and moral values and meanings that are associated with them. This is done to uncover how the norms and behaviours that are coupled with specific social roles or statuses as well as to unearth how persons are expected to adhere to the social moral structure and the extent to which they can increase their agency.

The increasing presence of mobile phone technology, ICTs and social media in the lives of young people however may instinctively and continuously be altering their gendered personhood. In this thesis I thus argue that young women in Cape Town and specifically Eersteriver are using their cell-phones and thus social media to push the boundaries of *ordentlikheid*. I propose that they push against the boundaries of the social structure within their moral economy by means of their agency. In the section that follows I argue that even though these young women use their agency *through* the social media on their internet enabled cell-phones, they do so while still remaining within the social structure.

2.4 Agency within Structure

For Fortes (1969), native configurations of personhood connect one to history and structural time. He understands the "native" configuration of personhood to encompass the locally constructed and accepted ways of performing one's personhood and showing that one is a socially acknowledged agent in the society in which one is embedded. Building onto this assertion Salo (2006:5) argues that since local ideas of personhood connect a person to history, they also connect one to structural time and therefore social structure.

Williams (2003:132) describes the notion of social structure as one of the building blocks of social science since it entails gaining an understanding about social processes as well as social interaction. Structure is intricately constructed by social contexts and replicated by those who may be seen as pushing the boundaries that are constituted within the social structure. Using Mauss's term "habitus", Bourdieu (1999) connects private life to collective social structure and depicts how social life may be given but also replicated, reproducing the existing social relations. Bourdieu's (1999) conception of habitus as the practice of structure makes it possible to grasp how social structure is personified and experienced in the social lives of people. This is evident in the work of Salo and Ross who show how social structure by means of gendered moral codes are taught to young people by respectable elders who are a part of that particular moral world. The social structure highlighted by Salo shows that social structure namely respectability, was *given* to the young women in Manenberg. In this thesis I propose that in the new age of communication technologies and social media, young women may be exercising their personal agency to push the boundaries of the moral structures they find themselves in, while reproducing the existing social relations thus exercising their agency within social structure.

Giddens (1984:14) characterizes agency as the ability a person has to do things. He argues that although some scholars have likened agency to intent or motive, agency which is the ability to take action, may produce expected and unexpected outcomes that recur through time and space. For Giddens (1984) agency brings about outcomes and alters existing social conditions, and therefore agency involves power. In the same way Karp (1995:8) highlights the relationship between structure and agency alongside the intricate disposition of agency by asserting that agency alone could not just signify the liberated implementation of choice or taking action. For Karp (1995) choice within itself is structured and therefore agency involves power. In the social sciences there has been a long standing debate which posed the question; is it structure or is it agency that is the primary force behind shaping social behaviour?¹⁵ This thesis will show that power and agency reciprocally implicate each other with regards to young women pushing the boundaries of respectability. What I mean by this is that while young women may be able to use their cell-phones to exercise their agency in pushing structural moral boundaries, these boundaries limit agency. In order to understand the role new social media may play

¹⁵ The brief discussion of the arguments forwarded by the sociologist Giddens (1984) and the anthropologist Karp (1995) give some indication of this.

in the exercise of choice among young people, it is important to look at a few studies that have explored the impact new social media and cell-phones have had in the social relations of young people.

2.5 The Social uses of the Cell-phone: A Global Perspective on Young People and their Social uses of ICTs

In the following, I focus on the different ways young people have been found (by social scientists) to be using the cell-phones socially. I draw from different studies that have been conducted in Central and Southern Africa as well as the Global north.

Based on her research in on young women and cell-phone use in Kinshasa, Pype (2013) shows how the cell-phone may personify an array of social risks and as a result other practices are considered in attempts to tame the handset without eliminating its usage. Pype (2013:1) provides a powerful vignette in which she recalls an instance where one of her female interlocutors who was engaged to be married, was advised by her church leader, to use a different cell-phone number for her fiancé to contact her on than the one she would use to communicate with her other lovers. This negotiation ensured that the handset and its uses as well as drawbacks, were tamed without rejecting it. Pype (2013) makes public and private discussions about the mobile phone her focal point in order to offer an understanding of how the cell-phone is incorporated into contemporary debates about urban morality and personhood. Expressing that what is seen as “appropriate” and “inappropriate” is culturally and socially specific, Pype (2013:2) focuses on discourses pertaining to what she calls “appropriate” and “inappropriate” uses of cell-phones with regards to gender and sexuality in Kinshasa.

Focussing on masculinities in Mozambique Archambault (2011) presents how mobile phone communication may sometimes participate in the passing on and access to information that is meant to remain undisclosed. In other words, the mobile phone is often used as a tool for passing on or unwittingly revealing information that was never intended to be revealed such as infidelity in a relationship for example. While the cell-phone may be considered as a helpful tool especially among those advocating ICTs for gender empowerment, Archambault shows that there may be instances where the cell-phone may be viewed as detrimental.

Drawing again from research conducted in southern Mozambique, Archambault (2012) explores the ways young men employ communication as a way of conveying and attending

to their personal and shared experiences of confined social mobility. She argues that although mobile phone communication may link physical distances in noteworthy ways, the device also adopts specific aesthetic merits that endorses social exclusion as opposed to putting an end to it (Archambault, 2012:394). The previous examples all show that the body of literature relating to cell-phone use in everyday life among young people is indeed a growing one. However, despite the fact that a steady growth in international literature that explores the social uses of mobile phones and the consequences thereof, there is an evident disparity. This disparity, I argue, is that of literature that focuses on the South African context, and even more so, on the South African youth. I will now focus on studies that have focussed on the South African context.

Based on her research on adolescent girls use of the instant messaging application called MXit on their cell-phones in Cape Town in 2007, Bosch (2008) argues that adolescent girls in Cape Town often used their cell-phone as a way of staying in contact with parents, as well as making new friends and maintaining relationships with already existing friends. For some, chatting to their friends via MXit, another previously popular social application, actually improved their friendships with specific people since they were able to chat about things that they would not necessarily speak about when they saw one another. This suggests that they “got to know” one another “through the phone”. Bosch (2008:52) suggests that adolescents in Cape Town rely more on their cell-phones to keep in touch with parents and friends than any other mode of communication. It comes as no surprise then that along with contemporary technological innovations and changes regarding the cell-phone, it has also resulted in changes in the ways that young people are staying in touch with their friends and family, and love interests. Drawing attention to the ways in which deaf persons in Cape Town use cell-phones socially, van Pinxteren (2012) contends that the deaf community in South Africa utilize SMS text messaging as a method of communication. van Pinxteren (2012) asserts that cell-phones have the ability to incorporate deaf persons into the broader social order and that the role thereof can be put into action to facilitate their need for communication especially with hearing persons.

Derived from research conducted in Cape Town focussing on the role of cell-phone communication in the preserving of romantic relationships Motau (2013) asserts that technological advances such as ICTs and specifically cell-phones, lessens the inconvenience of distance and permits the execution of internet enabled cell-phones to aid

labour migrants in communicating with their love interests they left behind. Drawing from an anthropological stance that generates the importance of a cell-phone device as both a social entity and negotiator in relationships, Motau (2013:5) explores the daily use of the device in relation to the ways in which their daily lives are shaped by it. The master's theses in anthropology by van Pinxteren and Motau and the study by media studies scholar Bosch which all use ethnography lay the foundation for further research among young people and cell-phone usage to be conducted in Cape Town. Although these studies focus on young people and their cell-phone use, what has not yet been done is a focussed study on whether the use of internet enabled cell-phones may alter gendered urban moralities and normative personhood among young people and this is where my research hopes to make a valuable contribution.

I argue in favour of the internet enabled cell-phone and all its social interactional possibilities to remain part of the communication terrain within Africa and among all Africans, urban and rural alike. Through this thesis I will demonstrate that the internet enabled cell-phone is not only a necessary means for communication among young women in Cape Town, but that it also plays a significant role in negotiating good daughterhood in everyday life. In the section that follows I draw from literature that addresses how internet enabled cell-phones in general, and social media in particular, have impacted on social networking and interactions, as well as intimacy and perhaps even romance among young people.

In recent years social networking sites have become progressively more popular globally. Facebook in particular, has become remarkably widespread, with more than one billion consumers universally, and an estimated ten million "Facebookers" listed on the South African system¹⁶ a number of years ago (Bosch, 2010:259). Correspondingly Castells (2007) asserts that the use of cell-phone technology and social media is substantially higher among young people than their older counterparts. Since we are living in a fast changing world due to technology and social media, in 2015 this number must be much higher.

¹⁶As of this year the Facebook online website as well as the mobile phone application has changed its "friend request" icon. The icon was first presented as a male profile figure adjacent to a female profile figure, but has since been changed to the female profile figure being placed before the male profile figure. This "switch" had occurred after a recent survey revealed that there were more women registered on the Facebook network than men.

More and more young people in South Africa are also starting to make use of social applications on their smart phones such as Blackberry Messenger (BBM), WhatsApp, and Twitter. With the rise of these social apps, many young people are starting to make less use of MXit since the other apps make it much easier to know who they are chatting to and they have more control over who makes contact with them. Bosch (2011:30) demonstrates that in rural areas cell-phones make social networking, market and trade, as well as obtaining news and other information possible. However, under some circumstances, cell-phones also lead to gendered relations and portrayals of personhood¹⁷.

2.5.1 Social Networking and Intimacy among Young People

Literature proposing that technology plays a major role in the remarkable reconstruction of ideas around friendship and intimacy is growing rapidly (Davies, 2013:3) Based on her study on young people, social networking and intimacy in the UK, Livingstone (2008:4) builds on this by asserting that among the youth of the early 21st century, it appears that producing and networking online contents is turning out to be a fundamental way of handling one's individuality, social interactions and daily life. This new technology comes in the form of sites and applications like Facebook, Twitter, BBM, WhatsApp, and MXit¹⁸ among others. It not only reconfigures the designs of culture, research, and even businesses, but it is also beginning to establish new and different ways of being intimate and doing intimacy (Davies, 2013:3).

Put in simple terms, new technology that is now easily operated on internet enabled cell-phones, are creating new opportunities for young people to feel close to people and to do things that would normally strengthen a friendship. What I mean by this is that, ordinarily, a relationship is strengthened by seeing one another and having regular conversations, in other words spending time together. What this new technology is doing, is making it possible for young people to "spend time together" online and via social apps, chatting via their cell-phones. So here, taking time out of one's day to chat to and "spend time" with either a friend or love interest by means of a cell-phone, getting to know one another disclosing personal details about each other's lives, can be equivalent to face-to-face conversation where such acts of disclosure cement bonds to feel intimate and to do intimacy (Davies, 2013:48).

¹⁷ I discuss this in great detail in chapter five of this thesis.

¹⁸ I explain these social applications and networking sites in the chapter that follows.

2.5.2 Cell-phones and Social Interactions

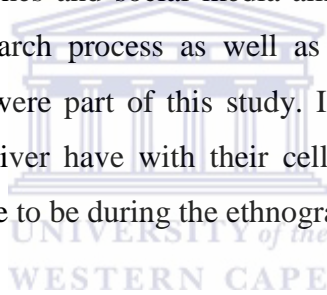
New social media that are operated on smart phones have given rise to a new kind of social interaction; dual conversation. In a dual conversation, a young person is able to have a cyber or digital conversation with someone via either Facebook or BBM for example, while engaging in a “face-to-face” conversation at the same time. This dual conversation is what Humphreys (2005:819) refers to as the “face-to-face and cyber conversation”. Humphreys (2005:819) asserts that although dual and separate conversations can now take place, there is some kind of “face-to-face versus cyber conversation” debate that exists since the individual having the digital conversation is exposed to expectations from both the person with them physically, as well as the person they are having the cyber or digital conversation with.

This study is crucial for helping me gain an understanding of the social uses of the mobile phone among young women and how they may possibly be using social media to go against gendered restrictions with regards to being a “respectable” young woman. This study also aims to obtain young women’s reflections on what it means to be a “good” girl or daughter. This study will thus uncover the appropriation of cell-phones and social media by young women from a working class community in which notions of *ordentlikheid* and respectability may still be very prevalent.

As shown in this chapter numerous studies have investigated the social practices of SMS text messages. Through extensive reading on relevant literature in the field of young people and ICTs I have found what I would like to call a gap in this body of literature. I found that very little research on the phenomenon of social media and its social uses among young people and specifically young women in South Africa exists. As I have shown in this chapter, while a number of relevant studies on the social uses of cell-phones have been conducted, what has not yet been done is a focussed study on whether the use of internet enabled cell-phones may alter gendered urban moralities and normative personhood among young people. This “gap” in the literature was a great driving force behind the process of knowledge production of this thesis but “gap filling” was not all I was after. I wanted to explore whether new social media might be allowing young women to change practices if not conceptualisations of gendered personhood and social interaction, and how this assists them in increasing their agency. Anthropologists like Pype (2013) have already begun to do this and have thus opened up a whole new and exciting avenue for further anthropological exploration which I aim to do in this thesis.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I provided a comprehensive introduction to the concept of *ordentlikheid*/respectability and its boundaries within Cape Town neighbourhoods which I followed with an introduction to the concept of personhood and made clear why, for the purpose of this thesis I use personhood as opposed to Identity. Furthermore I discussed how young women who push moral boundaries by means of agency, do this while still adhering to the moral structure. I then presented relevant studies that have been done on young people and cell-phones in Africa and abroad so as to provide a global perspective. By doing so, this chapter sought to make a compelling case for more studies on the ways in which young people and specifically young women, negotiate gendered personhood through the use of social media to be operated on internet enabled cell-phones. I presented key themes and arguments from relative literature in this small but growing field of study by drawing from two main bodies of literature, one being gendered personhood, and the other, the social uses of cell-phones and social media among young people. In the next chapter I will describe the research process as well as the research area. I will also introduce the key persons who were part of this study. I go on to describe the kind of relationships the girls of Eersteriver have with their cell-phones as well as the ethical concerns and reflections that came to be during the ethnographic fieldwork of this study.



CHAPTER THREE: HANGING OUT WITH THE GIRLS AND THEIR CELL-PHONES: EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORDENTLIKE MEISIES AND THEIR CELL-PHONES

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I show that while some young women in Eersteriver are largely dependent on their cell-phones and social media, others are not. Drawing on the work of Fetterman (1998), Jackson (1987), Becker (2007), Geertz (1998) and Steinmetz (2012), the first part of this chapter is focused on providing a detailed description of the research process. I will then demonstrate how I entered the field and introduce each of the six key interlocutors who took part in this study in addition to another three individuals who played a vital role in me getting to know Eersteriver and its residents¹⁹. Finally I bring to light my ethical concerns and reflections in this chapter.

3.2 Fieldwork

Fetterman (1998:1) describes ethnographic research as “the art and science of describing a group or culture.” In my undergraduate and post-graduate training in anthropology I have come to know that the description Fetterman (1998) refers to may be based on “exotic” people from faraway lands, but it could also be based on a group of people from one’s own locality. The latter is commonly referred to as anthropology at home. As Jackson (1987) so eloquently put it, the “exotic” may very well be a mere few kilometres away. Becker (2007:88) asserts that for the most part South African anthropologists have done fieldwork “at home” i.e. in South Africa. She further argues that in most cases South African anthropologists conducted fieldwork; although within the same locality as them, among people whom they did not necessarily share a “culture”, whatever this culture may be (Becker, 2007). Of course, ethnography is putting a looking glass on social relations and cultures and then analysing them by putting them into context. In recent conceptualisations ethnography is the process of producing knowledge in the interaction of researcher and interlocutors. The intention of this ethnography is therefore not to objectify or to “other” the people of Eersteriver. Instead, through this ethnography *at home* I hope to uncover the ways in which young people from a Cape Town neighbourhood negotiate their gendered personhood by means of their cell-phones and the social media that is operated on the devices. As I will show, this ethnography consists of both *offline* and *online* fieldwork. For

¹⁹ I also describe various vignettes in this thesis in which these individuals are mentioned.

the offline fieldwork I employed what Geertz (1998) characterized as “deep hanging out” and for the online fieldwork I employed a “virtual ethnography” whereby I observed and interacted with my interlocutors online.

3.2.1 Deep Hanging Out

I employed what Geertz (1998) termed Deep Hanging out. I immersed myself in the lives and experiences of the young women I worked with while we “hung out”, while at the same time being continuously conscious of their responses as well as my own. I “hung out” with them and observed their daily activities such as visits to friends and even staying home in order to see whether or not these young women assume particular gendered roles and how these are perhaps situational. When hanging out with them, I sparked conversations about their cell-phone usage as well as issues relating to their personal (gendered) personhood. Our conversations also focused on the ways in which young women in Cape Town and thus Eersteriver are using their cell-phones and social media to widen their social networks and break away from and/or push the boundaries of the restrictions of good daughter-hood. It was important that the focus of my inquiry was not only on their cell phone usage, but also on their daily routines and social lives (Fetterman, 1998).

While “hanging out” I used the opportunity to speak to the young women about their life histories with cell-phones and what made them choose the particular cell-phone they currently had, if they had a choice at all. While hanging out with my interlocutors I used every opportunity with them to consciously observe, converse, listen and explore. I also wanted to find out about their use of social applications on their cell-phones and the history thereof. For example, most of them started off by using MXit²⁰ and have since moved on to newer social applications such as WhatsApp²¹, BlackBerry Messenger also known as BBM²², and Facebook²³. All of these social applications and networking site allows its users to get in touch and stay in touch with friends and family, as well as meet new people online.

²⁰ MXit, pronounced “mix it” is a free South African instant messaging application that was particularly popular among young people in South Africa in earlier years (Bosch, 2008:52).

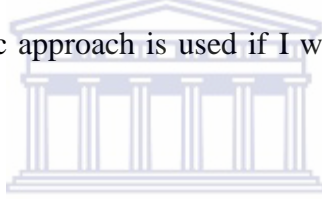
²¹ WhatsApp is a cross platform instant messaging social application targeting smart-phones that uses the internet to send images, videos and audio files.

²² BBM is an internet based instant messaging social application that unlike MXit and WhatsApp which uses its users cell-phone number, requires its users to have their own BBM pin number.

²³ Facebook is an online social networking website that allows its users to create profiles, upload videos, upload pictures and post statuses.

3.2.2 The Social Uses of the Cell Phone

As social media starts to capture and compress increasing amounts of individuals into online communities, Steinmetz (2012:26) contends that it is imperative that the ethnographer and thus anthropologist have a well formed ethnographic methodology in place to examine this phenomenon. For this reason, I decided it was best to employ an online or virtual ethnography in conjunction with the conventional fieldwork ethnography that is so well known and widely used by anthropologists and other social scientists alike. The online/virtual ethnography is a growing methodology in the present day as societies are gradually becoming technologically connected. Additionally, due to the internet and social media being both an instant and universal medium in which time and space disintegrate the virtual realm presents individuals and specifically young people boundary crossing points which are immensely different from those which exist in the “real” world (Steinmetz 2012:27). Because of this, more and more young people are going online to meet the social and emotional needs that are not met in their everyday offline lives so it is crucial that a virtual ethnographic approach is used if I wish to investigate young people and their online interactions.



All the young women I worked with made use of WhatsApp and SMSes²⁴ as their most common mode of communication although Prudence was the only one who would occasionally make use of MXit. I also asked how often they changed cell-phones thinking that perhaps some of them may have had a cell-phone contract that gets upgraded every second year for example, since this is what myself and my friends do. I found that Eersteriver was very remote in terms of connections to the city and shopping malls. The closest to a mall the area had was the Eersteriver grand shopping complex. The shopping complex contained lower end retail stores such as Mr Price, Shoprite, Jet, Pep, Ackermans, Cash Crusaders, a furniture store and a few Chinese owned stores that sold everything from nail varnish, to children’s toys and cheap replicas of popular brand name shoes. The neighbourhood also had an abundance of foreign cell-phone repair shop owners locally known either as the “pakistani’s” when referring to shop owners from Pakistan or the “nadjies” when referring to Nigerian and Somali shop owners. I found that all the young women I worked with either bought their cell-phones from one of the retail stores in the

²⁴ An SMS is a short text message that appears in the message inbox of a cell-phone. SMS should not be confused with the instant message (IM) that appears in the social application from which and to which it is sent.

shopping complex, Cash Crusaders, or simply from one of the foreign owned cell-phone repair shops in the neighbourhood with money provided by their parents or by using their own money they had saved up.

The young women I worked with used their cell-phones in different ways. They download, send and listen to music, they take pictures of their families and themselves mostly or have pictures taken of them by their friends or family. They send pictures to their friends and family, save pictures onto their cell-phones from the internet, and chat to friends and family. Furthermore, they acquaint themselves with new people. I remember when I was a teenager; most people my age were using the then popular MXit. I would often be asked by young men my age “*can I have your MXit contact?*” which was my cell-phone number. One Friday afternoon while hanging out with Taryn and Danielle I learned that young men were no longer asking for MXit contacts. They were now asking for WhatsApp contacts which also require a cell-phone number. To me it seemed like a *new* way of doing an *old* thing²⁵. I say this because both questions “can I have your MXit contact?” and “can I have your WhatsApp contact?” essentially meant the same thing i.e. “can I have your cell-phone number?”

The young women I worked with each viewed and valued their own cell-phones and cell-phones in general, differently. I noticed that there was an equal split between the six young women I got to know during my three month ethnography. Prudence, Margo, and Danielle, valued their cell-phones and access they had to the device but were not as dependent on the device as Elmorose, Chichi, and Taryn, who placed great value on their cell-phones. I propose that this is because those who were more dependent on their cell-phones placed much greater value on social connectedness than the others since they treated their cell- phones with a considerable amount of care because without it they would be unable to interact with the outside world. Those who were less dependent on their cell-phones, for various reasons such as caring for a newborn baby in Prudence and Margo’s case for instance, and being more interested in offline activities in Danielle’s case, didn’t seem to rely on the device too much for keeping in touch with people. They would make contact with family and friends once a week or so or every few days but still preferred face-to-face interactions, unlike the other three who openly admitted to needing their cell-phones to be in contact with friends, family and love interests every day.

²⁵ I discuss this at length in the chapter that follows.

Since my interest was in the social uses of the cell-phone and other forms of social media to be operated on the device, I myself made use of the social applications and networking sites they used, which were WhatsApp, MXit, BBM and Facebook. I did this in order to keep in contact with them while at the same time strengthening my relationships with them individually, as well as to monitor their usage of these particular social applications and networking sites since these are popular social applications being used by young people in Cape Town. I looked at the kinds of statuses and pictures they posted as well as who they were interacting with via these sites and applications. I closely examined how these young women may or may not have been using their cell-phones as a medium to crossing socially constructed boundaries put in place as a way to guarantee their respectability within their community. These young women often used WhatsApp and Facebook as a way of expressing themselves in ways that they couldn't do in "real" life. For example, some would express their anger or frustration after an argument with a parent or a disagreement with friends. Others used their cell-phones as a way of expressing their personal views about sensitive topics as I will demonstrate in the chapters to follow.

3.3 Entering the Field

On my very first visit to the field I arrived at the home of Gerswin Makay in Heather Park, Eersteriver on a Tuesday morning just after 9 am. Even though it was summer, it was a cold and somewhat rainy and cloudy day. When I arrived at Gerswin's home his mother informed me that he was not there and that he had recently moved to his girlfriend's home a few streets away but that he would come around later during the day. Glaring at me with my heavy laptop bag on my shoulder his mother invited me inside.

"Ja Gerswin het my gese jy wil navorsing doen hieso oor meisies en cell-phones. Hy't gese jy kom vidag" (Yes Gerswin informed me that you want to do research on girls and cell-phones. He said you were coming today) Aunty Mandy said as she switched on the kettle and put two cups on the kitchen counter.

"Ja auntie, ek wil he hy moet my voorstel an jong meisies hieso. Isit okay as ek elke oggend hiento kom vi my navorsing?" (Yes Aunty, I want him to introduce me to the young girls here. Is it okay if I come here every morning for my research?) I asked.

"Nee is fine jy kan kom. Se ma vi my Aunty Mandy. Maybe kan jy n rol model wies vi die meisies hie. Jy wiet as hulle nou sien jy study en jy kom elke dag met jou laptop sal hulle

miskien oek soes jou wil wies”(No its fine you may come. You can call me Aunty Mandy. Maybe you can be a role model to the girls here. You know if they see that you attend university and you come here every day with your laptop, maybe they will also want to be like you.) She said taking her cell-phone out of her pocket.

“Wag lat ek gou vir hom bel om te se hy moet om kom, hy vrek gewoonlik tot laat marag as dit so koud is” (Wait let me quickly call him to tell him to come over. He usually sleeps in, in such cold weather.)

Gerswin came by later that day with his girlfriend Prudence. I had hoped that through Gerswin I would get closer to other young people and particularly, young women from Eersteriver since I would be frequenting the area every day. By explaining to him what my study is about I had anticipated that he would be able to assist me in making myself familiar with his group of friends and specifically the young women he was friends with since I had known him previously to be a very social and outgoing young man. I had hoped that my affiliation with him would further assist me in meeting young women in the neighbourhood especially and make myself familiar with them so that I could select those I regarded as being able to make a significant contribution to this study based on their use of social media on their cell-phones. This was not entirely the case since very soon after entering the field I found that Gerswin spent most of his time with his girlfriend Prudence and their infant son at his parents’ home and hardly ever left the house. Many of his male friends came to visit him instead and he seemed to have parted ways with the female friends I had known him to have previously²⁶, unless they were mutual friends of his and his girlfriend. His girlfriend Prudence also didn’t have many friends so I decided to adapt my initial plan and locate interlocutors by getting to know the inhabitants of Eersteriver better myself by carefully observing who frequented Gerswin’s home and how often. I also just simply observed the young women who walked down Andrew Street, which is the street in which Gerswin Lived. With the permission from Gerswin’s parent’s Samantha Makay affectionately known by all in the neighbourhood as “Aunty Mandy” and Patrick Makay respectfully known by all in the neighbourhood as “Bra Pat”²⁷, their home became my research base and served as the social space from which I met other residents and ultimately the interlocutors of this study.

²⁶ Since I had met them at the social gathering he had invited me to which I mention in chapter one.

²⁷ A term of affection shortened from the Afrikaans word “broer” meaning “brother”.

3.4 Introducing the Interlocutors

I chose Gerswin's girlfriend Prudence as one of my interlocutors because I was around her everyday and observed how she would always find a way to have access to a cell-phone whenever her own cell-phone was not in working condition or if she had run out of cell-phone credit commonly known as "airtime". Since Prudence had no social group to speak of I decided to locate individual young women from the neighbourhood to take part in this study and eventually I located six key interlocutors namely Prudence, Margo, Danielle Taryn, Elmorose, and Chichi whom I will now briefly introduce.

3.4.1 Prudence



Figure 1: Prudence smiling nervously as I took this picture, anxious to see what it would look like since she was not happy with the "selfie"²⁸ she had tried taking of herself using my cell-phone camera.

Prudence Swarts is an 18 year old Afrikaans speaking young woman who at the time of my fieldwork had just had a baby boy whom she was raising along with her 19 year old boyfriend Gerswin Makay and his parents, Samantha and Patrick Makay who took primary custody of baby Tirlo. Her grandparents had taken custody of her and her younger brother after her mother and step-father passed away shortly after each other when she was 11 years old. Before moving to Heather Park in Eersteriver to her grandparents who at the

²⁸ A photograph or self portrait one takes of oneself using either a cell-phone camera or a digital camera. It is called a selfie because it is a picture taken of the self, by the self.

time were council workers who had since been retrenched, Prudence lived in Bellville South, another working class neighbourhood in Cape Town.

Prudence and Gerswin lived with her grandparents and younger brother a few streets away but frequently slept over at Aunty Mandy's home. Prudence and her boyfriend spent every day at his mother's house and this is where and how I got to know her. Both Prudence and Gerswin later moved to his parent's home permanently after Gerswin had a disagreement with her Grandfather. In 2014 Prudence was repeating grade 10 and had decided to leave high school when it became visibly noticeable that she was expecting a child.

While hanging out with Prudence one day, she expressed her regret of having wasted two years at high school saying *“ek is baie spuit oor die twee jare wat ek op skool gemos het”* (I regret the two years I wasted at school very much) and her desire to complete her schooling the following year and possibly study nursing thereafter. She also expressed that after meeting her boyfriend and becoming a mother, a very big change took place in her life and that she was now a “better person”. I asked her what she meant, to which she replied that before Gerswin and Tirlo were a part of her life she used to drink alcohol and visit shebeens frequently with the friends she had at that time. In fact, she met Gerswin at one of the many local shebeens²⁹ in the area, but says that since their relationship became serious she didn't go there anymore.

At the start of my fieldwork Prudence and Gerswin shared an inexpensive touch screen cell-phone his parents had purchased at a retail store in the area's only shopping complex. When they didn't have cell-phone credit they would use Gerswin's mother Aunty Mandy's reasonably priced internet enabled cell-phone. Later on in my fieldwork Gerswin's cell-phone had some problem and remained “broken” for over a month, and Prudence had purchased a second hand Blackberry cell-phone from a cell-phone repair shop which also needed to be repaired later. She would alternate between using Aunty Mandy's cell-phone, her grandmother's cell-phone and Gerswin's cell-phone when it was repaired to chat to her Family and to me.

²⁹ In South Africa a shebeen often denotes an extended section of a house that is converted into a bar or nightclub where alcohol is sold. Shebeen owners often do not have a liquor selling license and sell alcohol to minors.

3.4.2 Margo



Figure 2: Margo with her infant daughter who she insisted should be in the picture with her.

I met Margo at Gerswin's social gathering during the proposal stage of my thesis and had known her to be a very vibrant and outgoing young woman. Margo Okkers is a 19 year old Afrikaans speaking young woman who had matriculated at the end of the year 2013 with admission to bachelors³⁰. Since this is quite a big achievement she had intended to study social work but fell pregnant early in 2014. Much like Prudence, before falling pregnant and subsequently becoming a mother Margo used to frequent local shebeens where she used to hang out with a rather unruly crowd and drink alcohol most weekends. At the time of my fieldwork Margo only left her home when her younger sister Danielle came home from school. Unlike prudence, Margo had no older persons to help her with her baby during the day. At the onset of my fieldwork she was using her mother's cell-phone that does not have access to internet, to communicate with me via SMS on days that we did not see one another, and also to her boyfriend since he was not living in Eersteriver.

Margo lives in a fairly small one bedroom house with her parents, two younger siblings and her infant daughter. Her father works as a plumber and her mother works at a factory that manufactures machinery for wineries in Cape Town. Although her entire family shares

³⁰ When a grade 12 high school student passes with admission to bachelors it means that he/she obtained at least 50-59% or more in four or more of their seven school subjects. Passing with admission to bachelors is a requirement to gain entry to a university.

a moderate sized bedroom, their house does have a small kitchen, a bathroom and a lounge. She expressed how having a baby had also changed her in the sense that she was now at home a lot whereas before she was always outside roaming the streets with her friends who she didn't see very often anymore. She also expressed that she was hoping to either go and study or get a job when her baby was older and she was no longer breastfeeding.

3.4.3 Danielle

Danielle Okkers (known in the neighbourhood as Danelle) is a 17 year old Afrikaans speaking young woman. She is also Margo's younger sister. Danielle enjoys loud and rough activities that are typically associated with male persons of her age and also wears clothes from the male section in clothing stores. Danielle enjoys playing soccer with her male friends at school and also enjoys singing and styling her female friend's hair. After completing high school she wants to study medicine or become an entrepreneur. Although Danielle openly admits to preferring male friends as opposed to female friends especially at school, she has a female best friend Taryn whom she spent most of her December school holiday with.

Danielle lives in Heather Park Eersteriver with her parents, siblings and infant niece, but sometimes stays with her grandparents during the week in different area in Eersteriver to be closer to school. Very soon into my fieldwork Danielle's father had broken her cell-phone by throwing it to the ground. When I was informed of this by Danielle all she said was:

“ek het die meer n phone nie” (I don't have a phone anymore).

Surprised I asked *“hoekom nie?”* (“Why not?”)

She laughed awkwardly and said *“my pa het dit stukkend ge gooi”* (My father broke it by throwing it).

Towards the end of my fieldwork she bought herself a moderately priced touch screen³¹ cell-phone with money she had been saving up.

³¹ A cell-phone with no tangible keypad that uses direct finger input to interact with the device.



Figure 3: Danielle (being coached from the sideline by her best friend Taryn) posing confidently for the picture on their way back from the nearby shopping complex.

3.4.4 Taryn

I met Taryn through her best friend Danielle since the two were almost always together. Taryn Rodriques is an 18 year old Afrikaans speaking young woman who moved to Eersteriver with her family when she was a young child to be closer to her father's work. Although her mother preferred to use public transport and her father walked to work, Taryn and her family were one of the very few families in their street to own a motor vehicle. Unlike her best friend Danielle, Taryn is very feminine in her mannerisms and her way of dress and likes to wear her hair loose. Although she does not wear short dresses or clothes when she leaves her home, she has quite a collection of crop tops that she likes to pair with either denim jeans or tights which she wore whenever it was hot outside. Taryn lives with her parents and two siblings. She has an older sister who at the time of my fieldwork was in the process of obtaining a diploma in early childhood education and younger brother who is still in primary school.

Taryn did not leave her home very often during the week except for a Friday afternoon or when she would visit Danielle who lived a few houses away from her. She spent most of her time at home looking after her younger brother while her parents were at work or with Danielle and some of their other friends in the area.



Figure 4: Taryn striking a pose.

Taryn comes from a better-off family than all the other young women who took part in this study. Taryn's father is a machine controller at a retail store at the nearby shopping complex and her mother a nurse. Taryn dreams of starting her own hairdressing business and travelling the world one day. She enjoys dancing, styling people's hair, and most of all, taking pictures of herself using her cell-phone and having her friends or siblings take pictures of her. She also openly admits to being very dependent on her cell-phone and is very active on WhatsApp.

3.4.5 Elmorose

Elmorose Julia Bosman known by all as Julia, but insisted I call her by her "real" name (even though I would slip up and call her Julia many times) is a quiet English speaking 17 year old young woman who lives in Heather park, Eersteriver. She attends high school in Eersteriver and lives with her aunt and two cousins in a small two bedroom house.

At the onset of my fieldwork Elmorose had an inexpensive QWERTY³² keyboard cell-phone that she had recently purchased at the nearby shopping complex using money she had gotten for her birthday. Later into my fieldwork she exchanged her cell-phone for a

³² Pronounced "kwer-tee" QWERTY refers to the standard arrangement of alphabetic keys on a standard computer or laptop keyboard. The name QWERTY stems from the first six alphabetic keys on the top line of the keyboard.

more popular smart-phone and admits to spending a lot of time chatting to friends on WhatsApp and later BBM.



Figure 5: Elmorose in her front garden.

Elmorose is originally from Johannesburg and first came to Cape Town with her mother in 2006 to attend a family funeral. Elmorose remained in Cape Town with her mother and older sister after the funeral and visited with her aunt known by the neighbourhood as “Ouma” in Heather Park Eersteriver. She has no relationship with her Sotho father who is still living in Johannesburg. Shortly after settling into their new living arrangements her mother passed away. Elmorose declares that she does not know what was wrong with her mother but she suspects that “Ouma” and other relatives do know but are not telling her. She also suspects that her mother knew she was very ill and that is why she decided that they should stay in Cape Town after the funeral since she was not married. She has an older sister who also lives in Eersteriver with her boyfriend but prefers to live with “Ouma” where she has her own room. “Ouma” who works two jobs as a domestic worker at a doctor’s office in central Cape Town and at the home of a married couple in the same vicinity, takes care of her financially but she also gets pocket money from her older sister and often cleans her cousin’s home for money as well.

3.4.6 Chichi

Chiedza Mtero who prefers to be called “Chichi”, is an 18 year old English and Shona³³ speaking young woman who is originally from Zimbabwe. From her friends at school she had learned to speak some Afrikaans and Xhosa. Chichi moved to South Africa with her Mother and younger brother in 2010 after her father who had moved to South Africa two years before them, had found a home for them to rent in Eersteriver. At the time of my fieldwork Chichi was writing her grade 12 final exam and attended high school in Eersteriver.

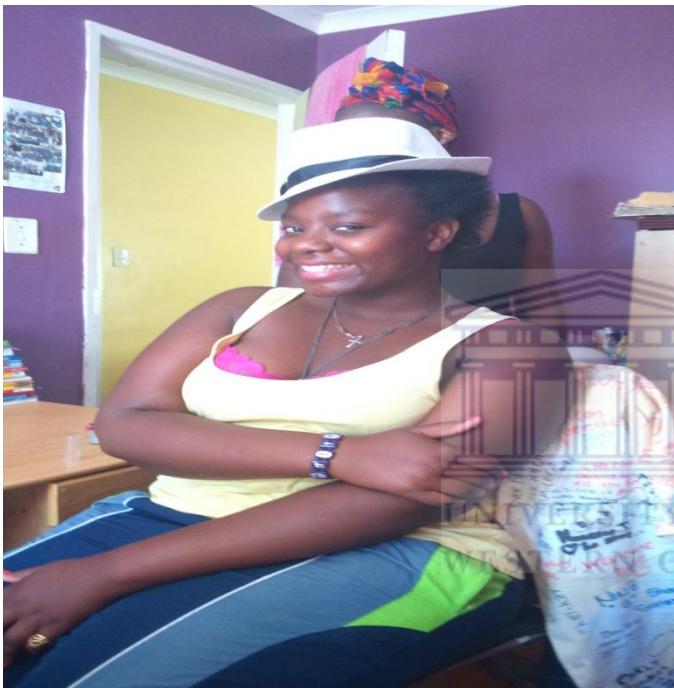


Figure 6: Chichi wanted her picture to be a playful one, to show her energetic personality.

Chichi admits to being very dependent on her cell-phone and is very active on WhatsApp and Facebook. She used to be on BBM when she had a BlackBerry cell-phone but preferred WhatsApp when she made the switch to an inexpensive touch screen cell-phone. Although she spent most of her days at home doing her schoolwork since her father was particularly strict about her getting good grades, Chichi was a very vibrant person who loved making new friends and socialising. She would often have her friends visit her or ask permission from her father who was at home and unemployed, to go and visit her friends. Chichi’s father, who used to be a sales man at a cell-phone network store in the

³³ Shona is one of the 16 official languages of Zimbabwe and is also one of the 3 most spoken languages in the country.

airport mall in Belhar³⁴, became unemployed in June of 2014 after his employer refused his request to being transferred to a different branch after he was seriously injured in a shooting that took place during a heist at the store. Her mother works as a domestic worker for a wealthy family in an upmarket suburb in Cape Town and is also a sales representative for a leading direct seller of beauty related products. Unfortunately Chichi was not accepted to study accounting at the University she applied to due to her refugee status, so she took a job as a waitress at a well established restaurant at the sophisticated waterside mall situated close to the Cape Town harbour.

All the young women who took part in this study were for the most part homebound. Their cell-phones thus played important roles in their sociality. For Prudence, Margo and Danielle their cell-phones were important but they were not enormously dependent on the devices whereas Taryn, Elmore and Chichi were incredibly dependent on their cell-phones. The reason for this is that Prudence and Margo had just become mothers so they spent less time interacting socially via their cell-phones since they had their infants to take care of. Danielle embodied a certain toughness that made it easy for her to adapt to not having a cell-phone anymore since she preferred offline activities like visiting her friend Taryn for example. Chichi, Elmore and Taryn were not very socially connected in the neighbourhood and thus spent a great deal of time being “socially active” on their cell-phones as I will show in the foregoing chapters.

Another three important individuals who were not key interlocutors but who contributed to this study are Gerswin Makay, his parents Samantha “Aunty Mandy” Makay and Patrick “Bra Pat” Makay.

3.4.7 Gerswin

Gerswin Makay is a 19 year old Afrikaans speaking young man who lived in Eersteriver. At the time of my fieldwork Gerswin was unemployed but with the financial help of his parents he was able to make money with his girlfriend Prudence by selling 5 kilogram braaipack's³⁵ that they purchased from their local butchery.

³⁴ Belhar is a suburb of the City of Cape Town that is situated on the Cape Flats. Belhar is roughly 15 kilometers from Eertseriver.

³⁵ 5 kilogram plastic packages of assorted frozen meat that is often used to braai. In South Africa to braai meat is to grill meat over an open fire.

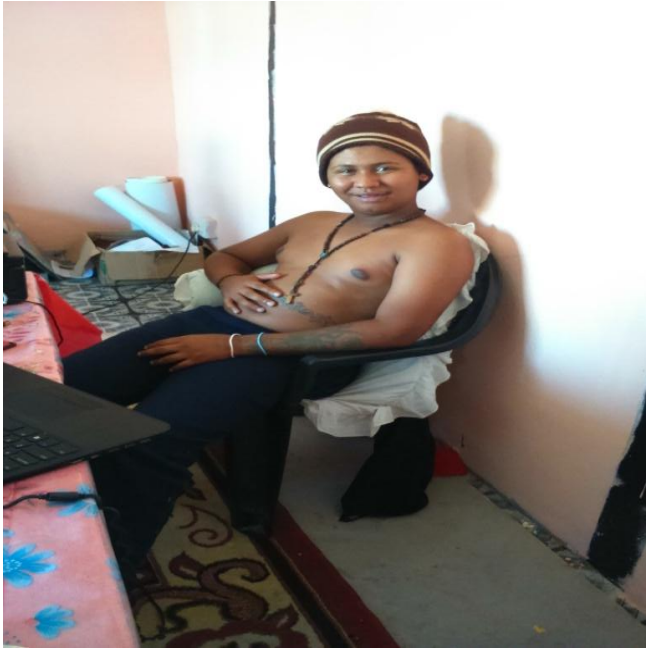


Figure 7: Gerswin agreed to smile for this picture while waiting for the racing game he was playing on his mother's laptop to download.

3.4.8 Aunty Mandy

Samantha Makay affectionately known in the neighbourhood as “Aunty Mandy” is what I would like to call, the mother of the neighbourhood. Aunty Mandy is a proud house wife, day care teacher, and part time student. Even though she was studying early childhood education part time, she still managed to operate a private day care and maintain her household.

Based on my observations I have come to know that most young people in the neighbourhood regard her as either their mother figure, or a second mother, or a woman they have the utmost respect for (more than any of the other adult women in the neighbourhood). Even though Heather park and specifically, Andrew street and surrounding streets all have respectable mothers, Aunty Mandy is by far, based on my observations, the most liked and respected among the young people.



Figure 8: Auntie Mandy who usually wore her hair neatly combed back and tied into a bun, insisted I style her hair before agreeing to have her picture taken.

My thoughts on Auntie Mandy were confirmed when during my informal visits I attended her day care graduation concert. Of course, the audience was comprised of mainly the parents and grandparents of the children in her day care, but also a group of the young people in the community came to show their support by “showing face” at the concert, taking pictures and making videos on the cell-phones (which they later showed her and offered to send to her on WhatsApp or via Bluetooth³⁶ and some of them put the pictures they had taken on her laptop)

3.4.9 Bra Pat

Patrick Makay affectionately known in the neighbourhood as “Bra Pat” is Auntie Mandy’s husband of 20 years and Gerswin’s father. He is an Afrikaans speaking man who moved to Eersteriver after the company he worked at purchased a house for his family. After 24 years of service at one of Africa’s leading packaging companies, Bra Pat executed voluntary retrenchment in 2013 and helped his wife set up and manage her day care which opened in January of 2014.

³⁶ Bluetooth is a short range wireless interconnection of mobile phones which allows users to transfer pictures or other pieces of data to another device via Bluetooth.



Figure 9: Bra Pat sitting on an upside down empty paint drum on the small porch at the entrance of his home.

I decided to include photographs of my formal and informal interlocutors so as to assist in providing a visual representation to the various vignettes in this thesis. Thus far I have discussed the fieldwork process of this ethnography and introduced the key interlocutors of this study. I will now discuss my research process reflectively.

3.5 Research Process Reflectively Considered

Ethnographers are often renowned for their ability to be conscious and receptive in the field as opposed to narrow minded and completely biased. Ethnographers do however begin their research with a certain level of biases and predetermined ideas or views about the people they intend to study. The selection of a field site, research question and group of people to study is biased in itself. Fetterman (1998:1). One could argue that the term “bias” is problematic since ethnography as properly done by anthropologists rests crucially on the idea that there is no such thing as “bias” or its opposite “objectivity”. Instead, anthropologist and thus ethnographers are conscious and hold that there is no objective knowledge of social relations. What this means is that although the ethnographer goes into the field with an open mind, this attribute by no means implies that no preconceived notions are present since social knowledge is produced in the interaction of researcher and interlocutor and is influenced by the ideas and feelings that both of them have. The ever

increasing of ethnographic fieldwork conducted “at home” is not devoid of drawbacks and demands more consideration of reflexivity (Becker, 2007:89). The challenge is the awareness of these conditions and relations of knowledge production. For this reason it was imperative that I critically reflect back on the research process.

3.5.1 Positioning Myself within the Context of Eersteriver and its Young Women

My entry into the Eersteriver neighbourhood was very important since my positionality within the neighbourhood largely depended on this. Sikic-Micanovic (2010:47) asserts that positionality denotes not only how the anthropologist is perceived by the neighbourhood, but also how residents of that particular neighbourhood are perceived by the anthropologist. For this reason I deemed it best to gain entry into the field by way of personal contacts. This was crucial not only for my gaining entry into the neighbourhood, but also for rapport to avoid mistrust since many scholars contend that establishing rapport is crucial in an ethnography (Sikic-Micanovic, 2010:50). Entering the field through a young person of that neighbourhood made establishing rapport easier since he was positioned in such a way that made it easy for me to interact and meet young women on the level of a peer or an equal. If I were to enter the field through a person who was positioned differently say for example, a “respectable mother” (in Salo’s terms), this could have been problematic in terms of access since the young women could possibly have felt that that they could not be completely forthcoming about what it is exactly that they use their cell-phones for because of my relations with a respectable member in their community.

Being a young woman proved to be a positive factor in the creation of a safe and judgement free space that enabled the young women who took part in this study to freely delve into their experiences and thoughts. When they shared their life histories with me, I often shared a personal narrative of my own as a way of making them feel more comfortable. For instance, Prudence agreed to being part of the study and started preparing her biography the same day that I asked her. Even though she agreed to being part of the study she still seemed a bit uncomfortable around me, which in turn made me unsure of how I could make her comfortable with me. To remedy this, after reading her biography she gave to me 2 days later, I decided to share a little biography of my own with her, tailor making it to match her level of honesty in her biography. What I mean by this is that Prudence shared extremely personal and painful things about her life with me, so, in turn, I shared some of my own painful and personal stories that were similar to hers for example,

Prudence had shared with me that she had lost her mother when she was eleven years old. I then shared with her that I had lost my father when I was thirteen years old. I shared my personal stories with her to show her that I too have experienced loss and feelings of failure and rejection. Although she was still a little awkward around me at times, this encounter made her more at ease around me.

I had informed my interlocutors and Aunty Mandy and Bra Pat that I would be taking pictures of them to include in my thesis to which they agreed. Aunty Mandy complimented me on my long and smooth hair. I told her that I use a GHD³⁷ flat iron to straighten my hair to which she replied “*oh dan moet jy my hare ook mooi maak vir die fotos*” (oh then you also have to make my hair nice for the pictures). So the next day I straightened Aunty Mandy’s hair before taking pictures of her and Bra Pat. That evening I received a WhatsApp message from Prudence asking me to do her hair with my GHD the next day. I felt that doing her hair and trying to get to know her better through conversing reinforced the positive experience we had the previous day. Before entering the field I mistakenly assumed that all the young people in Eersteriver would be using BlackBerry cell-phones or that they would like me, be switching over to Android operated cell-phones. Instead I found that many of the young people in this neighbourhood were only just beginning to acquire BlackBerry cell-phones.

The fact that my study focused largely on cell-phone use, I too made use of my cell-phone for research purposes, to stay in contact with my interlocutors and to observe their various online social activities. I considered the possibility that the kind of cell-phone I had may be similar or very dissimilar to those owned and used by the young women who took part in this study. For example, we all may have had cell-phones, but they were different brands and models which of course, had different prices. When I initially started my ethnography I was using a moderately priced Blackberry cell-phone then later upgraded to a more elegant Sony Ericsson cell-phone. I was concerned that this would lead to issues of class and social status since youngsters invest time and money, in self presentation (Livingstone, 2008:4). To avoid any negative reactions, it was crucial that I stress the fact that I was more interested in what they were *doing* with their cell-phones as opposed to the kind of cell-phones they have and the social meaning that may be attached to it. A reflection on my own views and judgements with regards to my assuming class analysis through

³⁷ GHD is an international leading manufacturer of high quality hair straightening irons and other hair care products.

consumption was thus imperative. As said by the Comaroffs (2000:306), “generation, in fact, seems to be an especially fertile site into which class anxieties are displaced.” My interpretation of this is that persons falling into age brackets of what is considered to be youth often have to bear the burden of having concerns relating to class placed upon them. This is what the Comaroffs refer to as “the contemporary predicament of youth” (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2000:306). To avoid this kind of predicament placed great emphasis on the fact that my aim was to look at the cell-phone as a technological tool that may re-shape their everyday social interactions and personhood and not as a commodity (Pelckmans, 2009:24).

3.5.2 Reflections on Experiences in the Field

In her PhD thesis Salo (2004:25) recounts how in the field, the respectable mothers of the Manenberg Township had requested her to dress differently since she was a mother herself. They felt that her way of dress i.e., jeans and t-shirts was not the way an “*ordentlike ma*” was supposed to dress. In terms of dress, much like Salo (2004:24) before the start of my fieldwork I purposefully decided to wear denim jeans and plain t-shirts and sneakers to appear more youthful and untailed in order to integrate myself into the lives of the young women I intended to ask to be a part of my study. Although my experience is slightly different, I too found myself changing the way I dressed during the fieldwork process of this thesis. The Eersteriver neighbourhood is a working class neighbourhood with a high unemployment rate so the social setting was different to the middle class neighbourhood I came from (and that my friends came from) so the way I would dress when meeting a friend for a movie for example, would not be applicable for my fieldwork. For example, I did not wear any jewellery except for my ear piercings. I also did not wear branded jeans or expensive sneakers. On most days I wore the very affordable Tomy takkies that many of the young people and even Aunty Mandy wore regularly.

Anthropologists Kondo (1990) and Abu-Lughod (1993) point out that the ethnographer who assumes the insider-outsider approach is confronted with both advantages and disadvantages. Kondo (1990) illustrates that the insider-outsider anthropologist who shares a common racial identity with the people he/she works with may be seen as a “conceptual anomaly” (Salo, 2004:22) to the very people he/she intends to work with. This is because the anthropologist is seen as being similar to them yet distinct from them. My experience during my ethnographic research in Eersteriver was much like this. My “colouredness” made entry into this neighbourhood relatively easy since I possessed some level of being

an “insider” given that Eersteriver is a predominantly coloured neighbourhood. My being a University student however rendered me an outsider to a certain degree.

I did not for one minute think about the things I would *not* discover. When I uncovered information that was different to what I had expected to find, I was very intrigued by it, but also not entirely prepared for it. For instance, when I discovered that out of the six young women I worked with; only two of them had their cell-phones with them most times, whereas the remaining four didn’t always have their cell-phones with them. Perhaps this said more about my attachment to my own cell-phone and my social background since these young women still placed great value on their cell-phones even though it wasn’t *always* on their person.

During my fieldwork I experienced instances where a close bond between myself and my interlocutors had been formed. While this was good for my research, it could potentially have become problematic because they expected favours from me once they started becoming increasingly used to my presence. For example, Chichi had asked me to accompany her to go and get her grade 12 results from school. On that day she told me (via WhatsApp) how nervous she was because she was scared of her Fathers reaction if she did not pass all her subjects with an A. I responded with *“Don’t worry, you studied hard. Would you like me to bring you a calming tablet? It will help with the nerves”* She responded with *“I was actually hoping you would buy me a monster energy drink”* I then told her that I did not have money. She then responded with *“its only twenty rand for the big one”*. On another occasion she also asked if she could loan R150 from me and that she would pay it back at the end of the month, which I also declined since I thought it was inappropriate and could possibly jeopardize our relationship, but also because I was not working so I was not able to loan her any money.

Since one of my key objectives was to investigate how young women may be pushing the boundaries of good daughterhood and respectability, another issue of concern was that I had to find a way to deal with conflict among the girls I was working with. One day while standing in front of Auntie Mandy’s house speaking to Elmorose, I asked her to accompany me to Danielle and Margo’s house across the street. She responded with “No, I don’t go there” with an appalled look on her face. I took the fact that these girls lived in the same street as a given that they were friends. Also, in all my visits and conversations with Danielle and Taryn, they never revealed to me that they had conflict with Elmorose. I was

disappointed since this meant I would not be able to have a group discussion, but I then chose to only visit the girls one on one. Since I could not get the girls to resolve their issues, I chose not to discuss them with each other so as to remain neutral and not damage my relationship with any of them.

All of the key interlocutors including Aunty Mandy, Bra Pat and Gerswin wanted to participate in this study and turned down my offer to use pseudonyms. They insisted on their real names being used and were excited about the idea of a “book” being written about them.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I demonstrated that while some young women in Eersteriver are largely dependent on their cell-phones and social media, others are not. I drew on the work of Fetterman (1998), Jackson (1987), Becker (2007), Geertz (1998) and Steinmetz (2012), to provide a detailed description of the research process. I then demonstrated how I entered the field and introduce each of the six key interlocutors who took part in this study in addition to another three individuals who played a vital role in me getting to know Eersteriver and its residents. Finally I brought to light my ethical concerns and reflections. In the next chapter I will explore the ways in which internet enabled cell-phones and social media has changed concepts of social interaction for young women in Eersteriver.

CHAPTER FOUR: ‘NEW SOCIAL MEDIA’: CHANGING THE CONCEPTS OF SOCIAL INTERACTION

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will demonstrate how new technology that is now easily operated on internet enabled cell-phones, has provided young women with the unique ability of both establishing and maintaining social relationships. I will show that it is not something entirely new that young women are doing through social media; rather, they are doing an *old* thing in a *new* way. The old being social interaction and the new being that it can now take place in the virtual world. I will show how social media has revolutionized young women’s understanding of what social interaction is. Drawing from Taylor & Harper (2003) who provide an update to Mauss’s (1924) theory of gift giving I will show how cell-phone interaction can act as a form of gift giving and how through new social media even this *old* thing is now being done in a *new* way. I propose that this new way of interacting socially has resulted in new ways of having a conversation. I thus go on to discuss how young people are now able to have dual conversations simultaneously - one in the real world, and another in the virtual world. I will finally show how new social media has resulted in new ways of doing intimacy among young people. This chapter concludes with a brief summary of the main claims put forward in this chapter.

4.2 Changing the Concepts of Social Interaction

When one thinks of social interaction, images of friends spending time together would probably turn up in one’s mind. More often than not, social interaction is equated with the physical presence rather than the virtual. Typically, social interaction is likened to activities between people that involve close physical proximity for example, meeting a friend for coffee, going to see a movie with someone or having a family lunch at a restaurant. In this section I argue that cell-phones and social media are generating new ways in which young people can not only establish, but also build and strengthen social relationships. The reason for this is: all of these have one key element in common – conversation. Growing up, a conversation was accepted as a dialogue between two or more people in a face-to-face fashion. Even a telephone conversation was accepted as a norm during my upbringing. New social media now makes it possible for a conversation to take place via instant messaging using social applications (or social apps), that is, an online conversation whereby text messages are being sent back at forth as opposed to a phone call. Young people are now even sending one another voice recordings via either BBM or

WhatsApp referred to as voice notes, as part of their online conversations. It often takes the place of an actual phone call and an actual “visit”.

I became aware of this one day while hanging out with Chichi. As I sat on one end of Chichi’s double bed, my back propped up against a pillow against the wall for back support, I glanced over to her on the other end of the bed sitting in the same position as I was. Her cell-phone (plugged into the wall socket charging) was in her hand. The cell-phone screen light went on so I knew she had unlocked the keypad. To me, she looked engrossed while engaging with the device.

“It’s rude to chat on your phone when you’re in a company” I joked.

[Immediately glancing up at me] she responded “I’m just checking how far my phone is charged and I thought I heard a WhatsApp message come through but it was an SMS from my mom, and besides, a girl can multitask³⁸ you know” with a proud grin on her face.

Not knowing how to respond, the only reaction I could manage while she looked at me waiting for an equally witty response was to roll my eyes and quickly grab a magazine from a stack that was on the floor beside my feet. While doing this I heard a beeping sound coming from her cell-phone. As I pretended to pay attention to the content in the magazine trying to analyse my encounter with Chichi she - completely unaware of my inner turmoil continued to open the message she had just received on her cell-phone. Chichi’s ability to immediately glance up at me when, to me, she appeared to be enthralled by whatever she was reading from her cell-phone screen demonstrates how she was able to, in my opinion, be self aware of both herself and her surroundings when interacting on and with her cell-phone. In this way being able to accurately respond to what I had said. I also found Chichi’s clever response and assertion of being able to multitask to be particularly powerful for the reason that her instant shift of attention from her cell-phone onto me and her response which was in line with what I had said, was indeed a form of multitasking. It was a *new* way of doing an *old* thing.

“Ok it was a real WhatsApp message this time” Chichi announced as a voice recording started to play. I gathered that it was a female friend of hers when I heard the words “Hey

³⁸ To multitask is to do more than one thing at a time. In this instance, read a message from a cell-phone while having a social conversation in the physical world.

bestie³⁹ sorry for not replying to your voice note last night. I fell asleep and only checked my phone now. Thank you for being with me last night. You made me feel so much better. Have a good day and send my regards to your parents and Prince⁴⁰”

“From who?” I asked.

“My best friend”

“Oh from school?”

“No from back home”

“Oh. Tell me about her”

“Her name is Anele. Everyone calls her Nelly for short. We’ve been best friends since we were five years old. She belonged to the same church as me when we were still in Zimbabwe”

“That’s a long time hey. When was the last time you saw her?”

“A few days before we left, but we chat everyday because I had her home number all the time so we would call each other at first but now we send each other voice notes on WhatsApp because then we can speak all night and anytime”.

“I thought Anita from school was your best friend because you always speak about her”

“Ja she is a good friend but we aren’t as close as me and Nelly” Chichi responded as she responded to Nelly with a voice recording.

I found it very interesting that Chichi felt closer to a friend she had not seen in five years. I was surprised by the fact that of all the friends Chichi had told me about and some who I actually met, I had never heard of Nelly before yet *she* was the best friend. In Chichi’s response to Nelly she expressed how glad she was to have been there for her and that, “that’s what best friends do”, and that she hopes she feels better.

Grasping my uncertainty of the subject nature of the voice recordings Chichi stated “She’s going through a rough time with her boyfriend so she was crying last night. She was so upset she was even crying in the voice notes. So that’s why she’s thanking me for being

³⁹ A nickname young women often give to one another to signify that they are best friends.

⁴⁰ Chichi’s younger brother Prince.

with her last night because I was being there, making her feel better about the situation”. I found Chichi’s notion of “being there” with her friend to be very profound since physically the two friends were almost 2000 kilometres apart⁴¹. For young people who admit to not being very socially connected in the typical “real” world sense like Chichi, Elmore and Taryn, who spend most of their days at their homes, their cell-phones present them with an exceptional benefit. It gives them instant access to a virtual world where they are able to blur the lines of time and space (Wei & Lo, 2006:53).

“So you were there for her through the phone?” I asked.

“Yes. She’s always helping me when my dad and I argue, so it’s the least I can give to her you know.”

By means of their cell-phones, young people are finding new ways to interact with their family and friends. Based on my fieldwork young people often exchange voice messages, text messages and dedicate statuses⁴² on social applications to their friends and this is often a mutual exchange of social interaction.

So far I have shown that internet enabled cell-phone users have adapted their way of interacting socially in several different ways. Missed calling is yet another example of how they are doing an *old* thing in a *new* way. Although “beeping” is from the pre smart-phone age, young people have now adapted this into their use of internet enabled cell-phones. For example, the young women I worked with would often give their friends missed calls to signal that they should either “meet” on WhatsApp or that the receiver of the missed call should check and respond to a message that the sender of the missed call had sent them on WhatsApp.

Donner (2008:1) describes “beeping” or “missed calling”, a well-known practice among cell-phone users, as simple as one individual calling another, via a cell-phone, but then ending the call before the other person is able to answer it. If the person who has made the missed call’s number is stored onto the receiver’s contact list, the receiver will see exactly who has “given” them a missed call. Otherwise, the receiver will only see the person’s number in the call log. Donner (2008:1) asserts that the “beep” is almost always deliberate; the missed caller has sent a communication to the receiver unsupplied with words. I

⁴¹ The distance from South Africa to Zimbabwe is 1 827, 2km.

⁴² I discuss this elsewhere in this chapter.

addition, “giving” a missed call is nearly free of charge since the person being called doesn’t get a chance to answer the call.

The giving of missed calls is a useful example of constant relations between social interaction and new technology. Even though “beeping” has roots that stem from actions that originated during the telephone age, it has progressed. It now makes use of the technological abilities of the cell-phone such as the contact list and call log as well as the network billing composition (Donner, 2008:3). Missed calling is now much more nuanced and has increased in reaction to a mixture of financial, societal, fiscal and technological circumstances that are customary in the developing world (Donner, 2008:3). In addition to missed calling, young people are also using the “please-call-me” feature offered by all South African network providers as a way of conveying an unsaid message.

Horst and Miller (2006) depict social practices involving the “call me” feature offered by Jamaican network provider Digicel. Fundamentally, the “call me” or “please-call-me” as it is known in South Africa, serves as a missed call in word form. This makes it possible for cell phone users who have run out or are low on airtime credit to send a few free messages a day to other persons. This is done either to request that the receiver call them back or sometimes the please-call-me contains a message within itself. Network providers such as Vodacom, MTN and Cell-C allow users to personalise their please-call-me messages, so many people will add their name. So the please call me message will read as “Sharon would like you to call them back” or “Please call ImissYou” depending on which network the sender is registered. The young women who took part in this study used please-call-me’s for various reasons. Prudence would send it to her boyfriend to indicate that they should “meet online” on MXIT but other times the please-call-me signified that either one or both of them didn’t have airtime credit to SMS, call or go log into MXIT. In instances like this the please-call-me would often read as “Please call NoAirtime”. The text included in the please-call-me’s are typed as one word since the function does not allow for the spacing of words. Building on Mauss’s (1924) theory of gift giving Taylor & Harper (2003) describe the ways young women interact socially via their cell-phones with regards to exchanging text messages as the performance of gift giving. I would like to argue that this *new* way of doing social interaction is a performance of gift giving among young people and especially young women. Even though the “call me” is a pre smart-phone

usage, among internet enabled cell-phone users its use has been adapted to mean something entirely different to actually wanting the receiver to call them.

4.3 Cell-Phone Interaction as Gift Giving

In the opening vignette of this chapter I provided a transcript and detailed description of one of my interactions with one of my interlocutors Chichi. Chichi's belief that "giving" her best friend her support and encouragement in times of need show that while Mauss's (1924) description of gift giving is still applicable, new social media has enabled young people to update their way of doing this performance. For Mauss (1924) gift giving is a process that integrates a society through reciprocity or exchange. Gift transactions can thus be understood as expressive movements in the management of meaning (Sherry, 1983:157).

At the time of their research among English high school students in the early 2000s, Taylor & Harper (2003:5) declare that young people employed SMSes, airtime and the actual cell-phone as forms of gifts which were traded over in performances that carried particular meanings among young people and was performed for the purpose of reinforcing social relationships. Taylor & Harper (2003:3) propose that although the performance of gift giving is at times done habitually, this performance is at all times mutual and structured, and acts as a go between in the social relationships and interactions among adolescents, especially female adolescents. Taylor & Harper (2003:5) demonstrate the exchange of text messages between adolescent females as one where two or more teenage girls would be seated together in the school cafeteria where one of the girls would show the rest of the group either a funny or inspirational text message she had received on her cell-phone. The nature and content of the text message would then spark a conversation among the young women. Ultimately the text message will then be passed onto the rest of the group members for them to send to their other friends.

Having been a teenager myself during the early 2000s, I can attest to this performance of gift giving. Since internet enabled cell-phones were not prevalent among adolescents at that time, my friends and I would send one another text messages on a regular basis. Often during interval at high school my friends and I would sit together beside one another on the school terrace and go through each other's message inbox, looking for funny, inspirational or "cool" SMSes. Whenever we found one we liked we would often say

“send me this SMS” and receive it immediately or later that evening depending on the airtime credit balance our friend had. In other instances, my friends and I would inform one another about SMSes we had received and would show them to each other or forward it to each other and eagerly await their reply. If no electronic reply was received because of a low airtime balance for example, we would talk about the message the next time we saw one another. This is what Taylor & Harper (2003) call the ritual of using text messages as gifts between young people.

My personal account demonstrates how the use of mobile phone technology (during the early 2000s), served as a mediator for gift giving among young people. The account presented by Taylor & Harper as well as my own, not only shows how the cell-phone offers a way through which meaning is embodied and distributed, but also how assigned responsibilities of gift giving are assumed via the electronic embodied “gift” (2003:5) These adopted roles of responsibility denotes the ritualistic performance as well as the responsibilities of each individual. In the two instances above, the ritual denotes the text message which served as the gift, and the receiving of the gift as well as the response to having received the gift serves to boost and sustain the relationship between the young women. On the one hand the performance of gift giving functions as a way of conveying the way they felt about each other, while on the other, the reciprocation of a different text message or SMS, or even the acknowledgement of the message signifies a sense of balance in the friendship thereby bringing the interaction to a close.

Although sending text messages was a rather new phenomenon at the time of their research in the early 2000s, Taylor & Harper (2003:3) assert that gift giving is a demonstration and expression of deep seated needs and desires that involve practices of social cohesion and interchange. Taylor & Harper (2003:3) contend that these needs and desires have been an unyielding part of adolescent cultures for a very long time and *will continue to be in the years to come*. Over a decade later, my experiences in the field correspond to the notion of a youth culture that seeks to express deep seated needs that involve social solidarity, only now; this involves the cell phone and thus social media. For instance, over a decade later young people are now able to do more than send just an SMS. Young people are now able to exchange pictures, music, and videos via social applications and networking sites such as Facebook, WhatsApp and BBM. As previously mentioned young people can now also dedicate statuses to someone like Taryn did with Danielle. As

shown below, even I received a “gift” of interaction when one evening as I was scrolling through my WhatsApp contact list inspecting the profile pictures and statuses of my interlocutors, I saw that Chichi had not only dedicated her WhatsApp status to me, but included me in her profile picture as well.

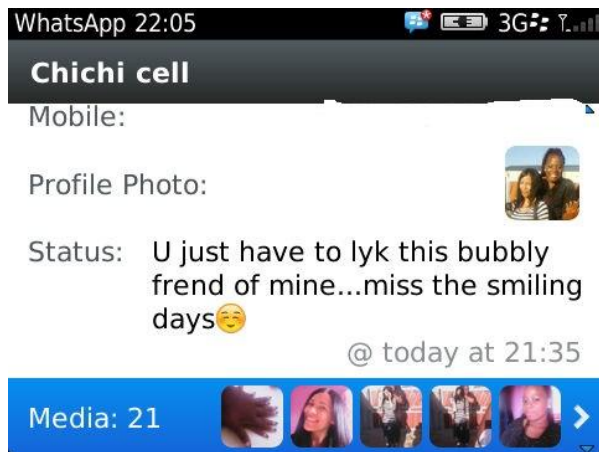


Figure 1: A WhatsApp status Chichi dedicated to me. See also her profile picture of her and me on the evening of her Matric ball⁴³.

Transliteration: “You just have to like this bubbly friend of mine...[I] miss the smiling days”.

After seeing Chichi’s status and profile picture I sent her a message on WhatsApp saying “love the profile picture! Miss you too!” Chichi then responded with “Thank you diva⁴⁴ you must also make a picture of us your profile picture”. In this interaction between myself and Chichi, I was quickly made to understand that among young women, gift giving was a vehicle of social obligation.

When Prudence and Margo joined Facebook towards the end of my fieldwork, Margo sent me a greeting in the form of an inbox message to which I responded and Prudence tagged me in a picture of baby Tirlo who by that time, I had grown quite fond of. I acknowledged this by both liking and commenting on the picture. These illustrations reaffirm my claim that through the use of new social media, young women are able to do old things in new ways. Internet enabled cell-phone users are doing *old* things in *new* ways using technologies available on them. I found that young people are now able to have two

⁴³ In South Africa the equivalent to the American Prom is the Matric ball or Matric dance. The Matric ball usually takes place at the end of the academic year after or before the grade 12 exams.

⁴⁴ The nickname Chichi and I had for one another.

completely separate conversations with completely different people, at the same time. I call this a dual conversation.

4.4 Dual Conversations and the Face-to-Face versus Virtual Conversation Debate

With the help of new social media, young women are even able to have dual conversations. On numerous occasions the young women I worked with during my ethnography would be speaking to me (while hanging out), while at the same time chatting to other friends on social apps. For instance, one Thursday afternoon after Prudence blow dried my hair; I proceeded to flat iron⁴⁵ my hair in the room Prudence shared with Gerswin and his two younger siblings. I had arranged to meet with Elmorese that particular day but since my hair took a little longer than expected I couldn't make it to her house, which was two houses away from Aunty Mandy's at the time we agreed. I did however; send her a message on WhatsApp saying I was busy with my hair and that I would see her later. She responded by saying that she would come to me instead since she visited Aunty Mandy's house most days anyway. As I sat finishing off my hair Elmorese stood in the room doorway which was at the rear of the mirror I was seated in front of.

Elmorese and I conversed about an array of things such as the colour of my hair which was red at the bottom and black at the top, and how she didn't feel like doing her hair but that she was considering colouring her recently dyed blonde hair black before school reopens among others. As she took her cell-phone out of her tracksuit pants pocket to respond to a message, I noticed she had a new cell-phone. I asked her when she got the new cell-phone since when I last saw her a few days earlier, she still had her previous cell-phone. She announced that she had exchanged her cell-phone with her cousins a few days earlier *and* cleaned her wendy house⁴⁶ which was at the back of their yard as well, so as to say, she did the latter to reinforce the exchange of cell-phones. I observed through her reflection in the mirror how Elmorese was able to keep the conversation with me going, responding accurately to whatever I was saying without me having to repeat myself, while simultaneously responding back and forth to WhatsApp and BBM messages she was receiving. On a different occasion after entering Aunty Mandy's lounge one afternoon I came to find Elmorese seated alongside Aunty Mandy's daughter on one of the couches in their small lounge. They hadn't seen me enter since they were so captivated by the Kenyan

⁴⁵ Straightening one's hair with a hair straightening iron.

⁴⁶ In South Africa a wendy house is a moveable wooden cottage that is often used as a temporary home to accommodate extended family. The wooden structure is usually situated in backyards.

television soap opera they were watching on one of the local South African television broadcast stations. I sat down quietly on the single seated couch behind them and observed Elmorose responding to messages on her cell-phone every few minutes.

“Who are you chatting to?” I asked.

Startled by my voice both girls turned around and laughed surprisingly. “Just this other boy” Elmorose answered.

“On WhatsApp?” I asked.

“Yes, he got my contact from Facebook now he is chatting to me” She answered.

“Do you always give your WhatsApp number to people you meet on Facebook?” I asked, to which Elmorose boldly responded:

“No, only if they seem cool. You know there are a lot of perverts on Facebook but I delete them if they inbox me such things.”

Elmorose interacted with me while being engaged in a separate virtual conversation at the same time. Her boldness in stating that she only gives her personal contact details to young men if they seem interesting, suggests that she perceives social media as a space where she is free to be in control of whomever she chooses to interact with, and whether or not she wants to interact with them on multiple platforms i.e. from Facebook to WhatsApp. I call this having a dual conversation. Humphreys (2005:819) denotes this twofold exchange as the “face-to-face and cyber conversation”. In a dual conversation, an individual is adept to have a virtual conversation with one or more person via their internet enabled cell-phone, while simultaneously having a “face-to-face” conversation.

Based on my fieldwork among the girls of Eersteriver I have found that for those of my interlocutors who were less socially connected and who desired to be, their cell-phones and thus social media enabled them to not only be more social (via their cell-phones) ,but more importantly, it strengthened and maintained social bonds. Taryn often used her cell-phone to chat to her best friend Danielle during the week when Danielle was at her grandparent’s house for school. Elmorose also used her cell-phone to chat to old primary school friends and would often arrange outings and visits with them by means of WhatsApp or Facebook. This goes against arguments made by supporters of the face-to-face versus virtual conversation debate. Humphreys (2005:819) declares that while dual

conversational exchanges can now occur concurrently, it can become problematic given that the person engaging in the virtual conversation has to meet the expectations of both the person with them physically, as well as the person they are having the virtual conversation with. This is called the “face-to-face versus virtual conversation” debate. Contributing to this debate, Przybylski & Weinstein (2012:8) propose that simply by existing, cell-phone communication technology may get in the way of the development of social relationships.

There are however instances where the cell-phone could potentially cause conflict, but I hold the view that this is more common in romantic relationships as opposed to friendships. I was hanging out with Prudence one day at Aunty Mandy’s house. I was on the one bed holding her baby while she sat on the other bed which was opposite to the one I was sitting on, holding her boyfriend’s cell-phone since she was awaiting a reply from her grandmother on WhatsApp. The handset then rang, but the caller’s number was not saved onto the contact list so she proceeded to answer the call. The caller was a girl named Whitney, asking to speak to Gerswin. Prudence’s demeanour changed from even-tempered to a more distrustful state as she got up to leave the room to hand Gerswin the phone. Very shortly after, he returned with the cell-phone and handed it back to her. She cynically asked him:

“Wie is whitney?” (“Who is Whitney?”)

He laughed uncomfortably and said *“Wag man”* (“Wait man”) and swiftly left the room.

Prudence spent the rest of that day in bed, not speaking to anyone including me. So here it could be argued that cell-phones, if used for unfavourable purposes if indeed there was something going on between Gerswin and Whitney and Prudence was not just jealous, can obstruct the maturity of intimacy and confidence in a romantic relationship (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2012:8).

Based on her ethnographic study on cell-phone use in intimate relationships among labour migrants in Cape Town, Marjorie Disebo Motau (2013) asserts that there are instances where communication between two people engaging in a virtual conversation can take place and cause conflict. She makes the example of one of her research participants being displeased with the time his partner takes to respond to his text messages (Motau,

2013:68). Subsequently I will not deny that the cell-phone and the use of social media can perhaps cause problems in romantic relationships at times, I am more interested in the ways in which the internet enabled cell-phone offers young people in general and young women in particular a way to be social in more ways than one. I argue that by engaging in a dual conversation, like Prudence did with me and her grandmother and later even with a third person by answering the call, she was able to meet all of our expectations simultaneously. Almost as if to say, the cell-phone and thus the dual conversation was enabling her to multitask socially. Apart from equipping young women with a whole new way of having a conversation, the topics of these conversations also hold importance since conversational themes that are more meaningful and personal is likely to promote a safe sense of closeness (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2012:8). As I have already discussed above, young people and specifically young women in Eersteriver have constructed new ways of doing old things by means of their internet enabled cell-phones. They are now able to have conversations and interact in new and interesting ways. I would like to argue that all this has lead to young women finding new ways of doing intimacy. In this thesis I use the concept of intimacy to denote closeness.

4.5. New Ways of Doing Intimacy

Drawing from my fieldwork I argue that through new social media young people are now able to experience a sense of closeness towards another person without needing to be within close physical proximity to that particular person. I have found that technology has a key position in the major reforming of concepts surrounding intimacy and other social relationships among young people. (Davies, 2013:3). With the help of social media that are operated on their cell-phones, particularly WhatsApp, MXit, and Facebook, the young women I worked with were able to “do” intimacy in a completely new way.



Figure 2: A cartoon image depicting how cell-phones and social media have modified the intimacy of marriage. Here the traditional words “you may now kiss the bride” has been replaced by “you may update your Facebook status”.

Source: Facebook – “I just want to share my life with you” Facebook page.

While the concept of intimacy in social relationships is not a new concept within itself, my argument here is that young women in Eersteriver are able to build, establish and strengthen relationships and exercise intimacy all without having to leave their homes. The intimacy all takes place within the virtual realm. Typically, a relationship is strengthened by seeing one another and having regular conversations, in other words spending time together. This is the traditional understanding of social interaction; however, what this new technology is doing, is making it possible for young people to “spend time together” online and via social applications, chatting via their cell-phones or doing things that would normally strengthen a friendship or any other kind of relationship. Since regular social interaction strengthens relationships and creates bonds, this too is possible while chatting to someone via a cell-phone.

Prudence and Gerswin’s infant son fell ill with bronchitis and had to be hospitalized for a few days at the Eersteriver hospital. This was during the time when Gerswin’s cell-phone had a technical defect so he used Aunty Mandy’s cell-phone to communicate with Prudence who was using her grandmother’s cell-phone since she had to stay the night with baby Tirlo. On the first night that baby Tirlo was admitted to hospital he was put on a ventilator. For a new mother this experience was quite traumatic for Prudence, especially

since she was at the hospital alone. To remedy this she sought comfort from Gerswin, which he gave to her in a WhatsApp conversation I was allowed to read between the two of them.

In the conversation Prudence expressed her concern and fears for the baby because of the pain and discomfort he was in. Gerswin responded by reassuring her that everything would be okay. Gerswin “kept her company” via their virtual conversation for the remainder of the night and helped her feel less lonely and worried. Based on my observations, Gerswin and Prudence were not overtly affectionate towards one another but I would often see him dedicate a MXit status expressing his love for her. In instances such as the MXit status dedication as well as the hospitalization of their infant son, one can see that although time consuming, sending an SMS or text via a social application such as WhatsApp affords people to express themselves more freely (Motau: 2013:67) Instances like this demonstrate how the cell-phone and thus social applications can serve as a means to *do* intimacy in a *new* way.

I would often hear young people say “we were chatting and became close that way” indicating that they had gotten to “know each other” online. This is true even for myself and my relationships with my interlocutors. The fact that we had virtual conversations did in fact prove to improve our real face-to-face interactions and strengthened our relationships. The young women I worked with have found ways of being “social” and found ways to “interact” with others without actually having to leave the comfort of their own homes. They are able to “chat” and even “have fights” via their cell-phones. In the same way, they are also able to maintain and reinforce relationships. For example, since Taryn stayed indoors and came outside mostly when she was with Danielle, she would often declare her love and appreciation of Danielle and the friendship they share in her WhatsApp status. By doing this, Taryn was able to cement her intimacy with Danielle as shown below (Taylor & Harper, 2003:3).

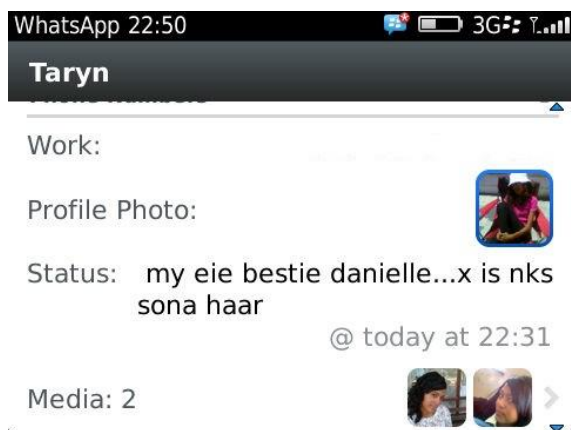


Figure 3: Taryn dedicating her WhatsApp status to Danielle and even using a picture of Danielle as her profile picture.

Transliteration: “My very own bestie Danielle...I am nothing without her”.

Creating online content and “meeting” and “getting to know” people online is becoming fundamental in managing one’s personhood, social interactions and even daily life Livingstone (2008:4). Cell-phones and social media offer an avenue through which young people can maintain and strengthen their social associations (Taylor & Harper, 2003:3). In doing so, cell-phones sanction a variety of eccentric “interactional” methods that allow young people to employ much more than insufficient conversations or chats to secure their social relations (Taylor & Harper, 2003:3). Short text messages known as SMSes along with instant messages on social applications such as WhatsApp and BBM are some of these “interactional” methods.

Witnessing how the internet enabled cell-phone and new social media has such a major impact on the social lives of the young women of Eersteriver, I began to question how this would impact the way they perceived themselves as they approached adulthood. I sought to uncover how they use social media to discover, perform and articulate themselves liberally since social media plays such a crucial role in the construction of contemporary youth personhood (Weber & Mitchell, 2008:26). The next chapter grapples with these questions among others which I include in the concluding discussion that follows.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter my main claim was that new technology that is now easily operated on internet enabled cell-phones, have provided young women, with the unique ability of both establishing and maintaining social relationships, that is to say, they are doing an *old* thing

in a *new* way. The old being social interaction and the new being that it can now take place in the virtual world. My key sub-claim was that social media has revolutionized young women's understanding of what social interaction is. Drawing from Taylor & Harper (2003) who provides an update to Mauss's (1924) theory of gift giving I discussed cell-phone interaction as a form of gift giving and showed how through new social media even this *old* thing can now be done in a *new* way. I proposed that this new way of interacting socially has resulted in new ways of having a conversation. I then went on to discuss how young people are now able to have dual conversations simultaneously, one in the real world and another in the virtual world. I also presented new social media has resulted in new ways of doing intimacy among young people. In the next chapter I argue that young women are finding ways to challenge the confines of gendered norms often referred to as *ordentlikheid* within their neighbourhoods, with the use of their internet enabled cell-phones often being at the core.



CHAPTER FIVE: BEING A “GOOD” GIRL IN THE AGE OF WHATSAPP AND FACEBOOK: PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES OF ORDENTLIKHEID

5.1 Introduction

The social moral structure that requires a young woman to act in a respectable manner is often regulated by an older respectable woman. In the age of new social media the ideology of respectability and its boundaries however may appear controlling for young women who want to experiment with the freedom that social media freely offers. It should come as no surprise then that young women are now finding new ways to articulate and perform themselves. The internet enabled cell-phone and social media is one such way. Through the use of internet enabled cell-phones and thus social apps like Facebook and WhatsApp young women in Eersteriver are finding new ways to negotiate their personhood as good daughters and exercise their agency to push against the boundaries outlined by the moral social structure in which they exist. This chapter is informed by and builds on Salo’s (2003) argument of good daughterhood and Salo (2003;2004;2009) as well as Ross’s (2010) arguments on *ordentlikheid* and the boundaries in which these kinds of daughters can exist as well as the spaces they occupy within their community. Although many older persons may be highly concerned that the internet and social media offers little to no privacy and exposes young people to the likes of sexual predators for example, In this chapter I will show how young women of Eersteriver perceive the internet as a free and safe space to represent themselves and their feelings liberally. I will thus show how these young women use the freedom, privacy and anonymity that the internet and social media so freely offers, to push the boundaries of good daughterhood and thus increasing their agency, while still remaining within the social structure of respectability.

In this chapter I demonstrate how young women are finding ways to challenge the confines of gendered norms often referred to as *ordentlikheid* within their local communities, with the use of their internet enabled cell phones often being at the core. I do this by presenting evidence of how these young women are able to display different kinds of behaviour in the virtual realm where little to no adult supervision is present, while being “good” daughters in the “real” world. I will use examples primarily from my online fieldwork data such as screenshot images taken of their Facebook and WhatsApp statuses and profile pictures to support my claims. I will make use of excerpts from formal

interviews, field notes taken after deep hanging out, and my own observations during the fieldwork. In the first part of this chapter I theoretically discuss *ordentlikheid* as it is characterized by Salo (2003; 2004; 2006; 2009) and Ross (2010) in relation to the Eersteriver context. I follow this with a discussion on social structure, personhood and agency which I relate to my fieldwork data to show that the young women I worked with are continuously de-constructing and re-constructing their respectability through their agency. However, as I will show, they do this while at the same time reinforcing their social moral structure of *ordentlikheid*. In the second part of this chapter I present and critically discuss the impact of social media and cell-phones on young women of Eersteriver and show how they push the boundaries of respectability.

5.2 Characterizing the *ordentlike meisie*

As discussed in Chapter Two Salo (2003:172) argues that *ordentlikheid* is a relentlessly gendered ideology and that gendered *ordentlikheid* acts as a regulator for young women and their mobility, assessing certain social areas as suitable for women to be seen at and others not (see also Ross, 2010:40). Salo (2009:15) describes the idea commonly held in the Cape Flats communities of an *ordentlike meisie* as being diligent about her school work, conservative in her manner of dress and behaviour, and who spent her afternoons at home as opposed to walking around in the streets, except if she was running an errand. Similarly Ross (2010:37) describes *ordentlikheid* as presented to her during her long-term fieldwork in a settlement just outside Cape Town as alluding respectability shown by external appearances, such as being clean and tidy for example.

Salo found that young women who exhibited these characteristics were held in high esteem by the older respectable mothers and other members in the Manenberg Township since they were considered *ordentlik* and were thus believed to personify a respectable personhood, making them “good” daughters within the neighbourhood. Although Salo conducted her study in the working class Manenberg neighbourhood in the late 1990s, I found during my ethnographic fieldwork in 2014 that the ideology of a good daughter and respectable girl was largely unchanged and still a very dominant force among older respectable women in Eersteriver. I thought back to a time when Aunty Mandy and I had a conversation in the kitchen where we spoke about Gerswin and his girlfriend Prudence and how her younger daughter Jamie is so taken by Prudence and spent a lot of time at her house two streets away before they moved to Aunty Mandy’s home.

“Sy het nou die dag baklei by hulle. Jamie het my kom se sy het n ander meisie geslaan” (she was in a fight the other day, Jamie came to tell me that she fought with another girl) Aunty Mandy said as she placed dirty plates and glasses into the kitchen sink. She then continued, *“sy kan bietjie baie deurmekaar en ombeskof wies maar ek het vir haar gese in my huis moet n meisie ordentlik wies”* (she can be very violent and disrespectful, but I told her, in my home, a girl needs to be respectable). *“Nou wat is volgens Aunty Mandy n ordentlike meisie?* (According to Aunty Mandy, what is a respectable girl?) I asked as I watched her wash the last plate. Aunty Mandy responded by saying:

“Ok lat ek jou gou n brief gie vir wat ordentlikheid volgens my is. Vir my moet n meisie sag wies, sy moet haar gedra. En die plekke wat sy naatoe gaan, sy moet wiet hoe om haar te gedra in plekke, sy moet nie wild wies en praat nie. Jy wiet Lara, vir my, loep n meisie nie heeldag rond in nagklere nie. Sy moet teen alle tye netjies angetrek wies. Sommige meisies loep dag en nag in nagklere wat nie vir my pas nie. (Ok let me give you a brief [idea] of what respectability is according to me. To me a girl should be soft spoken, she must behave. And the places she goes to, she must know how to behave herself in places, she must not be unruly and speak in an unruly manner. You know Lara, to me a girl should not walk around all day in her night clothes. She should be properly dressed at all times. Some girls walk around day and night in their night clothes and that doesn’t sit well with me.) She paused, with the plate still in her hand and looked up and out of the kitchen window almost as if she was gathering her thoughts trying to think whether or not she had left any important characteristics out of the “brief” she had just given me. She finally concluded by saying *“Sy moet oeki kaal goed dra en ombeskof praati”* (She also should not wear revealing clothes and speak in a rude manner).

This interaction with Aunty Mandy made it abundantly clear that young women who did not exhibit the characteristics of a respectable or “good” girl i.e. who did not work hard at school, who were provocative in their manner of dress and behaviour, who got into physical altercations, who did not spend her afternoons at home and instead spent them roaming the neighbourhood streets, and who overtly disregarded the social and physical boundaries of the neighbourhood, were regarded as reckless and foolish. Based on this I argue that by using this ideology, “respectable mothers” such as Aunty Mandy were able to have some level of influence on the reputation a young woman would have in the neighbourhood. One afternoon while standing outside Aunty Mandy’s house along with her family in their front yard under the shaded roof as it was quite hot that day, one of

Gerswin's friends Ryan, who is also their next door neighbour who had recently returned to Cape Town after working in Johannesburg for some time, came to visit. After speaking about everyday things and asking me why I was there so often, he announced that he was looking for a girlfriend.

“*Vat net iets ordentlik asseblief!*” (Just take something respectable please!) Aunty Mandy shot back flinging one hand in the air, so as to display her disapproval of his previous choice in girlfriends. I wondered. I suddenly recalled one of my previous visits when one Saturday afternoon a few weeks earlier, I had seen Ryan sitting on a camping chair on the corner of the street drinking beer. Beside him two girls were dancing and drinking beer. The girls were dancing to music that was playing very loudly inside the house he was sitting in front of. Perhaps Aunty Mandy was referring to that particular incident or many others since she's known him almost all of his life, I thought to myself as I observed their conversation. Ryan declared that he wanted a girl who had paid employment, had a car, and maybe even a place to stay. Bra Pat, Aunty Mandy's husband light-heartedly interjected “*oh jy wil he die vrou moet vir jou onderhou?*” (oh you want the woman to support you?) Ryan then laughed and answered no, he just wanted a girl who was ambitious. Since a respectable girl's display of good daughterhood by means of modest behaviour or way of dress suggested a young woman's capability of bringing up her children well and her ability of managing a decent and respectable household (Salo, 2003:352) and possibly a romantic relationship, it comes as no surprise then that a respectable mother such as Aunty Mandy feels so strongly about a young man having a respectable girl as his romantic partner.

Ross (2010:641) contends that while *ordentlikheid* may be expressed as a fundamental nature, aggressive socialisation appears to be inherent to its construction. Perhaps young women within these communities are punished by either their parents or other respectable members of their communities if they go against any of the socially constructed boundaries they are expected not to cross. But how are they punished? At the time of Ross and Salo's research aggressive forms of punishment were accepted as a norm in the localities they conducted their research in since the respectable mothers shared the responsibility of the upbringing of all the young people in the community (Salo 2004). I found that while the ideology of a good daughter and *ordentlike* meisie holds an uncompromising value to respectable mothers in Eersteriver, aggressive forms of behaviour is exercised by parents only. That is to say, a young person may be reprimanded by an elder in the community but

only the parents are allowed to physically reprimand if they see fit. But just because elders and fellow community members are not allowed to aggressively punish young women in Eersteriver, there were still negative repercussions that came with going against socially constructed boundaries, the loss of them being seen as a respectable girl being most severe. In the section that follows I theoretically discuss personhood and agency in relation to the social structure in which it exists. I feel that this is particularly important not only because I want to propose that young women in Eersteriver are using their cell-phones and social media to increase their agency while still remaining within the boundaries of respectability, but also because in the section that comes thereafter, I present virtual and physical examples of what I propose.

5.3 Being a Respectable Person in Eersteriver: Increasing Agency while Staying within the Framework of Social Structure

As discussed in chapter two, structure is intricately constructed by social contexts and replicated by those who may be seen as pushing the boundaries that are constituted within the social structure. Using Mauss's term "habitus", Bourdieu (1999) connects private life to collective social structure and depicts how social life may be given but also replicated, reproducing the existing social relations. Bourdieu's (1999) conception of habitus as the practice of structure makes it possible to grasp how social structure is personified and experienced in the social lives of people. Fowler (2004:4) describes personhood as the condition of being a person. He goes on to say that within their specific social contexts, persons are configured, de-configured, sustained and amended through the social structure they are a part of. Fowler (2004) further describes this course of action as the continuous attainment of personhood. What this means is that the moral economy in which one exists and thus the social structure thereof entails that one passes from one state of personhood to another i.e. respectable daughter to respectable mother.

The social structure highlighted by Salo shows that social structure namely respectability, was *given* to the young women in Manenberg. Similarly, this social structure has been *given* to the young women in Eersteriver. In this chapter I show that in the new age of communication technologies and social media, young women are exercising their personal agency to push the boundaries of the moral structures they find themselves in, while reproducing the existing social relations thus exercising their agency within social structure.

In relation to both my research and Salo's, what this means is that when faced with situations where they may not always be able to express themselves liberally because of the confines of *ordentlikheid* which is a crucial part of their social structure, young women create new ways to articulate themselves.

In the sections that follow I show how young women in Eersteriver exercise their agency to show parts of themselves in the virtual realm that they cannot otherwise show in the physical world - that is, pushing the boundaries of what it means to be a respectable and good girl. While these representations could be seen as acts of rebellion, I argue that it takes place through creating a parallel but sometimes contrasting online persona. In this way they are still within the boundaries of respectability thus showing that agency exists within the framework of social structure.

To avoid the negative repercussions that often come with defying the boundaries of being a "good" daughter and thus good girl outright, it is my argument that young women in Eersteriver have found ways to push against the boundaries of respectability without crossing it altogether. The internet enabled cell phone and the social media that is operated on the device makes this possible. In line with Pink (2007:1) who asserts that electronic media, photographs and digital videos have become progressively more integrated into ethnographies - as depictions of ethnographic knowledge and experiences, as cultural transcripts and as locations for social relations, I rely on visual aspects to serve as depictions of ethnographic knowledge in the next section of this chapter.

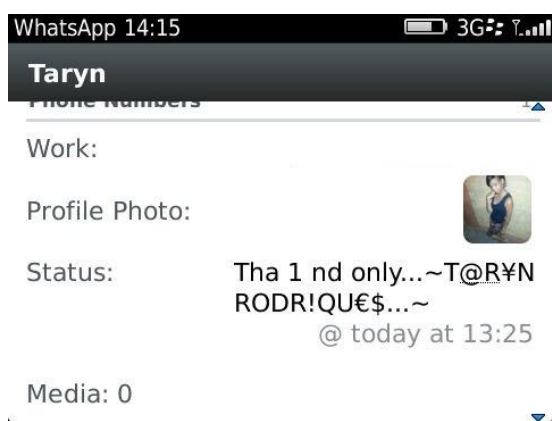
5.4 Pushing the Boundaries of What it Means to be a Respectable Girl

New technology such as the internet enabled cell-phone is accepted and integrated into the daily lives of young people more swiftly than older persons. As young people utilize technological devices, not only does this modify their daily lives, but also their experience and view of society (Tully, 2003:444). Since young women in Eersteriver are expected to live a life of domesticity and thus respectability, they were not always able to express themselves authentically in terms of dress and how they felt on any given day. Salo (2010:302) asserts that in Manenberg during the late 1990s some young women had fashioned a separate moral world with a separate series of morals and social associations in an attempt to re-characterize and reclaim a "good" sense of personhood. In Eersteriver however, it is my argument that young women are using the new technology that they have

accepted and integrated into their daily lives as both a platform to perform self adoration and articulate future aspirations, and as a medium to push the boundaries of ordentlikheid. I start by first presenting how young women in Eersteriver use WhatsApp and Facebook statuses and profile pictures to model good daughterhood and to perform themselves through self adoration. I then present how these young women use the same forms of social media to exhibit pride regarding their academic achievements as well as their future aspirations. I follow this by presenting instances where these young women use the fact that little to no adult supervision is present on social apps to push against the boundaries of the “real” world that requires them to be respectable.

5.4.1 Cell-Phone Usage as an Agent for Portrayals of Good Daughterhood and Performances of Self Adoration

During my fieldwork I found that these young women were using the social apps on their cell-phones to articulate their emotions and their opinions via social media. I would often come across Facebook or WhatsApp statuses and profile pictures they would create in which they articulate how they felt about certain matters. This ranged from matters such as how their day was, to more serious issues such as a disagreement with a parent as well as demonstrations of self adoration. Since most of their parents were not making use of these social apps and networking sites, the young women could liberally articulate themselves. Below I provide screenshot examples of Taryn, Elmorose and Chichi using their cell-phones as a means of performing self adoration and demonstrating respectability⁴⁷.



⁴⁷ A screenshot is an image taken on a cell-phone or computer, which records that which is visible on the screen or monitor. It should be noted that the screenshot images presented below were taken with both cell-phones I was using during my fieldwork. Since I started using a different cell-phone in the second half of my fieldwork some screenshot images may look different to others since the appearance of screenshot images varies on different brands and models of cell-phones.

Figure 1: In her status, Taryn proudly displays her full name. In her profile picture Taryn is wearing a strappy vest and a short skirt.

Transliteration: “The one and only...TARYN RODRIQUES...”

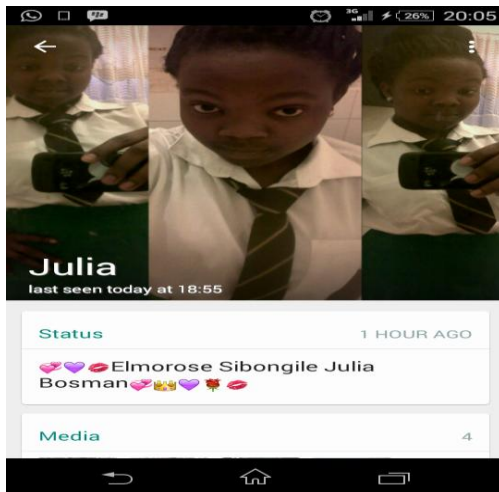


Figure 2: Screenshot image of a WhatsApp status Elmorose made, displaying pride in her full name, celebrating her Christian name as well as the name that was given to her by her father. Her profile picture, which is a compilation of self portraits commonly known as “selfies” is also visible.

The performances of self adoration in figures 1 and 2 by Taryn and Elmorose are quite interesting and call for discussion. Performances emerge in different instances and forms. Schechner (2013:2) asserts that performances must be interpreted as a wide range of human activities spanning from sports and music to everyday social life performances and rituals, and on to gender roles and the internet. When I saw their status updates along with their profile pictures I got a sense that both Taryn and Elmorose were conveying something about how they wish to present and perform themselves. Perhaps even unwittingly to some extent.

While it is quite clear that they are performing self adoration in their statuses, what is not very clear is whether or not the profile pictures at the time of the status updates were meant to substantiate the performance of self pride that they were trying to demonstrate. If this were the case it would appear as though Taryn wants to present herself as a young woman who likes to flaunt her body. Taryn very often displayed profile pictures where she was “showing skin”. Taking this into account it would seem that for Taryn, it is much more than self pride. For Taryn, I contend that her status update and profile picture has a lot to

do with her sexuality and sexual and sensual embodiment. Since showing off her sexuality and sensuality is heavily suppressed by the good daughterhood concept, through the social media on her cell-phone Taryn is able to perform her sexuality as a young woman through dress in a way she would not be able to do in her everyday life.

Interestingly, all Taryn's revealing pictures were *always* taken within the boundary of her home. The pictures would either be taken in her bedroom, her home, or as is seen in figure 1, in front of her home. So while wearing revealing clothes is not what is expected of a good daughter in Eersteriver, Taryn managed to push the boundary while staying safely within it by never leaving her home dressed in that manner. In fact I never saw Taryn outside the gates of her front yard in skin revealing clothes⁴⁸. Even when performing self adoration Taryn uses her agency to push against the boundaries of respectability while still remaining within its structures.

Elmorose's performance of self adoration is somewhat different. Unlike Taryn who presents herself in terms of physical appearance and dress, it would appear as though Elmorose presents herself in relation to her background and her position as a school going young woman. Even though she never met her father she was told by her mother that he was a Sotho man who wanted to name her Sibongile and she has thus adopted this name into her full name on her Facebook profile as well as in her WhatsApp status in Figure 2. She could easily have changed into casual clothing before taking that picture, or she could even have used an entirely different picture as her display but she chose to take pride in her individuality as a respectable young woman who is proud of her African lineage as well as her school career thus using social media as a platform to displaying her good daughterhood.

Elmorose's public demonstration of her African lineage within the context of often deeply conservative and often anti-black racist Cape flats communities is a very bold form of performing and presenting herself. I say this because while she performs such a boundary pushing presentation of *who* she is and how she wants others to see her, her having a picture of herself in her school uniform in her profile picture demonstrates conformity.

⁴⁸ See also the picture I uses to introduce Taryn in chapter three. The picture was taken in the street as she returned home from the Eersteriver grand shopping complex. The picture shows Taryn dressed very modestly, showing almost no skin except for her arms.

What this means is that Elmorose is a young woman that is not only complex, but also contradictory.



Figure 3: A picture Chichi uploaded onto Facebook showing herself wearing no makeup on her face with a description saying that a strong, beautiful and confident girl does not show her naked body, but rather her naked face.

Based on numerous visits to Chichi's home I learned that she was very fond of makeup and had quite an impressive collection, most of them given to her by the woman her mother worked for and some of the free items her mother would get after making a sale as she was also a sales rep for a very prominent direct makeup selling corporation. In figure 3 Chichi expresses that if a woman wants to exude strength, beauty and confidence, she need not show her naked body, she need only show her naked face. Holding the same assumption that the picture serves to substantiate the status or in this case the picture caption, It could then be said that Chichi expresses that *she* does not need to show her naked body to feel strong, beautiful and confident. In this instance Chichi uses social media to express and perhaps even reinforce a good sense of daughterhood.

5.4.2 New Social Media as a Way to Demonstrate Academic Pride and Future Aspirations

Drawing on my online fieldwork I argue that young women in Eersteriver are using new social media as a way to exhibit pride in relation to academic achievements as well as future aspirations.



Figure 4: Chichi showing her delight in completing her schooling and her desire to going to study at university to open the door to a bright future. In her profile picture (which was taken in her backyard) she is wearing a short dress.

Transliteration: “I am officially done with high school. Just waiting for varsity next year then I am unlocking into my bright future”



Figure 5: Two Facebook status updates by Chichi after receiving her grade 12 results expressing pride in being ranked in the top two performers for maths in her school as well as passing grade 12 with admission full university bachelor studies.



Figure 6: A Facebook status update in which Elmorose demonstrates appreciation to God for having passed to the next grade.

Transliteration: Thank God I failed.....Just joking, thank God I passed. Guys, Tshepo [and] Nelly, this now really shows us that we can trust in him and our hard work wasn't for nothing through this hard times and stressful moments we had. But today he showed us that he is always there for us and never must we forget him when times are good and then when the bad times come we know him. I just want to say thanks guys that told me not to lose hope and [that] I must trust in myself and in him.

Figures 4, 5 and 6 demonstrates that young women in Eersteriver use their cell-phones and social media as more than a medium for articulating self adoration and good daughterhood. They use social media to show off their academic achievements as well as to show appreciation to those who have supported them and even to divinity as shown in figure 6. In order for one to understand how young women from Eersteriver push against the boundaries of respectability I have to present this within a larger context- that is, the ways in which they use social media to articulate themselves freely in all kinds of aspects of their personal and social lives as I have just shown. In the next section of this chapter I present and discuss the ways in which young women in Eersteriver use their agency to push against the boundaries of respectability by creating parallel online personas. I argue that with the aid of internet enabled cell-phones young women in the Eersteriver neighbourhood have created a separate moral world where there is no adult supervision. The absence of adult supervision allows them to freely state how they feel. However, I

argue that even though they use their agency to articulate themselves authentically, they do this in such a manner that does not cross over the boundaries of their moral social structure. I thus argue that their agency exists within the framework of their social structure.

5.4.3 Taking Risks While Playing it Safe: Pushing Against the Boundaries of Respectability

Since the behaviour of young women in working class neighbourhoods in Cape Town are often assessed from the standpoint of the local ideology of domesticity and respectability, motherhood and young women's domestic responsibilities are often regarded as the feminine ideals (Salo 2010). As a result, young women are often required to restrict themselves to the home space where they are to spend their free time doing chores in and around the house or looking after younger siblings, in order to obtain and maintain a respectable and domestic feminine personhood. During my fieldwork I found that young women in Eersteriver would often make the kind of statuses one would not expect from an *ordentlike* meisie. Again I present screenshot images of WhatsApp and Facebook status updates in which these young women push against the boundaries of *ordentlikheid*. I argue that this takes place in a rather paradoxical manner. What I mean by this is that young women in Eersteriver are taking risks while simultaneously playing it safe by pushing against the boundaries of *ordentlikheid* in an unseen world while still remaining within the boundaries of *ordentlikheid* in the physical world. Below I provide examples of rather uncensored WhatsApp and Facebook status updates by Taryn, Elmorose and Chichi:



Figure 7: In this status update Taryn uses explicit language to express that even though she is feeling very tired, she still honours her duties and does her chores.

Transliteration: “My body is in his [profanity] sore jor can’t help myself...I am [profanity] tired...but I still fulfil my duties”

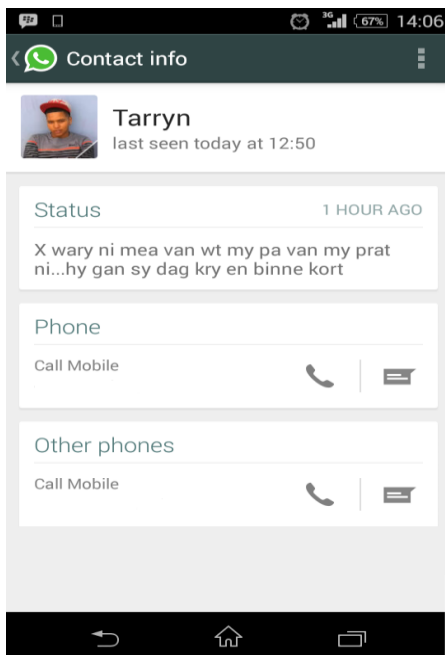


Figure 8: In this WhatsApp status update Taryn expresses feelings of hostility towards her father after an argument that occurred between them.

Transliteration: “I’m not worried about what my Father says about me anymore...his day will come, and soon.

The content of Taryn’s status updates is particularly interesting. Figure 7 shows how she uses social media in her effortless negotiation between an explicit display of how she feels and her performance of the expectations of good daughterhood where she honours her responsibilities to do what is expected of her in the household. In contrast, figure 8 demonstrates how Taryn pushes the boundaries of respectability by speaking about her father in a threatening manner as well as publicly announcing that she is not concerned about what her father thinks of her. Both of these demonstrations are not the kind of behaviour that is allowed within the ideology of good daughterhood. In a neighbourhood where so much value is placed on how a young girl is seen by respectable members in the neighbourhood, Taryn is careful enough not to make her statement of disregard towards her father in the physical world for that would put her good daughterhood at great risk. Taryn thus declares her feelings in the safety of the virtual world. Taryn’s frank yet authentic declarations show that new behaviours emerge from performances of personhood

via social media and that long established understandings of good daughterhood and respectability are altered and thus crafted into online performances.

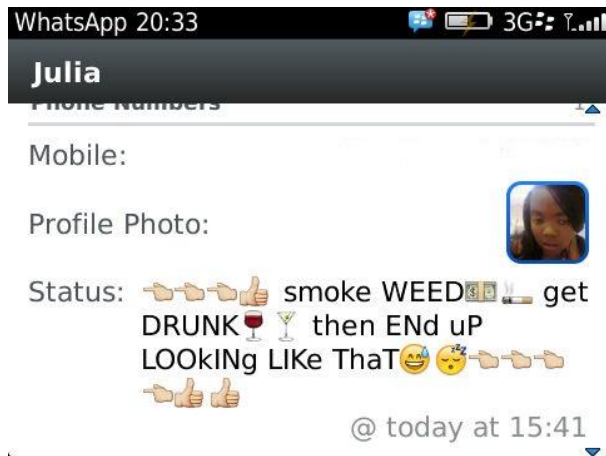


Figure 9: A WhatsApp status made by Elmorose on New Year’s Day in which she encourages her peers to smoke marijuana, drink alcohol to the point of intoxication so that they can end up looking as inebriated as she does in her profile picture. Her clever use of emoticons assists in making her status update seem aesthetically appealing to her peers.



Figure 10: A New Years Eve status update made by Chichi in which she wishes all her peers a happy new year and reminds them to drink alcohol discreetly.

I was sick at home on New Year’s Day (which was a Thursday) scrolling through WhatsApp on my cell-phone to see what all my contacts had gotten up to the night before. It was then that I came across these status updates of Chichi and Elmorose. I decided to wait until I saw them the following Monday to discuss it with them. As soon as I arrived in Eersteriver I alerted both girls on WhatsApp that I was coming to see them later that day. Soon after, Chichi alerted me that she was dressed and that she would wait for me on the

corner of the street. As soon as we met up we made our way to her home. As I sat on the double bed that she shared with her younger brother I watched her tune the radio station until she stopped at one of Cape Town's leading broadcast radio stations before plugging her cell-phone into its charger. I took this opportunity to ask her how her new years eve had been:

“Ag it was okay, we had a braai here at home”

“Just you and your family?”

“No, some of my relatives were here as well. They all slept over because they were so drunk” [laughs]

“What did they drink?”

“Beer”

“And you?”

[laughs] “Are you mad? You know how strict my dad is and how holy my mom is”

“But on WhatsApp you said your peeps should drink on the low”

“I meant it as a joke because I saw everyone's statuses that they were having fun partying and I was just at home. I didn't want to seem boring you know”

“Oh so you never drank at all?”

“No. Only coke [laughs] my parents said no.”

“Oh so you decided to encourage your friends to drink? You naughty girl” I said light-heartedly.

“[laughs] No, *I reminded* them to do it secretly because their parents are also strict like mine but they were allowed to go out with friends that night unlike me”.

As I was hanging out with Chichi in her bedroom, Elmore sent me a message on WhatsApp saying that she was waiting for me at Aunty Mandy's house. Chichi offered to walk me to the corner again so we left her house and proceeded to Aunty Mandy's home. When I arrived back at Aunty Mandy's house I found Elmore cleaning Aunty Mandy's kitchen. This was a common occurrence since Elmore regarded Aunty Mandy as a mother figure. We talked about what we had done over the weekend and then I shifted the conversation to the New Years Eve WhatsApp status she had made. I started by asking her what she got up to for New Years Eve:

“I was with one of my school friends in Malibu⁴⁹”

“Oh what did you do for the evening?”

“[laughs] Yoh! It was leka, I came home 4 o clock the morning!”

“Oh so you slept over at her house?”

“No we didn’t sleep at all [laughs] we were awake the whole time waiting for my lift I was so tired when I came home”

“Wasn’t Ouma angry at you for coming home so late?”

“Yes she was cross but I phoned her before the time to say I’m coming home late. They wanted me to sleep there but Ouma said I must come home”

“What happened?”

“She [the friend] and her brother came to fetch me because they were gonna braai so when it was time to come home so the car didn’t want to start so I had to wait for her uncle to come and bring me home”

“Did you drink at the braai?”

“No there wasn’t wine only champagne but they gave us grape juice”

“So what was your WhatsApp status about? You looked a bit drunk”

[laughs] “No I took that picture when I came home so I looked so drunk, like I was drugged because I was tired because of waiting so long for my lift so I thought that would be a kwaai status to go with that picture because everyone was drinking that night and I didn’t want to feel left out.”

“So what did your friends say about the status and picture?”

“The boys were saying that it’s cool and even invited me to a braai. And the girls said next time when I party like that I must take them with” she said in approval of herself for having fooled her peers into thinking that she is a girl who goes to cool parties and who experiments with alcohol and other substances.

In their virtual status updates, Chichi and Elmorose perform themselves to their peers as outgoing and very social and for lack of a better word - cool. However, in the physical world both young women admit to making those statuses to appear to have a life more exciting than it actually is. Chichi even goes as far as *reminding* her peers to find a way to consume alcohol without their parents and older persons seeing them, as if this were an unspoken rule among young people. Both Chichi and Elmorose demonstrate that with new

⁴⁹ Malibu Village is another suburb of Eersteriver a few kilometres from Heather Park.

social media it is indeed possible to experiment with social boundaries while being good daughters who comply with the expectations of gendered personhood.

The young women could liberally present themselves in a certain way while still holding onto their good daughterhood on account of the “separateness” social media offers them. Social apps and social networking sites such as WhatsApp and Facebook serve as a separate platform on which these young women can not only express resentment towards their parents, which they are probably not inclined to do in the real world, it also allows them to “safely” misbehave. Tully (2003:444) proposes that young people place new technology and the social applications it presents to them into different contexts. As shown above, young people and young women in particular are placing the internet enabled cell-phone into a situation where the device enables them to act out in the virtual realm while still maintaining their sense of respectability in their households and neighbourhood. In this way young women are able to gently yet persistently push the boundaries of being an *ordentlike meisie*.

The images above are proof that while being “good” daughters in the “real” world, these young women are able to display different kinds of behaviour in the virtual realm where little to no adult supervision is present. The content in the images displayed above, would under no circumstances be allowed to manifest in the physical everyday lives of these young women because it goes against what is expected of a respectable girl in the social structure i.e. respectability in Eersteriver. Since these feelings of anger, frustration, disregard, and even waywardness cannot be acted on in the everyday real lives of these young women, I argue that they use the freedom of social media that is operated on their cell-phones to safely misbehave since their parents and other older respectable persons in the neighbourhood will not see it. I have to reiterate here the existence of agency within the framework of social structure. Through new social media young women in Eersteriver have created new ways to perform themselves by implementing their agency to present parts of themselves in the virtual realm that they cannot otherwise present in the physical world. However, this takes place so discreetly so that it does not put their respectability in jeopardy. What this means is that instead of being trapped within the boundaries of social structure, they use their agency and social media to reclaim some level of freedom by pushing the boundaries without ever crossing it. Even though they may very well be able

to cross the boundaries they prefer to extend the boundaries of respectability and in that way make it work in their favour.

The fact that young women in Eersteriver have chosen so cleverly to push instead of cross the moral confines of respectability is an important finding. I say this because not only are these young women able to position themselves within the boundaries of respectability, they are also able to implement their agency to perform themselves freely in a separate moral world. These two moral worlds co-exist in the lives of these young women. Furthermore the fact that these young women use their activity in the virtual realm to push against the boundaries of respectability suggests that a duality is at play. What is interesting about this is that through social media they can invent a parallel online persona whereas the earlier generation as discussed by Salo (2003) had to physically move. Here it becomes apparent that the earlier generation were not able to conceal their desires and attempts at reinventing gendered personhood. For this reason, when they cross over the boundaries of respectability they were often regarded as foolish (Salo, 2003) and used as an example of the kind a daughter parents did not want their good daughters to be like. In the fast changing world of technology and social media, young women in contemporary South Africa are not only able to invent a parallel online persona, but they are also able to conceal this persona. This concealment is quite paradoxical since it allows them to be the *same* person in *different* ways in the two different worlds, performing different parts of themselves liberally while still demonstrating some conformity.

5.5 Online versus Offline Performance: Which is the Authentic Person?

The central claim of this chapter is that new social media to be operated on internet enabled cell-phones have enabled young women in Eersteriver to cleverly push against the boundaries of gendered personhood and alter their practice of good daughterhood since they make it possible for young women to experiment socially (in the case of Chichi and Elmorose in figures 9 and 10), and discreetly rebel (like in the case of Taryn in figures 7 and 8). The differences between their online demonstrations and how I knew them to be in person were worlds apart. In the same way it can be argued that the virtual world and “real” physical world may indeed be worlds apart as well. The question then becomes, if these young women can exist in both worlds, which is their *real* self?

I would like to argue in favour of an argument that both their selves are “real”. To some extent they are different persons in the two different realms. I propose that the freedom and (privacy from their parents) the virtual world offers them, gives them the ability to authentically articulate even their darkest thoughts. In this way they are still the same person. The only difference is that they are able to liberally yet safely articulate themselves without facing the kind of repercussions they would most likely have to face had they crossed the confines and lost their reputation as good daughters like the earlier generation. Based on both my offline and online fieldwork and observations I have come to the conclusion that with the aid of internet enabled cell-phones and thus social media, young women in Eersteriver are able to exist and be “real” in both the virtual and physical world. The fact that they gently push against the boundaries as opposed to crossing it altogether affords them the ability to negotiate between the two worlds with their respectability remaining undamaged. In this instance the young women and their good daughterhood is not a fixed trait, but rather part of an active process of negotiation between the virtual and physical world (Rasmussen: 2008:31) or what Fowler (2004) describes as the continuous accomplishment of personhood.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter is informed by and builds on Salo’s (2003) argument of good daughterhood and Salo (2003;2004;2009) as well as Ross’s (2010) arguments on *ordentlikheid* and the boundaries in which these kinds of daughters can exist as well as the spaces they occupy within their community. In this chapter I demonstrated how young women in Eersteriver have found ways to push against and thus widen the boundaries of gendered norms often referred to as *ordentlikheid* within their local neighbourhood, with the use of their internet enabled cell phones often being at the core. This chapter also demonstrated how young women of Eersteriver use the freedom, privacy and anonymity that the internet and social media so freely offers, to push the boundaries of good daughterhood and respectability while still maintaining their sense and title of being *ordentlik*. In the following chapter I bring together the main claims made in this thesis.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This study explored how young women in contemporary South Africa are making use of cell-phones and social media to widen their social networks and break away from the restrictions of respectable daughterhood. I investigated particularly whether the availability of the new social media (to be operated on cell-phones) has changed the concepts of personhood identified by Salo (2003). In other words, this study took a closer look at young women's use of contemporary mobile phone technology in contemporary South Africa and how it altered their performance of good daughterhood and respectability.

In order to demonstrate the significance of the impact social media has had on young women on the Cape Flats it was necessary for me to contextualize this study. I have particularly drawn on and built on the work of Salo (2003; 2004; 2006; 2009; 2010) and Ross (2010) in order to explore some of the contexts i.e. the social moral structure in which a young woman is required to be *ordentlik*/respectable. I have looked at the ways Bosch (2008; 2010; 2011), Pype (2013), Archambault (2011; 2012), Motau (2013) and van Pinxteren (2012) discuss the social uses of the cell-phone in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as the ways Livingstone (2008), Davies (2013), Humphreys (2005) describe the social uses of cell-phones and social media among young people in the global north so as to provide a global perspective. Furthermore I have drawn on the work of Fortes (1969) Williams (2003) Bourdieu (1999) Giddens (1984) and Karp (1995) to argue that young people and particularly young women in working class neighbourhoods are using social media to increase their agency while still remaining within their social moral structure - thereby reinforcing the moral restrictions of good daughterhood and I have conceptualised the way in which I use the term personhood in this thesis.

I continued to contextualize this study by providing a historical background of the research field site namely Eersteriver. I described the research process by providing a detailed description of the three month (offline and online) ethnography I employed in the Eersteriver neighbourhood as well as also briefly describing the six interlocutors who took part in this study as well as an additional three individuals who contributed to this study. I demonstrated the kind of relationships the girls of Eersteriver have with their cell phones, how they use their cell phones, for what purposes, what they do with them, who they communicate with and in which ways. Furthermore, I discuss the kind of social applications they make use of as well as how frequently and also what kind of information

they post about themselves on social applications via their cell phones. I also reflected on the research process and experiences in the field.

Drawing on both online and offline fieldwork data I demonstrated how new social media that is now easily operated on internet enabled cell-phones, have provided young women with the unique ability of both establishing and maintaining social relationships. I argue that they are doing an *old* thing in a *new* way. The old being social interaction and the new being that it can now occur in the virtual world. I placed great emphasis on how social media has revolutionized young women's understanding of what social interaction is. Following Taylor & Harper (2003) who provides an update to Mauss's (1924) theory of gift giving, I argued that cell-phone interaction is a form of gift giving and showed how through new social media even this *old* thing can now be done in a *new* way. I showed that this new way of interacting socially has resulted in new ways of having a conversation namely, a dual conversation whereby I presented examples showing how young women in Eersteriver are able to simultaneously have dual conversations; one in the real world and another in the virtual world. Aligned with the assertion of doing an *old* thing in a *new* way, I further presented how new social media has resulted in new ways of doing intimacy among young people in Eersteriver.

Again drawing on online and offline fieldwork data I finally presented the impact social media has had on young women and their performances of good daughterhood. This thesis builds on Salo's (2003) argument of good daughterhood and Salo (2003;2004;2009) as well as Ross's (2010) arguments on *ordentlikheid* and the boundaries in which these kinds of daughters can exist as well as the spaces they occupy within their community. Since the social moral structure that requires a young woman to act in a respectable manner is often regulated by an older respectable woman, I argued that in the age of new social media the ideology of respectability and its boundaries may appear too controlling for young women who want to experiment with the freedom that they deem social media freely offers. I argued that through new social media that is operated on their internet enabled cell-phones young women in Eersteriver are now finding new ways to articulate and perform themselves. Using direct online fieldwork data in the form of cell-phone screenshot images I showed how through the use of internet enabled cell-phones and thus social applications like Facebook and WhatsApp young women in Eersteriver are finding new ways to negotiate their personhood as good daughters and exercise their agency to push

against the boundaries outlined by the moral social structure in which they exist. In this way I asserted that their agency exists within the framework of their social moral structure.

In this thesis I argued that even though many older persons may be highly concerned that the internet and social media offers too little privacy and exposes young people to the likes of sexual predators for example, young women of Eersteriver perceive the internet as a free and safe space to represent themselves and their feelings liberally. To support this claim I showed how these young women use the freedom, privacy and anonymity that the internet and social media so freely offers, to push the boundaries of good daughterhood consequently increasing their agency, while still remaining within the social structure of respectability. In this thesis I ultimately demonstrated that young women in Eersteriver have found ways to challenge the confines of gendered norms often referred to as *ordentlikheid*. I further showed that the use of their internet enabled cell phones was often at the core. I did this by presenting evidence of how these young women have created a parallel and sometimes contradictory online persona and are thus able to display different kinds of behaviour in the virtual realm where little to no adult supervision is present, while being “good” daughters in the “real” world.

The arguments put forward in this thesis all speak to the main claim that there is a relationship between good daughterhood and new social media, and that this relationship is composed of young women in the working class neighbourhood Eersteriver using their internet enabled cell-phones as a means of exploring the social and virtual realm without putting their title of a “good” or “respectable” girl at risk. This thesis shows how new gendered subjectivities emerge from performances of personhood in the new social media such as WhatsApp and Facebook and how understandings of “good” daughterhood and respectability are altered and thus crafted into these practices.

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