

Degrees of sharing

Public voices, impression management and mobile video production in a participatory media project for teens in Makhaza, Khayelitsha.

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February 2011.



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Introduction

Almost forty percent of the current population of South Africa are between the ages of fourteen and 35 years old (Statistics South Africa, 2010). In the past, the political and civic engagement of young black South Africans made a significant contribution to the struggle against apartheid but often took place at the cost of young people's own educational and economic advancement. Consequently these youth were termed 'the lost generation'. Given this history, it might be imagined that post-apartheid youth would be a driving force in South Africa's new democracy. But the new generation of 'born free' young South Africans have generally not fulfilled such expectations, with many retreating from active political involvement, thus gaining the reputation of being a new "lost generation", albeit of a different kind (Reed & Hill, 2010, p. 270). While this is a local phenomenon it corresponds to global trends of young people's disengagement from formal politics.

Worldwide, politicians and scholars have tried to find reasons for and to address this alleged political disinterest of the youth. Reed & Hill (2010) and Rheingold (2008) suggest that participatory media production is an effective way to engage otherwise disaffected youth in civic activities and to encourage them to express their concerns, ideas and desires. By telling their own personal stories via pictures, young video producers gain the ability to turn their private voices into public voices, to distribute these videos (both online and offline) and thus to share their experiences and concerns with others. Proponents of such participatory projects suggest that they may lead to "collective action for common purpose" (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006, p. 174), and that such projects may consequently foster nascent forms of civic engagement.

This research project explores the use of participatory video production for civic engagement by twenty teenagers (aged between fifteen and eighteen) in Cape Town attending an after-school program in Makhaza, Khayelitsha. On the whole, the young participants in this study were economically, educationally and socially marginalised. They belonged to a group of young people whose votes are courted assiduously at election time, but whose voices are often ignored by mainstream media and politicians.

Teens' existing interest in media production as well as their networks of online and offline media exchange suggested the need to document the practices of an already engaged media-producing and media-sharing peer community. In 2008, a survey of a similar group of students (in the eleventh grade) attending schools in low income areas in Cape Town already frequently produced and exchanged photos and videos via their mobile phones (Kreutzer, 2009). A more recent study of teens from Guguletu and Langa situated such

practices in relation to a range of other 'mobile literacies' developed around sharing media and texting with peers on Mxit and Facebook (Walton, 2010).

The teens who participated in the Makhaza project were found to engage in similar practices. This study further documented their involvement in mobile media production, and in producing, sharing and distributing their own mobile videos. While the participants were highly engaged by the video-making project, their reluctance to share their productions with peer networks or a broader audience yielded several important insights. Notably, gaining a public 'voice' cannot be reduced to a simple state of 'self-expression' or the technical ability to produce video, or to access communications networks for sharing and publication. Instead it should be seen as a complex process that teens negotiate as part of their ongoing project of impression management (Goffman, 1956).

The participants received Nokia feature phones (Nokia X3 and Nokia 5530 XpressMusic) for a period of four months and attended weekly participatory media production training sessions. The research findings confirmed that the participants were highly engaged by mobile phone photography and mobile media distribution within their primarily offline social networks. Videos, however, were treated differently. The participants reported that they were proud of their video productions, but they did not exchange them with others in their social network as might have been expected.

This paper explains the teens' reluctance to share their creations in relation to Goffman's notion of impression management (1956). In this case, the process of impression management took place through the use of mobile phones, and both individual identities and social relations were expressed through the production, storage and exchange of media. This group of teens carefully chose and edited the content they stored on their mobile phones in order to create and maintain a 'cool' image of themselves. Their modus operandi was reminiscent of how teens in other more connected and well-resourced environments create and maintain profiles on online social network sites (boyd, 2007). In the context of this ongoing process of impression management via the mobile phone, the production of personal videos seemed to give rise to greater insecurities than did photographs, possibly because the look and style of self-representations and performances transmitted through moving pictures is harder to control than through still pictures.

This study suggests that it is not a straightforward process for youth to access a public voice when an opportunity to do so is offered to them, and that this process certainly does not take place automatically. It also indicates that the complexities of addressing peer audiences given the existence of (at the least) dual, opposing pressures (i) to conform to adult norms and (ii) the need to appear 'cool' in social networks of peers. This tension

contributes to the cautious behaviour around video exchange, which was observed in this project. Projects, which aim to give teens a public voice should thus take the teens' own perceptions of audience, public voice and being 'cool' into account.

The main research question for this study was: to what extent and in what ways does teens' ongoing impression management process (Goffman, 1956) through their mobile phones interfere with participatory media production processes? This essay seeks to answer the question by comparing and contrasting the findings of this research with the findings of boyd's (2007) research into how impression management influences the ways teens create and maintain their profiles on online social networks.

Public and private in participatory media production

Concepts such as participatory media production (Rheingold, 2008), participatory media (Jenkins, 2006) or digital storytelling (Reed & Hill, 2010), rest on notions that media production can be a tool to give citizens a public voice and thus sustain democratic participation. The public voice is thus the "bridge between media production and civic engagement" (Rheingold, 2008, p.101). Citizens produce photos and videos to share their point of view with a larger audience and to address the opportunities and challenges they face in their community (Rheingold, 2008). Reed and Hill (2010) speak about a "model of the multiple impacts of digital storytelling" (p.270). In theory, developing and sharing stories in this way can lead to (i) personal reflection, (ii) education and awareness, (iii) movement building, and (iv) policy advocacy.

Figure 1: Multiple Impacts of Digital Storytelling Model



Source: Reed & Hill, 2010, p.270

Media literacy and participatory media literacy workshops have established themselves for more than a decade in schools in the United Kingdom, with proponents arguing for the "considerable potential for media to be used as means of communication and self-expression" (Buckingham, 2005:7). These goals have also been adopted by community organisations located in low-income neighbourhoods or in poor countries. The video production project documented for this paper was conceptualised as contributing to a

'Media, Image and Expression' media literacy programme which also included talent shows, photography workshops and exhibitions and which is described as follows on the organisation's website:

"...encourages self-expression, builds confidence and provides a safe space in which learners can communicate their personal views and experiences, build on their ideas, discuss societal issues and learn to use different media to record local issues and history." (Ikamva Youth, nd.)

Projects such as these recognise that marginalised teens can be encouraged to exercise active citizenship (Rheingold, 2008) by communicating their concerns and connecting with like-minded peers (Kim & Ball-Rockeach, 2006). Working together to help one another is a valued tradition in South African townships, where good relations between community members and being up to date about what is going on in the community are important survival strategies (Skuse & Cousins, 2008) and also relate to communalist philosophies of *ubuntu*. Communication Infrastructure Theory (CIT) (Kim & Ball-Rockeach, 2006) states that any form of communication that happens within such a "neighbourhood storytelling network" is a contribution to civic engagement, as long as the communication focuses on issues belonging to the local community. According to Katz (as cited in Kim & Ball-Rockeach, 2006), "talk[ing] about public concerns conducted in private, even among family and friends, has political consequences" (p. 180).

Sharing media and technologies of sharing.

This private-public relationship is further influenced by media sharing practices, and by access to technology. Here South African young people's contexts diverge somewhat from those of their wealthier peers in the North, but many of their motivations and practices are certainly comparable.

In the North, social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace are important platforms that offer teens space for "profile construction, impression management and identity issues" (boyd, 2007. p. 10). Through personal profiles, teens create an online identity and personality, which is generally a polished version of their offline identity and personality (boyd, 2007). By visiting each other's profiles and commenting on texts, images and videos uploaded to these profiles, teens not only stay in contact with their friends, but also formulate their identities and learn to negotiate public life (boyd, 2007). In other words, identity formation takes place in public.

When creating a profile, teens work with an “imagined audience” (boyd, 2007). They cautiously choose what information about themselves appears on their profile in both text and image so as to create and maintain a ‘cool’ online image (boyd, 2007). This online image of themselves is especially constructed for their peers to be judged by their peers (boyd, 2007). Similarly, by viewing each other’s online identities, teens learn which “types of presentations are socially appropriate” (boyd, 2007, p.10) and take these unwritten rules into account when they create and maintain their own profiles. boyd (2007) compares her findings in the online world to the “process of performance, interpretation, and adjustment” (boyd, 2007, p.11) in the offline world, which Goffman (1956) called “impression management”. According to Goffman (1956), impression management is an essential social skill necessary for being socialisation, and which can only be learned by experience.

In the United States, the teens who form the focus of boyd’s research use social networks such as MySpace and Facebook on their computers, and many have access to broadband connections. In contrast, while young people in Makhaza and other South African townships value social networking just as highly, mobile phones are their primary communication tool, and their access to Internet depends on their supply of expensive mobile airtime. One study of media and technology usage showed that the majority of the teenage research participants owned a mobile phone, while those without their own phones still had access to a mobile phone as co-users (Kreutzer, 2009). In addition to this active sharing, Kreutzer (2009) describes involvement in mobile media exchange via Bluetooth, such as photos, music and videos, with 54% of the research participants stating that they took or shared at least one photo per day, although video recording and sharing took place less frequently (Kreutzer, 2009).

A more recent study of teens from Langa and Guguletu found that about a fifth of participants (n=50) reported that they made use of someone else’s phone ‘often’, and that almost three quarters reported sharing at some time or another. Most often they shared because they lacked airtime or because of some other barrier to access, but they also reported sharing to gain access to additional features (Walton, 2010:32). This study found that teens’ ‘mobile-centric’ web use focused on search (Google), social networking on Facebook, and a ‘delinked’ mode of interacting with media driven by downloading, saving and sharing media via bluetooth, rather than ‘surfing’ or browsing media online (Walton, 2010:v).

Methodology

Ethnographic data was collected during a six-month period in Khayelitsha township, Cape Town, South Africa. This aspect of the research was conducted by Silke Hassreiter for a MA

research project in Film and Media Studies at the University of Cape Town. The research included participant observation, informal interviews, in-depth interviews and diary-keeping to find out more about the overall role of visual mobile media in social interactions for teens in low income areas. Furthermore this research was interested in collecting knowledge about youth and alternative civic engagement through participatory mobile media production.

Participants were twenty young people in Grade 10 who attended an after-school program run by the non-profit youth development organisation, Ikamva Youth in Makhaza, Khayelitsha.

The study was divided into two parts. During the first phase of the research project, the teens' current mobile phone and mobile media use was documented with the general aim of exploring their production and exchange of visual media, such as photos and videos. During the second phase the participants received Nokia feature phones and took part in a participatory media production workshop. The aim of this workshop was to explore in what ways the participants made use of the opportunity to express their concerns and ideas through a one to three minute video and to investigate to what extent and how they distributed these videos through their existing on- and offline social networks. Table 1 (below) provides a description of the research participants.

Table 1: Details of Research Participants

Name*	Age	Gender	Own mobile phone?	Photo function	Video function
Andile	17	Male	No		
Bongani	17	Male	No		
Lunga	15	Male	No		
Themba	16	Male	No		
Lerato	17	Female	Nokia 1600	No	No
Mandla	18	Male	Nokia 1600	No	No
Yolena	16	Female	Nokia 1600	No	No
Linda	15	Female	LG KP135	Yes	No
Nothemba	17	Female	ZTE C78	Yes	No
Nomonde	16	Female	Samsung E250	Yes	Yes
Neo	17	Male	Samsung E250	Yes	Yes

Sibongile	17	Female	Samsung E250	Yes	Yes
Siyabulele	16	Male	Samsung E250	Yes	Yes
Vuyiswa	16	Female	Samsung E250	Yes	Yes
Yanga	15	Male	Samsung E250	Yes	Yes
Zodwa	16	Female	Samsung E370	Yes	Yes
Lindelwa	16	Female	Nokia N73	Yes	Yes
Unam	16	Male	Nokia 5310	Yes	Yes
Yola	17	Female	Nokia 2730	Yes	Yes
Zukiswa	17	Female	LG KS360	Yes	Yes

*Names are changed to protect the privacy of participants.

The Nokia feature phones: 5530 XpressMusic and X3 were chosen for this research project because of their variety of multimedia functions, and mobile Internet access. A micro SD memory card was provided with each phone (4 GB 5530 XpressMusic, 2GB X3). The 5530 XpressMusic can be used for simple video editing directly on the mobile phone. The original concept was that the participants with Nokia 5530 XpressMusic phones would complete their projects entirely on their phones, while participants with the X3 phones edited on the open source video editing programme Kino in the Ikamva Youth computer lab, which ran Ubuntu Linux on thin clients. While preparing the editing classes, the researcher ran into several problems: The X3 phones were not recognised by the Ubuntu computers and there was no Ovi suite version available for Ubuntu. Therefore the researcher had to make use of her MacBook to transfer the video files from the X3 phones to an external harddrive, which was recognised by the Ubuntu computers. In addition, the programme Kino caused several problems during the attempt to edit the video files. Firstly, the file formats produced by Nokia X3 (.3gp & MPEG-4) were not compatible with Kino (.avi and raw DV files). Further software (MPEG Streamclip – open software for MacBook) was necessary to convert the video files before editing. Secondly, Kino did not run correctly with the specific configuration of the Ikamva computer lab. The video editing programme did not work without crashing on the thin client machines. An Ubuntu specialist confirmed these limitations, and so Silke was forced to abandon editing in Ikamva Youth’s computer lab. She assisted the participants with X3 phones by using Final Cut Pro on her own Mac laptop. When the participants with 5530 XpressMusic realised that the participants with X3 phones had been given a wider range of video editing possibilities, they requested to be allowed to edit with Final Cut Pro as well. The researcher decided to accept their request but asked the participants with the

5530 XpressMusic to use their phones to edit and only later add the final touches to their videos with Final Cut Pro.

The participatory media production workshop sessions took place twice a week for two to four hours in the context of the computer and media literacy workshops of Ikamva. The workshop aimed to give the participants the necessary technical knowledge about video production on mobile phones in order to help them to produce their first video as independently as possible. Silke has a background as a journalist, camera operator and video editor in the field of journalism, and is a lecturer on media production at NHTV, international University of Applied Science in The Netherlands. The workshops concentrated on giving technical lessons and advice and attempted to stay away as much as possible from influencing the choice of topic and content of the videos so as to get (insofar as was possible) insight into the ideas and existing visual literacies of the research participants.

Through participant observation in Ikamva Youth, Silke was able to glimpse the life of a teenager growing up in Khayelitsha through a classroom study using ethnographic techniques which included informal conversations, classroom interactions and interviews. In-depth interviews were conducted twice during the research, one at the end of research phase one and the second at the end of research phase two, which was the end of the complete project. Over forty-four hours of interview data were recorded for the project.

Silke spoke English but had no knowledge of isiXhosa, the home language of most participants. The language policy of Ikamva Youth was to conduct all classes through the medium of English. All the participants spoke both isiXhosa and English. Nonetheless, three of the twenty students had serious problems understanding and expressing themselves in English. On the whole, the participants spoke in English when interacting with the researcher, often switching into isiXhosa when they spoke to peers. Informal language assistance and translations were provided by one of the Ikamva volunteers, who joined the researcher to assist during the participatory media production classes and during the interviews.

The participant observations all took place at Ikamva Youth. Initially, Silke spent two to three days a week at the project site, but during the final six weeks of the project, she was on site six days per week. Finally, the participants were asked to record their mobile phone usage in diaries and informal self-administered questionnaires to gain further insight into the way they used their phones in their home and school environments.

Research findings and discussion

During the first phase of the research, an active mobile phone and mobile media content exchange network between the research participants was found, as expected. The teens' current mobile phone and mobile media use was documented, with the aim of exploring the production and exchange of visual media and the overall role of such visual media in their social interactions. Unlike their peers in Northern contexts, these teens maintained a stronger offline than online social network: their financial means did not allow regular use of mobile Internet. Furthermore all of the participants reported that they had never used free Wifi on their phone and that they had also never connected a mobile phone to a computer with an Internet connection before. Nonetheless evidence of a strong impression management process (Goffman, 1956), similar to the one taking place between teens on online social network sites (boyd, 2007), was identified.

Degrees of sharing

Sharing mobile phones with other people is a common practice in low-income areas in different parts of the world (Kreutzer, 2009, Donner, 2009). Local sharing practices in South African contexts such as Khayelitsha are distinctive (Walton & Kreutzer, forthcoming). The research participants reported that they shared their mobile phones with friends, classmates and family members on a daily basis. The reasons for sharing their phones varied; sometimes mobile phone owners share their phone with classmates, friends and family because they didn't have a phone, sometimes because their phones had fewer features. Co-users with their own phone shared because they were interested in the latest games, music, pictures and videos of the phone owner. Co-users without a phone also made use of the phone to call, send texts or to surf the Internet. The length of time for which co-users are allowed to borrow a phone depends on the amount of trust the phone owner has in the co-user. Classmates and acquaintances are only allowed to have the phone for a few moments to a few hours, mostly with the phone owner close by. Close friends and family members can have the phone for up to several days.

When giving the phone away for a longer time, the phone owner loses immediate control over his or her device, which also potentially gives unknown people the possibility to check out the phone's content. All research participants stated that they did not perceive a mobile phone as a private device. Instead they were aware that many other people would have regular access to their phone content. Profile owners of online social networks have similar experiences. Although they can limit access to their profiles through privacy settings, but

they never know who sits next to the person they have officially allowed access to their profiles (boyd, 2007).

Sharing, exclusion and inclusion in offline peer networks

Being aware of the presence of both known and unknown audiences then, the owners of online profiles as well as mobile phone owners hold back some content on purpose to protect their privacy. They display other content in order to enhance their own value in the eyes of these audiences. Just as online profile owners intentionally place content on their profile to be seen by others (boyd, 2007), similarly the teen participants in this study described how they carefully select the content they wanted to store on their mobile phones. They believed that pictures and videos on mobile phones revealed a great deal about the character of the phone owner.

“You must look good on your photos. If you don’t look good, you have to delete them.” (Andile)

“You choose what you want the others to see about you.” (Mandla)

“Even if you are ugly, your photos have to be perfect.” (Lerato)

“The phone is all about style and image.” (Bongani)

The mobile phone’s wallpaper, for instance, had a similar function to online profile pictures, and was updated regularly with the latest ‘cool’ picture of themselves, of their friends or with any other impressive picture. Teens exchanged written messages contained in .jpg pictures. They also shared pictures and videos downloaded from the Internet and depicting celebrities or expensive goods such as cars and expensive brands. These were stored alongside their personal photographs in their photo and video galleries. Using the analogy of social network sites, these galleries of pictures and videos functioned similarly to ‘the wall’ of social network sites. Just as in online social network sites the more friends and the more popular the friends on the photos in the gallery of a phone, the more popular the phone owner is perceived to be. In addition, the number and popularity of the friends displayed through photos in the gallery or on the wallpaper were seen as indicators of popularity.

As a result of peer pressure, young people in Khayelitsha usually agree to hand over their phones to others. If they did not participate in the phone sharing process, they were seen as being selfish, which put them in an outsider position. Members of this phone-sharing community understood that those without their own phone did not participate, but teens with their own phone, who refused to share their phone with others were immediately excluded

from the circle. If a teenager did not share his or her phone with anyone, no one would want to share their phone with him or her. Research participants reported that this unwritten rule had both positive and negative effects. On the one hand it gave everyone the opportunity to make use of mobile phones, but it also put pressure on each individual, because sharing the phone meant that one was also sharing the phone's content. Depending on the content on the phone, some research participants reported that they would prefer not to participate in the phone sharing process at all.

Little privacies

A different set of pressures were apparent in relation to parental surveillance of phone content, which sets up an additional audience. boyd (2007) wrote about a dilemma online teens face, when their online profiles are found and regularly checked by their parents. On the one hand, the content of the profile has to be cool enough for the peers and on the other hand it needs to be suitably toned down for the parents. If the parents find content of which they disapprove, many insist that their children either remove the content or else they require them to delete the profile completely (boyd, 2007). In general, teens react by 'cleaning up' their profiles for their parents, but some open a second profile in addition to the one seen by their parents .A network of such 'friends only' (boyd, 2007) profiles form an alternative or 'mirror' network for the peer group.

Similarly to the private spaces created by online teens' 'mirror network' (boyd, 2007), the teens in Khayelitsha tried to create similar private spaces through PINcodes, passwords and hidden folder systems. Only best friends have access to this "little privacy" (Sibongile). Acquaintances, classmates and particularly parents who might get hold of the phone are restricted from content that is classified as too private, such as text messages, erotic pictures and videos or MXit. Other content is hidden for different reasons - the latest media (music, games, celebrity pictures and music videos) is often hidden so that the phone's owner can benefit from a period of exclusive ownership and gain the sought after "cool dude" identity.

The strategy of creating private spaces can also backfire if discovered, though, since it breaks with the default assumption that phones and their content should be shared and public. Some research participants reported that they could get into trouble if they tried to restrict their parents or other carers from seeing their mobile phone content by using passwords or PINcodes. In itself, the attempt to keep some content secret is reason enough for punishment. Therefore the participants explained that building up a secret folder system worked best for them to hide content and create a little bit of private space. Most parents or guardians didn't know about the existence of these folders and most of them were also not

mobile phone 'literate' enough to discover the folders when scrolling through the phones in search of forbidden content. But more than half of the participants reported that most of the time they would not even take the risk. If they receive mobile phone content, which they perceive as being too private or which might get them into trouble, they delete it immediately after receiving it, even if they would love to keep it.

A “touch” of social status

During the second phase of the research, the twenty participants were asked to choose one of the eleven Nokia 5530 XpressMusic or the eleven Nokia X3 phones. The participants were allowed to keep the phone until the end of the research project when they had produced the final videos for the participatory media production workshop. All of the participants used the phone as if it was their own phone. Some of them even pretended that it actually was their own phone, such as Andile: “[My friend asked] ‘Yo, where do you have the phone from?’ I was lying and said, “My mom bought it for me”. Feels like we have money back home.”

Table 2: Distribution of feature phones

Name*	Gender	Feature phone	Name*	Gender	Feature phone
Nomonde	Female	5530 XpressMusic	Vuyiswa	Female	X3
Lerato	Female	5530 XpressMusic	Zodwa	Female	X3
Yola	Female	5530 XpressMusic	Nothemba	Female	X3
Linda	Female	5530 XpressMusic**	Themba	Male	X3
Zukiswa	Female	5530 XpressMusic	Neo	Male	X3
Lindelwa	Female	5530 XpressMusic	Bongani	Male	X3
Sibongile	Female	5530 XpressMusic	Mandla	Male	X3
Yolena	Female	5530 XpressMusic	Unam	Male	X3
Lunga	Male	5530 XpressMusic	Siyabulele	Male	X3
Yanga	Male	5530 XpressMusic			
Andile	Male	5530 XpressMusic			

**Names are changed to protect the anonymity of the participants.

** Phone was broken – memory card not recognised by phone – received X3 as replacement

Table 2 (above) shows the distribution of the feature phones. Participants preferred the 5530 XpressMusic to the X3 phone because of its touchscreen. They explained that their circle of friends rate a 'touch' (or touchscreen phone) as 'cooler' than a keyboard phone. Touchscreens are more expensive and considerably 'fancier' with more features than the phones teens in Khayelitsha usually have. According to research participant Yolena, owning a 'touch' means that "your parents are rich or they are spoiling you." The phones belonged to Ikamva Youth, rather than to individual students, and were to be used at the end of the project, for future such participatory media projects.

Having use of such a highly rated phone, even only for a short amount of time, was, for most participants, the main reason to participate in the research. The higher risk that they might become a victim of one of the frequent violent phone robberies in the townships did not hold them back. Being the owner of an expensive phone brings so much social status that the teens felt it was well worth the risk. Participating teens reported that when they first showed these feature phones to their friends, the friends were impressed and as the participants had predicted, they experienced that their social status had increased. And indeed the participants reported that the teens with 5530 MusicXpress phones experienced a greater increase in status than the owners of X3 phones did. Some participants reported that the feature phones helped them to make new friends, in some cases with people who would not even look at them before they had the phones.

"Yes, Especially the girls. They come up to you and talk to you, because you have the phone. Have another girlfriend now. Some girls only talk to you when you have a phone. Boys don't make a difference." (Andile)

"Yes, Before they did not call me, now they are Yolena, Yolena!" (Yolena)

"Many more want to be my friend now. They want to be close to me now because of the phone." (Sibongile)

"Yes. All of a sudden they come. They wanted to have my songs. Now phone is gone, people are gone too." (Nothemba)

Some of the participants who chose a 5530 XpressMusic added that if their parents gave them the choice between a touchscreen and a keyboard phone, they would never ask the parents to buy them a touchscreen phone. Lerato explained this preference by pointing out that touchscreen phones, unlike phones with keypads, cannot be repaired in the cheap second-hand mobile phone shop containers in Khayelitsha. Consequently, if the screen on a touchscreen phone is broken, it is lost forever, because the parents cannot afford to have

the phone repaired by professionals. In a related vein, Vuyiswa, Zodwa and Nothemba explained that they had deliberately chosen a keyboard phone, because it made them feel more secure, since they already knew how to use it. Some of the participants who chose a touchscreen phone expressed their concerns about their ability to learn how to deal with a touchscreen. But within two weeks all of them stated that they felt as comfortable to work with a touchscreen as with a keypad. The reason that more female than male participants chose a touchscreen phone relates to the fact that female teens had run faster to get to the phones, and so had already picked their phones before the male participants even realised where the phones were displayed.

Many possibilities but no money

The many desirable features of the 5530 XpressMusic and the X3 were very important in bringing research participants the expected social status and fame, but few participants made extensive use of all the phone's features. This limited repertoire of use can be explained by the financial constraints experienced by the teens. The research participants could only afford R5 (\$ 0,71) to R15 (\$ 2,14) airtime a week. This was partly financed by money given to them by their parents or other carers and partly by saving up their lunch money. This is still too little to call, send text messages or even to spend much time on the mobile Internet. Most of their airtime was used for MXit, a free online mobile chat. After MXit, the participants used the features, which were exempt from network charges, which turned the feature phones into MP3 players, photo/video cameras and photo albums. Just as with their own phones, the participants used Bluetooth to exchange mobile media such as photos, videos or music. Only one female participant reported that she had sent an MMS. But this happened by accident when pressing the wrong buttons and she regretted it as soon as she saw what it had cost to send it. As she phrased it, the MMS was "eating up all my airtime" (Yolena).

In the interviews, the participants were asked whether they were discontented with anything concerning the feature phones, and all without exception replied that they were absolutely happy and that the phone had everything they needed and even more. Silke nonetheless observed several difficulties the participants faced, especially when exchanging memory and SIM cards on a regular basis because of the ongoing phone sharing process. A simple thing, which gave the participants a lot of troubles was the SIM flap of both phones, which is actually meant to facilitate the access to SIM cards (5530 XpressMusic) and memory cards (5530 XpressMusic and X3). But nineteen of the twenty participants had extremely short fingernails. When they wanted to open the SIM flaps they had severe problems. And because also the little opening was too small for their fingers, the participants used all kinds

of tools to remove the cards. These tools could easily damage the phones, such as bird feathers, wooden sticks, or pieces of coca cola cans. The SIM card for X3 phones sits behind the phone's battery, which means that every time the participants exchanged the phone and the SIM card, they had to open and close the back of the X3 phone, which lead to some damaged plastic covers. Furthermore, the participants regularly forgot to press "remove E: memory card" before removing the memory card when the phone was still switched on. In this way one memory card was damaged (no phone was able to read the card after that) and two other memory cards lost all their content.

"Videolising" [filming] for the participatory media production workshop

The participants were asked to produce a 1 to 3 minute video with the feature phones about a topic of their concern, using interviews, B-Roll, stand-ins, music and voice-over. While brainstorming the topic of their video, apart from one teen, all the research participants suggested the kinds of topics, which are commonly associated with Life Orientation and Life Skills programmes in South African schools. These emphasize parental concerns about the dangers to youth of HIV or of teenage pregnancy. When the participants started filming their first B-Roll and their interviews, half of them changed their topics. Some changed them because they could not find a suitable interview partner or because they did not know how to express their ideas in pictures. Others stated that they would prefer to talk about another topic, one, which they found more intrinsically interesting. Table 3 (below) illustrates the choice of topics. Table 3 also shows that only half of the participants (n=10) completed the challenging process of collecting footage for and then editing their videos. The timing of the project meant that students who did not collect footage early were likely to drop out. Most obstacles to completion reflect the difficulties of finding suitable and sufficient footage for the students to express their initial concepts.

able 3: Choice of topics

Name*	First topic	Final topic	Reason	Finished	Reason
Unam	Love	The danger of alcohol – message: "You can drink a little bit, but don't drink too much, it destroys your life."	More interesting	Yes	
Zodwa	Crime	Crime – message: "Go to school instead of		Yes	

		doing crime.”			
Lindelwa	Teenage Pregnancy	Dancing – message: “Don’t listen to others. Follow your dream.”	She dances herself and does not like the fact that many people in the township do not take dancers seriously.	Yes	
Sibongile	Alcohol	What happens if teenagers drink too much alcohol? – message: “Don’t drink, because horrible things happen to you.”		Yes	
Lerato	Homosexuality	Fears of teenagers – message: “We have all the same fears, so love and help each other, don’t kill each other.”	After long discussions with the research supervisor and the participant, all together decided that the topic might be still too controversial in townships, which could lead to problems.	Yes	
Yanga	Crime	Crime – message: “Stop doing crime, start working for your money.”		Yes	
Nomonde	Alcohol	The danger of alcohol for teenagers – message: “I am afraid that my friends die when they drink too much.”		Yes	
Yolena	Love	The importance of friendship for teenagers – message: Tips for being a good friend.	Worked together with Nothemba, after Nothemba’s phone broke. Together they brainstormed for a new topic.	Yes	
Yola	Rape	Education – message: “Go to school, become independent.”	After a few failed interviews, she decided that the topic rape is interesting, but too hard to talk about via video.	Yes	

Nothemba	Love	The importance of friendship for teenagers – message: Tips for being a good friend.	Worked together with Yolena, because her phone broke (water damage)	Yes	
Name*	First topic	Final topic	Reason	Finished	Reason
Neo	Teenage love	Why do young people prefer international music over national music?	More interesting	No	Shortly before he finished his project, friends made a joke and placed a PINcode on his memory card. The only possibility to make the memory card usable again, was to format it.
Vuyiswa	Teenage pregnancy	Teenage pregnancy		No	She had in general problems following the classes because of her poor English. Which led to only three half finished interviews and a few clips, which was altogether not enough to produce a video.
Zukiswa	Friendship	Why is friendship so important for teenagers – message: “Like each other and help each other out.”		No	Did not finish the last reshooting. Only some B-Roll missing.
Andile	Alcohol	Traditional dances in church vs. Hip Hop – message: “Look! I can do both. One does not exclude the other one.”	He dances in a church on Sundays, while he likes to go out to Hip Hop events on Saturday evenings. Something many of his friends don’t	No	Too much stress with final exams. Did not have time to edit the raw material.

			understand.		
Bongani	Love			No	The teacher confiscated his phone because students were actually not allowed to bring phones to school. He and his parents could not afford the 50 Rand penalty to get the phone back.
Mandla	First time in love	Drugs in Khayelitsha	He explained, that this topic is touching him most, because many of the young people in his street are drug addicts.	No	He filmed real drug deals and drug abuse, which could have lead to trouble, even if the participant would have tried to make the people on the video unrecognisable. There was not enough time any more for a reshoot.
Lunga	Teenagers and money		Dropped out	No	
Siyabulele	Being more than friends	HIV prevention workshops in Khayelitsha are not enough – message: “We need more and different HIV prevention workshops.”	He stated that this topic really touches him and that he would like to present his idea of how to improve teenage HIV prevention workshops.	No	First raw material was not usable because of bad audio (wind noise). Then he did not show up for two weeks at the workshop sessions so he ran out of time.
Themba	HIV			No	He did not have enough raw

					material to finish his video
Linda	Teenage pregnancy			No	She did not find interview partners for her video

*Names are changed to protect the anonymity of the participants.

During the video production and postproduction phases the 5530 XpressMusic phone proved to be the better solution for media production in areas such as Khayelitsha.

The ability to edit video on the 5530 (rather than relying on computers for editing) made it possible for the participants with the 5530 XpressMusic to work on their raw material independently and without the limitations experienced by the participants with X3 phones. These included file incompatibilities, limited computer literacy, opening times at the Ikamva computer lab and the tight schedule of the researcher-editor, which all limited the amount of time that they could spend editing.

In addition, the video and audio quality of the videos produced with the 5530 XpressMusic was better than of the videos produced with the X3. The conditions for making videos in the township challenged all participants, and caused particular difficulties with exposure and audio recording. The high level of violent phone robberies limited the participants in their choice of filming locations. If they wanted to be safe while filming, the participants could either stick to places with many other people around, which caused audio problems, or else they had to film inside houses and shacks where the audio was better, but where there was too little light to produce well-exposed pictures. To deliver good audio and well-exposed pictures at the same time proved very difficult and time-consuming.

Non-compatibility with Linux was an additional constraint, particularly for the X3 users, and could present a serious obstacle in contexts where many NGOs, schools and governments require the use of open source software.

Public voices, imagined audiences and privacy

When the participants were initially asked for whom they imagined they were producing the videos, most of them said that their potential audiences were people from outside Khayelitsha, or that they were making them for rich and influential people who could come and help to address local problems and change difficult circumstances. During the process of production their imagined audience changed and all except one of the videos ended up addressed to other teenagers in Khayelitsha. While this may reflect their gradual realisation

of the lower production values of this mode of video-making, it also accords with a general sense that only the community itself could address the problems they were raising in their videos. When asked who should solve the problems in their community, most replied that this responsibility lay with people from within the community.

Although the research participants clearly addressed their peers in their videos and confirmed several times that they were proud of their final videos, they stated that they did not feel comfortable sharing the videos with their friends and classmates. The best videos received prizes and were screened at an end of year function for Ikamva Youth, and the participants also showed them to their friends on their phones, but they did not use their existing practices of peer-to-peer bluetooth exchange to distribute the videos so that they would reach biggest larger audience. On the contrary, they stated that they first wanted to receive more feedback from their friends before they would share the actual video files with others.

This reluctance to assume a public voice outside of the Ikamva classroom was found to relate to the ways in which videos in general are treated very cautiously on the mobile. While music clips and other celebrity videos are exchanged on a daily basis, private videos are largely kept on the participants' own phones. Most participants felt that videos about themselves, their friends and their family were more private than similar kinds of photos, partly because of the sometimes transgressive uses of video, but also because of the difficulties in controlling impressions in this semiotic mode.

“Videos are more private. Because when we film each other we use vulgar words and messages. We would be in big trouble if someone would hear that. We are not even allowed to watch American movies because of the strong language. On photos you don't hear what people say.” (Siyabulele)

“A video has always something funny. Sometimes that makes you laugh. If others laugh about you, then it is not cool.” (Nothemba)

“On photos your style is easier to control, on videos harder. There you might look funny.” (Zodwa)

Most research participants stated that if they used their mobile phones to film something, they produced amusing clips, such as the parodic clips documented in an earlier study by Walton and Kreutzer (forthcoming). This accords with the finding in other media literacy projects that humorous and parodic treatments are a common strategy resorted to by young and inexperienced media producers who use humour and irony to manage the

embarrassment of self-exposure and the difficulty of measuring up to broadcast media production values (Buckingham, 2003).

The teens themselves preferred watching funny clips and they also knew that their friends would find humorous material more interesting. They knew that, even if a video was not intentionally funny, their peers would find something in it to laugh about. They were concerned about being mocked for their videos, even if all the videos they produced were of a serious nature. Only two girls produced an intentionally funny video. They felt that their friends would like it more and would be more receptive to the message they wanted to send:

“It is important to make it funny, then people enjoy watching it and they receive the message. And don’t get bored.” (Nothemba)

“I would make it different this time - something funny with a message. The others would like that as well. I think that is the trick.” (Unam)

In retrospect, shifting the genre to parodic or other kinds of humorous videos could have been a more successful strategy. Such a shift in emphasis might have allowed the project to avoid interfering with the mobile phone impression management process and may have helped the participants to avoid the feeling torn between being proud of their own work while simultaneously being afraid that others might ridicule them because of it.

Conclusion

Over a period of four months, twenty teens from Khayelitsha received Nokia feature phones (X3 and Nokia 5530 MusicXpress) and attended weekly participatory media production training classes. The project revealed a context where access to digital communicative resources, networks and infrastructure were scarce, and that mobile phone and media sharing practices were distinctive. Nonetheless, teens handled the media on their mobile phones in comparable ways to which teens in other contexts have been found to manage impressions through online social network profiles (boyd, 2007). These also correspond to the practices through which local teens have been found to share and manage their seemingly private MXit social networks (Walton and Kreutzer, forthcoming).

Participants made extensive use of the photo function of their phones to create their mobile phone identities, just as elsewhere teens create their online identities through their profiles. It was a high priority for them to construct a ‘cool’ appearance through careful selection and strategic placing of photos, videos and music to impress their peers. While wealthier teens

have access to profiles of their friends on online social network sites, the teens in Khayelitsha had access to their peers' mobile phones.

Research participants create photo galleries on their mobile phones, with carefully selected photos showing favoured representations of themselves in still images, and they edit these collections in ways that are similar to the creation and maintenance of personal photo albums on social network sites. Photos considered less 'cool' or too private were immediately deleted, hidden in private folders or locked with passwords. Furthermore, the research participants used Bluetooth to collect photos of other people strategically and display them publicly in their photo galleries, thus showing off their friends. This practice resembles the way online teens select their friends' lists.

Videos are handled with care in the impression management process. As on social network sites, participants favoured watching and exchanging funny and professional music clips. Self-made videos were mostly hidden, classified as boring and not worth sharing or were damned to immediate deletion after being recorded. The reason given for this cautious behaviour around self-made videos is teens' feeling of having less control over how they, their family and their friends come across in moving pictures than they have over still pictures. Furthermore, the research participants stated that videos could pose a threat to their cool mobile phone image, because their friends could perceive the videos as unintentionally funny or even embarrassing.

This insecurity about the impact of self-made videos on the mobile phone persona has a strong negative impact on one of the most essential pillars of participatory media production, which is to reach a large number of viewers and to make the private voice public. Research participants stated that they were proud of their final videos, but they did not exchange them within their social networks as the researcher had expected, and as they had initially said that they planned to do. Furthermore, many participants reported that they did not feel comfortable in passing on the videos and would specifically withhold them because they were afraid that others would make fun of them and their work. Additionally, participants stated that their friends and family were not interested in receiving the videos because the videos were not 'funny' enough.

Therefore, this study concludes that especially in low-income areas where mobile phones are available to teens, participatory media production can be a strong tool to help marginalised teens develop experience in adopting public voices, as long as during the production process the ongoing mobile phone impression management activities are taken into account. It is very important to acknowledge that, for teens, mobile phones are not only a technological device for calling, checking emails and making videos, but are also an

“arena for the formation and enactment of social identities” (Fraser, as cited in boyd, 2007, p.21). Further research will explore theoretically the intuitions of these teens. These initial findings suggest that a ‘voice’ is not something primordial and pre-existent which can be ‘given’, but that instead it is found or constructed as a result of being heard or having something to say, and that, in a strongly visual society, to some extent it is also dependent on how the speaker is ‘seen’ or perceived by an audience. The teens’ struggles to communicate their concerns to an audience of peers suggests that this sense of being heard or being noticed is developed through interaction with others, through the recognition of genres and discourses, and that these processes are always situated in specific contexts of communication.

Implications for participatory media production curricula

If teens are asked to use their mobile phones for participatory media production in out of school contexts, this should be understood as creating a potential problem of ‘social convergence’ (boyd, 2007) for the teens, as the phone’s primary function as space for performance of identity to peers now needs to accommodate a different, less assured and controllable identity in the form of their efforts as video production apprentices. For this reason, this paper recommends that issues of audience, voice, and perceptions of ‘coolness’ should be addressed directly and reflexively, and assistance should be limited to technical advice. In addition, teens should also be given as much freedom as possible in choosing genres, topics, and content of their videos.

Projects should aim to allow teens to embed the final video products into their impression management process and to design them so that they are more comfortable about sharing the final products within their online and offline social networks. Drawing explicitly on teens’ facility with playful genres such as parody and burlesque might be a safer way for them to start dealing with more serious subjects without introducing the unwanted connotations of school and other adult-dominated spaces. Forcing genres, topics or content on teens could be perceived as threats to their ongoing processes of impression management and might lead to lower levels of participation and to a smaller audience. Moreover, without this audience, the teen would not be able to explore ways of developing a personal voice which can address and be recognised by new publics.

Implications for design

Although teens in developing countries value sharing, mobile phone manufacturers should not assume that they don’t attach immense value to their privacy at the same time. On the contrary, the content on their mobile phones is, in most cases, the only thing these low-

income teens really own and it is therefore very important and valuable to them. Because of the ongoing impression management process, teens want the co-users of the phone to see at least some of the phone content. The teens also don't have other storage possibilities for the mobile media files, irrespective whether they are storing media which they want to make public, or very private communication such as a lover's messages or erotic pictures. Thus their need to keep certain communication private, especially communication that might get them into trouble with their parents, created several dilemmas. The solution which several adopted by putting PIN codes and passwords on private content could itself lead to problems with parents who used their children's phones as control devices.

Teens could organise their mobile phone content more effectively and precisely if they could make use of more advanced privacy settings for mobile phones, where the teens can decide which content is visible for whom. It is also important that the people excluded from access to certain content are not aware of this. It would be good to have several phone modes, such as for example, one mode for "the show" to peers, one mode for parental eyes and one for more private dialogues with self ("diary moments") and trusted intimates. Teens in Khayelitsha use their mobile phones already as offline network profiles. This trend could be enhanced by mobile phone manufacturers if they designed phones along similar principles to social network profiles. For example the currently limited support for textual customisation could be developed further into the direction of creating a "wall" as on online social networks. This could replace the current Bluetooth exchange of little written text messages through .jpg pictures and could give friends of the phone owner the possibility to send text messages via Bluetooth to these walls. While online network features could integrate with online sites, the design should be always self-sufficient as a 'sneaker net'. It is important that these designs should not rely on phones having perpetual access to online cloud-based profiles. While the profile can respond to local networks of Bluetooth proximity, any changes to the profile should be permission-based and under control of the user.

The tight financial budget of the participants should also be taken into account when designing mobile phones for this target group. This consideration should not lead to the misconception that poor teenagers are satisfied with old-fashioned mobile phones with limited features. Like most teens worldwide, they are interested in fancy technical gadgets that they can show off with and which raise their social status. In contrast to better-situated teens who have phones and post-paid contracts paid by their parents, low-income teens have to work within a tight budget. Calling and text messages are not their main activities on a phone. Instead they rely on other features to use the phone as a communication tool. This makes it interesting to further exploit for example the power of Bluetooth and widespread understanding of this networking technology to develop local peer network

features, while support for Linux and open source software will allow the phones and the Ovi platform to find a place more easily in the open source informational ecosystems of public internet access providers.

Repairs and the second-hand market are also very important parts of the phone ecosystem in marginalised areas. The manufacturer should keep in mind that teens drop their phones or break them once in a while, but they don't have the financial means to have the phones repaired by professionals or to buy a new phone. Their phones should not only be fancy, but also robust and easily repaired by semi-professional mobile phone shop employees in the townships.

The tight airtime budget should be also taken into account when developing mobile phones further for media production purposes. The majority of the teens are not computer literate enough to connect mobile phones to computers, transfer video files to video editing programmes and edit the files there. As soon as the first complication such as file incompatibility occurs, the teens are helpless. In contrast, they are mobile phone literate enough to quickly teach themselves how to edit videos on a mobile phone if that feature is available. The possibility to edit video clips right away could also help to take away the insecure feeling towards videos, and would assist users in having tighter control of impression management through mobile video.

Finally, the distinctive township environment should be taken into account. For security reasons, the phone owner cannot film everywhere. Most of the time they are limited to private spaces, such as shacks or houses, which are in most cases very dark. Alternatively they have to deal with loud environments, because the more known people are around the safer the phone owner feels to flash its phone in public. A built-in light for filming could help, as could better on-board or external microphones.

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