Museum-worthy smartwatches: A medical humanities perspective

by

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the relationships that bind people to their smartwatches along the Sea Point Promenade in the city of Cape Town. The study identifies smartwatches as objects with immense social, personal, and interpersonal traction. Materiality in anthropology is well explored and offers a range of theoretical tools for bridging the gap between human and machine as well as functional design and aesthetic. Research with ordinary smartwatch users invites inquiry into aspects of their use that directly affect health, well-being, illness detection and monitoring. Smartwatches are also branded and displayed in ways that signify class and aspirations. These aspirations are coded by their functional, symbolic, and artistic value.

The research draws upon a comprehensive body of literature to contextualize and analyse how individuals utilize and perceive these devices, offering revitalized perspectives on smartwatches as machines that gesture towards ideas of convivial social relations. Conviviality puts the immediate in the larger context and the larger context in the immediate through deliberate connections, but also acknowledging the hierarchies and conflicting interests at play at the small and large scales of existence and consciousness. With a multimodal anthropological approach, the dissertation includes stories gathered over six months through ethnographic methods including participant observation, interviews, and the examination of public documents and artifacts. The research also explores audio reporting as a valuable tool for anthropology and ethnographic storytelling, providing insights into how people use, perceive, and experience smartwatches.

The intriguing relationship between smartwatches and people's lived experiences in modern urban environments is explored as a way to contribute to the expanding conversation on the interplay between technology, health, and society. It emphasises the intricate relationship that shapes the contemporary healthcare landscape between technology innovation, societal norms, and individual autonomy through nuanced storytelling and critical analysis.

Keywords: Smartwatch, Sea Point Promenade, Cyborg, Conviviality, Medical anthropology, Medical humanities, Quantified self, multimodal anthropology

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Chapter 1

1.1. Wearable technology: Painting a picture of a growing phenomenon of interest

A new era in healthcare management and delivery has been welcomed by the development of wearable technologies since the digital revolution in the last decade. The use of smartwatches' health monitoring features forecasts a favourable response towards the gadget (Kang & Jung, 2020). This thesis aims to unpack the merger between smart watches and cultural standards of health and fitness. I explore what constitutes medicalized metrics of good health, and think carefully about the various angles and extent to which smartwatches are viewed, experienced, utilized, and how they affect lives and health. While critically analysing the intricacies of smartwatches, I follow stories of ten individuals along Sea Point's most famous landmark, The Promenade, to find answers for this study's research question:

"How are wearable technologies, namely smart watches, perceived to promote health and extend wellness for people at Sea Point's Promenade in Cape Town?"

In this context, the goal of the thesis is to lift out stories, understand, analyse and interpret how these biotechnological machines have shaped and transformed everyday life through depicting people who express who and what they are through them. To help shape an understanding of the intricacies and functions of wearable technologies central to our embodied being, I think these ideas about how these technologies function in our lives and how they relate to our bodies, social selves, and individual identities are significant. This also includes the extent to which smartwatches have expanded from the individual to the communal level, and how people are able to develop health-related norms using the information generated by smartwatches. Looking at perception also creates an opportunity to understand my research participants' sentiments – how they feel, what they think, and what appeals to them about the watches– which is important. The "how" implies open-endedness as this is an exploratory paper, and allows for critical assessment of important research trends linked to areas of interest

The is an introductory chapter which aims to do three things. Firstly, it explores what smart watches are, their growth and potential in a health humanities context. The health humanities, or medical humanities offers a way to extend theoretical innovation in medical anthropology by broadening the scope of literature, what kinds of questions can be posed, and points to wider networks of connection across disciplines in science, arts, and humanities. Because the thesis expands on the themes of health and affliction that are considered in UCT's first MOOC, "Medicine and the Arts: Humanizing Healthcare", I delve briefly into the history of the medical humanities. Critical to the thesis is the notion by (Woods, 2014) that, in the long run, the history of the medical humanities assists us in recognising some of its fundamental cultural assumptions. The medical humanities as a means of responding to "dehumanisation" (2014:2) is historically and socially constructed emerged from preconceptions that contemporary medicine targets the body while the arts and humanities are all-encompassing, and from the belief that there is an essential distinction between machines and humanity (Woods, 2014). This is useful for this thesis because it helps shed light on how various cultural and historical settings have affected ideas of health and well-being. This awareness allows us to shift beyond past rigid perspectives and towards an expanded perspective of the medical humanities.

Secondly, the chapter considers the tangible needs of South Africans and their concerns with service delivery and healthcare as a basic right. To enhance our knowledge on the complexity and desires of smartwatches, which are crucial to our embodied selves, I delve into deeper context and come to understand some of the basic, material circumstances of social life that support our capacity to acquire and engage with health care. I will use this as the starting point for my context, specifically mentioning South Africa's distinct past as well as apartheid's effects on the current socioeconomic state with relation to healthcare and human life. It frames the project within the theoretical frameworks used for the research and examines the literature and scholars relevant to the convergence of the thesis, within a wider disciplinary conversation with the aim to demonstrate familiarity with the topic and appropriate approaches to studying it.

Lastly, the chapter briefly highlights the prominent theoretical work it builds on. It frames the project within the theoretical frameworks used for the research and examines the literature and scholars relevant to the convergence of the thesis. Scholars from different disciplines – anthropology, data science, health sciences and medicine, fashion design – dwell on the body/machine interface from a variety of angles. As one of the first students to undertake a

new interdisciplinary degree in health humanities and the arts, my approach explores smartwatches as a perceived health site—opening up routes of enquiry on questions that directly affect health, well-being and illness as well as creative engagement associated with their various perceptions of smartwatches as art or visual culture material. Taking this notion of engagement further, a prominent component that has interested me–which I will discuss in greater detail subsequently—is around smartwatches as machines that gesture towards ideas of convivial social relations. As observed by Francis Nyamnjoh (2015), conviviality is based on the intricacies that people and communities at all scales, both within and between societies, inscribe and absorb into their daily interactions. It entails the thoughtful and creative negotiation of the positive and negative aspects of being human in order to cultivate and maintain accommodative and interdependent modes of connecting, interaction with others, and a sense of community (Nyamnjoh, 2015). What this reveals for my research question is the extent to which smartwatches can be attributed with a spirit or agency of their own, and how this agency could potentially be manifested. It also offers a way to understand the desire for data driven health interventions as a contribution to health humanities. The notion also resonates with Donna Haraway's (1990) body of scholarship. Haraway (1990) offers a novel perspective on humanity and claims that all people are cyborgs—humans who are intimately linked to technology. Questions concerning personality, selfhood, and what it is to be human have long been raised by the integration of technology and body. Showing how the medical technologies we wear are there to protect some aspect of our health, and the level of protection as an analytical category gets further into the ways in which Nyamnjoh (2015) and Haraway (1990) speak together and part ways at the same time. The thesis is also interested in extrapolating the resonance of the cyborg metaphor, how it lives and embodies multiple experiences, and its relevance to the Sea Point Promenade context today.

1.2. Entangling the medical humanities: Toward an inquiry into smartwatch technology on everyday life

Wearable technologies, including smart watches, and even more mundane technologies such as eyeglasses are unevenly distributed in the world, and can be said to fortify technological culture along lines of access to wearable technology. Smartwatches are designed to enhance health and wellness by producing multiple metrics including heart rate,

calorie calibrations, time, speed, and even the number of steps made in a day. The devices have the potential to track and deliver highly particular health-related data in an accessible manner, enabling users to accurately proactively keep track of the state of their health. The health tracking features are predictive of positive attitudes and long-term use intentions (Chukwueweniewe & Usman, 2023).

> "When I think of my body and ask what it does to earn that name, two things stand out. It moves. It feels. In fact, it does both at the same time. It moves as it feels, and it feels itself moving. Can we think of a body without this: an intrinsic connection between movement and sensation whereby each immediately summons the other?" (Massumi, 2002: 1)

Many attributes characterise smart watches, such as their attractiveness, ease of use, design, emotional worth, and general status. The need to employ these devices can also be significantly influenced by one's physical attributes (Chukwueweniewe & Usman, 2023). When wearing or purchasing, according to the authors, users exhibit varying preferences with regard to size, amount, aesthetics, and wrist length or height. Given that smartwatches are wearable technology, users can anticipate that they will be a fashion accessory or a way to express one's individuality, contributing to the aesthetic element of existence. As a result, users may assess a variety of features for these gadgets, such as their shine, fashion, level of detail, design, colour, and bracelet-traditionality. Furthermore, several additional distinctive qualities that relate to safety desires, convenience of use, or reliability aspects may also be appealing to those who use it. To add, these characteristics include bendiness, buttons noise, feeling warmth, stature, intricacy, water resistance, pricing, and material quality. Additional characteristics such as cognitive ability and tapping response also add to the consumers' productivity needs when doing various tasks (Chukwueweniewe & Usman, 2023). Numerous theoretical stances are included in anthropological studies of healing, including those that focus on identity, agency, and embodiment as well as concepts of effectiveness (Miller, 1994). If wearable technology is to entirely evolve, it is fundamental to consider the wider scope of what wearables and objects enable people to experience beyond state-of-the-art technical characteristics.

In his review of the book "Medical Anthropology at the Intersections: Histories, Activisms, and Futures", Alexandra Widmer (2013) asserts that the early history of medical anthropology dates back to the first half of the 20th century. The second half of the 20th

century saw the emergence of second-wave feminist theory, which had a profound effect on both medical anthropology and anthropology as a whole. Women's legal rights, the fight for wage equality, patriarchy and family life, and sexual and reproductive rights were just a few of the topics feminist writers and activists started addressing in the early 1960s (Widmer, 2013). By the 1970s, feminist anthropologists—including feminist medical anthropologists—delved into these themes and created a significant area within the anthropology of reproduction. The use of technology for reproduction on women's bodies, including abortion and contraception, as well as the possibility of excessive use and harm, piqued the interest of numerous feminist medical anthropologists during subsequent decades (Widmer, 2013). Science and Technology Studies (STS), which emerged in the 1980s and also focused on the crucial perspectives on the production and reproduction of science, technology, and biomedicine, rapidly blended with the critical insights on patriarchy and biomedicine that feminist medical anthropologists had long held. Similar to feminist ethnographers, a number of STS academics expressed interest in providing critical perspectives of science, technology, and medicine in the making by venturing into the behind-the-scenes area of labs, healthcare facilities, operating rooms, pharmaceutical trials, and clinical research locations (Widmer, 2013). Feminist technoscience studies had become an interdisciplinary field by the early 1990s, and prominent scholars such as Donna Haraway (1985, 1988), Marilyn Strathern (1992), and Sarah Franklin (1995, 2007) had all endorsed it (Widmer, 2013). The scholars challenged the assumption that a natural human is fundamentally superior, and broke down imagined walls between humanity and technology. Such work has significant consequences for the perceptions of smart watch wearers examined in this thesis. Because this thesis draws on a range of theoretical innovation in the fields of medical anthropology and the medical humanities, it embraces that health is multifaceted, and typically consider health and well-being from a holistic perspective.

According to Schütz (2020), medical humanities assert that medicine is a compassionate field which interacts with people rather than inanimate or non-technical objects. Should the arts and literature lose their impact on medicine, its symbolism, values, and depictions would no longer be able to serve as a source of inspiration, solace, or health (Schütz, 2020). According to this philosophy, tackling the health issues of the twenty-first century and beyond calls for a broader understanding of what falls inside the rather strict parameters of the body of evidence supporting health care practices. The social sciences, humanities, and arts must all contribute to this body of evidence by sharing their expertise and by using their methodologies to seek understanding. According to Schütz (2020), engaging with these

disciplines is essential for a comprehensive approach to healthcare, and this thesis makes an attempt at such engagement.

1.3. The South African context – a critical aspect of theory making and understanding in the health humanities

People's ability to get tangible necessities for survival as well as their interpretive conceptions of the world have been permanently impacted by South Africa's tragic experience with racial discrimination. Inequalities and wealth disparities rank among the most significant issues that relate to the post-apartheid developmental experiences. In her (2010) article titled “Raw Life, New Hope: Decency, Housing, and Everyday life in a Post-apartheid Community”, Fiona Ross, an anthropology professor at the University of Cape Town, argued that Cape Town continues to be the most segregated city in South Africa, despite significant post-apartheid transformation. Irrespective of diversity in life experiences, the same historical processes have been prevalent for everyone.

In the second edition of his work, "Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Research Imagination” (2018), Chris Hart adopts a critical and philosophical approach with his contention that the literature must serve as a valuable tool for identifying key factors associated with a given topic. The literature also recognizes the interconnections between concepts and behaviours, establishing the context for the topic or problem, justifying the significance of the problem, and comprehending the structure of the subject matter (Hart, 2018). Understanding the structure of the subject and contextualizing the topic in this context means understanding that it is impractical to study Cape Town as a city in South Africa without considering its dismal past of racial and social oppression. Various unjust and discriminatory policies, as well as related institutions and practices of inequality based on race arose as a result of this. Since cost is a barrier that prevents people from purchasing smart watches and reaping the benefits of satisfying the need for self-expression and self-monitoring—two increasingly acknowledged new socio-technological values—it is imperative that the affordability issue be given maximum consideration. This is especially important when there is a large percentage of the population living in areas with high levels

of socioeconomic deprivation and insufficient income to purchase products like smartwatches.

It was thus critical to address the kind of technological revolution South Africans are a part of, and if there is a resistance towards the revolution. How a promising futuristic data economy could possibly fuel a digital apartheid. Colin Powell initially used the term “digital apartheid” to describe the deliberate exclusion of some groups from digital experiences and access due to economic and governmental policies and laws (Barnard-Ashton, Adams, Fasloen, Rothberg, Alan, & McInerney, 2018). Powell said: “I use an even stronger term—digital apartheid—when I discuss this subject” (Barnard-Ashton et.al, 2018:1). In his work “The New Apartheid” (Mpofu-Walsh (2021) asserts that South Africa’s subjugation has evolved into a new one, in spite of the exposure associated with it in 1994. He contends that the transfer of authority from the government to private individuals—many of whom are wealthy—is an avenue for mutation (Mpofu-Walsh, 2021). Because of its invisibility and ability to keep destructing while no one is looking, this new evolution poses a serious risk. I found the book's discussion of technology's role in this new form of apartheid to be perhaps its most compelling component, relevant for this thesis. We need to consider what apartheid's lasting effects are as we move through a world that is becoming more digital and face the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Mpofu-Walsh, 2021).

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) has been integrated by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa into his economic plan, (Rudolf 2022). The majority of individuals gain from technological improvements if they have established great access to health care and an adequate knowledge of how new and current technologies operate. This demographic typically knows how to use digital devices and can get relevant health information by navigating them with ease (Mackert, Mabry-Flynn, Champlin, Donovan, & Pounders, 2016). Typically, this is followed by applying the knowledge gained to address health-related concerns. This suggests that healthcare interventions that are solely technology-focused will probably benefit affluent groups with higher digital health literacy levels while excluding economically disadvantaged individuals like those with inadequate internet access. In her work on the 4th Industrial Revolution's promise for improving health care, Zamanzima Mazibuku-Makena (2021) writes extensively about these extreme inequalities and puts into context the realities of healthcare systems and technological advancements associated with the revolution in a country like South Africa. The 4IR has been defined as an environment in

which people utilise technological connections to govern and empower their lives, moving between physical and digital realms (Xu, David and Kim, 2018). Considering that smartwatches form part of this technological environment, this context is critical and necessary for the realism epistemological stance this thesis takes, which demands that knowledge be understood as contextual and historical rather than fixed. Mazibuku-Makena (2021) acknowledges that the concept of the 4IR necessitates new thinking in South Africa because of the country's overburdened and underfunded medical sector. Before the country's healthcare system can benefit fully from the success of this revolution, it must first meet fundamental necessities, such as improved infrastructure, improving the skills of its health professionals, and socioeconomic justice.

Imbalances in South African health care emerge across multiple distinctions that govern the allocation and production of resources. These imbalances manifest themselves in varying levels of access, affordability, usage, and the quality of services and amenities within the healthcare system. Therefore, considerable discrepancies in supply and consumption lead to significant inequalities in health status, health risks, and survival probabilities for particular demographic groups and individuals. As a result, health care inequality in South Africa is not a one-size-fits-all phenomenon. In addition, Mazibuku-Makena (2021) states that over the years, there have been numerous changes to South Africa's healthcare system and health policies, which have been intimately associated with the political history of the country. Extensive disparities cemented by colonialism and apartheid have had devastating and long-lasting consequences for the health outcomes of the predominantly Black populace. Most people's health needs are still not being sufficiently and effectively met by the South African health system, despite significant advancements and ongoing efforts by the government to address historical imbalances. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has defined health systems as all the entities, structures, and facilities dedicated to creating measures with the primary objective of improving health. (WHO, 200). Apart from managing an unparalleled quantity of illness cases (AIDS, tuberculosis, illnesses that are not transmissible, and severe traumas), the South African healthcare system also faces resource constraints that are made worse by insufficient funding, inept leadership, a lack of medical personnel, and declining facilities (Mazibuku-Makena, 2021). The healthcare system is still plagued by a history of exclusion and disintegration as seen by its division into two concurrent sectors: an exceptionally advanced private sector and a malfunctioning ineffective public sector. There is an unequal distribution of healthcare workers between public and private institutions, as

well as between urban and rural areas, and the public sector, which provides care for 84% of the nation's citizens, is grossly mismanaged (Maphumulo and Bhengu, 2019). A significant example of active critical work that shows how poverty contributes to the modern spread of pandemics in numerous locations is Paul Farmer's scholarship on AIDS (Farmer, 2004). In South Africa, the lack of universal healthcare has always existed.

A public health system's main goal is to improve people's health and well-being in a sustainable manner while also reducing inequities and bolstering integrated public health services. As a result, public health systems can be broadly defined as all organizations—public, private, or independent—that are involved in the delivery of vital public health services in a given region. It follows that public health systems are more than the conventional pyramid of publicly owned institutions that provide just individual health care (Niyitunga, 2022). A number of metrics, such as affordability, accessibility, equality, patient experience, and protection, are used to evaluate how effective the healthcare system is. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has recognised six essential components or parts of a health system: data; drugs, vaccines, and technical advancements; financing; leadership and governance; and medical care staff. With the importance of the sector for a country's attempts to achieve Universal Health Care (UHC) and epidemic preparedness, every element of the healthcare system must be taken into account for the public health system to function adequately (Niyitunga, 2022)

1.4. Donna Haraway in motion: Are we having fun yet, cyborgs?

> “Humans may enter into symbiotic relationships with intelligent machines . . . they may be displaced by intelligent machines . . . but there is a limit to how seamlessly humans can be articulated with intelligent machines, which remain distinctively different from humans in their embodiments” (Haraway, 1999:284)

A Cyborg Manifesto (1991), written by renowned academic Donna Haraway and first released in 1985, is a highly relevant text that discusses dominant understandings of reality

and the boundaries between humans and machines. It is a seminal work in feminist studies, examines the political, social, and historic conditionings of gender/sex, race, and class (Haraway, 1991). While working within the framework of feminist postmodernism, Haraway's ideas about a cyborg identity—which are essentially based on anti-essentialism, deconstruction, and norm critique—help the feminist postcolonial perspective in its quest to subvert prevailing notions of femininity (Haraway 1991:163,174).

> "What counts as women's experience in the late twentieth century is changed by the cyborg, a matter of fiction and lived experience"
>
> (Haraway 1991:149)

For this reason, the cyborg paradigm is useful not only for analysing constitutions of "woman," but also for feminist study of a type of techno-humanism (combining human and technology). According to Haraway (1991:174), women of colour can be seen of as forming a cyborg identity, which increases its applicability to the study of gender and racialization in a feminist postcolonial setting. The cyborg as a tool for decolonizing the female body is a claim made by Haraway, and this thesis will apply her ideas on the boundaries—or lack thereof—between human and machine. The extension of our brains-even the soul-through our cell phones troubles this distinction even further in the time since Haraway predicted such a collapse between human and machine. This transformation has further been enhanced by the smartwatch because the smartwatch makes a stronger connection between our offline and online selves because it's always connected.

Although Haraway's cyborg is mainly metaphorical and conceptual, the smartwatch unnerves us with its proximity to the concept. Our bodies literally become a part of technology. It's not just a part of our body; it's fully integrated with it—for instance, by monitoring our heart rate. The metaphor of the cyborg has resonance now more than ever. People are becoming more and more cyborgs as a result of the growing integration of technology into daily life.

> "If you are actually in love, you find yourself always to be in love with the wrong kind of love object – even if you are married, even if it is altogether upheld by the state – love undoes and re-does you. So, as in the Cyborg Manifesto, I'm also trying to come to terms with where we find ourselves together. Where do we find ourselves? When my

> dog and I touch, where and when are we? Which worldings and which sorts of temporalities and materiality erupt into this touch, and to what and whom is a response required?"
>
> (Haraway 1991:149)

In the passage above, Haraway (1991) states that the book endeavours to acknowledge the reality that not all elements of love are desirable in an interview with Gane (2006). This gives a new perspective on smart watches, one that looks beyond their obvious monitoring functions and takes into account temporalities like the speed at which people are communicating, which results in constant alertness and on bodies. Which could, for instance, hold the overarching objective of regulating time and touch to create neoliberal people and bodies of information whose skin functions as an open path for labour, attention, and communication. This also had me considering quite closely three kinds of users; a teacher, an outdoor enthusiast, and a writer and the features I would you include in a watch that was designed for them.

In examining the history of the interaction between people and machines in her book, Haraway (1991) argues that three barriers were crossed across human history, altering the notion of what is considered cultural or natural in different ways. After Charles Darwin's On the Origin of Species was published in the 19th century, the first such barrier—that separating humans from animals—was overcome. This book serves as a rejection of ideas of human exclusivity and supremacy by demonstrating the biological connection between all organisms, which turns the evolution of the organism into a riddle (Haraway, 1991). The idea of evolution was also presented as being essential to comprehending the purpose of human existence. The interaction between machines and living things (human or animal) is the subject of the second boundary-breaking incident. Every element of human life was mechanised with the arrival of the industrial revolution. With the growing reliance of humans on technology, machines have become an integral aspect of the human experience, serving as an extension of human potential. The third boundary relates to technological advancements that have led to the creation of ever-more complicated machines, some of which are insignificant in size or completely undetectable in the case of software. First came advancements in silicon semi-conductor chips, which are today ubiquitous in all spheres of life. It becomes challenging to distinguish between these machines and humans because they are essentially undetectable (Haraway, 1991). Thus, this machine is a representation

of culture encroaching onto nature, blending with it and altering it along the way. Consequently, the distinctions between the natural and cultural domains grew increasingly illusive.

The introduction of machine-generated organs has been a significant advancement in the medical profession today, and smartphones, for instance, extend human memory, perceptions, and consciousness. The progress gained the smartwatch technology gives us the capacity to exist beyond the confines of place and time, as well as to be present remotely. These technological developments all contribute to the growth of the human race and the improvement of our mental and physical capacities. This thesis is interested in this very notion that the idea is that the human body has evolved traits like longer life spans that it would not have been able to generate on its own. As defined by Haraway (1991), the cyborg is a novel metaphor for empowering self-construction that symbolises the deliberate remaking of identities that are imposed by society; the adaptability of our socially formed identities—our capacity to break free from the constraints of pre-packaged personas and subvert socially pressured roles (Haraway, 1991). Similarly, (Nyamnjoh, 2015) has argued for conviviality that the best method for people to survive, get by, and strive for the good life in the city is to adapt socially, economically, and in other ways to one another as they wander through the physical and intellectual complexities of daily existence.

1.5. The smart watch as a convivial machine: Embracing Francis Nyamnjoh's currency of conviviality

As previously stated, Francis Nyamnjoh, professor of anthropology at the University of Cape Town, has observed that in West and Central Africa, people recognise their own incompleteness and are determined to find ways to improve their connections with other people (Nyamnjoh, 2015). It is thought that Africa remains mired in a remote and dim past, unable to free itself and is in dire need of inspiration in order to potentially rise beyond its current difficulties and flourish (Nyamnjoh, 2015). The author recognises the inherent absurdities in human nature, but makes a consistent effort to rise above them. He recognises the unimaginable destruction and chaos that come with having power, and is proud of the

virtues of moderation as a necessary preservation mechanism and as a self-renewing source of solidarity. The cornerstones of conviviality are dynamic partnerships based on shared wants and aspirations in urban environments. In spite of widespread accounts of exclusion, Africans are able to reconcile with the reality of their contexts, negotiate the boundaries of their sociability with the power structure, and, in turn, open up new avenues that strengthen their networks of interactions and collaboration. These Africans start to take seriously the necessity to make room for one another to survive once the sense of completeness is lessened. In their incompleteness, their interactions as intimate strangers illustrate the difficult contradictions between intimacy and mutuality and serve as a symbol of struggles against backward forms of belonging.

Conviviality is based on the intricacies that people and communities at all scales, both within and between societies, inscribe and absorb into their daily interactions. It entails the thoughtful and creative negotiation of the positive and negative aspects of being human in order to cultivate and maintain accommodative and interdependent modes of connecting, interaction with others, and a sense of community (Nyamnjoh, 2015). Urban conviviality, which accepts incompleteness as the norm, leaves little room for clean dichotomies that emphasise specific locations and spaces for various social categories and hierarchies (Nyamnjoh, 2015). The best method for people to survive, get by, and strive for the good life in the city is to adapt socially, economically, and in other ways to one another as they wander through the physical and intellectual complexities of daily existence. In this way, conviviality is the ideal boundary attitude allowing social actors to skilfully navigate, negotiate, and balance conflicts, outbursts, violence, and real or potential tensions between the various identity margins they straddle with dialogues about unity in diversity. The author makes a contribution to medical humanities with this way of being - giving individuals the power to accomplish things they otherwise wouldn't be able to if relying only on inherent human abilities or capabilities (Nyamnjoh, 2015).

Nyamnjoh's (2015) multifaceted framework of incompleteness and conviviality provides insight into practices that surround wearable technologies in Sea Point. Building on the legacy of writings about the interconnectedness of the human with biotechnology (Haraway 1991 & Nyamnjoh, 2015). This approach highlights conviviality as one productive way to lift out from the everyday, forms of connection with smart watches, including the relief of loneliness, the desire for protection, and feelings of pride associated with wearing specific brands like the Apple watch. Incompleteness is the perfect storm for advertising and

technology. Consumers who seek completeness through material culture and the trappings of elitism, aesthetics, and comfort will by definition, be drawn to the novel and the promised. Because of this, humans are in a constant state of interdependence and do not require others in order to be full.

In their work: “Towards a contextual theology of conviviality: Tutu, Bonhoeffer and living musical metaphors”, Coates and Kunnuji (2022) posit that conviviality becomes an approach to incompleteness. Using one's abilities and resources for the good of the greater group, without the conceit that accompanies aspirations and declarations of completion, is one of the lived expressions of knowledge of incompleteness (Coates & Kunnuji, 2022). Acknowledging one's incompleteness makes one more receptive to social interaction. This is a submission to a social order based on mutual enrichment, active involvement, cooperation, interdependence, and reciprocity rather than a ruse to become complete. This should not be interpreted as denying Africans the capacity to cognitively theorise about their behaviour, leaving the task of theorising to researchers. Africans have always had methods of understanding what they do, and they share these conceptions among themselves. But in a lived structure, each cooperating person might not always be aware of how their activities fit into a larger theoretical picture (Coates & Kunnuji, 2022).

> “Arguably, what differentiates humans from other living species is our ability for self- reflection. To observe and analyse our own thoughts, emotions, and intentions; to reflect on past behaviours and to plan future behaviours. There is little doubt that such reflective ability can drive self-improvement, and introducing self-tracking technology to that mix greatly enhances our powers of analysis and prediction. It helps us to uncover lawful relationships between our behaviour and its consequences, and to leverage the level of control that we might exert over our physical health, our mental wellbeing, our productivity, or other variables we care about. At the same time, humans are a deeply social species. We share a basic instinct for attachment; a fundamental need for affiliation, for meaningful social connection and social support.”

1.6. Listening to a self-tracking scholarly conversation in progress

Self-tracking has been integrated in people's daily lives and is becoming more and more widespread in the field of healthcare. Because self-tracking has received so much interest in the fields of medicine and healthcare, fundamental criticisms of self-tracking for wellbeing have emerged in research. Deborah Lupton, a digital sociologist who studies the use of new digital media in medicine and public health notes that, in addition to self-tracking, there are a number of other names that are used to characterise the methods that people may attempt to monitor their daily lives, including lifelogging, self-monitoring, personal informatics, and the quantified self (Lupton, 2016). The author refers to self-tracking as a practices in which individuals consciously and purposefully acquire data on them, that they subsequently examine and think about using in their daily lives (Lupton, 2014). Lifelogging, as a process of using digital tools to document details about one's life (Lupton, 2014). The academic community that studies human-computer interaction is the primary user of the term personal informatics. The phrase "self-knowledge through numbers" is associated with the quantified self, which was first used by Wolf and Kelly in 2007 (Lupton, 2016:1), who employed quantitative data as a way to track the components of daily living. Wearable technologies were employed for personal surveillance as early as the 1970s, when they were used for self-tracking (Lupton, 2014). Even though members of the Quantified Self group often use the term “Quantified Self community”, it essentially alludes to sharing information about oneself or improving one's own data collection endeavour by studying the findings, self-monitoring, and record-keeping portrayal methods of others. (Lupton, 2014).

The complex phenomena of the quantified self and self-tracking have been extensively studied by Lupton (2014), who looked at it from a variety of interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological perspectives. A growing body of research in the field of Human-computer Interaction (HCI) studies explores the nuances of self-tracking, explaining the various reasons people engage in this practice and the variables affecting people's adoption, continuance, or discontinuation. Regarding health and well-being, which are key components of self-monitoring, the World Health Organization's definition of well-being—which includes social, mental, and physical aspects in addition to the absence of illness or disability—emphasizes the fundamental relationship between the two (Lupton, 2016).

Self-tracking devices leverage advances in wearable technology, wireless communication, and cloud computing to enable the gathering and processing of personal data related to biological, physical, behavioural, and environmental domains. This allows people to keep an eye on a variety of aspects of their lives. Research in the medical field explores how self-tracking devices can be incorporated into rehabilitative settings and how they can be clinically used to manage chronic conditions, providing insight into how these devices can improve patient outcomes. Information systems research, with a focus on wearable technology and its implications for behaviour analysis, illuminates user motives, tolerance levels, and goal accomplishment about self-tracking. HCI researchers provide insights into design aspects and iterative refinement processes targeted at improving user experience and efficacy. The scholastic and empirical discourse of the purposes of wearable technologies range from wellbeing to aesthetics. From a design viewpoint, considerations involving the creation and evaluation of novel self-tracking technologies are crucial (Lupton, 2014).

Designing technology with health and wellbeing in mind may initially appear to be a singularly useful endeavour. However, it's a complex task because health can be viewed as an experience that is constrained and impacted by a range of variables, such as personal needs, more general health determinants, access to healthcare, cultural and societal presumptions and larger power structures (Spors, Laato, Buruk and Hamari, 2023). These creative perspectives emerged from the medical humanities due to their inventive and creative unorthodox features and practices. The design aesthetics of smartwatches can foster social ideals and satiate the need for self-expression through artefacts, body architectures, personal scenographies, performative connotations, interactive fashion material, visual cultures, and emotional garments. How well a technology is received is a significant component of design aesthetics. Nanda, Parul and Bos (2008) define design aesthetics as the study of how beautifully something looks, anticipated to catch users' attention and increase adoption intention. The way that a smartwatch's colour, form, and look convey a certain aesthetic, establish a sense of balance, or evoke certain feelings in the wearer (Nanda et al, 2008). D'Amour, Goulet and Labadie (2013) have stated that in order for these things to be easily integrated into what we do every day, there needs to be a higher focus on design. The recommendations for achieving this include adorning self-tracking devices with jewellery, integrating them into stylish clothing, making them auxiliary and significant (D'Amour et al, 2013). Torgan (2012) observes that while certain individuals feel trendy and athletic when wearing a self-tracking device, others feel obese and self-

conscious about their appearances. People's reactions to a device may be significantly influenced by its design, including how it looks and how noticeable it is—or is not. In the digital self-tracking experience, design elements, emotions, bodies, identities, and data are interwoven (Lupton, 2014). Smartwatches are considered to be fashion items and more of a premium accessory. Users' favourable opinions of a smartwatch will be influenced by its distinctiveness.

Others gain more confidence and feel safer knowing that these devices are tracking their health (Lupton, 2016). This awareness can provide people a greater sense of control over their lives. The safety smartwatches provide through self-tracking can be significant for individuals living in a society where there are many more options for how to live one's life and when social bonds and established social institutions have deteriorated (Lupton, 2014). Some sociologists have noted that the disappearance of traditional social structures—such as religion, nuclear families, rigid gender roles, and lifetime employment—contributes to the idea that individuals must maximise their opportunities in life given the unpredictable nature of modern life (Lupton, 2016). Their life paths have grown far more open as a result, but they are also far more vulnerable to dangers and uncertainty. Because of their choices and actions, they are held accountable for both their accomplishments and shortcomings.

The adoption of technologically mediated, data-intensive approaches for health management and self-monitoring, according to Lupton's (2016) analysis, is consistent with socialist governance ideas, which place an emphasis on the behaviour and autonomy of the individual citizen. This new paradigm means that individuals will now be more accountable for their health and well-being and that institutions will lose control over health management. This is especially important in light of the government's declining support of social and medical services. In a society where people are expected to actively participate in their own health management, this movement represents a larger cultural shift towards wellness and agency. Since it allows people to take charge of their own well-being by using metrics-driven approaches to self-improvement, the Quantified self movement is regarded as a shining example of a progressive attitude based on self-control. The idea that progress depends on quantifiable facts emphasises this mindset.

Crucially, the communal nature of self-tracking behaviours suggests the possible advantages of adopting a socially conscious understanding of the Quantified self. In terms of self-tracking and its social ramifications, acknowledging, accepting, and publicly supporting this perspective may have considerable rewards. Individuals will be able to

manage their mood swings, reduce stress, manage chronic illnesses better, sleep better, have better interactions with others, and so on with the help of the information found on the smartwatch. This conceptual linking is relevant for this study because it also has to do with the social embeddedness Nyamnjoh (2015) makes reference of on the reinforcement of incompleteness never as a means of achieving completion but rather to improve their social function. The underlying connection between capitalism and Quantified Self practices stems from the way they both encourage people to consider their health as companies or initiatives, in that they require ongoing investment, development, and progress (Lupton, 2016). In his own words, Gary Wolf characterised this project-like attitude to the self as follows:

> We use numbers when we want to tune up a car, analyze a chemical reaction, predict the outcome of an election. We use numbers to optimize an assembly line. Why not use numbers on ourselves?

The sociology of science and technology offers valuable insights into the dynamics of human engagement with smartwatches through an extra analytical lens. In this paradigm, important factors include the philosophical character of interactions between humans and technology, the influence of technology on ideas of existence and autonomy, and the complex ways in which technologies shape social relations both in conjunction with and independently of them (Lupton, 2016). The line between the human body and technology is become harder to draw as technology develops, especially with small, wearable devices like smartphones and smartwatches. Examples of non-intrusive technology include insulin pumps, heart pacemakers, and hearing aids. Jurgenson (2012) suggests that it is becoming harder to distinguish between one's online and offline identities, painting a picture of a world where technology, identity, and the physical are all overlapping and fluid. A vast ecosystem of stakeholders, including developers of hardware and software, companies, designers, servers, databases, the computing cloud, the internet, systems, and social media platforms, are involved in the self-monitoring mechanism built into smartwatches. A perceptive self-tracking analysis ought to examine and challenge the changing dynamics in which our work and personal identities are created by a network of contributors motivated by the desire to maximise individual potential in addition to individual agency. This thesis emphasises the non-human agents that create complex networks as a result of human interaction with

technology, with a particular focus on the cyborg phenomena. According to Lupton (2016), workplace relationships and productivity are also aspects of self-tracking cultures, in addition to personal metrics. Socioeconomic factors, including sexual orientation, place of residence, class, race, or ethnic origin, are portrayed in the literature on human-computer interaction as having little bearing on an individual's prospects and probabilities. Individuality is defined as a combination of one's distinct life experiences that direct one's destiny via self-awareness and reasoning. With respect to self-tracking, organisations and organisations such as schools, hospitals, clinics, health promotion organisations, and workplaces actively encourage and take part in self-tracking cultures.

Moreover, employees may find it necessary to use tracking devices in order to evaluate their productivity, which may have an effect on their prospects for promotion and income (Lupton, 2014). As such, these systems require third-party user monitoring through the use of self-tracking devices. The devices still gather and store personal information about each individual user, but their function now is externally mandated or enforced self-tracking rather than self-directed tracking (Lupton, 2014). It can be difficult to distinguish between forced and voluntary self-tracking, especially when compensation, sanctions, or future employment are at stake. Seven members of Discovery's Vitality Active Reward incentive program—an international insurance company with its headquarters located in South Africa—are included in this thesis. Under this weekly gain-framed incentive programme, participants receive prizes for tracking and exceeding set physical activity criteria (Hafner, Pollard and van Stolk, 2020). They consent to having their physical activity tracked by a variety of devices, including watches and smartphones, and they accept to be rewarded with Vitality points for meeting predetermined activity goals, which can range from simple to complex exercises or events. The consistent allocation of points to these activities reduces volatility caused by the use of various tracking devices (Lupton, 2014).

Chapter 2

Rationalizing pursued methodological roads

The methodological choices that guide this anthropological study are thoroughly explored in this chapter, which also highlights important facets and emphasises the interconnected themes of relational accountability, reflexivity, and critical realism. As the researcher, I explicitly acknowledge that my perspective and positionality have a profound impact on how I perceive and interact with the world around me, and that these factors have a profound impact on my life prospects. Writing an inquisitive and self-aware thesis requires adopting a reflexive position such as this. The chapter further explains the selection of Sea Point's Promenade as the research site and discusses why semi-structured Interviews and contemporary ethnography: participant observation and fieldwork are the methodological techniques best suited for this research. The study goes a step beyond by presenting a distinctive multimodal anthropology methodological approach through the exploration of audio podcasting. This audio component can be directly engaged with through an associated QR code, which unlocks the potential of audio reporting as a powerful tool for anthropology and ethnographic research. Furthermore, the chapter explores in brief the intriguing arena of artefacts and public documents. The various ways these objects are welcomed, abused, or ignored in day-to-day existence are illuminated by field observations, which also make emotional links to the historical narrative mirrored in the artwork along Sea Point Promenade. Lastly, the chapter briefly takes into consideration the ethical issues that arose throughout the research process. This reflection raises the study's transparency by recognising the challenges and complexities of adhering to ethical standards.

2.1. Relational accountability, reflexivity, and critical realism at play

Reflectivity is essential to anthropology, and this thesis recognises the necessity of looking at how one's personal beliefs influence the research process. Reflexivity, according to renowned academic and anthropology professor Jay Ruby, entails having a higher level of self-awareness, knowing what parts of oneself are appropriate to share, and making sure that sharing is not self-serving or unintentional (1980). The significance of acknowledging these relationships is emphasised by the author, who clearly conveys their relationship to the research (Ruby, 1980). According to Ross (2010), reflexivity is the understanding of how history, as well as both historical and contemporary forms of power, influence our beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. My journalistic and anthropological training have taught me that the two disciplines could certainly be said to be close cousins for their storytelling nature. Although they have distinct similarities in their data collection methods, or having those transcendent experiences when absorbing people's experiences and putting their stories on larger platforms for the world to consume, anthropology has proven to provide a lot more reflexivity and orientation of the complexity of reality. According to Ross (2010), reflexivity is a crucial component of the anthropological study methodology.

My life prospects are shaped by my standpoint and positionality. My social standing conditions how I experience and interpret the world, how I interact with others, as well as the research topics and forms of analysis I select. This idea is echoed in the book "Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methodology" (2008) by author and philosopher Shawn Wilson, who offers an indigenous research paradigm on the interrelated topics of identity, health, healing, culture, and wellbeing. Wilson (2008) contends that, in order to be accountable to all relationships, researchers need use prudence when selecting research subjects, data collection techniques, forms of analysis, and how to communicate the major research findings. This argument is based on the idea of relational accountability, which is at the heart of this study. It is recognised that family history has a significant impact on one's identity and research topics, and that the author has a strong personal connection with some issues. These encounters have a profound psychological impact on the me, highlighting the interaction between academic interests and personal background. Wilson's (2008) work

serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of developing bicultural competences in indigenous scholars and the need to acknowledge the intricate intersectionality of their experiences and identities during the research process.

The commencement of my postgraduate studies with the Centre for Film and Media Studies (CFMS) at the University of Cape Town (UCT) saw critical inquiries into the workings of digital technologies in a South African context, essential to critical algorithm studies and data feminism. I examined the ramifications of this integrated and diverse technology environment, looking specifically into the awareness and experiences of algorithmic systems. Coming into this new interdisciplinary approach to healthcare, I have been closely engaged in interactions that have guided my thinking about my topic leading up to this work. In 2014, UCT launched a “Massive Open Online Course in Medicine” (MOOC) and the Arts co-convened by Dr Steve Ried and NRF-rated Professor, Head of Anthropology at UCT and Convenor of Health Humanities and the Arts (MPhil) Professor Susan Levine. Steve Ried is a family doctor at the Groote Schuur Public Hospital in Cape Town, with a wealth of medical knowledge as well as expertise in teaching and research related to rural health care. Ried is also co-convenor for the course Critical Health Humanities in Africa, which includes the participation of artists, performers, and health humanities for the exploration of the value of interdisciplinary approaches to health. Levine's research lies in the interconnected fields of visual, political, and medical anthropology. Working in and out of disciplines underpins Levine’s pedagogical approach to interdisciplinary problem solving and knowledge production in the health sciences across the African continent.

Another contemporary effort to foster a medical humanities and the arts in African tertiary education in South Africa are Stellenbosch University’s ’health and society. From 2016, the Departments of Sociology and Social Anthropology, as well as Global Health, have collaboratively convened MPhil and Postgraduate Diploma programmes at Stellenbosch University to supplement the Unit for Research on Health & Society (Pentecost et al, 2018). All together, these curricula offer chances for interdisciplinary study, primarily at the level of postgraduate education. All of the creators of these courses are members of the emerging Medical and Health Humanities Network Africa, despite the fact that they have each developed a unique strategy for connecting the social sciences, humanities, and health sciences (Pentecost et al, 2018). Thus, multifaceted strategies to health sciences education in the context of South Africa have a solid foundation upon which to grow.

The aforementioned have been an incredibly important area for me to look beyond anthropological knowledge creation into other modalities concerning health and well-being and what medical practice can entail in a resource-constrained setting. To be studying medical anthropology at this historical juncture in the middle of a pandemic is a real privilege as it gives one an ability to work through the themes of medical anthropology and the personal and intimate recognition of disease. It gives one an opportunity to try to understand social relationships, the political economy of disease, the everyday embodied sense of being, as well as what it means to be well living in a medically plural world. I took into account my own positionality as a black student at the University of Cape Town, the historical trajectory of the institution, the timelines of smart watches, the history of time, and how these wearable technologies are made, distributed, perceived, desired, and received today, as well as what they represent in the context of South Africa, because I wanted to produce an exploratory and reflexive thesis.

This thesis ascribes to a critical realism research paradigm. Critical realists are defined by du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, and Bezuidenhhout (2014) as scholars who have an obligation to improve the social fabric by drawing attention to, considering, and transforming any unfair exhibits in society. I give explicit consideration to the ontological and epistemological position of critical realism, owing to some of its key features and relevance to this paper. The entities that construct the world are endowed with certain powers and liabilities due to their attributes. When one or more entities activate their powers, occurrences take place. Both visibility and invisibleness are possible due to reality's layered character. That is to say, they can comprise both tangible objects like wearable technology or smart watches and intangible things like ideas, theories, concepts, or institutions (Haigh, F., Kemp, L., Bazeley, P. *et al. 2019).* Factors such as human rights, discrimination, and capitalism are examples of unseen things in the social environment. Although these unseen entities cannot be observed empirically, their activated powers and methods may have observable repercussions (e.g., social, personal, and interpersonal connections, large scales of existence and consciousness. I am compelled by the critical realism epistemological stance to view knowledge as contextual and historical, rather than as something that is fixed. Although critical realists accept that they will never be able to offer definitive solutions, they do not think that this should be the initial goal of the inquiry (du Plooy-Cilliers et.al, 2014). My goal is not to just learn things for the sake of learning or engagement, but practical ideals, such as emancipation and freedom, as in this instance, should be ingrained in knowledge (du Plooy-Cilliers et.al, 2014).

2.2. Field site Context: Cape Town's Sea Point Promenade

Purposive sampling was employed for the purpose of research. This sample aligns well with the overall objective of the study, and it has enabled me to obtain insights that address the research question after multiple observational visits to the site. Additionally, the Promenade provided me with a daily destination where I could return and concentrate on interacting with others who use wearable technology to track their health. Since purposeful samples that are typically limited in size, Shaheen, Musarrat & Pradhan, Sudeepta & Ranajee (2019) raise doubts about their usefulness and credibility based on their reasoning and objectives. For this reason, I chose a total of ten participants. From the runners, walkers, strollers, and swimmers along the Beachfront, to the many sets of social standards, ages, weights, and heights that the Promenade fosters, I studied the culture and relationships in the area.

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork from Sea Point's Promenade, my purposeful sample is drawn from a pool of people who specifically wear wearable technologies. The concept of purposeful sampling is to select samples with high information content so as to obtain a thorough comprehension of the phenomenon (Shaheen et al., 2016).Film and Screen Studies Professor Lindiwe Dovey wrote about screening filmmaker Francois Verster's Sea Point Days film, and experiencing a refreshing sense of renewal and claustrophobia disappearing (2018). The author acclaims that this teaching experience has taught her in an intensely embodied way that while we have to commit ourselves to not allowing the horrors of the apartheid past and its legacies to be forgotten, we simultaneously have to find ways of freeing our eyes from an apartheid vision of the world, in which we are bound to see race first and foremost, and all other aspects of people's identities, experiences and lives only secondarily (2018). Although the film isn't accessible at this present time, I understand that Verster (2018) uses people's spoken memories of apartheid and old movie footage to help people see South Africa in these new ways.

The philosophical foundations of Albert Camus' philosophy are intriguing to read about in poetic form. French-Algerian Nobel Prize winning author, journalist, and philosopher Camus (1954) with a deep sense of humanity and nostalgia, evocatively and poignantly wrote about a place that was both vividly physical and blatantly unfair, recalling the conflicting assertions

of sunlight, history, and poverty during his childhood in Algiers, now known as Algeria in North Africa.

> "Yes, there is beauty and there are the humiliated. Whatever may be the difficulties of the undertaking, I should like never to be unfaithful either to one or to the others."

Memory, beauty, and freedom are among the subjects that Camus discusses in his writings, as well as his struggle to defend these principles in the face of atrocities and injustice. The authoritative governments, conflicts, and other worldly catastrophes were an obstacle to his philosophical beliefs of beauty and freedom. Similarly, The aesthetic effect of Cape Town, including its extravagant displays and the overwhelming contrasts of mountain ranges and architecture, and Sea Points, does not take away the fact that the City is significantly divided. Interdisciplinary academic, writer, visual artist and Visual Anthropology course convenor at UCT's Anthropology Department, Dr Jade Gibson shared similar sentiments on this on her offering: "Skeletal (in-)visibilities in the city – Rootless: a video sculptural response to the disconnected in Cape Town". Even while the media portrayed Cape Town during the 2010 World Cup as having magnificent scenery of Table Mountain, stunning shores, and cheerful communities of varied populations, it suffered from difficulties originating from the dispersion of spatial planning caused by Apartheid (Gibson, 2012). This is important to conceptualize and bring the history of the site into context.

The rich and poor are likely to be increasingly segregated as a result of attempts to establish more "secure" regions as a result of gentrification (13:2012). Even though South Africa's constitution guarantees racial equality, the country is far from having achieved economic equality. Due to the economic disparity brought about by the racialized inequality of the previous apartheid laws with regard to jobs and schooling, Cape Town continues to be characterised by a sizable urban poor expansion that is predominantly black (including coloured people) (Gibson, 2012). The choice of this particular site was based mostly on empowerment, which is seen as an intellectual minefield in feminist discussions (Holland, 2010). Being a young Black woman with positionality on the margins, reflexivity, and relational accountability also played a role.

Participants were between the ages of 18 and 80. various classes of people, smartwatches their interactions and relationships with them. This generation is more eager to pay higher prices and more driven to actively change their living habits for the better in order to achieve

their health-related goals (Muller, 2020). Additionally, this age group is the first to have grown up in a period where smartphones, computers, other electronic gadgets, and the internet are necessities for day-to-day existence (Muller, 2020). As a result, they naturally embrace technology and its innovations.

This purposive sampling allowed for inferences to be drawn and fit certain criteria that are relevant to the study. The group helped me address the research question in relation to the study. The covid-19 pandemic in particular has shown how critical health research and public health is and has exposed some of the gaps in health and wellbeing of all people.

For the goal of better capturing the interview data and for the audio podcast's creation, I asked each participant's permission to record the interviews. When I tried taking handwritten notes on the first two days of fieldwork, I found that they were generally unreliable and that I frequently missed important details. I sent out the digital consent form over WhatsApp. For the recordings, I also utilised my phone. By having the interviews recorded, I was able to create a verbatim translation of the conversation, which let me concentrate more on the interview's content and verbal inputs.

Only one interview per person was conducted. Typically, they took 15 to 30 minutes. There were times when I only went to observe and remained silent. I didn't have a set daily schedule while doing this for nearly four months. I would spend around three hours in the campus library before returning home to write while taking field notes. In situations where I couldn't manage to visit the on-campus library, I would also use the UCT Online Library. During this time, I also participated in the UCT Office for Postgraduate Studies and Researcher Development In-Person and Online Interactive webinars extensively. It was a critical period for fieldwork as well as for working collaboratively and actively with classmates, professors, and research colleagues.

2.3. Semi-structured interviews and contemporary ethnography: Participant observation & fieldwork

2.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

In order to explore the manner in which smartwatches were used and perceived, and how the technology affected lived experience, I interviewed people about their smart watch use.

According to Tracy (2013), making use of qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviews, facilitated cooperative exploration, knowledge generation, introspection, and the provision of explanations on a flexible, dynamic, and frequently engaging path. Semi-structured interviews elucidated the respondents' personal lived experiences and viewpoints regarding the extension of their embodied sense of self through smart watches (Haraway, 1990 and Nyamnjoh, 2015).Conversations with ordinary people on the Sea Point promenade provided considerable insight into situations that cannot be seen or easily accessed. I asked runners, walkers, and strollers questions about how they perceived their devices, and what intrigued me, was the extent to which smart watches were framed as body architectures that amplified the social worlds of an interactive material and visual culture, personal and social skins and emotional attachments. I spoke with different classes of people, including some individuals who were not be able to gain access to medical care but who purchased wearable technologies to track their health.

Sarah Tracy is an Associate Professor of food studies and the history of medicine and Director of The University of Oklahoma's Medical Humanities Programme. She is committed to interdisciplinary education that draws from the humanities, social sciences, and arts to provide understanding of science, technology, and medicine. To make the most of the interview time and such stimulating roads, I created an interview plan that included the main question and topic as well as other linked questions. These include the extent to which wearable technologies can be attributed with a spirit or agency of their own, and how this agency is manifested. Additionally, the various ways in which the unique personalized experience of wearable technologies be reconciled with collective patterns and norms from a common urge to understand what it is to be “fully human” within a shared mode of inquiry This served to maintain the interview's attention on the planned course of inquiry, since the aim of the research isn’t just to describe participants’ stories, but to understand, analyse and interpret those stories. This method was the most suited and relevant for this study considering that this a relatively new field of study and the intention centres identifying and analysing significant subject matter. They are semi-structured because I needed them to be purposeful and still have conversational quality.

2.3.2. Contemporary ethnography: Participant observation & fieldwork

Observation methods are useful to researchers in a number of ways. It's a study technique that entails getting to know people by living through their experiences. This kind of understanding necessitates a certain level of intimacy, claims Ross (2010) ; not judging people based on what society or theories say about them. Instead, learning about them by being a part of their daily life and understanding their habits and connections with others. This, as Malinowski (1922) has maintained, is living with people in their own social surroundings and learning the rules—many of which are unsaid and unacknowledged—by which they live and interpret their lives, as well as how those norms are broken and the resulting repercussions. One of the most well-known and significant people in anthropology is Bronislaw Malinowski. He is regarded as the Father of Field Research because of the innovative method he blended ethnography and participant observation (Cassar, 2023). As an advocate of participant observation, he focused his fieldwork on the notion that in order to observe and document the activities that are taking place, the researcher should actively engage in the culture that is the subject of the study "to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize *his* vision of *his* world" (Malinowski 1922:25). The Cape Town marathon took place around the same time that I was conducting fieldwork for this thesis. The 42.2km Sanlam Cape Town Marathon is a renowned international city race that welcomes a wide range of participants, from social runners to top competitors (Ajam, 2023). I observed and interacted with some of the individuals. The event, in partnership with Sanlam, Adidas, the City of Cape Town, Virgin Active and marathon enthusiasts from all over South Africa and from around the world, featured a variety of race options, including the Gold Lable Status Road marathon, the 10km or 5km Peace Runs, the 46km Trail Marathon, the 22km Trail Challenge, and the new 11km Trail Race. It takes months of sweat, tears, and smartwatch tracking to prepare for any marathon, but watching took no work at all. Seeing the nearby Sea Point residents walk, jog, and bike to the closest viewing location along the Sea Point Promenade route and cheer on the competitors as they pass by was a part of this observation. In other words, fieldwork is an effort, consciously directed, a means through which to come to know other people and their ways of life (Ross, 2010).

2.4. Multimodal anthropology: Audio podcasting

As part of coursework, I enrolled in a course in multimodal and visual anthropology, concerned with engaging deeply with ways of knowing and to ask questions about how we

perceive the world and how we re-present the world. It explored vision, the senses and affect as socio-historically located and the relationship to ethnographic representation, processes of making, agency, personhood, and exploring *making visible* from an anthropological perspective. I have considered audio reporting as a methodology for my research because this project is a labour of love, and a true testament to the ever-seeker, relentlessly curios and exploratory spirit I have held over the years. As someone with a journalistic background, undertaking the course reignited a sense of recognition and alignment. According to (Gamwell and Collins, 2016), storytelling can be structured in a more profound manner through podcasting. As a design anthropologist, Dr. Adam Gamwell is passionate about media creation, cultural analysis, social strategy, education, and ethnographic and contextual research. In order to jointly identify issues and develop solutions that span culture, behaviour, and environment, he combines participatory design, grounded ethnographic analysis, and holistic, systems-level viewpoints (Gamwell and Collins, 2016). I am curious about how audio reporting as a tool for anthropology and ethnographic research allows for storytelling to be constructed in a more profound manner.

In addition, Gamwell and Collins, (2016) have argued that the audience may feel more connected to the speaker after hearing them describe their own experiences, and including more senses in ethnography means developing a new way of knowing rather than just telling a story. When methodology is applied in a novel, imaginative, or perceptive way, methodological significance is attained (Tracy, 2013). New approaches could refine and hone that approach in addition to providing new theoretical understanding. Engaging in "creative analytic practices" means using dance, performance, and other artistic mediums to gain insight, as described by Richardson (2000). Expansion in the qualitative landscape is highly desirable, as methodological vitality offers valuable understanding of our craft abilities related to data collection, management, and analysis (Tracy, 2013).
My motivation for pursuing the method had to align with the purpose of the endeavour, which was to experiment with the methodology and determine its potential contributions to the field of anthropology.

To reflect on this creative analytical process, careful planning and conceptualization were necessary in the podcast's early stages of creation. I went on to identify wearable technology in Cape Town as my target audience for the podcast concept and developed an episode idea. Because the focus was more on experimenting with the process, which required taking

into account the ideal podcast episode length, the discussions or semi-structured interviews were longer than the podcast indicates.
After that, I decided on a theme and subject by considering the special viewpoint I could offer the podcast's subject and answer the research questions.
Additionally, because my participants answered the research questions in different ways, I found it a bit difficult to make it specific. Broadly appealing podcasts may wind up reaching a smaller number of listeners and people are more like to suggest a narrowed down podcast to a friend than a general one. I made an attempt to make a strong first impression and setting the tone for the podcast by bringing in the field site background. I named the podcast *Journeys Beyond the Wrist* and the episode *Smart Watches, Sea Point, and the Shifting Sands of Time.* I took some time to make a list of bullet points to help the episode flow better as I was writing the podcast script because I wanted to avoid rambling about. This ended up serving as the podcast's compass and direction. In order to create a script, I had to list the main ideas and the narrative framework.

In order to maintain brevity without sacrificing the depth of the anthropological inquiry, it became clear that long interviews needed to be condensed into vital audio snippets. I had to choose a suitable location for recording when it came time. With a microphone and headphones in hand, I recorded in a calm room. I was fully conscious of how crucial a controlled recording setting is. Fortunately, I didn't need to purchase pricey equipment in order to record high-quality audio. My microphone and simple podcast setup made editing simpler and improved the audio quality. Thanks to technology, podcast editing software is frequently inexpensive. Even some excellent, free tools for editing podcasts exist.
Editing merely involved minor structural adjustments and audio clean-up. I attempted to simplify the procedure so that I wouldn't become overwhelmed. I began by introducing myself, my message, and the value of listening to my podcast in an approachable manner. My initial focus was on prioritising the subject matter before returning to address audio issues.

Trimming, chopping, and moulding the audio environment was the delicate dance of editing. Unwanted silences were cut, redundant phrases were removed, and a symphony of voices that flowed naturally with the story were revealed. The application of sound methods was crucial in creating audio tapestry. The skill was in the careful use of equalisation modifications, loudness adjustments, and the thoughtful placement of background music.

Enhancing clarity, arousing emotion, and keeping the audience interested were the goals of each component. I then edited the podcast and then exported the audio file. On the hosting service Soundcloud, I exported it as an MP4 file. In its entirety, this endeavour explored multimodal anthropology using synthesised interviews, narrative, and experimental sound approaches, serving as a testament to the creative power of interdisciplinarity.

Figure 1: Podcast titled: Waves of Change & the Shifting Sands of Time

2.5. Public documents and artifacts

Tracy (2015) has also mentioned in her “Qualitative Research Methods” offering, a methodological approach she refers to as “Public documents and artefacts”. This approach involves examining public documents, which include internet sites, leaflets, publications, and promotional materials, and objects of art, which are man-made objects like toys, furniture, technology, or paintings, in their respective contexts (Tracy, 2015). According to the author, the chance to learn first-hand how artefacts are loved, misused, or ignored on a daily basis comes from fieldwork. Documents provide background information on the group's past, details about its regulations, policies, or membership requirements, as well as key facts and data. I found this to be interesting considering the various Art on Sea Point’s Promenade’s, much of it reflecting South Africa’s past. Gaining acquaintance with the current groups or hierarchies through the reading of public documentation about this environment can also save you time by preventing you from asking participants questions that can be simply addressed elsewhere (Tracy, 2015). Public documents such as articles, leaflets, and promotional materials provide additional context for understanding the significance of the artwork within its broader social and cultural context.

The artwork "Contemporary Stagings of the Tableau Vivant" by Marieke Prinsloo Rowe offers an array of subject matter for inquiry when analysed using the approach of looking through public records and artefacts. The piece "Walking the Road – Art on the Sea Point Promenade" by (The SA-Venues.com, 2017) tells a story that skilfully combines environmental harmony with societal aspirations. This is one of the striking illustrations of how public art may act as a catalyst for debate and introspection among the community. The artist utilises the French phrase 'living picture' to represent a gathering of costumed performers or artists' figures meticulously positioned in a still, yet powerful, scene (The SA-Venues, 2017).

Figure 2: Contemporary Stagings of the Tableau Vivant (The SA-Venues, 2017)

This process transforms the art installation into a dynamic artefact that invites a careful examination of its levels of narrative significance. On a personal level, the installation is a moving reminder of one's own aspirations. Through a discussion with the artwork that goes beyond conventional artistic mediums, viewers are inspired to consider the relevance of personal narratives. The tableau vivant turns into a tool for self-reflection, encouraging people to think about the dreams that influence their lives and, consequently, add to the larger conversation in society.

Figure 3: Contemporary Stagings of the Tableau Vivant (The SA-Venues, 2017)

The characters in the tableau stand for peaceful cohabitation because of their placement against the vivid blue backdrop of the water and sky (The SA-Venues, 2017). The artist paints a picture of a young South African democracy represented by an extended armless girl who is full of cheerfulness and their autonomy. The story of aspiration and emancipation is strengthened with the addition of a dragonfly. The artwork makes a strong point about how interdependent humans and environment are. This environmental viewpoint emphasises the value of care and receptivity while challenging viewers to re-evaluate their relationship with the planet. A deeper comprehension of the public conversation surrounding these issues can be attained by employing the methodology of looking at public documents and artefacts to understand how the art installation addresses themes of democracy, freedom, and environmental harmony. One may explore how the art installation enters the public conversation about these issues by using public records and artefacts for the Sea Point Promenade as a methodology for research.

These sculptures were taken down in June 2011 after a 12-month display on the promenade, yet their stories are still relevant today. The work invites viewers to consider their own narratives and aspirations by delicately arranging characters and symbols to create a narrative of democratic values and environmental harmony. In the same way, this study reveals smart watches to be more than just useful tools—they are also coded symbols of class and personal aspirations. The artwork also places an emphasis on the environment

and the interconnectedness of humans and their environments. In a similar vein, although the primary focus of this study is on the interactions between people and their urban surroundings, it also subtly highlights the interactions between society, technology, and the larger environment. The Sea Point Promenade serves as a stage for the various interactions made possible by smartwatches, emphasising the interconnectedness of technical advancements, human existence, and the urban ecosystem in particular. Fundamentally, this thesis and the artwork recognise the complex interaction that people have with their surroundings, whether those environments are technological or natural.

With all of the debate surrounding the public art work at Sea Point Promenade and the extensive historical and literary documents around it, this methodological approach is especially interesting for this particular thesis topic. Another public art was "Perceiving Freedom," by artist Michael Elion (SJ de Klerk, 2021). It overlooks Robben Island, the location of the prison where former South African president Nelson Mandela served over thirty years of his life.

Figure 4: Perceiving Freedom by Michael Elion (de Klerk,2021)

Michael Elion, the artist, has claimed that the sculpture "links us to the mind of a man whose incredible capacity to transcend enduring physical hardship, with unwavering mental fortitude and dignity, transformed the consciousness of an entire country" (de Klerk, 2021:1). The distinct lenses of the sunglasses, according to Elion, "symbolise the invisible barriers and prejudice that exist in our perceptions and shape the way we view the world" (de Klerk, 2021:1). Since Mandela's tear ducts suffered damage by the sun and dust as he laboured in the Robben Island stone quarries, there was a debate on the image's appropriateness (de Klerk, 2021).

In the light of how smartwatches are branded and displayed as symbols of class and aspirations, Michael Elion's claim that the sculpture's sunglasses symbolise injustice and invisible walls holds resonance. A common theme emerges from the analysis of materiality and symbolism as both the sculpture and the smartwatches turn into symbolic objects that mirror social views, biases, and desires. A multifaceted glance at the cultural landscape of Sea Point Promenade can be facilitated by this junction of art, historical background, and health-related controversies.

Figure 5: Perceiving Freedom by Michael Elion (de Klerk, 2021)

2.6. Navigating an ethics tick-box

One the courses I took as part of coursework was *Medical Anthropologies: Well-being in a precarious world*, and one of the key prospects it exposed me to, is competence in understanding the ethical dimensions of research in human health. Deborah Posel and Fiona Ross delve into such discourse in their discussion of some of the ethical challenges and conundrums when undertaking fieldwork in the book *Opening up the quandaries of research ethics: Beyond the formalities of institutional ethical review* (2014). Professor Deborah Posel is a leading South African sociologist interested in the historical sociology of apartheid and the sociology of post-apartheid South Africa, and Founding Director of interdisciplinary research institutes Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of the Witwatersrand and the Institute for the Humanities in Africa (HUMA) at the University of Cape Town. Professor Fiona Ross, as previously introduced, NRF-rated Professor of Anthropology at the University of Cape Town is also *Medical Anthropologies: Well-being in a precarious world* course convenor. Her work is concerned with formations of social life in apartheid's aftermath.

Before deciding willingly to engage in the study, participants should have sufficient understanding of the study and its implications for them as individuals. Posel and Ross raise an intriguing point about how the ethical review process can easily lead to a "tick-box" (2014:3) mentality, or preoccupation with correctly filling out the forms, rather than attending to the challenging ethical issues—that can be messy and complex (Posel and Ross, 2014). I once wanted to talk to someone as they were walking around with their child at Sea Point's Promenade during fieldwork. Both the man and the child were wearing smartwatches. Parental or guardian consent is necessary by the Children's Act (No. 38 of 2005) before a child can take part in research, in part because it is believed that children are not mentally capable of understanding the type of research in which they are taking part (Posel and Ross, 2014). Even when someone is in charge of looking after a child, they may occasionally fall short because they struggle to manage their emotions or comprehend social settings (Posel and Ross, 2014). This can happen even if they're trying to do the right thing.

Sea Point is a relatively privileged space, and people go there specifically to not engage with others – even though it's a very busy area; with rich history and a rich residence. Even though I was aware that I couldn't interact with the child, I was still concerned that speaking with the father while they were with their child may generate more ethical issues than simply asking him to sign a consent form and speak to me. It becomes then ironic the unlikeliness of the consent form to provide much preparation for the ethical uncertainty that the field of social research frequently raises if and where the dominant objective is administrative rather than intellectual (Posel and Ross, 2014).

Chapter 3

Narratives of wearables

This chapter presents and discusses the study's findings in light of its objectives, which included highlighting personal narratives and explaining, analysing, and interpreting how smartwatches have impacted and changed daily life by showcasing users who use them to express who they are. The topics that have surfaced from the transcript analysis are also covered in this chapter. Data analysis is carried out employing a theme analysis technique. Thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2012), is a rigorous process that involves identifying, categorising, and contextualising themes—patterns of meaning—across a set of data. The researcher can perceive and comprehend common or collective meanings and experiences with through the use of thematic analysis. There are many trends in any dataset; the purpose of analysis is to identify the patterns that are relevant to answering a specific inquiry, which can then be linked to broader theoretical or conceptual frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Here, the perception of smartwatches as health and wellness inducers at Cape Town, South Africa's Sea Point Promenade.

A detailed reading of the transcripts is a critical first stage in the processing process of qualitative data, according to de Wet and Erasmus (2005). By carefully reading the content, I was able to engage with it in an unmediated manner that helped put the statistics in context. Even at this early stage, the common themes among all the participants were clear. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), it is important to go over the transcripts in order to find any recurrent themes or unexpected or contradictory information. I went over transcripts several times following this guideline to make sure I didn't miss any alternative accounts to what became the most popular experiences and views of smartwatches. To illustrate this first step in the analysis process, data revealed that only one of my participants, a 72-year-old white American woman - living in South Africa for over a decade - had received her smartwatch as a gift. The other research participants consciously chose to purchase theirs.

> “Stories go in circles. They don't go in straight lines. It helps if you listen in circles because there are stories inside and between stories, and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way

> home. Part of finding is getting lost, and when you are lost you start to open up and listen." (Tafoya, 1995)

3.1. On the hybridity of the cyborg

In keeping up with Haraway (1990), the cyborg has potential to symbolize "a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self," because it depicts a disjointed, mechanical body and self that captures the complex, postmodern human experience of the modern era (1990:33). Reddy Brown, the 72-year-old white woman explained that she received a fit band as a gift from a friend many years ago. She had worn it for a long time until it broke. Her friend purchased the exact same one for her. She believed it made him more limber. To prove that this worked, her friend had her stand up and stretch as far as she could and she really worked hard. And then he put it on her wrist and she went so much further.

"Is this all in my head?", she thought.

Reddy's depiction of the fit band underscores Haraway's (1990) claim that humans and technology are inextricably linked. It affects flexibility and influences physical skills as the band becomes a physical extension of the body. Her initial doubts about the fit band's effectiveness ("Is this all in my head?") are reminiscent of Haraway's (1990) observation that it can be challenging to understand how technology affects the body and that the lines between human and machine are blurring. The notion that fit bands makes one - more limber, illustrates the idea of technology enhancing human capabilities. When Reddy wears the band, she feels that she can stretch further, suggesting a direct impact on her physical capabilities.

Reddy highlighted that she knew very little about her fit band and was not fully tapped into its possibilities. She elaborated,

> There's a way to make it brighter but I forgot how to do it. I don't even understand how much more my watch can do besides counting my steps – my understanding is limited to monitoring your health. And, I have to say, when I'm being conscientious, which I haven't been lately, I walk more because I know by the end of the day, I'm going to look at my watch and say:

> I only walked a thousand steps today and my goal is 10 000 which I almost never reach. That's how it improves my health, but other than that…

This ignorance is consistent with Haraway's theory that machines are parts of our embodiment and that, "our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert (1990:4) in the presence of their vitality. Reddy's ignorance of her equipment draws attention to a possible power dynamic in which the machine maintains some autonomy (Haraway, 1990).

These sentiments were also echoed by the second participant, Kabelo Ntuli, 28 Black man, who strongly thought that at some point, the metrics take over and one almost gets lost and forgets about what it is they are meant to be doing. Ntuli illustrated

> For example, working out doesn't always have to be the same motion. My smartwatch doesn't really track my weight training exercises. The most it can track is rowing and the rest is cardio exercises, so I might not be doing cardio exercise but I'm still working out and my watch won't track that. So, if I looked at my health journey based off of my watch and all the data coming out of it, I don't think I'd be meeting my personal health goals.

Not only did Ntuli believe that these metrics can be a distraction, but he also thought that they were invasive. Ntuli explained,

> This is a practice in the United States, sure. But maybe there's restrictions limiting that in this country. But I do know that a lot of the times, we just skim through the terms and conditions without reading them properly.

For these reasons, Thabo had stopped wearing his watch on a daily basis. He elaborated,

> I only use it when I plan to do some heavy cardio or cycle or if I'm participating in some kind of a marathon. I don't use it often because of the concern of the invasion of my privacy. Someone somewhere knows what I'm doing all the time, maybe the same is true with my cell phone but, I at least need my cell phone a 100%. I don't really feel secured with the sensors on the instruction pamphlet that I got. They said that the sensors had to be close to your skin to give you any useful data, and for me that's a much hassle. The watch is either

> too restricting and I can’t stand for too long or I wear it when I’m comfortable and miss out on all the supposed data.

Ntuli's decision to stop wearing his smartwatch on a daily basis is rooted in concerns about privacy invasion. He expressed his discomfort with the idea that someone, somewhere, might have access to his activities at all times. This aligns with communication research and the growing discourse on the quantified self, where self-tracking is viewed as a communicative event. The sociological perspective sheds light on the challenges individuals face in incorporating self-tracking devices into their daily lives, balancing the desire for data with the practicality of device usage.

Moreover, he asserts that wearable technology has not advanced to the point where he would consider overlooking his doctor's consultations over the next two to three decades. Ntuli adds,

> Again, as consumers, this is some of the stuff that were not fully aware of. Look at the example of Elizabeth Holmes and the Theranos scandal for instance. So, based on this, I don’t trust wearables and I don’t think I will trust them for the next two to three decades with replacing my health check-ups.

His specific mention of the Theranos scandal taps into the ethical and reliability issues surrounding health-tech companies, contributing to the broader discourse on the ethical implications of self-tracking technologies. Elizabeth Holmes and Ramesh Balwani claimed that their business, Theranos, would transform blood testing using cutting-edge technology and efficient procedures (Williams, 2022). Because of the company's unusual methods and adoption of a board of advisors rather than a standard board of directors, scepticism spread throughout the scientific community (Williams, 2022). The corporation collapsed in 2014 as a result of growing suspicions and more journalistic scrutiny. Theranos's licence was suspended in the wake of investor litigation and governmental inquiries that led to accusations of conspiracies and financial fraud against Holmes and Balwani (Williams, 2022).

He adds,

> And, even then as I get older, I will want more detailed insights into what my health is like because this is the age at which there is a lot more deterioration in the body and you want to avoid that as best as you can.

> Even now, it doesn't give me information or data about my health that's specific to me. So, for example if I'm doing an exercise and the watch needs to tell me how long I need to rest for after doing this exercise, the watch uses a generic profile of a person who is my age, within my BMI range and who has my kind of lifestyle behaviours that I've selected in whatever survey I did before using this wearable device. It doesn't necessarily tell me: "Ntuli, your medical history is like one, two, and three, and we know that you had these conditions when you were younger. You grew out of them etc." And based on this,… It is nice to look at it looks nice, but I don't think for health reasons, it's something I would take very seriously because it doesn't give me detailed information about my specific health profile.

From an information systems perspective, Ntuli's expectations for more detailed health information and personalized insights speak to user expectations and the need for tailored self-tracking solutions. As he delves into the specifics of his reservations, Ntuli emphasizes the lack of personalized insights from his smartwatch. This aligns with research in the field of medicine that explores the use of self-tracking devices in rehabilitation and chronic disease management. The disconnect between generic health profiles provided by wearables and the nuanced medical histories and conditions of individuals raises concerns about the effectiveness of such devices in delivering meaningful healthcare information. His narratives on his smartwatch concerns provides valuable insights that resonate with multiple disciplines, making it a rich source for interdisciplinary analysis. The intersection of communication, sociology, medicine, and information systems reveals the multifaceted aspects of individuals' experiences with these devices.

Echoing this mistrust of data ownership, he also expressed dissatisfaction with the operational functionality of the device. Ntuli adds,

> I'm not a fan of the way it operates because you have to engrave it your skin… I don't trust the product. I don't trust the data that comes out of the product, so I won't be replacing my traditional consultations with it anytime soon. Not to say that traditional consultations are any better, but at least there is a person that you can hold accountable. There is a doctor and a nurse that if they say that you're okay or you're not, you can hold them accountable. Unlike a smartwatch, which I can't hold the manufacturer accountable because

> they’re not a medical company. So maybe that’s what it’s going to take – maybe it’s going to take medical companies getting involved but they probably also want to protect their doctors so I think a lot of how the future goes for smartwatches depends on how all the different key stakeholder play things out among themselves.

As Ntuli notes, traditional consultations with human doctors and nurses offer a sense of accountability that is lacking in interactions with technology. This highlights concerns about the opaque nature of data collection processes, as well as the potential for misuse or manipulation of personal data by technology companies. The idea of meta colonialism is interesting for this particular context. This, as Bulhan (2015) posits, is an expansive, sophisticated and subdued type of control that has replaced the early and organic forms of colonial domination. In this new kind of colonialism, the capitalist system, liberal democracy, and Western culture are combined to create a single, all-encompassing power that rules over politics, the economics, and culture (Bulhan, 2015). The primary object of dominance is the entire colonised person—their social, cultural, psychological, and economic identities (Bulhan, 2015). The primary indicators of meta colonial wellbeing are the quantity and quality of acquired material goods individuals consume, the residences they live in, and the technology they own (Bulhan, 2015). A colonial people's perception that they are happily moving towards well-being and accountability makes freedom much more complex and difficult. The lack of accountability Ntuli perceives in the smartwatch, as opposed to traditional medical consultations, aligns with the idea that meta colonial governance operates in a way that is challenging to challenge or hold accountable. His preference for traditional consultations may also be influenced by cultural perspectives on technology and healthcare. Ntuli's reluctance to fully embrace the smartwatch may stem from a clash between his cultural understanding of healthcare and the technology's intrusion into that space. His experience with his smartwatch highlights the significance of critically analysing the methods by which smartwatch data is gathered, kept, and used in the larger context of data ownership and management. The body of research on data privacy and governance highlights the necessity of open, moral procedures that put people's autonomy and freedoms ahead of their own data. Ntuli's hesitation to completely rely on his smartwatch for medical advice is indicative of larger social concerns about how data-driven technology may affect people's privacy, autonomy, and accountability in the digital age. This reflects the larger social problem of data ownership, where people are becoming more worried about who owns and

profits from the data produced by their use of technology. Control over several facets of people's lives, including their data, is a crucial component of the overall power structures, as the literature on meta colonialism reveals.

Abongile Mpela, another participant, 32, shared Ntuli's sentiments around the data risk and security. It was a typical cold, wet, and unpleasantly windy Cape Town Saturday morning at Sea Point's Promenade when I spoke to him on his smart watch use. As Ross (2010) has asserted, participant observation and fieldwork requires an intimacy, and learning about Mpela and understanding his habits and connections with others. One such connection that this conscious observing and engaging effort led to was on Mpela's partner and his partner's smartwatch brand preference: the Apple smartwatch – although he prefers the Garmin brand. I found this to be one of those organic and stimulating roads Tracy (2013) makes mention of, that important insights into interpersonal relationships can also be gained through participant observation and interviews. Furthermore, researchers could investigate relationships through participant observation and interviews with the aim to understand why people enter into these types of relationships, how their interactions develop and change, and how they express their feelings for one another (Tracy, 2013).

It was an unexpected trajectory that Mpela and I embarked upon; however, his disclosure of purchasing an Apple smartwatch for his partner not only underscored the efficacy of these methodologies in facilitating an organic semi-structured dialogue but also exemplified the potential for symbolic affiliation within a communal context and the formation of such communities around particular brands. During our engaging discourse, Mpela graciously consented to allow me to photograph his Garmin smartwatch, further enhancing the richness of our interaction.

Figure 6: Participant's smartwatch

Without a question, smartwatches contain a wealth of desirable data about their wearer. As with any modern smart technology, there are security issues to be mindful of. And in Mmekwa's experience, the smartwatch has proven to be more accurate than a smart phone. Because of this, data risk and security was a huge concern for him.

> "In the future, if they start direct marketing because of this, I'll be very worried because they would be taking my personal information and using it towards a certain situation, like Flo with the period app."

In their ethical review of the use of smartwatches to identify heart rhythm disorders, Predel and Steger (2021) discovered that there can be negative consequences due to the high rate of false-positive results. Among the moral conundrums the writers address is data protection. One issue is that the businesses possess and keep user-provided health data, which they do not disclose to users or know how it will be utilised. Companies may share or utilise the data that smartwatches acquire for different purposes, contingent on the terms and conditions. At times, users fail to review or comprehend the entire extent of what data is stored and how it is used. To give one example, researchers alone had access to the data gathered and evaluated for the Apple Heart Study—no Apple employees were given this information. However, anonymised data can still be recognised even when it is encrypted (Predel & Steger, 2021).

Undoubtedly, gathering and documenting personal information about individuals is not something that is new. Data collecting has long been employed as a tactic to integrate power over the lives of those whose data are collected and to consolidate knowledge about them. D'Ignazio and Klein (2020) speak about this extensively in their *Data Feminism* offering. They make the striking example of the intimate connection between data and power being found in the historical narrative that starts with the logs of individuals who were taken prisoner and put on slave ships, turning thoroughly lived lives into nothing more than numbers and names. It goes through the eugenics movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which used statistics to measure how much white people were superior to everyone else (D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020). Analysing the implication of this finding requires inquiries into how this injustice be lessened. According to the authors, examining power entails identifying and elucidating the oppressive forces that permeate every aspect of our life and are frequently invisible to us because they are ingrained in our datasets, databases, and algorithms. In my honours dissertation with the Centre for Film and Media Studies, I explored the values, judgements, and logics that underlie algorithms—which are crucial to critical algorithm studies—and are frequently thought to be black-boxed, discriminating, and oppressive (Eubanks, 2018).

> "The machine is not an it to be animated, worshipped, and dominated. The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment. We can be responsible for machines; they do not dominate or threaten us. We are responsible for boundaries. Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert" (Haraway, 1991: 152).

In a similar vein, a medical anthropology lens sheds light on the obstacles to Mpela's use of smartwatches in this research and promotes a closer examination of his data fears as well as the ways in which his wellbeing is shaped by society and culture and how he experiences, interprets, and responds to inquiries about health, illness, and wellness. The discipline's emphasis on sociality, historical and contextual considerations, and methodological tools provide a way to comprehend how sickness affects people and their relationships, the environments they live in, and the social forms that illness either permits or rejects. Its innovations are a part of people's daily lives and are used, interpreted, and contested in people's daily attempts to make sense of their experiences. Foucault's ideas of totalitarian

surveillance, biopolitics, and biopower are representative of a large portion of the social science work on wearable technologies, activity trackers, and other data gathering apps and devices that monitor human bodily states and activity (Wissinger, 2017). The critique incorporates a wide spectrum of work on this topic, from algorithmic culture criticism and surveillance studies to sociological studies of how self-tracking adversely impacts racialized, classed, and gendered groups. A host of privacy, ethical, and societal concerns are brought up by wearable technology's ability to transmit and receive information about others instantly (Gill, 2008). When people grow reliant on technology to support their cognitive processes, continuous usage of intelligent devices, like wearables, may cause certain skills (like social intelligence) to decline or at least impede their development (Gill, 2008).

Akho Sinqaba, a 26-year-old black woman employed as an anthropology researcher, emerged as the only participant who found gratification in the self-tracking capabilities of smartwatches. In her account, she articulated a particular enthusiasm for the health monitoring features embedded within these devices. She highlighted the ability to monitor steps taken over specified periods, enabling comparative analysis across months, weeks, and days. Additionally, she expressed appreciation for the capacity to track her menstrual cycle, emphasizing the utility in promptly identifying irregularities by discerning variations from the previous month.

Sinqaba's reliance on the smartwatch as a tool for health management resonates with the broader literature on cyborgs and conviviality. Her account of her smartwatch use illustrates the symbiotic relationship between humans and technology, embodying the principles of cyborg identity construction and convivial adaptation within the contemporary digital landscape. The smartwatch, in this context, emerges not merely as a gadget but as an extension of the self, facilitating a dynamic interaction that redefines the boundaries of human experience and identity. The integration of machine-generated machines such as smartwatches, into daily life represents a significant advancement, akin to the extension of human memory, perceptions, and consciousness facilitated by smartphones. This technological progress enables individuals to transcend the constraints of both time and space, fostering a sense of remote presence.

In parallel, Nyamnjoh's concept of conviviality finds resonance in Sinqaba’s use of the smartwatch. Her integration of the smartwatch into her life exemplifies a form of social and technological adaptation, where she aligns herself with the device to enhance her overall well-being. The concept of conviviality, as articulated by Nyamnjoh (2015), emphasizes

adaptation and mutual support among individuals navigating the complexities of daily existence. Her embrace of smartwatch technology aligns with this notion, as the device serves as a means for her to adapt socially and economically to the demands of modern life. The device fosters a convivial relationship between Sinqaba and her health data, encouraging active engagement through visual representations like graphs that motivate her to maintain consistent tracking habits.

Since the quantified self and self-tracking have been examined from a range of theoretical and methodological angles and across disciplinary boundaries, this thesis also considers Lupton's (2016) claims that technically controlled, data-driven solutions to managing one's health and self-monitoring align with neoliberal political thought, which emphasises personal conduct and responsibility for one's on the part of citizens, moving the management of health from structures to people Intimate bio digital knowledges have already evolved into modes of bio capital, physical and digital units of human value that can be bought and sold in the digital data economy (Lupton, 2016). This captures individual impulses to gather data for self-improvement within a negative picture of oppressive authority and control.
One way to look at self-experimentation with data is through Haraway's (1990) argument that we "can be responsible for machines, and that they do not dominate and threaten us."

Reddy's use of her smartwatch to monitor her health, especially during the times of COVID-19, exemplifies this responsibility. When she speaks about her blood pressure, she admits there is a way one can find their blood pressure on the device – this will tell what your heart rate is, beats per minute. And hers normally runs low so when she looks at it and it is what would be normal for most people, she knows she has to take her blood pressure. Reddy adds,

> That's an important feature especially in the times of Covid. That's what comes to mind when I think benefits—counting your steps which encourages you to walk and being a safety bell.

In addition, enhancing the notion of a safety bell, two elderly acquaintances that Reddy knows were given Apple smartwatches as gifts from their children. She indicates that if the device falls, it has a function that causes it to automatically dial the emergency contact number when it hits the ground. Reddy adds,

> That's another advantage of a smartwatch, that it gives an alert to your family.

> One of my friend's mother-in-law goes for a walk every day. She is 80 something and her husband passed away maybe three-four years ago. She was out for a walk and fell. And she couldn't get up, and by the time somebody found her… I mean, she's fine, thank God. They took her to the hospital and that's when they started talking about these smartwatches. It is programmed so if you fall, the watch says to you: *Should I call your emergency number?* And if you don't respond within a certain amount of time, they do it anyway, because you could easily say no if you are conscious. That was the heath in smartwatch, because that actually saves people's lives.

Her distaste for larger smartwatches is one of the reasons she prefers the Fitbit over the Apple Watch, which underlines her particular practical and aesthetic preferences when it comes to wearable technology. Reddy adds,

> "It's not even that it looks more expensive, I just don't like something that big on my wrist."

Haraway's (1990) cyborg metaphor is further enhanced by Reddy's disdain of big smartwatches and her preference for fitness bands over Apple watches because of their size. Choosing a wearable device blurs the boundaries between the natural and artificial, becoming a personal expression of one's identity and preferences. She has also always worn her smartwatch upside down– and does not usually wear it on her right hand because she is right-handed. This was intriguing for me because I had not actively and intentionally observed or noticed whether people wear their smartwatches on their left or right hand, and the reasons thereof.

An excerpt of this discussion from data reads:

> Reddy: "I put it on my left hand because when I sliced my thumb, I got four stiches in last year."
>
> Me: "What happened? Were you cutting something?
>
> Reddy: "I was using a Mandoline. You know what a Mandoline is?"
>
> Me: "No."
>
> Reddy: "Don't ever get one."

She then goes on to explain that they come with metal gloves that she is supposed to wear – it is to make really thin slices. She was cutting up a zucchini. In order to see, she has to squeeze the watch, and she couldn't use the thumb at all, so she started wearing it on her

right hand and just got used to it. But because she wears it upside down, and is right handed, she does not want to cover up her tattoo. It has always been on her left hand until last year. Taking the idea of smartwatches covering up tattoos further, Reddy told a story about a woman she met who works as a tattoo remover. The woman indulged Reddy on some of the processes and rationales that lead individuals to opt for their tattoo removal. Reddy adds,

> Because they're so bad for you because they… I don't know the medical terms but they break down something and the reason they're permanent is because they can't heal. It takes like 12 treatments to get rid of them because they have to do something to redo the molecules. She was explaining this whole thing about why they're not good for you and she says to me: "You don't have to cover your tattoo."

Reddy had not realized she had covered her tattoo through her watch until the woman said that. The discussion about tattoos being bad for health and wearables serving as cover-up tools for tattoos adds another layer to Haraway's (1990) cyborg metaphor. Wearables not only become extensions of the self but also tools for concealing or modifying aspects of one's physical identity.

3.2.The mindful body's convivial ways of being and becoming

The third participant Mmusi Maneli, 41 black male and makes the attempt to transcend the various identity margins he straddles. In the interest of promoting his health, Maneli speaks of the intimate relationship he had with his Garmin 35 smartwatch that extends beyond simple fitness tracking; referring to it as a constant companion in his day-to-day activities. Maneli, who is originally from George and came to Cape Town for the Sanlam marathon, uses his Garmin 35 to monitor his heart rate, pace, and caloric expenditure. The Cape Town Marathon, in partnership with Sanlam, Adidas, the City of Cape Town, Virgin Active and marathon enthusiasts from all over South Africa and from around the world. The event featured a variety of race options, including the Gold Lable Status Road marathon, the 10km or 5km Peace Runs, the 46km Trail Marathon, the 22km Trail Challenge, and the new 11km Trail Race.

The smartwatch provided him with a detailed weekly report that was sent to him every Sunday. It went above and beyond, giving him information on his blood pressure and subtle advice on how to control his stress levels. Through this smartwatch, Maneli is able to

dismantle some of the rigid identities imposed by society. These identities are the result of institutions and relationships in the social, cultural, and economic spheres and are actively contested politically. The idea of the cyborg and conviviality offers him an opportunity to effectively compete for meanings, as well as other forms of power and pleasure, in his smart watch. Conviviality, which accepts incompleteness as the norm, leaves little room for clean dichotomies that emphasise specific locations and spaces for various social categories and hierarchies (Nyamnjoh, 2015). In this way, conviviality is the ideal boundary attitude allowing social actors to skilfully navigate, negotiate, and balance conflicts, outbursts, violence, and real or potential tensions between the various identity margins they straddle with dialogues about unity in diversity. Maneli is able to empower himself in this way, something he would have not otherwise been able to accomplish if relying only on inherent human abilities or capabilities.

Moreover, the participant articulated a profound connection with his smartwatch, emphasizing the personalized feedback loop it established. Maneli's attachment was evident as he described the smartwatch's ability to alert him when running at an accelerated pace, prompting him to slow down in response to elevated blood pressure. Despite occasional inaccuracies related to age and height estimates, he expressed admiration for the watch's overall reliability. His engagement in marathon running was primarily driven by health considerations, following participation in cricket, rugby, and football. The emotional connection with his Garmin extended beyond technical functionalities, as evident when he consciously allowed the device to rest before embarking on a 42-kilometer run. This gesture underscored his appreciation for the smartwatch as a personal companion, substantiated by the meticulous charging routine he observed. The mere suggestion of a scratch on the device evoked agony, emphasizing the profound bond forged through accumulated kilometres and associated memories. Looking ahead, Maneli contemplated passing on his current Garmin to someone who would cherish and maintain it, illustrating an enduring commitment that persisted even in the face of potential upgrades.

Maneli's dependency on his smartwatch reflects Nyamnjoh's (2015)' idea that incompleteness is the inherent order of existence. His use of technology to deepen and broaden his understanding of his health is consistent with the recognition that people are in a state of perpetual interdependence and do not need others to be whole. He feels more complete in the context of health monitoring when his smartwatch acts as an extension of

his well-being. Whether accepted or not, Nyamnjoh (2015) contends that conviviality is unavoidable. This unavoidable conviviality is embodied in Maneli's case by his relationship with his smartwatch, which he uses on a daily basis and which has shaped his health habits. His relationship with his smartwatch is interwoven, reflecting the inescapable necessity of conviviality as a part of existence.

In the context of anthropology, people frequently extend themselves through different techniques and artefacts. Maneli's emotional connection to the smartwatch—which he shows by treating it like a sentient being and charging it—indicates that for him, the device is an extension of himself rather than merely an external instrument. His smartwatch starts to become an integral part of who he is. By using the smartwatch, Maneli is able to negotiate and challenge the identities that are placed on him by society expectations as a Black man living in Cape Town and frequenting a space like the Sea Point's Promenade for instance. He may rethink and challenge preconceived beliefs about age, health, and physical activity in society through to the smartwatch.

Consistent with the notion of conviviality, I was curious about how design aesthetics of smartwatches can foster social ideals and satiate the need for self-expression through artefacts, body architectures, performative connotations, interactive fashion material, visual cultures, and emotional garments. This line of thought propels the consideration of Margaret Lock and Nancy Sheper-Hughes' *Three Body Model* (1987) formative article when they argued that the human experience of the body is not uniform across time or space and the ways in which human experience is given meaning is derived from social forces (Lock & Sheper-Hughes, 1987). They propose dismantling conventional notions about the body, examined in relation to modern commodity culture as well as how it embodies social and economic inequality.

One participant Akho Sinqaba, expressed skepticism about the role of smartwatches in the future of healthcare in South Africa. Akho acknowledged the privilege of individuals like herself who can track their health through smartwatches, but she questions the wider applicability of such technology in a country where many lack access to such resources. Her scepticism towards the future of smartwatches in South African healthcare underscores the complex interplay between technology, social forces, and healthcare accessibility within the framework of Lock and Sheper-Hughes' (1987) *Three Body Model*. Despite being among the privileged few who can afford such devices, Akho questions the broader accessibility and

effectiveness of smartwatches within the country's healthcare landscape. This skepticism underscores the disparities in access to healthcare resources and technology, highlighting how social and economic factors shape individuals' experiences of their bodies and health. She spoke of the social body aspect of the *Three Body Model* when she discussed the societal perception of individuals with smartwatches. She observes that owning a smartwatch or fitness wearable is associated with a certain social class, implicitly reinforcing social ideals about class and wealth. Furthermore, her skepticism indirectly alludes to the body politic element of the *Three Body Model*, suggesting that the adoption of smartwatches and similar technologies may contribute to reinforcing existing social and economic inequalities. The privilege of being able to afford and utilize such devices may inadvertently contribute to class distinctions and shape societal perceptions.

design aesthetics and if they preferred a certain brand of smartwatch and if so, why. Sinqaba added that the watch can be a fashion statement based on how she styles her watch. She can swop out the watch striped for ones that suit her personality and get a smaller frame or a bigger frame. All her friends who have them also wear theirs differently in terms of what size they prefer and the style they prefer to.

Here, conviviality arises from the need to question class distinctions through attempts at adaptability driven by the need to survive. Sade Aimes, 32 white woman, discovered I was conducting research when she and a few pals were taking a stroll along the Promenade. She indicated that she understood the difficulty of approaching people to engage in conversation because she is a researcher herself. Aimes' unwavering devotion to Apple, demonstrated by her Apple watch and phone, is proof of the impact of brand identity in the wearables space. “You won't convince me to switch”, she says, echoing her unyielding stance. Aimes uses her smartwatch as a means of self-expression that stems from her passion for the Apple brand identity, rather than just as a preference. She is especially excited about the watch's capacity to precisely track her workouts—a feature she appreciates as a gym frequenter.

People today define and express who they are through the things they buy and how they look, which reflects how they view themselves and the world. Maintenance of the body suggests an interest in physical appearance, sexual attractiveness, and overall health. The

other to look at it is as a way the unique personalized experience of wearable technologies can be reconciled with collective patterns and norms from a common urge to understand what it is to be “fully human” within a shared mode of inquiry i.e. the possibility to symbolically connect with a shared community and how these communities are formed around the Apple brand.

Taking the notion of a smartwatch as self-connotation and fashion statement further, Ntuli, on the other hand, still needs convincing on the design of these watches’ potential to be more than monitoring his health.

> “We have to consider the source – the source for a lot of these products is the global north and even though China is a big partner in South cooperations, they are increasingly becoming a member of the global north by economic positionality, by their position on the global stage. So if we look at the cultural values that these people have, they’re often very exclusive of people of colour and very exclusive of other cultures that are not theirs. Everyone wants to represent their own culture when they do this so for as long as these watches continue to be produced in the global north, well keep on seeing the same cycle as were seeing with clothing and any other kinds of fashion statement industry which is that we’re essentially going to be led by whatever trends are developed and set in the North without much consideration to the particular needs, demands, or resource availability of our local context. So as far as that’s concerned, I don’t see it fostering social ideals in that way. I think even if we were to have let’s say African designers of these devices, they would still ultimately need the funding to pursue this and that funding would come from the north and that funding would then dictate the trajectory… the same way if we look at our luxury high fashion brands that are locally made, a lot of these brands really still.. I mean ya know? A lot of what they’re doing, a lot of their manufacturing processes and textiles they use are based on what is used in the textile makeup and in the manufacturing processes of European luxury fashion houses so repetition… it as cycle that repeats itself. That’s how I see it.”

Even beyond differences, inequalities, and structures of power, conviviality provides venues and possibilities for an uplifting way of expression. It urges us to let go of our inflexibilities about identities and realities, leading us in the direction of rich dream realms for social reinvention. This allows for the creation of an endless variety of conviviality venues, including those that are political, cultural, religious, economic, gendered, class-based, generational, and geographical.

Another way I was able to look at a participant's experience with their smartwatch through their connection with space and time in regard to material bodies and environment-body interactions. Abraham Anam's remarks demonstrate his dedication to safety when running and wearing his smartwatch at the Sea Point Promenade. His decision to wear the smartwatch goes beyond only monitoring his fitness as he frequently runs along Sea Point's Promenade; it serves as a link to his mobile device, enabling him to stay in touch even when out on the road. He mostly acknowledges the luxury of being able to run in a place like Sea Point, citing its accessibility as opposed to less secure locations where people may be forced to run because they have less options. He started off with a more basic smartwatch and worked his way up to one with more features – focusing on the growing significance of health indicators like heart rate, which was made even more apparent by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 7: Participant's smartwatch

Atkinson et.al, (2015) highlight the research by Sparke and Anguelov (2012) on how certain inequalities that were already in place were reflected and reinforced in the way that the 2009

H1N1 virus pandemic and reactions to it were framed (Guthman and Mansfield 2012). These include assigning blame for the outbreak to underdeveloped nations and their citizens, managing and calculating risk, providing access to care both internationally and domestically, and the ways in which neo-liberalization processes on a global scale contribute to the emergence of novel, highly contagious influenza viruses (Guthman and Mansfield, 2012). They examine how the modern emphasis on individual responsibility for risks and response is interwoven with global biosecurity issues. Parallel to this, Mansfield (2012) investigates the ways in which environmental contamination in fish products may impact the neurodevelopment of developing foetuses.

Chapter 4

Concluding thoughts

This chapter functions as the final and parting impression, elucidating how the study expanded, questioned, and contributed to knowledge. It achieves this by first summarizing the key findings into two primary themes revealed in my analysis. These themes, denoted as 1) The world as comprehensible and 2) Feminist and futuristic, are linked to the research question to address the 'how' aspect it poses. Next, I underscore the significance of the findings, explicitly demonstrating how the study impacts both theory and practice. Finally, I acknowledge some of the limitations the study encountered.

The thesis aimed to explore and discuss the discourses shaping the meaning of smartwatches across various disciplines, particularly in the medical humanities context along the Sea Point Promenade in Cape Town. The research question focused on understanding

how smartwatches are perceived in promoting health and extending wellness for individuals at Sea Point's Promenade. I delved into the implications of wellness culture attached to wearable technologies and considered the societal transformations occurring through the adoption of smartwatches in a South African context. I achieved this through purposive sampling, which allowed for inferences to be drawn and fit the criteria that are relevant to the study. The group helped me address the research question in relation to the study in an eagerly open manner. I conducted ten semi-structured interviews and contemporary ethnography: participant observation & fieldwork at the Sea Point Promenade over the course of six months.

The concept of *The world as understandable* essentially stems from the revelation that smartwatch users can indeed be considered cyborgs. The cyborg acts as their ontology, shaping their politics and embodying a condensed image of both imagination and material reality. Haraway's (1990) cyborg metaphor, emphasizing transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities, became particularly relevant for the South African context, especially at this time. The assertion that cyborgs are the illegitimate offspring of patriarchal capitalism and state socialism, as per Haraway (1990), holds weight in the context of this research. The notion of conviviality (Nyamnjoh, 2015), grounded in African perspectives of well-being, provided a unique perspective to understand the interplay of technology, societal norms, and individual autonomy in the modern and urban Sea Point's Promenade.

The second thematic strand, *Feminist and futuristic,* revolves around the ability to navigate both physical and cultural landscapes, drawing attention to the potential and reality of a world that transcends tidy dichotomies. This realm is characterized by a fluidity in mobility, identity, citizenship, and a sense of belonging. The participants identify as both socialists and feminists, perceiving idealistic and materialistic elements within the social practices, symbolic constructs, and tangible artifacts associated with advanced technology and scientific culture. One participant exemplifies this approach by highlighting the safety aspects of both the smartwatch and the Sea Point Promenade as a site. This reflects the nuanced navigation and negotiation of their way of being. For some, the Sea Point Promenade emerges as a secure space, offering a newfound privilege that was previously inaccessible for specific groups of people. The smartwatch, in this context, becomes a means to bridge a facet of the digital divide and embrace emerging technology. Wellbeing, in this framework, is situated within the social and cultural domains. In an effort to resist the global

intensification of domination, these individuals have united and shifted their perspective to better position themselves in the contest for meanings and various forms of power and pleasure within technologically mediated practices. These frontier Africans navigate diverse identity margins, consistently working to bridge divides in response to the intricacies and complexities facilitated or exacerbated by mobility and encounters.

Through accelerated physical and social mobility facilitated by their creativity and meaning making through the use of smartwatches, these futuristic Africans adeptly navigate and negotiate multiple facets of identity and belonging. The feminist perspective acknowledges that no boundary, wall, or gap is insurmountable, as they actively engage in conversations across divides. At the futurists, possibilities are limitless, allowing for transformations and manifestations that adapt to context and necessity. A multitude of interconnections, intricate entanglements, and dynamic interdependencies offer Africans opportunities to explore their potentials without being constrained by exclusionary identities, despite persistent hierarchies on global and local scales. The data delved into the ways in which individuals can form symbiotic relationships with intelligent machines, employing the concepts of the cyborg and convivial social relations to map connections between embodied experiences, the symbolic and sensory potential of digital devices, and intersectional identities. The exploration of well-being in this context involves understanding how people perceive and interpret wellness in their interactions within family, community, and the broader social context. This perspective on well-being, presented here as “holistic" from a cultural standpoint, aligns with African views, often grounded in group norms, values, kinship relationships, and cultural ties, emphasizing well-being as a social process with material, relational, and subjective dimensions, underscoring the centrality of relatedness. Belonging, community, and relationships not only contribute to well-being but also play a significant role in shaping the meaning of life. The complexity of various human and nonhuman actors collaborating to configure self-tracking assemblages was crucial to recognize. Self-tracking discourses and practices intersect with themes of individualization, reinvention, the neoliberalist emphasis on self-responsibility, and the pursuit of self-knowledge for self-improvement. Challenging the notion that civilization confines itself to a narrow understanding characterized by dualisms, the dominance of the mind, purportedly autonomous individuals, and a world of sensory perceptions, the passage suggests that individuals, including Africans, who feel severed, dismembered, caricatured, or restricted by such limited indicators, have reason to distance themselves from conventional ideas of civilization and modernity.

This study had three main limitations. The first was the risk of a big topic, second, lack of anthropology background, third, the main focus area; environmental, aesthetic, political and medical – there was a range of different focuses to look at. To start, I was quite excited and tried to take on the subject in a much broader way. I had to manoeuvre taking some pressure off myself of trying to talk about everything all at once. Taking things further and expanding on some ideas by giving more context came across as digression. I initially had other ideas related to the study and had to learn not to use overarching statements and go on a tangent so that my decisions would not seem arbitrary to the reader. I was also interested in environmentalism, for instance – who cares about it? Is it accessible to my participants' lives? Could it be a privileged discourse – worrying about the environment vs worrying about month-to month living. Inquiries into how smartwatches are manufactured and their impact on the environment. One coursework introduced me to the anthropology of biomedicine and the application of interpretive skills to an understanding of the Covid-19 pandemic effects of the Anthropocene on human health and planetary health.

I have a media and journalism background from both my undergraduate and postgraduate studies. I had no anthropological background when I registered for the Masters with the department of anthropology. One of the first books I read were Thomas Eriksen's *What is Anthropology.* One of the things that stood out was that, fieldwork or ethnography, was the central activity in anthropological research method or production of knowledge. Journalism and anthropology could certainly be said to be distant cousins for their storytelling nature. Although the they have distinct similarities in their data collection strategies, or having those transcendent experiences when you absorb people's experiences and putting their stories on larger platforms for the world to consume, anthropology has proven to provide a lot more flexibility and orientation of the complexity of reality. It was only natural for me to experiment with audio reporting for the thesis too.

Granted the programme is interdisciplinary, the foundational anthropology background would have been rather helpful. I experienced immense self-doubt especially during the thesis writing process. I think coursework was challenging too, but in a fun way. I had fun! One of the reflection essays I wrote for one of the courses achieved a pass rate of 100. The proposal for the thesis, on the other hand, was only accepted after about three presentations. The initial challenge was because I had initially developed an interest to interview students from the UCT gym. But the Faculty ethics approval for research access to students process

timeline was not feasible. Not to say that the Sea Point's Promenade was easier, because people most people are running and not exactly sitting with me in a pre-planned interview.

Lastly, I struggled with the main focus area because I thought there were so many interesting themes the paper had potential to explore. It is interdisciplinary but I did not want it to be confusing because each of the main areas of interest would generate a different problem and have a different argument attached to them. They are different ways of thinking too. But I needed to think about what the dominant ones were. If they each got equal amounts of attention, it could have also cost my ability to create a coherent discussion. I wanted to avoid glossing over lots of topics and getting deeper into the few main themes – key areas the literature review highlights.

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