Connecting People:

Mobile phone use in social, intimate and identity relations

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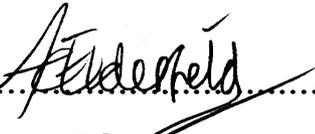
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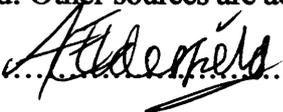
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Summary of Thesis

This thesis explores the social and cultural integration of the mobile phone in the lives and relationships of a sample of consumer-targeted and predominantly middle-class graduate mobile phone users aged between 17 and 27. Drawing on qualitative and ethnographic fieldwork that took place in a mobile phone retail outlet over a year, the thesis examines how mobile phone use becomes integrated into social, intimate and identity relations in everyday life. Using a progressive amendment approach to research design, ethnographic methods were adopted; involving participant observation in a commercial environment – including interviews, diarying, and group interviews – to gather rich data through rapport and relationship building. The data was analysed and examined with reference to empirical research studies of mobile phone use in the UK; concentrating on friendship groups, intimacy and consumption together with reference to mobility, the information society, the network society and identity. Illustrating that use of the mobile phone provides a visibility of relations together with a powerful reshaping of relations and cultural practices in the liquid connectivity of interaction. Additionally, mobile phone use has established paradoxes of interaction in everyday life. Key findings and points of discussion include; co-present use; strengthening ties while forming exclusive bonds and heightening insecurities over disconnection; compulsion for contact; virtual and continuous contact yet non-committal interaction; blurring of public and private spheres through de-privatising in public while privatising booths of public space and reshaping social conduct and etiquette; making and breaking of intimacy through multi-modal uses which change etiquette and the culture of communication; the creation of monitored body data for togetherness and as a digital leash while heightening insecurities, suspicion and accountability; gendered use of the mobile phone in communication and identity; exclusivity yet not individualism or exclusion; and integration into existing lifestyle while aspiring towards another more attractive and distinct lifestyle.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Finding the signal

As an accessible form of technology, the mobile phone changes how individuals carry out their everyday lives. The way the mobile phone is used affects the cultures and societies in which the mobile phone becomes domesticated, changing communication and affecting identities as well as relationships. Mobile phone use 'affects the development of social structures and economic activities, and has considerable bearing on its users' perceptions of themselves and their world' (Plant, 2002: 23). The mobile phone becomes an icon reflecting these relationships in a multi-relational and fluid everyday life. As a social and cultural relation, use of the mobile phone represents an expression of the relations between people, thus providing a centre through which to form attachment in social interaction (Vincent, 2005).

Unlike many other devices the mobile phone has become a valuable social platform for social actors. This is attributed to the social capacities it can provide, together with the emotional and 'sentient' relations it brings to the socio-emotional actor (Vincent, 2005). The mobile phone is a relation that is being used between people in new social contexts and cultural undercurrents; it is a social platform to communicate, conceal, control and represent. The mobile phone is considered a true artefact 'of the people' (Selwyn, 2005) and a ubiquitous part of everyday life (Glotz, Bertschi and Locke, 2005).

Aims of this thesis

The social and cultural integration of the mobile phone into everyday life deserves further ethnographic investigation; in particular, the social and intimate relations that are formed, displaced and reconfigured, together with the relations that are displayed in the embodiment of the artefact itself. A qualitative angle will be added to a predominantly quantitative area to provide an explanation of the sociality; the reasons behind uses. This will enable an understanding of how meaningful the mobile phone has become to those who use the artefact.

Research question

- *How does mobile phone use become integrated into social, intimate and identity relations in everyday life?*

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Theories of mobility, the mobile society and the network society will be addressed. This will capture how significantly the use of a mobile communication device has consolidated, constrained and reshaped social life and relations in a ubiquitous and fluid form, while also reinforcing a form of surveillance and networked individualism.

Mobile technology contributes to easing temporal and spatial constraints, providing an alternative to travel. Mobile devices therefore provide the capability to become "virtually present". However, Urry (2002) claims that for mobile virtual interactions to be effective forms of interaction, they must rely on some co-presence interaction to maintain both trust and the consolidation and richness of bonds.

The mobile nature of this technology gives rise to communication anytime and anywhere. This not only blurs the public and the private social spheres but, in turn, reshapes acceptable mobile-communicated social conduct and etiquette. This also allows an increase in and, in turn, an expectation of communication and reshaped forms of beginning and ending intimate relationships; through silence as an accepted response, for example. In this way, a reshaped social space has been produced which can characterise the mobile society together with the associated relations.

There is perpetual contact when time and space merge; a mergence brining capabilities for continual contact. This continual contact with others reshapes dimensions of the network society. There is a sense that the capability for contact leads to both a compulsion to communicate and an expectation to make contact. As a result, there is a form of accountability, particularly in events of uncontactability. This brings power relations to the use of this technology, particularly in a society that is networked to track data flows and body data. This powerful networking therefore enables relations (because it allows a virtual co-presence for continual contact), while also creating constraint; reshaping relations in ways that begin to be compelled to communicate and also be accountable for not communicating. This is just one example of the paradoxical relations created by mobile phone use; an example which will be investigated in this thesis.

Castells' (1996) conception of a network society has now been challenged by the mobile society in terms of Castells' use of passive nodes that form the network society. Another pitfall in Castells' theory is that there is a lack of consideration towards the

social; that is, the relations between the nodes (or connections). The mobile society and use of mobile devices have affected these relations and bonds by unfixing and moving them. There is no longer a 'community' in the traditional sense of the word. There are connections between individuals; people are networked as opposed to connected within close-knit groups, leading to a networked individualism. This is when people connect in networks as opposed to communal groups (Wellman, 2002). There is a decentralisation of networks through interconnected nodes, in which there is no clear structure, but a fluid structure in the organisation of the links between nodes within these mobile networks. Co-presence remains important to the relations between nodes in a mobile society. The function and meaning of the technology, however, arise from the contact and connections made, as opposed to the locality of the individuals, or nodes.

This idea of networked individualism is challenged by this thesis, as mobile phone use both consolidates and constrains bonds in friendship groups and in intimate relations. The ways in which mobile phones are consumed in terms of identity also reveals much relating to bonds, individualism and inclusion within groups; revealing paradoxes in wanting to be exclusive yet not excluded. There is a networked individualism in a new sense. Wellman's concept is a personalised networking; the networked relationships in the mobile society are, however, not as detached from the bonds of communal groups. There does not appear to be a tight and close-knit organisation in the network society. However, the friendship groups studied do have strong bonds and group identities that characterise close groups. These are reflected and illuminated in co-present mobile phone use and device display, together with the reasons for consumption, as this research will show.

This research will reveal the complex sociality of the mobile phone, highlighting how and why the mobile phone has had huge implications on the ways interaction is mediated, controlled and displayed in UK culture. The sociality of the mobile phone used in social networks, intimate relations and identity will be explored by this thesis through a qualitative study of consumer-targeted middle-class graduates aged 17-27, in the UK. These young, identity-building and impressionable people are concerned with their friends and relationships, successful careers and lifestyle aspiration. This niche market was targeted by retail and commerce during the time of the qualitative data collection and therefore became the target group.

Mobile phone use has become integrated to the extent of changing culture, while culture has changed technology (Brown, 2002). Mobile phone use adopts a role in which it can enhance many aspects of social life, strengthening social ties. However, this use also limits relationships and these limits introduce new insecurities, for example friendship and intimacy. The mobile phone creates paradoxes in everyday life; offering freedom and independence while projecting visibility that can be monitored. Use of the mobile phone conveys aspects of perceived individuality, while in social life this is contradicted by practices of collective use and display. These are illustrations of dualities and the somewhat paradoxical nature of social life.

The varied uses of the mobile phone transform social and power relations, co-presence and social space. It is the social uptake and social uses resulting from deregulation and technical progress that are also a focus of this thesis. Commercial and technical advancement lead to choices over services and branding reshaping connectivity. Effects of commercialisation will also be explored because these capacities appear to be linked to changing power relations, both in social relationships and the personal display of the mobile phone. In one respect, the power dynamics within the social realm, gained from using multiple methods of communication provided by the device itself, challenge social expectations and communicative competence. In another respect, the change and challenges of power relations, brought about by commercial enterprise and innovation, reshape intimate capacities through effective marketing. Once the mobile phone is incorporated into everyday life, use reveals and reshapes power relations between the consumer and the commercial enterprise. Additionally, this incorporation, or domestication, into everyday life illuminates and reshapes relations for the consumer, both as a social actor and in their close relationships with others.

Research sub-questions

With these above considerations the overarching research question can be reformulated into the following questions:

1. *How do mobile phone uses bond and consolidate relations in friendship, intimacy and identity?*

2. *What are the conflicts and constraints to these everyday relations that can arise from mobile phone use?*

3. *How have everyday communications and the sociality of these relations changed as a result of mobile phone use?*

4. *What are the dualities and paradoxes in relations that have become visible due to mobile phone use?*

Themes

This introduction will focus on the comparison between telephone use and early mobile phone use (that is, the pre-text messaging mobile phones). The impact of mobile phone use on social relations will be a prominent focus in this thesis, which will study the social and cultural use of the mobile phone. This will identify the transformed social and cultural dynamics of mobile phone use as a relational medium. These will provide a foundation on which to separate the five main themes embraced throughout this thesis. These themes identify the paradoxes and dualities in the ways in which people use mobile phones; these become illuminated when considering the four sub-questions above. The prominence of these themes become apparent during the ethnographic fieldwork and provides the common thread of the findings in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

- *Power relations* are exercised in social and intimate relationships. The capability of continuous contact allows the user to exert power in trust, security and visibility of social relations. The ownership of the mobile phone provides the contradictory power dynamics of safety and security coupled with heightened anxiety and suspicion. The mobile phone produces 'body data' (Lyon, 2001) in a liquid social life (Bauman, 2000) through the visibility and consequential accountability created (Green, 2002).

- *Virtual presence* is significant in social relations, particularly for those participants who are in intimate relationships or who have close family ties. The mobile phone becomes a digital lifeline to maintain contact and develop relations 'anytime, anywhere' (Castells, 1996) in a ubiquitous form. The mobile society and the network society are particularly relevant here in understanding and interpreting the empirical elements to the questions being considered in this

thesis. The mobile phone creates a virtual presence, enabling interaction that would be occurring in actual presence; it also provides the capacity to consolidate close attachments and strengthen intimacy through 'time-space distanciation' (Giddens, 1990), although the mobile phone can also convey adverse expectation and accountability. Can the mobile phone be a facilitating and contributing factor or is it simply a lens to view existing aspects of interaction? This thesis will demonstrate that the themes of power relations and virtual presence are co-existent in the social framework of mobile phone use.

- *Co-present use* refers to how the mobile phone is used during close proximity to people in the co-present group. Although the mobile phone is used for distant interaction, the use differs with the introduction of multi-functions to strengthen friendship and intimacy. These co-present uses are shown to reflect and develop group interests through activities such as sharing of ring tones and videos. Messages and ring tones are sent to each other so that these can be read and used at a later time. This serves to consolidate feelings between romantic partners and effectively reinforce inclusion in the circle of friends. The camera function is used to photograph friends and then build up galleries to share among a friendship group for amusement. Most prominently, however, group cohesiveness is established for men in terms of the distribution of pornographic material and the implications of the display of masculinity, as well as shared entertainment. This use creates a divide in terms of group identity and gendered identity aspiration. It becomes clear that mobile phone co-present use demonstrates inclusion within a shared friendship group in which underlying currents of power and control become apparent. This illustrates an interconnecting theme between co-present use, power and also an overlapping of identity reflection and aspiration.

- *Identity reflection and aspiration* are sought and can be found through mobile phone use as an artefact. The mobile phone is an embodiment of culture as well as a communicator of the self; 'the mobile phone has become a prosthetic, an extension to the body' (McGuigan, 2005: 8) yet the device is ingrained in identity. Identity reflection refers to the use of a mobile phone as a fashion accessory to elaborate identity. For example, pink handsets co-ordinate with pink outfit designs, symbolising femininity. An identity paradox of difference in

opposition to inclusion is demonstrated by having the latest handset. This becomes a subscription to trends and inclusion, although having 'the latest' implies 'difference' and therefore exclusivity and not exclusion, through symbols of wealth and the aspiration towards a dominant lifestyle. Media images and marketing hyperbole play a significant role in mobile phone purchasing, particularly in portraying lifestyle and individuality, to persuade consumption. The appeal of a desirable lifestyle and individuality affects consumption, but it is the amalgamation of these together with gendered representation that is appealing to the users.

- *Multi-modal use and social space* refers to the ways in which self-expression and the presentation of the self have been transformed with the uptake of multi-modes of communication that have been offered by the mobile phone. Text and photo messaging provide a new dimension of telephonic communication. Photo and video messaging becomes a social activity of sharing, reducing inhibition in self-expression. These modes provide an ease to express oneself yet they also act as 'a wall to hide behind' (Participant Karl, 23), due to non-face-to-face or verbal contact, which can be potentially awkward. This method retains a level of closeness in an unobtrusive way over the presentation of the self in the early stages of any courtship. There is a broad overlap with identity reflection and aspiration, in presenting the self in a desired way through the capacities of the mobile phone. Relational interaction has changed with multi-modes of communication in comparison to speech-only telephony. Social etiquette has adapted and 'm-etiquette' (mobile phone etiquette) has evolved (Lacohée, Wakeford and Pearson, 2003), such as the intrusion of use in social settings and the 'softening' of social co-ordination (Ling, 2004). This provides flexibility, yet it also diminishes obligation and commitment to social engagements.

These interconnected themes will demonstrate a blurring of boundaries between telephony itself and the other information and communication resources that are incorporated by the mobile phone; as an artefact and a social and cultural tool in everyday interaction.

Approaches in connecting people

The mobile phone has adopted many technical capabilities over the last decade, resulting in the introduction of new social uptakes and associated meanings within the tapestry of everyday life. There is a need to add sociology; specifically, the need to investigate the sociality of mobile phone use is derived from the fact that much of the previous research focuses on the functional and technical uses of the mobile phone. There has been some research carried out in the field of the social studies of science and technology, regarding the mobile phone. However, the wealth of this has been conducted outside of the UK, in Finland, Norway and US (for example, Kopomaa, 2000; Ling, 1999; Campbell and Russo, 2003). UK culture has therefore been comparatively under-researched, particularly regarding the social uptake of technical capacity as it happens and as it becomes adopted by the prime targeted consumers. Finally, mobile phones use reshapes social life and culture. As Brown (2002) claims 'technology has certainly changed our culture, [but] culture itself has remade this technology in a thousand different ways' (p.3). This suggests that, although technology has an effect, it is not autonomous; cultural and social uses and contexts can affect the technology, particularly the way that it is used.

During the time taken to complete this thesis, there has been a vast array of research carried out into the use of the mobile phone in various cultures, including the challenges to relationships and identity together with a duality of social interaction it reveals. However, 'there is a need to understand still better how people fit these new devices into their lives and to what effect' (Katz and Aakhus, 2002: 316). In response to this claim, this thesis begins to reveal the social impact of mobile technology in the social relations of a network society, through the illumination of social dynamics and the integrated changes to social life due to the mobile phone.

This thesis is primarily ethnographic and data-driven, using theory and data iteratively to inform each other. The previous research is initially studied and analysed to identify key areas requiring investigation. As findings and themes develop, the theory and previous studies are considered in the analysis stages of these themes that come from the fieldwork. The discussion of previous studies cover a range of findings related to those discussed in my own findings, and these are used to inform the analysis in context. Interplay between findings and theory also demonstrates how theories are supported and extended by such findings.

The previous studies focus on statistics and empirical work highlighting demographic contrasts in technological mobility. This will define the terrain for mobile phone use in the UK, and will enable justification of the use of the particular social group to be studied. The empirical works discussed are those relevant to the main relations through which the social and cultural impacts of mobile phone use can be illuminated; networks, close relationships and identity relations. These previous studies will be reviewed together with the consideration of the specific themes arising from the findings of this thesis.

The approaches discussed in this thesis are therefore mobility, information society, the network society and theories of consumption. These are particularly relevant to the findings because these theories connect all five themes, and also help to explain many of the paradoxes from the findings.

Mobility and liquid modernity are the underlying theories explaining the convergence of time, public space and private space; they enable both virtual and co-presence, increasing opportunities and social capital while freeing and constraining contact. Theories of the information society explain how information is integral to communication and relations, and how information becomes networked. The theories discussed in this thesis also explain the information-saturated society and bias of information and communication; this helps to explain how information is interpreted and becomes meaningful in how information and communication flow. Additionally, this is linked to the social constructionist approaches towards technology; how technology is configured by users, and how use re-configures users and their relations. This leads to the mediation of power relations, expectations and the ordering of society via surveillance and a trail of body data. The discussion of the network society extends this in explaining the reshaping of social structures, friendships and intimate relationships due to mobile phone use in social practices. Castells and networked individualism are discussed in relation to communities to explain how mobile phone use builds and consolidates relations through sharing material and giving gifts. Finally, theories of consumption and identity bring many of the themes together. These theories are particularly relevant in explaining how the mobile device is consumed and used in ways that become socially embedded in networks and relationships; that meaning is developed and identity portrayed through use and display of the device. This relates to

power relations, co-presence, virtual presence and identity aspirations in terms of belonging and consolidation. There is also discussion regarding the advertising effects of consumption and aesthetic choice, which relates to inclusion, aspirations and identity performances.

The advertising effects on consumption of the mobile device will now be discussed within the time-line of mobile communication. A history of the mobile phone will be offered to explain the distinction between technical capabilities and the social uptake, thereby reshaping social interaction. This will provide a foundation from which to explore the sociology of mobile phone use in everyday life; as a social and intimate interaction, and as an extension of the self.

A time-line of mobile communication

During 1985 the mobile phone in Britain became available primarily for business people, for whom it became a symbol of power and status. The mobile phone was associated with wealth and 'yuppie' culture (Crabtree et al, 2003; Brown; 2002), making ownership somewhat exclusive. Mobile phones became niche objects; 'playthings for executives, or business essentials for upscale mobile professionals' (Crabtree et al, 2003: 10). Following steady penetration of the business sector, the 1990s saw a rise in use by the general public. In 2000 50% of the population owned a mobile phone. This was then followed by a sharp increase to 65% of UK households having access to the mobile phone, amounting to 47 million handsets by 2003 (Lacohée et al, 2003). This illustrates a sudden shift from convenience to a perceived necessity platform of 'an established feature of everyday life' (Bassett et al, 2001: 206), both functionally and culturally. It is important, however, to remember that the mobile phone is convenient, in some respects, but it can also be an inconvenience for the work/life balance. Many tradespeople find mobile phones to be an interruption and also a continuous connection to work during leisure time. Not withstanding, ownership has continued to grow considerably. This growth will be illustrated from the early years of the mobile phone to the present day, with particular focus on the technical advancements and social appeal to a large section of the UK population.

Radio telephony and the pager

Radio telephony marks the beginning of telephony in a mobile sense, beginning in the military. Radio telephony was the result of 'integration of radio transmission with the

traditional switched telephone network' (Ling, 2004: 7). This form of telephony was used in the early 1900s in marine communications, and then as radio communication in the 1920s, for policing and taxiing. The walkie-talkie was invented by Al Gross during the Second World War for use by the War Emergency Radio Service. Utilising radio transmission, it was used for mobile radio communication (McElroy, 2005), and was a handheld transceiver, together with headphones and backpack. Radio telephony and the use of walkie-talkies as mobile technological artefacts existed only in an operational and purposeful form, for emergency and logistical purposes.

There was an absence of any social elements in the use of radio telephony or walkie-talkies until post-second world war, when the walkie-talkie began to be used for more than emergencies. They became small, hand-sized in frame but limited in range and power (McElroy, 2005). FM walkie-talkies are still in use today, for pleasure, emergency services, repairmen etc; families also use them for holidays and hiking expeditions (Rohrer, 2006).

'Switched' communication was developed for radio telephony following the Second World War, whereby messages were broadcast to users without the capability for personal communication (Ling, 2004). Mobile telephony has evolved from the radio-telephone services developed in the US in the 1940s, which used the integrated radio-based telephone devices with the switched telephony systems (Ling, 2004). This system used a "push to talk" technology, whereby communication was channelled through an operator who then dialled the number; this only allowed one person to speak at a time when the connection was made. It was an open and closed channel to enable speech to be transmitted (Ling, 2004).

At the end of the 1950s, the term 'pager' was used to refer to a personal radio communication tool that received a radio message for the person carrying the device. This was similar to receiving a text message, although without display or the capability to store messages. The very first pagers 'beeped' to prompt the user that they were being contacted; the user then called a pre-defined telephone number to receive further information (see the middle and right devices in picture 1.1). These pagers were not widely used until the 1980s when there were 3.2 million used in on-site situations, by doctors in a hospital for example.

Picture 1.1: The development of models (right to left)

Source: BT (2005) 'Connected Earth'

The numeric pager had a small display showing a number to call; this was further extended to convey complex messages via a pre-defined code (Office of Communications [Ofcom], 1997). The final development in the 1990s was the alphanumeric pager; the message sender would phone an operator and dictate a message, which the operator would type and then send out to the pager (see the left device in picture 1.1). This 'message-sending device' (BT, 2005) shares social qualities with text messaging in terms of contacting a person who is on the move. However, communication via the pager was one-way, which limited communication and relied upon the recipient to return contact using a public telephone. Despite these limitations, millions of these devices were being used in a more personal way in the 1990s (Ofcom, 1997), as it was an accessible way to reach 'required' people on an 'anytime, anywhere' basis.

Picture 1.2: New range of colourful pagers
Source: BT (2005) 'Connected Earth'

The pager gradually declined in the business sector during the early 1990s, mainly due to the introduction of the mobile phone into this sector. There was a sudden shift in markets, peaking between 1994 and 1996 when 'private consumer subscribers accounted for practically all subscribers' (Ofcom, 1997: 4). Successful marketing strategies relating to the cost and appearance of the device increased its appeal to consumers through new colourful designs (see picture 1.2) by well-known brands such as Swatch and Benetton (Ofcom, 1997). This marked the beginnings of mobile technology as a sleek, embodied artefact symbolising identity. It also gave society a glimpse of what was ahead in terms of the wireless network society, triggered by mobile phones in the early 21st century, and how it would become appealing in both relational and embodied ways.

Citizens' band radio (CB) began its use in 1945 in the US and peaked in the UK in the 1980s. This form of contact was the beginning of a somewhat more social two-way radio system for short-distance personal communication. In the early 1960s CB was used for emergency services and highways communications for truck drivers and taxis (Packer, 2002). At the same time that the pager was being ingrained in communication in the 1980s, businesses and lorry drivers lead the growth of CB use which spilled over into wider use within the UK. However, conversations were not private, being broadcast to other CB users and were also rather susceptible to interference. Nevertheless, CB developed its own culture and slang language; it continues to remain in use by hobbyists and is often associated with truck drivers and rural life in the US.

Mobile telephony

By the mid-1950s, mobile telephony was capable of instant spoken communication, with direct dialling and automatic channel assignment. Mobile telephony was car-based and mainly used by mobile workers, such as emergency services. However, this system was expensive, heavy and troublesome; in the 1960s such phones began to weigh less and require less power (see picture 1.3 below), but continued to be the size of a brief case (Lacohée et al, 2003).
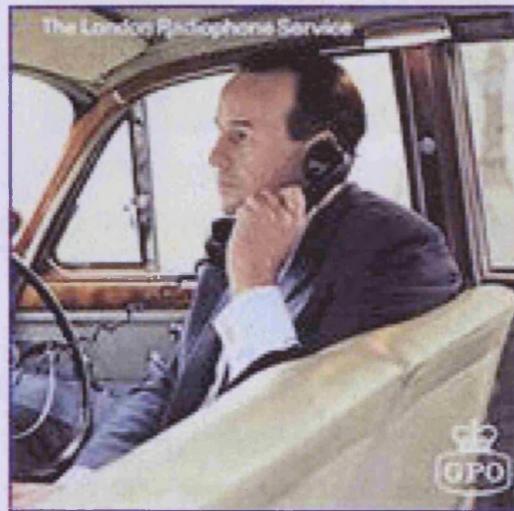
Picture 1.3: Car-phone in 1967

Source: BT (2005) & The London Radiophone Service

In the late 1970s the first cellular telephone system was created in the US. Soon after, the Nordic countries set up the Nordic Mobile Telephone Group, which established 20,000 mobile phone users in Sweden by 1981. Lorry drivers and construction workers used mobile phones as an integral part of their working lives. By the late 1980s mobile phones were available for social use in the UK (Lacohée et al, 2003). In January 1985, two UK mobile phone networks were launched by Cellnet (now O2) and Vodaphone (now Vodafone), attracting a large number of users in locations where the services were available (Lacohée et al, 2003).
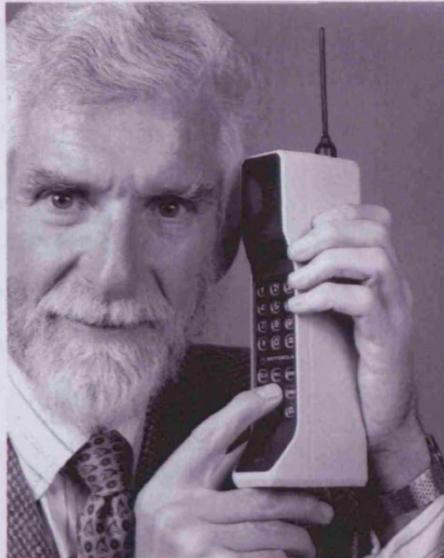
Picture 1.4: Martin Cooper of Motorola with "the Brick",

Motorola DynaTAC (cellular analogue) phone

Source: Galambos & Abrahamson (2002)

The first generation of 'mobile' handsets had moved from analogue circuit switched technology to cellular systems and analogue (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, 2007). Ownership was expensive and therefore symbolised wealth and status. Motorola manufactured revolutionary phones and those using them became rather conspicuous due to the size of the device (see picture 1.4 above). It was from this handset that the references to the 'brick' phone have evolved.

During the 1980s the appearance of the mobile phone and the identity associations were not of the same importance as today. The status symbol remains but this has shifted from mere ownership to the type of handset owned, brand, model and expense. The perception of 'brick' phones has shifted from symbolising status to symbolising old and out-of-date mobile handsets. Today, when people refer to their own phone as a brick, they are not necessary implying that it is between 10-15 years old or that it is the size of a brick; the 'brick' term has now become a generic term for any handset that is considered unfashionable, or for referring to old or large phones in general, as the findings of this thesis suggest. However, this does not suggest that every mobile phone owner now has the most trendy or latest handset. There are many users who have somewhat older models that are practical and functional in the contexts of their own lives.

The mobile phone was marketed primarily towards business use, and mobile phones were owned by less than 1% of the UK population by the end of the 1980s (Crabtree et al, 2003). At this time the second generation of mobile phones were produced; analogue technology was phased out, accompanied by falling prices due to the growing connectivity. Ericsson, Nokia and NEC had removed the monopoly of Motorola in the design and manufacture of handsets (BT, 2007). The digital global system for mobile telecommunications (GSM) for the second generation was adopted and had over 340 networks globally in 2003 (Lacohée et al, 2003). First and second generations both used the same cellular structure; the defining characteristic of the second generation, however, was the advanced features of caller identity and text messaging, and later text messaging across networks. The price of handsets dropped as the subscribers rose. Networks subsidised the cost of handsets, and therefore the majority of consumer spending was on the cost of services, rather than the handsets.

In 1993 mobile phone use reached 1 million users (Crabtree et al, 2003), continuing to rise and reaching almost 7 million by 1997. During this period, the concept of mobile phones within society changed considerably, with emerging manufacturing technology enticing the customer to purchase and use the new smaller handsets.

The subsidy of handsets and cheaper subscriptions by the networks in the late 1990s encouraged the growing popularity of mobile phone use by the general public (Ling, 2004). Pre-pay services encouraged further subscriptions, defining a difference between post-pay and pre-pay services and resulting social dynamics. Pre-pay services were adopted by particular social groups, such as teenagers, who were more inclined to use text messaging as their main means of communication due to the cost differences between text messaging and calling (Lacohée et al, 2003). This period of growth saw a change in services with the commercialisation of GSM, together with changes in the desirability and variety of devices. Between 1998 and 2001, handset sales exploded from 9 million to almost 45 million (Crabtree et al, 2003). A major catalyst for this growth was the unanticipated popularity of text messaging. This massively increased the profits from network traffic, as opposed to profits from the sale of handsets themselves. Text messaging was a free quirky add-on that became an 'accidental success', not promoted by the industry until this became apparent (Lacohée et al, 2003: 206). Text messaging grew, and remains one of the few services not to increase in price, consequently further promoting text messaging as a relatively inexpensive and useful

way to communicate. Text messaging has now become extensive not only in terms of peer communication, but also as a significant method both of broadcasting news and of voting.

> Even though mobiles are becoming increasingly sophisticated with much [*sic*] more multimedia applications, texting is still one of the most useful functions of mobiles ... Booking cinema tickets, text voting, and news or sports text alerts are growing popular.
>
> BBC News, 2005

Text messaging, or Short Messaging Service (SMS) became noticeably popular between 1995 and 2003. This was due to the relatively low cost of communication it provided young people, together with the convenience of being subtle and unobtrusive (Ling, 2004). It was difficult to estimate the price of calling during peak-times, whereas text messaging was a fixed price and could be 'posted' for sending and replying to at one's own convenience (Ling, 2004), as in picture 1.5 below. Text messaging continued to be an increasingly popular use of the mobile phone even after the introduction of new functions. The Mobile Data Association reported that 26 billion text messages were sent in the year 2004. This thesis will examine how text messaging is a far-reaching mode of effective - and sometimes ineffective - communication.

Picture 1.5: Young people text messaging
Source: http://www.ipipi.com/ipipi/images/landing_pages/group.jpg

A substantial increase in subscriptions from 1998 to 2001 transformed luxury into a necessity. The use of the mobile phone use has saturated the population, creating an increased need or expectation for it to be adopted by all social actors in order to be included in society. Ownership became understood as inclusion. The Nokia handset in picture 1.6 illustrates how the device design contributed to customer appeal for consumers, much in the same way as the colourful pagers.

Picture 1.6: Transformation of devices (Top: 1994 Motorola; Bottom: 2000 Nokia)

Source: CNTR (2007)

In the early 2000s, 2G (Second Generation) and 2.5G (Second Generation enhanced) mobile phones were developed, signalling the further advances towards 3G in terms of multi-functioning and camera use. The defining characteristics of 2.5G were its ability to reach high data speeds and utilise wireless applications protocol (WAP). 2.5G was distinct from 2G through the inclusion of extensive applications such as call logs, colour screens, gaming functions, the use of navigation maps (General Packet Radio Service [GPRS]), voice mail, email and fax and the capability to download logos and ring tones. WAP, itself, was used on the GSM system to provide services similar to those found on the internet, and was therefore as successful as had been anticipated in terms of commercialisation. Unfortunately for service providers it did not quite reach the success

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of services such as text messaging, and its limitations in terms of usefulness and performance has seen it displaced by recent improvements such as GPRS (General Packet Radio Service) and i-mode (Ling, 2004).

Although the limited capabilities of WAP contributed to its low popularity, the introduction of i-mode web-browsing also remains somewhat limited. i-mode was developed in Japan and began to be used in the UK during the data collection stage for this thesis. It lacks the capability to fully browse the internet; using i-mode is not web-browsing of the internet as such, it is a selection of sites from the internet using an 'intranet,' which was defined as 'not so much a technology as a system of infrastructure and marketing'. (Ling, 2004: 10). Using i-mode, services and functions outside the users' own mobile phone systems can be accessed in addition to their own communication services.

Picture 1.7: Colourful mobile phones
Source: BT (2005) Connected Earth

2.5G not only marked a change in telephony, but it was also significant in terms of the increasing importance of personalisation for marketing and the consumer. A large variety of ring tones and logos became available which could be downloaded and shared. The mobile phone and its content as a hand-held platform were transforming into personal items, which began with miniaturisation (in 1999), increased battery power (Crabtree et al, 2003), changeable fascias (Ling, 2004) and adopting a handset in different colours (see picture 1.7 above). This was then followed by the colour-screen and camera features in 2003, noted in pictures 1.8 and 1.9 (below). These pictures also

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illustrate how the mobile phone as a cultural artefact changed in terms of design and a wide choice of design. This marked a general transformation in the shift from a communication platform towards a compact hand-held and multi-functioning device, brought about by GSM. The artefact could become 'different' and unique in terms of appearance and the reflection of personal tastes.

Picture 1.8   Picture 1.9

Pictures 1.8 and 1.9: Showing mobile phone progression between 1999-2003

Picture source: GSM Arena (2007)

Comparable to the social associations of the car, the mobile phone has become an everyday object consistent with status, taste and style. The mobile phone has evolved into an attractive commodity in expressing identity, and in terms of size, colour and functionality. This is just one of the many factors accounting for the phenomenal adoption and appropriation of the mobile phone.

> Mobiles became an attractive proposition precisely because they allowed users to express and reflect their identity much in the same way as decorating a house or driving a car.
>
> Crabtree et al, 2003:11.

In March 2003, 3G phones became the latest stage of development. 3G has provided endless capabilities and services at high-speed in the form of TV streaming and multimedia, including videoconferencing (Blenford, 2006). However, uptake of 3G has been was slow for most UK networks. This was due to the sheer aesthetics of the first

3G mobile devices; being rather large in comparison to 2.5G devices. These became reminiscent of the earliest 'brick' phones, deeming such devices cumbersome and unfashionable.

> Many of the first mobile phones to come out which used the technology have been large and cumbersome, putting many buyers off.
>
> BBC News, 2003

From 2000, 2.5G was providing multimedia messaging in the form of photographs and videos, together with internet access. The only significant difference between 2.5G and 3G was video calling; this function did not appear to take-off. Video calling was a gimmick and consumers soon reverted to voice communication together with the increasing use of the text message (BBC News, 2005).

Where 3G had been adopted the technology appeared to have a high popularity with the 25-34 age group who were able to afford it, and not the predicted 18-24 age group who were the intended target market (Blenford, 2006). 3G had been demographically specific in its early use and did not reach anticipated levels of use. It has become clear that functions such as video calling are not as popular as predicted due to the sustained popularity of text messaging.

The mobile handset has become an integral part of how people project self-image and personas. There was an appeal in having the latest item with the capabilities this brought, and to displaying them. For 3G use, for example, men seemed to use their phones extensively compared to women, creating a persona through use and display of their 'high-tech tool' to impress women (Blenford, 2006). In comparison, women had a comparatively practical use for safety purposes, such as photographing taxi drivers (Blenford, 2006). In addition, this research also reveals that 62% of 3G service users (of one network) were men.

Figure 1.1 below displays statistics from a technology tracker, based on 4,000 interviews per carried out by MORI each month between September 1999 and December 2006. This graph depicts the use of the mobile phone, text messaging and use of photo messaging, and shows a sudden increase in ownership between September 1999 and September 2001, with ownership rising steadily thereafter. Whilst the use of photo messaging remained relatively low from its introduction in January 2003, text

messaging was first recorded in May 2001 at 26% and rose sharply to 53% by September 2003. These statistics clearly demonstrate an increase in ownership together with the continual rise in text messaging.

Mobile Telephony Trends
Source: MORI (2006)
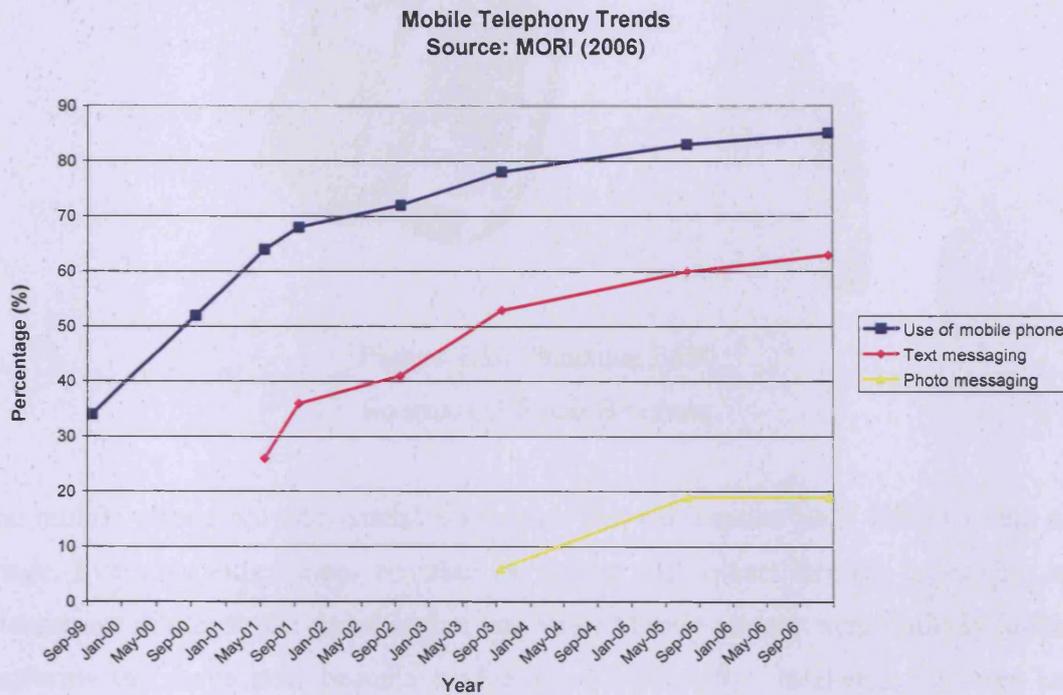
Figure 1.1: Mobile Technology Trends
September 1999 - December 2006 (MORI, 2006)

Mobile phones in the UK today are multi-functional, including a camera (as shown in picture 1.9, p.20), video recorder and an mp3 player. This illustrates how mobile telephony has become broad and dynamic, extending and adapting to more computerised forms of communication by allowing email and file attachments in the form of sound, music and moving images. For it is multimedia messaging that provides this capability to exchange photographs, video and sound clips at a distance and through file transfer using Bluetooth. This capability is encased in what advertisements in magazines portray as an attractive, fashionable and pleasant to touch object (see the Samsung E530 in the picture 1.10 overleaf).

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Picture 1.10: Samsung E530
Source: O2 Retail Brochure

The mobile phone provides social interaction that can capture daily life in sound and image. Everyday experiences can then be shared with others through messaging and internet use while on the move and at any time. Mobile phones were unlikely looking platforms that have now become a ubiquitous commodity, marketed and used in a myriad of ways today. This leads me on to discuss the marketing of the mobile phone, as a basis from which to investigate the appeal and advertising effects on the young, middle-class mobile phone user.

Marketing of the mobile phone: Neo-liberalism and deregulation

Marketing of the mobile phone is an important aspect explored in this thesis. It explains how the mobile phone has been portrayed to the consumer. Marketing strategies have changed considerably from promoting exclusivity to advertising an everyday commodity, and highlight how deregulation has shaped the way in which the mobile phone is being retailed. The telecoms industry has marketed the mobile phone as more appealing mainly due to the change in regulation, from statutory regulation marketing to that of self-regulation. The capitalist market of the telecoms industry has been strengthened to benefit consumers using a deregulated neo-liberal approach. With the focus on neo-liberalism and regulation for the 'citizen-consumer' (Ofcom, 2004a), the history of changes in telecoms regulation will be outlined to establish how the mobile phone industry has become competitive.

Neo-liberalism in the UK telecoms industry began to manifest itself in 1984, as the industry began to use a collection of theoretical and socio-political principles to strengthen capitalist market relations and increase individual freedom. This freedom favoured individual property rights, the rule of law, free trade and the institutions of freely functioning markets (Harvey, 2005). The emergence of neo-liberalism led to the social formation of mobile phone use; the neo-liberal capitalist market is global and universally dynamic in its role towards social and national demographics, being concerned with accommodating exchange between peoples to capitalise from the exchange of goods, irrespective of age, nationality, colour or gender (Colás, 2005). At the same time as these changes, self-regulation occurred as a result of the privatisation of BT, a nationalised telecoms company, which then became vulnerable to losing market monopoly. Consumers were free to choose alternative services from a range of competitive enterprises as BT ceased to be State-managed. This fragmentation of regulation in the telecoms sector essentially encouraged innovation and improvement, increased freedom of trade and the challenge of potential opposition, and thus created enterprise and choice for the consumer. As increased competition provides the incentive to sustain low costs in production, beneficial for the consumer and optimising capital (Newbery, 1999), so deregulation allowed competition within the industry to offer competitive prices to the consumer; this in turn encouraged efficiency and innovation of new technology (Walker, 2001).

Although telecoms have been, and continue to be, stripped of regulation, telecoms are 'policed' (Walker, 2001) by Ofcom to ensure the adherence to statutory regulations and legislation (such as the Enterprise Act 2002). Ofcom is 'the independent regulator for the UK communications industries' (Ofcom, 2004a: 2) covering fixed, mobile and internet services, through the reconciliation of private ownership with consumer rights (Walker, 2001). Ofcom monitors competition, and in doing so it simultaneously prevents anti-competitive practice, protecting citizen-consumers against being over-charged and under-served (Walker, 2001).

Monitored self-regulation, or rather 'deregulation', provided the foundation on which the abundance of different mobile phone services and branding arose, and, in turn innovative marketing associated with different service providers and branding. Ofcom made it possible to keep prices comparable across networks by preventing unfair trading such as 'predatory pricing' or 'margin squeezing' (Walker, 2001). At the same time,

the initial privatisation in this sector allowed the consumer flexibility to choose a network provider and services. This choice facilitated steady progress within the industry while maintaining the interests of the consumers (Ofcom, 2004a). However, in 2004 Ofcom avoided another reduction in regulation as this would have allowed the targeting of high-use, high-value customers. Moreover, customers from rival enterprises would be poached along with the possibility of PR attacks on competitors (Ofcom, 2004b). Therefore, less regulation would be detrimental to fair competition and trade.

As mentioned earlier in this introduction, there were only two service providers competing with each other at the beginning of mobile phone adoption in the UK; Cellnet and Vodaphone. However, in recent years there has been a significant increase in competition. This competition targets high consumer markets offering new services in order to reach full market penetration; for example, prepaid services (pay-and-go) for those who are unable to commit to a contract due to age or economic reasons. A neo-liberal approach to regulation means there is continuous technological innovation and price adjustment in order to sustain a thriving market. As these enterprises and consumers are regulated and protected against unfair trade, the obvious way to attract consumers is the use of innovative marketing. This involves continual adjustment to advertising strategy in order to gain capital and wealth through monitored deregulation.

This thesis will focus on how advertising influences the uptake of particular mobile phones; for example how these promissory images affect uptake and the ways in which the consumer integrates the mobile phone into his/her life. It needs to be recognised that the marketing imagery discussed is not a social reality. Not all potential mobile phone owners buy into the images. . Marketing merely persuades consumers and aims to target a section of the market that is likely to invest in ways to display identity using the most up-to-date objects.

Advertising

There has been a gradual shift from functionality and communication towards the 'enjoyment of [the] virtual' in marketing (Ziems, 2004). Marketing has evolved to a point in which emotion and lifestyle are being promoted as the consequence of mobile phone use; particularly that fashion, design and status are central parts of marketing (Katz and Sugiyama, 2005: 68-69). Using images of lifestyles, this illustrates that 'emotion is a primary motivator of consumption behaviour' and therefore it is emotion

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attached to the brand or object that is marketed in advertising (Hazlett and Hazlett, 1999: 8). 'Emotional values' and gratification are conveyed as the core feeling consequential to mobile phone adoption (Ziems, 2004), together with aspiration. These are what appear to sell products, and are the key to adoption or consumption in this case (Hazlett and Hazlett, 1999; Ziems, 2004).

O2 commercials (see picture 1.11) give an illusion of freedom and calm movement in the use of air bubbles which suggest that this form of mobility 'creates its own, secluded sphere that is separated from 'reality', while the water conveys comfort and calmness' (Ziems, 2004: 213). The conquests for space and detachment from visible tethers are used to promote these wireless services, an example being the space conveyed by air bubbles and planets in the O2 commercials in 2005. These demonstrate how feelings of freedom and calmness are being sold through the advertising of mobile phone services.

Picture 1.11: O2 Advertisement

Although pricing and services remain comparable across providers, fair trading regulations permit brands to define themselves, and to create symbols of such branding (see the air bubbles above in picture 1.11 above which symbolises Oxygen). This was the way to become distinct from various competitors, as Pfanner (2005) notes when looking at how commercial enterprises compete against each other using different words and slogans. These slogans are often optimistic such as 'The future's bright' (various Orange campaigns) and 'See what you can do' (various O2 campaigns) and both of these are promising potential fulfilment. Although different networks use similar methods, it can often be the case that one of them is promising a wireless internet service, for example, while the other is concentrating on social use by using the slogan 'How are you?' (various Vodafone campaigns) to emphasize interpersonal interaction (Pfanner, 2005). These campaigns advertise social capacities and potentials

of mobile phones in terms of emotion, social feelings and social impacts, but not the functions of the mobile phone as a tool. This approach hints at how the mobile has the potential to be a social entity itself in its appeal to consumers, and later it uses the mobile phone in a physical form as an important extension of the self in terms of a fashion item (Crabtree et al, 2003), or a feminine accessory as picture 1.12 suggests.

Picture 1.12: Nokia 'lipstick' phone
Source: O2 Brochure

The physical appearance of the mobile phone can communicate much about the consumer in terms of taste, preference, style and status. The Nokia handset in picture 1.12 above became referred to as the 'lipstick' phone, which was revolutionary in 2004 and 2005. The marketing used imagery and text to promote consumer intrigue into the functionality for female consumers. However, the most significantly popular phone for women at the time of this research was the Samsung E530 (see picture 1.10, p.23), because it was fundamentally understood as 'different', being the first pink branded model which was not specific to any network provider. This model was advertised with the slogan 'Looks great, feels even better', promoting the handset aesthetically and not the technical functionality. This promised a pleasant experience in the use of the mobile phone as a tactile pleasing object.

Picture 1.13: Samsung D500

Source: SAMSUNG's Digital World

Slogan: The Style of Business

The Samsung D500 in picture 1.13 above was a revolutionary phone when it was introduced into the consumer market. This was due to the integrated mp3 player and photographic reproduction, encased in a 'sleek' sliding phone. Television commercials advertising this handset portrayed a chic business lifestyle. Such imagery was an attempt to sell the handset by symbolising a desirable lifestyle, albeit through a somewhat bizarre association with the sliding black phone.

Other popular phones in the study were marketed illustrating multi-functioning and the quality of the mobile phone. The Sony Ericsson k750i (see picture 1.14) was marketed as a 'camera' phone; camera quality and auto-focus were predominantly emphasized, together with a high quality colour screen. Sony Ericsson marketed the handset using images of flowers and unusual events that could be photographed with a camera phone, as opposed to style aspiration; this suggested the need to always carry such a device in order to take spontaneous photographs utilising the high quality camera facility.
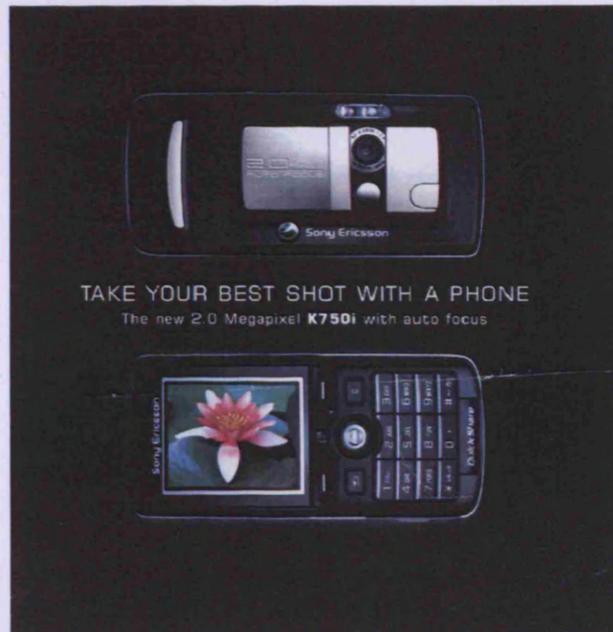
Picture 1.14: Sony Ericsson k750i

Source: Mobile News

The Motorola V3 'Razr' phone was marketed using a combination of the Samsung D500 and the Sony Ericsson strategies above in terms of aesthetics, lifestyle and functionality. The handset was the most aesthetically different and the slimmest flip phone at the time (see picture 1.15 overleaf). This handset was marketed as a folding handset, complete with all currently available functions in a compact device. The imagery used a stylish apartment with modern gadgets which served to create an air of desirability. This advertisement was also the most familiar to consumers who instantly remembered the complete functionality and the razor-like thinness of the mobile device.

Picture 1.15: O2 Loyalty Rewarded Motorola V3 'Razr' Noir

Source: O2 Brochure

The lifestyle being promoted and the pleasurable appearance of the handset were the main appeals in the imagery at the time of the field work. These features were predominant in the strategy to market the handsets used by most of the participants in the research. The imagery and marketing techniques discussed above depict functionality, in the sense of a 'gadget' encased in a mobile phone. O2 offered financial advantages to customers who renewed their contract at the time of the data collection. The advertisement (see picture 1.15 above) demonstrates the service provider's use and appeal of a particular handset, together with their own offers, in order to stimulate business and increase sales.

The breadth of social use today

The extensive use of the mobile phone could not have been predicted in the 1980s, particularly in terms of text messaging, a mode of communication in its own right. The camera phone and 3G services signify another milestone in mobile communications. The volume of both text messaging and multimedia messaging demonstrate the widespread social use today.

The camera function of the device is being used in a number of different ways. Both photo and video messaging became ever more popular as 3G services became more available. The mobile phone was then used in unforeseen ways in terms of media streaming. Pornographic images can be shared through media streaming amongst friends, for example. The website 'YouTube' invites people to send video clips of

anything they wish. This however, has lead to the posting and broadcasting of unsuitable images such as bullying and the infliction of harm.

Video streaming capabilities have added a new dimension to communications, in a way that begins to displace professional media images. The camera phone is used to report on news stories from the inside out by members of the public, who are often amateurs which are then sent to television and news departments. Recent images and videos created in this way include those of hurricanes, rail crashes and locked-down US universities. This has become an increasingly popular source of news reporting; television stations have realised the benefits of obtaining photographs and images recorded using mobile phones and often broadcast footage filmed by viewers. This is demonstrative of the new layers of media interaction and of the multi-layered broadcasting on an 'anytime anywhere' basis (Castells, 1996), demonstrating a blending of telephony with multimedia. The mobile phone is not only a speech 'communicator'; it can distribute and broadcast information sometimes without text or talk.

The mobile phone has become a necessity to people in everyday life. The device has withstood health scares relating to radiation and, brain tumours, the increase of theft and the consequential threat to safety, none of which have deterred people from its use (Crabtree et al, 2003). The mobile phone is used to enhance daily life while posing a threat to it; consumers appear to value communication and interaction more than they fear its negative effects (Crabtree et al, 2003).

> Many people buy mobile phones for reasons of safety, yet owning one increases
> your likelihood of being a victim of crime.
>> Crabtree et al, 2003: 11

Crabtree et al (2003) refer to the dichotomy of the mobile phone in terms of the improvements to everyday life at the cost of negative effects to that same daily life. This will lead me to explore how mobile phone use paradoxically consolidates, constrains and reshapes relations in social life.

The mobile phone has become an information and communication platform that has emphasized the nature of the information society. The mobile phone is an information medium as well as a telephonic communicator, powerful in creating an 'easy way in' for romantic interest and an easy way out (Participant Eric, 23). It allows contact and

intimate communication whilst remaining distant through the avoidance of speech, for example when using text messaging. This can cause closeness anytime anywhere, yet it can create barriers due to the limitations on interaction (especially when mobile phone use is the primary form of contact).

Mobile phone use has become used as a new form of surveillance to track and monitor people. In a decentralised society, use creates unfixed flows (Bauman, 2000) of body data used to tag and track (Lyon, 2001). In terms of connectivity this data creates togetherness in social and personal relationships, while this use as a power relation creates visibility and accountability. Both use and non-use (as data of unavailability) create monitored liquid data. This visibility creates a paradox; as a live link reshaping togetherness in relations, whilst at the same time heightening suspicion and insecurities.

The mobile phone blurs public and private social boundaries making it possible to have private discussions in any setting. This alters social interaction, allowing the intrusion of distant interaction into face-to-face interaction in a way that interrupts and pollutes co-presence. This demonstrates second and third-order effects of mobile phone use (Katz, 1997), in which the phone takes on different purposes to those intended, and reshapes interaction. Content and telephone numbers are no longer private and secure; they can be easily distributed beyond personal control.

These are just a few examples of the impact that the mobile phone has on social life and interaction. The mobile phone brings both freedom and the potential invasion of privacy in a multifunctional device within a neo-liberal society. The mobile phone has become a conduit of expression through which to nurture feelings of closeness and intimacy, thereby forming an attachment to the mobile phone. Therefore, the mobile phone becomes valued because of the stimuli the device can provide, as well as for the relations mediated and represented (Vincent, 2005).

> People's attachment to their mobile phone is not the result of a solitary pre-occupation with the device but rather it is relationships with others that provide the stimuli for people's attachment to their mobile phone.
>
> Vincent, 2005: 120

Connecting this thesis

Chapter 2 examines previous studies into the lived experience of mobile phone use as an integral part of everyday life, particularly the distinctive qualities of the mobile phone as a social and cultural artefact. This chapter will discuss social demographics and illustrate mobile phone use in domestication and distinction. It will also examine: the presentation of the self; changes to face-to-face interaction through blurring private and public spheres; co-present use in strengthening bonds; advertising and aesthetic attraction; and, finally, power and surveillance. This provides a useful background in terms of inquiry and research design. This chapter will discuss statistics and critically examine previous studies linking all the five themes of the thesis: power relations; virtual presence; co-present use; identity reflection and aspiration; and multi-modal use and space. This discussion of previous research provides a basis from which to discuss theoretical literature.

Building on the previous studies, *Chapter 3* presents the contributions of mobility, information and network theories, and the social constructionist approach to technology. Literature and theories regarding consumption, advertising and identity will also feature in this chapter. These are crucial to this thesis as social construction of identity and the resultant communications of identity are prominent forms of interaction in everyday life and culture. I will examine the theories of Urry, Castells, Bourdieu and Goffman as key thinkers in mobility, network interaction and identity. Chapters 2 and 3 will provide an overview of the distinctive qualities the mobile phone offers as a communication tool and social medium. These chapters will be used in conjunction with the findings to enable an effective qualitative analysis.

Chapter 4 will describe the research design that produced qualitative data reflecting how people use the mobile phone. The discussion of the fieldwork will include semi-structured interviewing, diaries and group interviews concerning mobile phone use. The significance of the mobile phone retail store, relationships in the field and the use of image will be discussed, including an in-depth discussion of access, data collection methods. Finally, the analysis and theme establishment through coding will be discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 5 is the first of three findings chapters analysing actor categories of mobile phone use. This chapter will set out how the device becomes part of the culture of

communication together with structuring interaction within existing networks. The mobile phone is used in social practices. Chapter 5 will investigate the understanding of belonging and strong networks ties in friendship groups through continuous contact and expectations of communication. A compulsion to remain in contact is prevalent while everyday co-ordination becomes fluid and adaptable to 'networked individualism'. The mobile phone assumes an important role in achieving tasks such as organisation and sustaining inclusion in the social activities within the group. Social activities can be structured quickly and in an impromptu manner, however this is at the expense of loosening social arrangements and social commitment. Consequences of mobile phone use create changes to social etiquette as emerging social capacities are brought to everyday lives. This echoes the change in social etiquette that has been found in a number of other studies (e.g. Ling, 2004). Chapter 5 will emphasize togetherness and disconnection mediated by the mobile phone particularly when friends are apart or in co-presence. This occurs through a reconfiguration of social interaction through new forms of social practices, such as sharing gendered material and gift-giving.

Chapter 6 will discuss intimate relations with respect to mobile phones. Focus will be given to initiating and ending intimacy, sustaining presence and maintaining relationships. The social capacities of the mobile phone give prominence to subtleties and private aspects of intimate interactive relations. The mobile phone is used differently within romantic and family relationships, raising insecurities and issues of trust and suspicion in relationships affecting freedom and power relations. Text messaging is used to express control within personal relationships through establishing a controlled and unobtrusive closeness. These modes of communication enhance the initial stages of relationships, yet become obstacles for long-distance relationships. The mobile phone adopts a meaningful position within the lives of users due to its capabilities to sustain continual contact and affirmation of feelings and thought. The mobile phone is a significant medium through which the self can be expressed, in both open and filtered ways, to form desired impressions and personas; these are both advantageous and limiting for intimacy.

Chapter 7 extends self-expression and performance in the culture of communication and use of the mobile phone. The mobile phone as an artefact becomes an extension of the self in adopting a role expressing habitus, aspirations and gender distinctions. As a commodity the device is continually redesigned and consumed, in the form of handset

upgrades and aesthetic appeal to lifestyle and identity. The technical functions of the mobile phone are aimed to appeal to the consumer in terms of providing the latest gadgets. The self-identity is problematic when dividing into bold categories. Many categories are interwoven, therefore the presentation of the self is fabricated in consumerism, impressions and colours in the aesthetic design of the handset, particularly regarding gender differences. Nevertheless, the mobile phone appears to be an effective device through which identity is communicated. The handset becomes meaningful as a prop to mediate identity and as an extension of the self. Attachment is formed to the device due to its social capacities to communicate the self, style and meanings. Value is given to the mobile phone as an artefact integral to collective and individual identities.

Chapter 8 consolidates findings connecting the analysis with Chapters 2 and 3. This chapter will provide an overview of the thesis together with a number of conclusive points regarding use, integration and relations in everyday life. The mobile phone is a social and cultural artefact for communication, interaction and information in various forms; reshaping existing interaction and relations by transforming communication and interaction. The aspects of social relations that are reformed, displaced and produced will be summarised. The mobile phone has had huge implications on the ways in which interaction is mediated, controlled and displayed in the UK. This chapter will finally discuss the implications and limitations of the research, emphasizing fashion, friendship, capabilities and marketing strategies.

Chapter 9 provides the overall conclusions, reconnecting them to the intentions of the thesis. Specifically, it will state how the mobile phone has reshaped power relations due to fluid interaction, particularly conduct and social practices and relations that can be monitored by family, friends and partners. Co-presence and virtual presence depend on each other; the mobile phone becomes meaningful in negotiations of continuous contact and co-ordination to sustain strong bonds in networks and relations. The combination of co-presence and virtual presence alters the understanding of space, particularly use of public and private space. Mobile phone use is performed as part of an identity to strengthen bonds in a network within a consumer society which is concerned with domestication and integration in ways reflecting cultural and social meanings. The mobile phone as a personal and social artefact has assisted interaction at the same time as changing communication into fluid and continuous contact, accessibility and a

performance identity. This occurs through a process of reshaping relations and establishing the device as a meaningful artefact through use and identity. The thesis will close with suggestions for further research in this field.

Conclusion

This introduction to the thesis has established the central themes of exploration and outlined the proceeding chapters. This chapter has investigated the history of the mobile phone in terms of technical and social development, marketing transformation and strategies, and regulation in the UK. Through an examination of previous studies into the lived experience of mobile phone use, Chapter 2 will introduce key areas of exploration in this research.

Chapter 2
Living in Mobile Connection

Introduction

The mobile phone is a particularly interesting social and cultural artefact to study, due to the depth of penetration that the technological platform has reached in comparison to other information and communication technologies used in everyday life. Notably, the mobile phone has now penetrated societies to a degree where 'there are more handsets than people in some countries' (Glotz, Bertschi and Locke, 2005; 11); this suggests the mobile phone is 'perhaps the most significant communications technology of the early twenty-first century' (Selwyn, 2005; 3). Mobile telephony is used by a broader stratum than the PC and the internet (Lacohée et al, 2003; Ling, 2004), and has saturated society (Crabtree et al, 2003). The position of the mobile phone as such an artefact is explored in terms of social uptake; meanings; and dichotomies relating to how this technological platform affects culture, and how cultures affect the use of this technological platform. Friendship groups, intimate relations and consumptive identities display social use and meaning in an evidential way. These areas are important because they illuminate the social use and meaning of the mobile phone to those using the device. These relations in UK culture will be explored to understand how and why the mobile phone has had huge implications for the ways interaction is mediated, controlled and performed.

This chapter will examine the place of the mobile phone within social networks, intimacy and identity, thereby serving to contextualise mobile phone use amongst those who have a high consumption of the artefact. Such consumers are found to be the main targets of present day advertising of mobile phones; primarily those who are middle-class graduates, and mostly aged in their early 20s. The examination of previous findings throughout this chapter will inform interpretation of the research findings; it will also provide a background against which to channel further exploration of the themes and paradoxical revelations throughout the fieldwork phases explained in Chapter 4. Social factors relating to mobile phone use will be discussed to provide a basis on which to select the most appropriate participants for the investigation. This will also relate to how the mobile phone is incorporated into the daily lives and social dynamics of mainstream users in the UK. Predominant focus will be placed upon empirical work relating to the UK, drawing on other countries only when significant points of comparison or important analytical themes are to be found.

It is not clear that owning a mobile phone, in and of itself, significantly changes the lives of those who use it.

Crabtree et al, 2003: 6

Although it does not intend to establish a thorough in-depth analysis relating to one particular discipline or research field, this chapter will draw on social, psychological and technological studies to focus on the ways in which people are using mobile phones in their social relations of everyday life in UK culture. This will contribute to the social studies field of science and technology in an attempt to create the basis on which to subsequently clarify how, or even whether, mobile phone ownership significantly changes the lives of those using it; this is as directed by the research of Crabtree et al (2003) and many others being examined and critiqued in this chapter. Beginning with a discussion of the social factors of current mobile phone users, this chapter will determine the appropriate sample of mobile phone users for this study. A sample of those among whom social uptake of mobile phone technical capacities are prominent, or perceived to be important, according to media and enterprise marketing targets.

Social factors and the mobile phone

The UK is one of the leading nations in terms of mobile phone market penetration, together with Scandinavian countries, who are among these nations (Mante-Meijer and Haddon, 2001). With the progression of modern life in the twenty-first century, technological advancements have changed existing inequalities; it has diminished, amplified and transformed them to new levels. This is illustrated by social research highlighting a 'digital divide', which is attributable to social factors such as education, income, gender, age, ethnicity and occupation. Although access to much contemporary technology has recently increased, it continues to be disputed and negotiated into contemporary divides of social life. This being the case with technology in general, the pervasive mobile phone is, however, different; there are more handsets than people in the UK (Glotz et al, 2005). MORI (2006) reported 81% of 4,000 people own a mobile phone in January 2005. Additionally, MORI claimed that 96% of these people who own mobile phones are aged between 15-24 years old. This suggests that there is an age factor affecting mobile phone use, and this will be the first point of discussion in this section proving the rationale on which to select the target consumers of the study.

Age

In May 2003, figures which had been published by the Office of Telecommunications (Oftel, now Ofcom) reported that there were more mobile phone users aged 15-44 than in older age groups; specifically, 90% of those owning mobile phone were aged between 15-24 years old. In support of this, Westcott (2004) claims that a 'survey of 1,000 adults ... found that the 16-24 age group were the heaviest users of the mobile phone in Britain'. DMEurope (2005), a corporate newsletter, claims a slightly older user group, aged 18-29, are 'early adopters with high disposable incomes', and are therefore targeted when new services arrive, for example such as third-generation services. However, Haddon (2002) claims that 'the technology has spread more broadly among the population' so this raises questions over why a younger sample group of 18-29 year olds should be aimed at in recruitment stages. Nafus and Tracey's 2002 study revealed age divides in terms of feelings towards the artefact, claiming feelings varied from 'indifference to outright hatred of them, their owners and everything they represent' (p.207). Most owners spoke about mobile phones regarding utility; it was only the Nafus and Tracey's under 30s group who spoke of unsavoury social capital, which meant they tried to distance themselves from mobile phones. The neighbouring age groups expressed enthusiasm (teenagers) and indifference (middle-aged group and above), but this could be due to the fact that mobile phone use increasingly declined beyond the 45-54 age groups, relative to the increase in age.

In terms of actual use, Aura Corporation carried out the Mobile Industry Customer Satisfaction (MICS) Survey in November 2004 and January 2005 with 2,006 individual UK residents. The survey found '14-19 year olds send, on average, more than 10 texts a day' (Aura, 2005) with the mean number of voice calls made per day doubling for this age group. This illustrates that the younger group aged between 15 and 24 not only have high levels of ownership, but also high use. Users how fall into this age group are primary impressionable targets for marketing based on trends, fashion and identity; the review literature regarding identity emphasizes the appeal to the trendy younger market.

> While both genders are rather similar in the quantitative intensity of usage, they still differ significantly in the qualitative patterns and purposes of use.

> Geser and Trench, 2006: 6

Telecommunications consumers are not only characterised by demographics, moreover, 'they are characterised through their relationship to the industries and institutions that comprise telecommunications markets' (Green, Harper, Murtagh and Cooper, 2001). These consumers are young, impressionable early adopters with heavy use patterns. Having reviewed age in relation to mobile phone ownership and levels of use, it is clear that divisions of ownership and use do not largely exist among young adults. However, there does appear to be a difference in use between the genders, albeit these differences are minimal. This thus leads to a consideration of gender in use levels.

Gendered communication

Use of the mobile phone does not appear to be distinguished in the same way as other technologies in terms of gender differences. However, Crabtree et al (2003) found that forms of contact differed according to gender. In actual use, women were 'significantly more prone to sending text messages' (Geser, 2006: 7; Fox, 2001) than men, who were more active in making voice calls. Based on just four case studies, Crabtree et al (2003) found that women are twice as likely as men to use the mobile phone to text message their children, whereas men, on the other hand, are twice as likely to contact work colleagues using the mobile phone (Crabtree et al, 2003). Much of the research into gendered use of the mobile phone applies to the US, Switzerland and other European countries; it is therefore difficult to review a wealth of relevant empirical work. However, these studies demonstrate clearly gendered use of the mobile phone, mirroring kin relationships and domestic roles primarily for women. The findings of this research also point to gender differences, particularly in terms of bond strengthening (women) and bond making (men). The findings will later show that women speak to both men and women more extensively and intensively then men contact men, who will be direct and purposeful in their approach to using mobile phones as a communication tool. This demonstrates how the mobile phone becomes an extension of presence in maintaining closeness.

> Generally, the mobile helps to maintain established relationships. This is particularly noticeable in girls' friendship groups, whereas boys tend to use the mobile more as a toy.
>
> McGuigan, 2005: 54

Keller (1977) and Noble (1987) found women and those concerned with family contact have a higher intrinsic/social use of the telephone than men or those without familial

duties. In this way, women use the mobile phone as an invisible open channel or an 'umbilical cord' (Palen, Salzman and Youngs, 2000). This is more evident in women's use, whilst males use the mobile phone to broaden contacts and concentrate on self-created relationships and networks, as well as to find an intimate partner (Geser, 2006). A further difference is that men use the device in an inventive and creative way (McGuigan, 2005) to increase their network circle (Geser, 2006), whereas women use the mobile phone as a form of interaction in itself to enhance their close relationships with family and friends (Haddon, 1997). This suggests that women wish to contact fewer people using the mobile phone, primarily using the device to contact and maintain strong bonds. A gender difference exists where the mobile phone is used strongly with the few as opposed to frequently with the many. For men, it is instrumental in establishing contact with new people (Geser, 2006). As women's use of the mobile phone is mainly for frequently contacting and maintaining bonds with family and those who are close, this can lead to a social insulation in comparison to the interactions that men have using the mobile phone.

Such gender observations, however, cannot be considered in isolation of other factors and the contexts in which men and women live their lives. Motherhood affects use of the mobile phone in the co-ordination of work and child-care for example, as women 'make far greater domestic use of the telephone' (Anderson, 2002). Haddon also suggests that employment circumstances and the presence of children will make a difference to the way in which the mobile phone is used. However, there is no uniform use women as everyday use is affected by wider factors, for example the demands of the wider family. Haddon (1997) states that this is a common claim of feminists; that the situation of women is discussed without considering the roles and circumstances they have, such as cultural and class backgrounds. Anderson (2002) claims that women's use patterns have indicated their dominance of the role in maintaining household social networks, making it a 'co-ordination-hub'. Anderson, however, recognises employment has a bearing on this. Anderson's (2002) findings suggest that men are the heaviest users of the mobile phone in terms of gendered performance and use whilst at work. Considering that gender should not be considered in isolation of other social factors, this leads onto a short consideration of other social factors which can affect mobile phone use. This will enable the substantiation of the selection of a middle-class sample to be studied in this inquiry.

Socio-economic factors

Unlike many other technologies, the mobile phone has cut across social and economic divides in terms of ownership and access. The mobile phone has saturated society in a way that is beyond that of any other similar technology which has caused a digital divide[1], internet use being the prime indicator of this divide (Rice and Katz, 2003). The digital divide suggests a difference in take-up and in effective use due to levels of opportunities and inequalities, or levels of access (Selwyn, 2004). This divide illuminates gaps along social factors such as education, income, age, gender and ethnicity. Although there is a relationship between access to and use of ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies), the divide concerning mobile phones has moved to divide along how the device is being used. In this section I will illustrate the underpinning differences in mobile phone ownership according to class and economic factors.

Diffusion and consumption of mobile phone use need to be understood in terms of the 'contexts and processes of their use in everyday life' (Green et al, 2001). Katz and Aakhus (2002) identify cross-cultural trends in mobile phone uptake as being cultivated in social contexts, in social networks, as a result of changes in traditional communication and mobile communication behaviour. Contact, inclusion and work/life balancing are all reasons to adopt and use a mobile phone. Crang et al (2006) imply that such technology infiltrates existing lifestyles in terms of communication, work and strong ties, although factors such as cost may affect which functions of the mobile phone are used. Crabtree et al (2003) claim that start-up costs initially limited uptake, but the introduction of pay as you go mobile phones made it possible for those with low incomes or tight budgets to own mobile phones. Haddon (2002) reported that 77% of mobile phone users adopt the pre-paid services, as opposed to taking out a subscription in the UK. Cost as an influential factor established that much of the use behaviour is governed by income, 'that those who tend to have relatively lower incomes (including teenagers and pensioners) show a preference for the cheaper option' (Fox, 2001: 11). With the pre-pay conditions in place, there was text messaging increase, as these were of a fixed cost (Grinter and Eldridge, 2003); this was particularly popular with young people, showing that age and economic factors cannot be divorced.

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[1] The term 'digital divide' was coined in the 1970s from research into mass communication effects by Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1970); it has rooted itself in the divide between the information rich and the information poor, thus creating a gap.

The digital divide is now not about being 'connected', as the statistics from MORI suggest (discussed in chapter 1); the majority of the UK population are connected. There is a divide relating to the rationale for adoption and *how* people are connected, together with what is invested and gained from being connected. Research in the UK relating to socio-economic background does not equate to the wealth of research in other countries. For example, research from Switzerland raises some interesting associations between education and class. The effect of these associations on mobile phone use holds negative correlations for Geser (2006); he found that the number of calls and text messages per month of the women sampled was high when the level of their parents' education was low. A reason for this could be related to the sole use of a single or fewer channels of communication compared to those who have high levels of access to and knowledge of other forms of digital interaction, such as email and online chat (Geser, 2006). Ling, Yttri, Andersen and DeDuchia (2003) studied 1,750 users in the UK, and 1,750 in five other countries and claim that sociality differed between the classes due to opportunity. They discovered that middle and upper-class parents encouraged children to have a 'firm local sociality' involving sport and outings to meet others; middle and upper-class parents and children also have the means and opportunities to engage with others using various media. Lower-class parents and children do not have the same opportunities. It therefore follows that the middle-class population would cut across those who used the mobile phone as the only device for communication and as one of many forms of communication. This group would therefore be suitable for further study to examine the mobile phone as a relational and cultural artefact in terms of social networking, intimacy and identity; this discussion will follow later in this chapter.

The mobile phone 'is an artefact of the broader development of ICTs that has arisen in the past decades' yet it has been popularised more recently (Ling et al, 2003: 2). There is extensive research in this field, but for the purpose of this thesis it is important to concentrate on the practices and modalities that are being entwined into everyday life. The sample is primarily selected on the basis of age, and comprises people between the ages of 17-27 as this group invests much of their social capital into the phone in terms of identity impression, lifestyle aspiration, successful careers and trends. This will be substantiated in the identity section of this chapter.

Consumption, identity and advertising

Mobile phone use will now be discussed as a cultural and relational artefact, a useful artefact consumed in everyday life. The mobile phone is yet another platform to be consumed in traditional ways; for example, buying a mobile phone because friends have a mobile phone can be likened to buying new shoes because friends are buying new shoes. Physical adoption is a small part of buying into owning a mobile phone; mobile phone use involves consuming its capacities through the entirety of use and display of the mobile phone within the lifestyle and everyday performance of the user. This section will now use some of the thesis findings (detailed discussion of findings will appear in later chapters) to frame the literature of previous empirical work. The review of literature will also outline the need for further research into the mobile phone as a displayed cultural artefact, and the effects of industry advertising. The domestication model will present how technology becomes embedded into lifestyle and identity; a discussion of this will therefore provide a basis on which to discuss the paradoxes and contradictions arising from the findings.

The goods we consume become valuable when they become utilised and integrated into everyday life. Nafus and Tracey (2002) used thirty-nine semi-structured interviews taken from a BT study that aimed to understand how ICTs fit into the lives of British households. They drew on discourses regarding how technological devices are objects of consumption, and conceived the process of consumption as concerning how goods become integrated by consumers, as opposed to how they are utilised.

> Some see the mobile phone as merely useful, but, for many, mobiles are emblematic of older ways of consuming.
>
> Nafus and Tracey, 2002: 218

Together, these technologies represent 'modes of communication', and the mobile phone is therefore only a part of these (Nafus and Tracey, 2002: 208; Douglas and Isherwood, 1979).

It is domestication that creates a place for technology in people's lives and therefore causes the 'consumption' of technologies (Haddon, 2003). The domestication model accounts for consumption as it effectively unfolds social aspects and understandings of the use of ICTs. It does this through asking major social questions, such as how, where, what, when, who and why an object or media of technological innovation is put to use.

The domestication model shows how explicitly consumed commodities 'are appropriated into domestic culture' (Silverstone et al, 1992: 16), undergoing a process of appropriation, incorporation, and redefinition; this coheres with the interests and values of the household, in terms of the 'co-ordination hub' discussed above. The mobile phone becomes domesticated both functionally and aesthetically through objectification, or personalisation. Silverstone, Hirsch and Morley (1992) claim objectification to occur 'in the spatial environment of the home (or in extensions of the home)' (p.22), the appropriation in an aesthetic environment. Objects can become embedded in the environment and are often consumed because they are compatible with that environment in respect of appearance and function (Silverstone et al, 1992). The artefact, whether it is a chair, painting, or television, together with the environment signifies expression as a moral economic unit (Silverstone et al, 1992).

It is the household that applied the 'consumptive meanings because they constitute a moral economy' (Nafus and Tracey, 2002: 212; Hirsch and Silverstone, 1992), which is expressed through a system in which the 'commodity and media relations' become useful and redefined appropriately for the users. The adopted object or media becomes appropriated to fit into the value and beliefs system of the individual or household, thereby expressing the systematic quality of a domestic aesthetic (Silverstone et al, 1992). In relating this to consumption and identity, the mobile phone is adopted, objectified and personalised into social life and the existing body of values and objects. Technological innovations are no longer commodities, they become relations through being personal and attaining a status that represents potential empowerment, identity and characteristics of the individual. This relates to Bourdieu's (1986) notions of habitus, in which consumption practices fit into existing habits and routines while referring to dominant classes in terms of expressing distinction. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

Promises of consumerism and gendered advertising
Chapter 7 will pay particular attention to the promises of consumerism. Gender will be discussed within this section, raising key findings of identity aspirations and reinforcement. Consumerism in this sense captures who the mobile device is selected for and how they are influenced by advertising, as well as how the device is displayed as an embodied artefact. For example, a black 'sleek' mobile phone will represent trendy phones styled on business, and a pink phone will reinforce a collective feminine,

albeit stereotyped, identity. An example of consumerism through use is when the phone is used to create impressions and perform identities, although this is linked closely with the findings of performance and presentation of the self. Personas are created and the mobile phone is used as a prop for men to become more desirable to women, and for women to ignore unwanted attention from men. This section will discuss these gender differences and the consumption of the mobile phone as an aesthetic, in terms of advertising.

It is interesting to explore claims made by men that the influence of the display of a higher specification, superior, aesthetically pleasing mobile phone above that of their peers, caused inhibitions in displaying lower quality phones.

> Others said they had been keen to display their mobile while they were top-of-the-range or state-of-the-art, but had stopped doing so when their models fell behind.
>
> Plant, 2002: 41

This raises the question of how mobile phones are marketed in terms of being 'state-of-the-art' and how they are viewed as trendy. This is due to the influences of marketing strategies on consumption and identity, linking to the purchasing of a lifestyle and impression and not just a device. This is a general question that will be addressed throughout this section on identity. For now, however, the discussion will focus on how the display of enjoyment and emotion (including the desire for symbols of increased status) are being used to market phones as an effect on identity, reinforcing the desire to possess the most up-to-date mobile phone.

The mobile phone industry has become de-regulated and enthusiastic over competition and enterprise. Many of the handsets and services on offer are similar. However, the marketing that is used differs between enterprises in order to attract the most customers whilst cohering to fair trade regulations (Ofcom, 2004). The ways in which consumables and technologies are marketed appear to have a large impact on adoption. The marketing techniques target the largest consumer group, who are concerned with image and have a disposable income. Hence, marketing tends to use imagery conveying lifestyle and fashion, together with value through emotion (Ziems, 2004). The current use of mobile phone marketing imagery will now be discussed together with the effects it has on consumption and the identity.

Advertising influences how new technologies are used and perceived using imagery that reflects an individual's relationships with new devices (Townsend, 2002). Effective images include those that present telecommunications as overcoming the spatial constraints on everyday life. Stereotypes are also used; women are presented as needing to own a device due to security fears and to remain connected to family and friends. The mobile phone is sold as a security blanket for women, whereas advertising towards men focuses on power as a tool of fashion and seductiveness (Townsend, 2002). Chapter 7 will discuss how this is detected by consumers in terms of intimacy and sex in a commercial.

Imagery enhancements, together with the evocation of emotion, as well as the placement of the items, appear to have an affect on the attractiveness of the item, whatever the item may be. As discussed in Chapter 1, lifestyle and fashion influence the consumption of such objects, particularly the appreciation of aesthetics, together with the social status symbols of distinction conveyed through advertising. It is the surroundings and emotions in which the product is placed that contributes to how it is perceived and, in turn, consumed. Gratification motivates creators and marketers to promote items in particular ways. For example, the O2 commercials outlined in the introduction of this thesis use imagery around the mobile phones to create a desirable air of calmness, freedom and control, which is subliminally achieved through the consumption of the phone. Freedom is emphasised through various slogans including promises of better futures if the telecoms services and handsets are purchased, such as 'see what you can do', and 'the future's bright'. Ziems (2004) claims there has been a shift from marketing communication to marketing enjoyment. There are promises of control, liberation and 'intense closeness' conveyed in much of the mobile phone advertising (Ziems, 2004). 'Youth modernism and futurism' are also used to market this device by casting it as a 'stylish design, elite status and fashion ... [in] a central part of marketing' (Katz and Sugiyama, 2005; 68-69). This emotion is attached to a brand or objects through the aura of the commercialised feelings conveyed. This aura exists not through showing the capabilities of the services or handsets offered, but through the emotional imagery used.

Mobile phones and mobile phone services use all modes of advertising to promote purchase and use. Television advertising was once an effective way to reach large

numbers of the population, but this effectiveness has been affected by the increase in the number of television channels. Advertising is now multi-channelled through moving media and magazines. There has been an increase in placing the consumer item intentionally into popular television shows and being used by celebrities; a product placement scheme in which Nokia, for example, paid for a particular handset to be used in films like The Matrix and James Bond (Katz and Sugiyama, 2005). However, non-terrestrial channels have dispersed the viewing of advertising during commercial breaks by the majority. Population penetration of advertisement is therefore increasingly difficult to sustain, especially with the increased use of personalised viewing planners, such as Sky+ for example, eradicating 'peak viewing'. Therefore, as well as reaching populations which television cannot reach, mixed media (magazines) are being used to complement television commercials.

The discussion will consider and establish how such advertising influences the adoption of a particular mobile phone in relation to how the device is used by participants. This leads to an investigation into the consumption of fashionable telephony. As indicated above, there are of course gender differences to be discussed sociologically with reference to using and consuming the mobile phone in representative ways. The discussion below will continue to substantiate the implications and further research needs of mobile phones as cultural artefacts of identity, and whether they are in fact artefacts of identity.

The mobile phone is a commodity communicating style and taste. Consumption can be conceptualised as 'a means of self-expression, individual identity formation, creativity, or even art' (Wilska, 2003; 441). Wilska (2003) carried out research in Finland, where the foremost effect of mobile phone use and penetration occurred. Wilska (2003) found that attachment to the mobile phone was related to 'general consumption styles'. For women there was an association between spending and addictive use, and a trendy consumptive style; whereas men tended to be enthused by technology and more playful in their use of technology.

Much of the previous literature appears to assume an appropriation and intended display of the mobile device as an aesthetic, which is often not the case. It needs to be considered that often the mobile phone is not displayed, for any purpose other than actual use, as opposed to representing tastes and identity. Plant (2002) carried out

research in London and Birmingham into the mobile phone's effects on social and individual life to 'identify significant ways in which local economic, technological, political and cultural conditions shape the use and perception of the mobile' (p.24). The research methods involved both structured and open-ended interviews, email interviews and observation of people's behaviour and actions in relation to mobile phones. In the UK the mobile phone was used as a prop, or a symbol to convey self-containment to keep attention away; for example women use the mobile phone as a 'personal bodyguard to deter overly keen men from trying a chat-up line' (Smith, 2006) through performing sham mobile phone conversations. A study carried out by Sheffield Hallam University claims that men believed that having the latest handset can be equivalent to driving the right car, in that possessing a phone with the latest gadgets makes them more desirable to women (Financial Times, 2006). This echoes the attitudes towards the perceived social capital of owning a stylish car, and also highlights the attitudes of those studied who generalise and stereotype women as being attracted to the aestheticism of a person.

Plant (2002) found that the mobile phone was also displayed for other practical reasons. For example, men will put their mobiles on tables when they sit, due to the discomfort of the device in trouser pockets whilst seated. In comparison, women carry the device out of view in handbags, and may not display them unless they are expecting a call. Therefore, display is not always due to the intention to show the device or represent an identity; consumption could be due to practicality.

Nevertheless, the findings in this thesis suggest that the mobile handsets are attractive to the users studied because they can be domesticated into their existing appropriation of such artefacts and lifestyles adopted. The ease with which the device integrates into existing style raises the value of the artefact. The findings will illuminate this integration and identity building through matching outfits, accessorizing outfits and portraying lifestyle tastes and impressions (the main one being smart, sleek and business-related styles). The selection of handsets is affected by how the aesthetics of the handset will fit into the social practices and communication of identity; identity aspiration, gender relations and power relations. These are consumptive social meanings which establish our uses of the mobile phone as integral to everyday life.

The theory presented in chapter 3 will discuss this further with references to Baudrillard, Dyer and Bourdieu. These findings connected very closely with the desire for difference of style; purchasing something that no one else. This refers to buying the most up-to-date and stylish handset to be different from others in a distinctive way, not an excluded way. This finding will be discussed further in the next section.

Exclusivity without exclusion

Research into the mobile phone as an artefact of identity has been carried out in the UK and overseas. These studies have established that the mobile phone symbolises freedom (Ling, 2004). The mobile phone is a fashionable item for some (Katz and Sugiyama, 2005), a commodity of which 'having the best' is important for many (Green, 2003). In both use and appearance the mobile phone can establish inclusion in social networks (Taylor and Harper, 2002). This implies that the style, appearance and use 'symbolise' the choice and preference of a section of society, therefore a collective identity, as opposed to individualisation (Lasen, 2004). In Chapter 7 there is a detailed discussion relating to consumption of the mobile artefact in ways that enforce exclusivity while simultaneously avoiding consumption that will exclude from the identity of networks. Having the 'latest' or devices perceived as 'different' reinforced a desire for exclusivity as opposed to exclusion. This was one of the main findings of the research. Therefore, this deserves a review of relevant literature.

Personalisation is rooted in distinction, not individualism. Personalisation, however, remains important as there is a simultaneous desire for distinctiveness and individuality causing tension (Nafus and Tracey, 2002). Lasen (2004) challenges the personal and individual, by claiming that although mobile phones become meaningful and symbolic of lifestyle, they are not exclusive to any particular lifestyle; it is the ways they are used and integrated into the lifestyle that is important. Therefore it becomes personal in terms of how it takes part in one's personality and enhances daily life for the user. Previous studies, from the UK and overseas, outline the tension and paradoxes between inclusion and integration and the distinctively stylish and individual (or rather personal, not individual). It is these tensions that will be substantiated through the analysis of the findings into mobile phone use. The mobile phone has become personalised in order to integrate into a style and to convey distinction, while remaining included in an exclusive way, therefore, not unique or 'individualised' as such.

Much of the literature on mobile phone use by young people characterises this group in terms of its difference and the formation of subcultures, by generalising their behaviour and identity (Green, 2003); however, this particular group is subject to the same identity negotiations and multiple social relations as other user groups. The mobile phone can be used to negotiate identity within a group, through intimacy and through personal use. However, identity is predominantly negotiated through group use for young people. One aspect of the socio-technical shaping of mobile, multimedia personal communications project (STEMPEC) focused on consumption and identity of young people aged between eleven and eighteen. The study found group interaction and identity would take place in the form of sharing information, for example local reports on bullying, which would be shared through text messaging displaying micro-co-ordination. Therefore use was rather practical in terms of value; it is this value that mediates identity, according to Green (2003). The mobile phone can mediate personal identity due to 'the social, cultural and economic value those devices represent and enable' (Green, 2003: 203-4).

The economic value found was related to the 'black market' of such devices at school because of their high value in the open market. At the time, they were a rarity in the school environment thereby playing a role in distinguishing identity through gaining 'street cred' (Green, 2003: 205). This economic value was affected by the cultural value of the device, in terms of the symbols of rarity, expense and fashion, a 'flash' item which is important to teenagers (Green, 2003). The mobile phone is therefore consumed as a distinctive fashionable commodity in which rarity makes it 'flash' and raises the status of its owner; much like that of owning a rare or somewhat expensive car. An object is flash in comparison to other like objects, if it is different or new, especially in relation to the size, colour and model of the phone (Taylor and Harper, 2002) while aesthetically presenting the self by 'having the best' (Ling, 2004; Green, 2003). Some participants in Green's study likened a flash mobile phone to owning 'bastard' (the latest) trainers in PE, which is a time when everyone looks at the trainers (Green, 2003: 206). Having the best phone elicits the same social associations and reactions as with other objects.

> Teenagers are particularly aware of the fashion aspects of their mobiles, competing to acquire the latest, coolest models and to customise them in the latest, coolest ways. Everything from the colour of the handset to the sound of

its ring tone, and the logos and graphics it displays can be given a personal touch.

<div align="right">Plant, 2002: 14.</div>

The mobile phone handset is used as a form of display and signals competition to have the best, yet to integrate at the same time. It is personalised to exert difference in the form of selecting a colour, or a different fascia for the device, whilst integrating by being part of the latest trends; the desire to be included, which can be likened to that of having the best trainers in PE (Green, 2003).

Green (2003) reported diversity within the same age groups. Some participants would rather spend money on clothes and use a functioning phone, than possess the latest phone or on fascias for the phone; however, this is only as long as there are no shortcomings of functionality or that it is extremely outdated or oversized, in the form of a 'brick'. Those who were more concerned with new phones were often included in group social actions of admiration and acceptance. This not only raises status through owning 'the best phone', it also speaks volumes about social networks themselves in terms of group identity and integration as well as individual identity. Green (2003) claims the importance of fashion and status for young people should be addressed with reference to their groups, or 'subcultures', as this is where meanings arise. Group affects on identity will be discussed in the section on social networks.

The social value of mobile phones, also contributing to individual identity, is very much associated with the interaction with others and groups of others in terms of similarities, differences and solidarities. Social groups connect, include, and exclude through the performance of identity and difference. The mobile phone therefore takes on a performance value beyond that of economic, cultural and social value (Green, 2003). However, as already illustrated, the levels of value are diverse within this group of users (Green, 2003); importance is in contact and function for some, while for others it is in trends and gimmicks. The more practical user has limits; the mobile phone should not be extremely old to the point that it appears out of date, although they will resist buying into the latest trends. This emphasizes the intention to integrate, not to differentiate (or individualise) the display and personalisation of the mobile phone. Actually owning a mobile phone demonstrates participation in social life or inclusion in a social network for young people (Taylor and Harper, 2002). The mobile phone is also used to represent an individual identity. In this sense, the mobile phone is objectified in a somewhat

contradictory nature. It is used to represent a solidified social cohesion, in 'belonging' to a network; however, it is also symbolic of independence and individuality, in order to stand away from the group or crowd. The mobile phone serves in expressing both 'individual and group identities' (Taylor and Harper, 2001: 3). Nafus and Tracey (2002) elaborate this claim by reporting that a working-class teenage girl wanted a mobile phone because she aspired to become upper-middle class, using the television character Ally McBeal as a role-model; she believes owning a mobile phone will include her in a different social category. The mobile phone is a relational artefact of communication and the communication of identity, expressing a desire to be distinctive yet included.

Performance and the presentation of the self

The findings will show that the device is a medium to express identity, being used as part of an identity in a performance. However, the paradox is revealed that many uses and displays of the mobile phone are to enforce front stage performance, while actually bringing much of the back stage into the front stage. In this way, the mobile phone illuminates both intended and unintended presentations of the self. There are personas and identity affirmation. This is connected to the identity aspirations and group consolidations of identity; particularly in terms of femininity and co-present sharing of masculine material. Mobile phone uses convey expressions of identity and impressions in terms of group cohesion, individuality and the impressions conveyed during courtship (group cohesion and courtship will be discussed later in this chapter). Goffman's (1959) concept of the presentation of the self and self-expression through the mobile phone will be emphasized in terms of performance value in this chapter and also in Chapter 3, with reference to the changes in social etiquette and the blurring of public and private arenas of social life.

Much research has been carried out into how people conduct themselves when using mobile phones in both public and private space. This ranges from the various personas intentionally used to those displaying 'back stage' (Goffman, 1959) information in public as a result of using a telephone on the move. Lasen (2003) studied the use of mobile phones in public places, demonstrating how the private merges with the public realm. There is also a vast array of studies relating to etiquette, or 'm-etiquette' (Lacohée et al, 2003). This study relates to the performance of the individual and collective identities; it shows how the mobile phone is used as a prop in communicating

information about the self, both intentionally and as a by-product of blurred boundaries, particularly in terms of attraction and courtship.

Lacohée et al (2003) note how social behaviour has changed with the widespread use of the mobile phone, by bringing the private into the public, such as using mobile phones on trains. This has changed behaviour and blurred the boundaries for what is and is not acceptable, or what is intrusion on other people's right to quiet; rules are gradually being established to govern these, in the form of 'm-etiquette'. This descends from n-etiquette, which are rules of conduct, or manners, governing communication via the internet. These rules are gradually beginning to clarify what is and is not acceptable in the use of mobile phones. This links identity performances to the multi-modes and space; performing relations using the mobile phone changes space, blurring private conversations with public space. The ways in which the mobile phone is used transforms space. The findings will show that writing a text message or playing with one's handset in a public place will cordon off that space, whereas having a private conversation on the mobile phone in a public space, publicises the interaction, as Monk et al (2004) found.

Monk et al (2004) carried out a controlled experiment into how conversations affect other people in public, particularly bus stations and on trains. They sampled 64 participants, or bystanders who were then questioned about features noticed in both face-to-face and mobile phone conversations, particularly the volume of the conversations. The study found mobile phone conversations were louder, and were also more noticeable on trains. There are many contextual reasons, such as sitting opposite the person using the mobile phone, together with the acoustics of the carriage space in comparison to the train station (Monk et al, 2004). Additionally, hearing just one side of the conversation can also be annoying in itself. Therefore, Monk et al (2004) recognise that the face-to-face conversation was predictably less intrusive than a mobile phone one due to loudness.

Although the study carried out by Monk et al (2004) was a controlled psychological study to gain quantitative data; they demonstrate how space can be polluted with people's private conversations, including both unintentional and intentional performances. Recent news reports suggest how other functions on the mobile phone are having an affect on public space; particularly the playing of music on mobile phones

on London buses which is a subject of considerable annoyance. 'It's an invasion of privacy'; or the right to privacy, claimed a telecoms technician (BBC London, 2006). The mobile phone has extended the previous annoyance of hearing other passengers' headphones. This was once irritating and viewed as disrespectful of people's right to quiet. The mobile phone can aggravate fellow travellers or bystanders further by simply subjecting them often to music not of their taste. This can be likened to the use of ghetto-blasters on beaches, where the music pollutes people's space of quietness. The playing of music often occurs in groups. This will be returned to in mobile phone use of friendship groups.

We can all relate to hearing private or intimate face-to-face conversations in public. Mobile phone use has an influence by highlighting private conversations in public due to the loudness of conversations, together with the exposure to half a conversation. Some people respect the m-etiquette of holding short and quiet conversations thus not to disturb others. This demonstrates there are different performances of the self through mobile phone use to those expectations within public and private spaces. Mobile phone use contributes to blurring spatial boundaries due to public use and display, and, in turn, m-etiquette; the mobile phone is a channel that broadcasts and amplifies life beyond the context of the mobile phone, particular private aspects of life broadcasted in public space.

> Faces are publicly assumed which then gives rise to the feeling that the new face and perhaps even the old face are false.
>
> Palen et al, 2000: 9

This connects to public displays of both the private and intended personas, for which the mobile phone is used as a performance tool (Goffman, 1959). The user has to manage simultaneous existence and, thus, has two personas in 'phone-space' and actual space interrupting each other; they often have to both be played out in the same space, therefore raising conflict (Truch and Hulme, 2004). Often facial expressions are freer in private, when they are not seen on the phone (Palen et al, 2000). In public, these private facial expressions can become public due to the observation of those within the space, and can therefore raise insecurities over 'false' facial interactions and phone conversations.

Personas are again controlled and delivered differently through the mobile phone. It is a relation that exerts self-expression and presentation. This, however, will be discussed in the section on intimacy, together with the integration elements of identity in the next section - on social networks.

This section has introduced the significance of the mobile phone as a commodity of consumption, and as an expression of identity in terms of relations, becoming domesticated through personalisation and inclusion. This discussion has also introduced the intersection between themes of identity aspiration, power relations and multi-modes and space. Particular handsets holding aesthetic qualities were often adopted by the younger population; those whom the marketing and branding target. The advertising attracts mobile phone users through the appeal of freedom, individual choice and 'difference'; using imagery of lifestyles that are aspired to and thereby marketing the latest mobile phones as part of the embroidery of the lifestyle. The mobile phone fits into a fashionable lifestyle and is therefore an accessory to this lifestyle. This presents the tension between difference, exclusivity, and integration (and inclusion) by noting that personalisation and difference do not amount to distinctiveness or individuality, and these are often influenced by both social networks and by the latest trends for the younger population. The findings will demonstrate an influence of friendship groups in the appearance and capacities of the handset, together with other factors (such as gender), in the appeal, use and display. Performance of the self using the mobile phone appeared to be important to young consumers when devices were perceived as top of the range models. This was, however, short-lived due to the progress of technology. The style of the model was an aspect that could possibly reflect tastes, preferences and a leaning towards a different social category in terms of social capital, rather than intentionally displaying the artefact. The device is used as a performance through which social behaviour alters identity perceptions, blurring public and private performances which disturb each other to reveal 'back stage' behaviour. This has revealed the dynamics of identity in the context of relations in social networks, and other relations where there are paradoxes between identity displays of front stage and back stage behaviour, as well as the paradox of exclusivity, not exclusion. The mobile phone has differing levels of value for different users culturally, economically and socially. Up until this point, it is clear that the young adults place value on the mobile phone in terms of friendship, close relationships and identity. These are very much influenced by marketing techniques. The value of the mobile phone as an artefact for young adults is

in the appearance, status and attraction of handsets through the influence of advertising. These interconnecting factors of friendship groups and then intimacy in the integration of the mobile phone use will now be discussed as a social and cultural relation.

Mobile phone use in friendship groups

Previous studies have demonstrated that mobile phone use is relational in terms of culture and identity. I have already established that the mobile phone is used to communicate the self in terms of expression, consumption and aspiration. Although the mobile phone is a personal item, with the latest features such as video cameras, mp3 players and fast internet access, the device has actually become an item which is consumed within groups. This thesis explores and defines how the mobile phone is important in personal attachments and intense relationships of friends, partners and families. This section will discuss the significance of the mobile phone within social networks, as an extension of face-to-face communication and for co-present use, whilst raising new modes of interaction through the social capacities of the mobile phone for networking.

Mobility studies have concentrated on travel (Urry, 2003) and often mobile working (Churchill and Wakeford, 2001) and work/life balance (Gant and Keisler, 2001; Perry, O'Hara, Sellen, Brown and Harper, 2001), how they cause a blurring of public and private thereby creating very little difference between work and leisure. Green (2002) reported that tele-working raised expectations of constant availability and this infringed 'on their personal and domestic life such that they had less time for their home and family' (p.288). This exerts power and a level of control, therefore demanding accountability by the person 'available'. It should be recognized, however, that this can also work against the employer through the private life spilling over into the work life (Harper, 2002).

Controlled Freedom

Although the effects of mobility upon work and life are not a focus of this thesis, the way in which mobility becomes a power relation in everyday interaction is a focus and can therefore be associated with research into employment. The data collected for this thesis will illuminate that there is a controlled freedom over mobile phone use. The mobility of the device allows the freedom to use the device outside the limits of time and space. However, this leads to a presumed availability, which in turn leads to all

kinds of communication expectations. This continuous contact leads to compulsions to communicate, and uses of the mobile phone therefore become powerful in controlling communications, relations and bringing accountability into them; leading to a form of surveillance. This empowerment can then challenge aspects of the personal life which one intends to keep private, in the same way as the employer invades the private life, and demands accountability (Gant and Keisler, 2001). One would assume that connectivity is convenient and that it is theoretically rather easy to establish and maintain contact given the ubiquitous nature of the device. The mobile provides visibility into a moving life, allowing freedom through unfixed access, and thereby becoming a surveillance tool at the same time (Green, 2002). Illustrating this, the findings demonstrating this paradox will reveal the connections of power relations and virtual presence.

Unorganised co-ordination of organised contact

This ubiquitous contactability also means that co-ordination could, in theory, become easy. However, these findings will show this virtual and constant presence leads to much communication and a lack of co-ordination. This is simply because arrangements can become unfixed, given the unfixed nature of mobile phone use. The freedom provided by the mobile phone gives the capacity of connectivity with many people, of networks not limited by time and space. The social use of the device allows freedom in adjustments to social arrangements, thereby allowing social actors to be active yet independent and individualistic. There is an impromptu co-ordination of leisure time, and therefore the mobile phone reshapes social practices in a capacity to 'soften schedules', adding 'slack to the more precise nature of time-based agreements' (Ling, 2004) with increased contact. This demonstrates a paradox of the strengthening of ties through the potential continuous contact, softening face-to-face interaction through the flexibility of this interaction.

Mediated disconnection

The mobile phone is a way of keeping in touch with others in ways that maintain continual contact in the form of knowing what each person is doing and making plans for activities (Grinter and Eldridge, 2001). This illustrates a domesticated role for the mobile phone in terms of practical use, but also in emotional use of sustaining up-to-the-minute contact with those who are emotionally close. The findings will highlight the value of the mobile phone particularly when there is a disconnection from others. As I

mentioned on page 51, identities are associated with interactions and group solidarities and the latest trends. There is a need to belong and to be included, together with the fear of disconnection and exclusion from group activities. It is through identity that a solidified social cohesion is represented, in 'belonging' to a network. The analysis will illuminate the circularity of this need to belong and a compulsion to communicate. There is a desire to be included in the friendships which are exacerbated by the instantaneity of the device. The need to be included becomes intensified into a compulsion to remain connected, therefore creating further need to continuously belong. The analysis will also reveal a paradox, in which the device is valued so highly due to the continuous virtual presence it provides that this leads to needing to preserve the device to preserve the capacity to communicate. The user is so fearful of losing their phone they do not take it out and use it only in particular places. This fear of theft is called 'value paradox' (Vincent, 2003) in which this anxiety of the loss of the phone is symbolic of anxiety over disconnection and loss of contact.

Disconnection through co-presence and multi-modal spaces

The display of the mobile phone is often for practical purposes, as opposed to displaying the latest trends. The findings suggest that when mobile phones are displayed and engaged with in public this changes the co-presence of others. In fact, mobile phone use changes co-present relations as well as the 'absent present' in terms of multi-modal communication. This becomes a self-exclusion and a disconnection from the co-presence of others due to a connection via the mobile phone. This will now be discussed with reference to previous observational studies.

Lasen (2003) studied the use of mobile phones in streets, cafés, shops, buses and trains in London. Observations revealed interesting findings relating to the display of the device and blurred social relations. The prominent findings of Lasen's study relate to the acceptance of mobile phone use in public places, to the point in which ring tones and conversations form the soundscape of the terrain. People became used to others using mobile phones in public and confined spaces; it therefore became expected and complaints lessened. People tended to become bothered by their co-present friends using the device too often and at length. This was found to disturb people within indoor spaces due to the volume of the conversation.

A participant in this research found that people's behaviour changes in public space when a person is engaging with their mobile phone. People created space by allowing the user to cordon herself by averting their attention from her and engaging with each other as a consequence of this self-exclusion. Use in public created an 'open-air wireless phone booth' (Lasen, 2003), which detracted not only from face-to-face communication, but also the spontaneous use of eye contact with passers-by, which means that people increasingly avert their gaze away from each other when mobile phone use is occurring (Lasen, 2003). Additionally, Lasen found mobile phone use is less frequent on streets than it is indoors, where it is more noticeable amidst the soundscape, the mobile phone's influence on co-present relations being amplified in a confined interactional space. There appear to be layered levels of interaction across the boundaries due to the occupancy of physical space and virtual space simultaneously (Palen, Salzman and Youngs, 2000); forming a shared group interaction on one level, and also a sound booth and the interruption of handset use to face-to-face communication on other levels. This is mirrored in the findings of this thesis, where virtual presence (or the 'absent present') and co-presence appear to be entwined and compromised by each other when mobile phone users attempt to interact with both simultaneously. The findings will reveal this in how such interactions both with and via the device affect the group, due to the inclusion and exclusion of third parties. There is a rather dynamic layered effect which can become confusing because some users may attempt to mix the phone and group interaction, switching between attention and inattention towards those present. This detracts from and disrupts co-present interaction, causing

> Annoyance, conflict and arguments if those present feel that the priority is given to the phone conversation … therefore … shortening the conversations seem to be the rules of etiquette in these cases.
> Lasen, 2003: 39

Exclusive belonging

Uses of the mobile phone can reflect the relations between people. This thesis will establish that the mobile phone both consolidates and divides groups; one of the ways this occurs is through sharing material via the mobile phone. This illuminates the intersection between co-presence, identity and multi-modes and space. Individuals are not excluded, but the inter-relations and stronger bonds within the groups are illuminated. Berg, Taylor and Harper (2003) studied college students aged 16-19 and

found that the mobile phone offered a means to 'demonstrate the ties between social groupings and, occasionally, the status of friendships or possible rivalries' (Berg et al, 2003: 3). Use of the device provides the visibility into attachments and the interconnectivity of networks. Particularly, the physical use of the phone demonstrates their ties in sharing, passing the objects around and leaning over to read messages; meaning that they are all physically engaging with each other and therefore the mobile phone impacts on closeness and intimacy (Berg et al, 2003). Both this study and my own findings found that symbolism of contact and non-responsive behaviour to be reflective of the communications within the friendship, particularly that a lack of reciprocity in exchange is reflective of tension. The friendship element accounts for the closeness of networks in terms of relations and activities that are both absent and co-present. The research of Berg et al (2003) prompts a further discussion of the previous research into how groups of friends appropriate the mobile phone.

Taylor and Harper (2002, 2003) have carried out a significant study relevant to how young people use their mobile phones between co-present persons, together with offering a sociological explanation in relation to cementing relationships through the meanings inferred by specific uses of the mobile phone. The aforementioned study, which took place at a sixth form college using observation and interviewing over a four month period, found that mobile phone use tended to be rather localized, as opposed to far-reaching (which is often implied by the mere capacities of the mobile phone). The most striking feature of the data was the use of text messages as gifts; it is the exchange of meaningful content between those at distance as well as those who are co-present. This extends to the sharing of amusing files, such as videos and ring tones which are discussed in the findings chapters. Taylor and Harper (2003) observe a group of girls in a school canteen showing each other amusing messages and then sending them to one another, along with the obligation to return a message in gift reciprocation. This sharing and reproducing have become effortless and impromptu, negating the need to remember to copy the file for them when they go home. The friends can instantly and spontaneously send such material to their friends. It is interesting how friendship groups come to share material at co-presence (Taylor and Harper, 2003), by showing messages to each other and this encourages interaction, or 'subordinate talk' of face-to-face interaction.

It offers a plausible reason to display engagement in subordinate talk – subordinate talk that could well be subversive.

<div align="right">Taylor, 2003: 36</div>

This thesis flags up that the mobile phone is used to give and reciprocate gifts in the form of nostalgic files, ringtones and pornographic material. Taylor and Harper (2003) also found that material is given and reciprocated in the form of rituals, obligations of exchange and to cement allegiances through loaning and sharing mobile phones, thus demonstrating trust. The mobile phone mediates expression of the self and relationships with others, which also uses a social capacity to 'emboss' value onto text messages. This creates a register of valuable memories through the saving of text messages and pictures; rather like an embodiment of memories. Taylor and Harper (2003) conclude that people shape technology for social needs and practical purposes, together with moral obligations, such as gift-giving (Mauss, 1954/1990). Taylor and Harper (2003) have tackled symbolism of feeling and value mediated through the mobile phone, although they have not researched the layering in networks, particularly inclusion and exclusion. They report the sharing and allegiances from the mobile phone use of a co-proximate group of girls. This leads to the consideration of gendered differences; how saving messages is important for users. This thesis will explore how sharing material creates a gender divide. It now follows to focus on researching gendered inclusion and exclusion within groups on the basis of sharing material, together with how relations are layered within friendship groups according to gender, power and interests.

The camera facility on mobile phones has revealed a whole new range of uses from entertainment to social divisions and surveillance. This study finds that in the context of friendship groups, this facility is often used in co-presence for entertainment and amusement, and then sent using Bluetooth and multimedia messaging amongst the group and beyond. There are few examples of significant findings beyond those of capturing and sending images. There was no evident previous research into group sharing of the material with reference to gender, power and inclusion, and the findings themselves will contribute to this arena of mobile phone use.

Although not specifically aimed at group co-present use and power, Kindberg Spasojevic, Fleck and Sellen (2005) focused on camera phone use in the UK and the US. They found that amongst the general camera phone use, most image simply by looking at an image on the handset of the person sharing it, and then sometimes through

phone transfer using Bluetooth and MMS. The data comprised of 303 photos and 17 videos, indicating the popularity of photographs. The intentions behind these images revealed sentiment, and functional, social and individual intentions, while the act of capturing was a social event to enrich social experience. Most of the images focused on people at social gatherings or outings and were shared with those present at the time of the capture. Group bonds and sub-group solidarities were strengthened in both cases. Such sharing of a mutual experience occurred more often 'in the moment', rather than later as a memento, although this too occurred 41% of the time. The quick capture and immediate distribution appeared to enhance the social occasion and therefore marked the event with value; why they are taken and how they are used (Kindberg et al, 2005). The motives for taking images ranged from joking, teasing and gentle provocation to simply celebrating togetherness, and sharing jokes, including the intention to embarrass friends, for example. It was often found that the images did not need explanation, making sense depending on the closeness of the relations and shared context, thus symbolising a friendship and a somewhat cryptic communication of play, jokes and riddles. The memento pictures recorded social events, such as hen nights, or photos of family, and the pictures were later sent via mobile phone or email to the people in the images. These images were also captured for absent friends, taken with the intent of sending them on. For example, an image of muddy boots from a music festival was shared with absent friends, almost to depict or symbolize what was being missed by absent friends. In this case, this was a form of (un)togetherness, which the findings will also show. This is where taking pictures and sending them was a way of closing distance between people, or simply symbolising a 'wish-you-were-here' sentiment. However, the majority of photographs were taken for co-present sharing by looking at the same handset (less than 8% of the images had been received). Such sharing in a face-to-face context was appreciated by the participants due to the mobile phone always being at hand. The mobile phone provided the capability to capture images in places where cameras both would and would not normally be; at work, school, in social settings and out-and-about.

Images are being captured in places where a camera was not typically used. This raises questions over surveillance and monitoring related anxiety. For example, on the one hand capturing a number plate would cause possible worries for others, while adopting citizen-journalism in the underground during the London bombings in 2005 and sharing pictures changes the processes of news (Dunleavy, 2005) and contributes towards the

instantaneity of news. The mobile phone has now been banned in many places, such as swimming pools, due to concerns over child safety and paedophilia, for example. These all point to the capacities of capturing images in unexpected places and the powers and implications it brings. It is intended that these dynamics of collective mobile phone experience will be revealed in the study to follow.

This section has addressed the use of the mobile phone in strengthening bonds through sharing mobile phone content arising from duty to reciprocate, and contributing to forming allegiances. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, with reference to Mauss (1954/1990). This chapter has also presented how mobile phone use blurs the public and the private spheres of everyday life in terms of work and leisure, also illuminating issues of surveillance, availability and accountability. Previous research will now explore the significance of the stronger ties of intimacy and personal relations. This will clearly highlight the theme intersections of empowerment, virtual presence, identity and the multi-modal use and space.

Personal use and intimate relations
The mobile phone exposes and reforms intimate relations both within the close-kin of the family and in loving or romantic relationships. The value of the mobile phone represented the value of relationships between people. The focus on these more intimate relations became important from a preliminary analysis of the diary data. When the data collected for this thesis was studied it was clear that there were a number of paradoxes in intimate relations were similar to those found in the data collected relating friendships, although these were somewhat more intense. For example, there is the freedom to communicate without temporal or spatial restrictions, which leads to expectations of continuous contact. When these expectations are not fulfilled, insecurities and anxieties are heightened. These simply illuminated insecurities and problems between people. This thesis establishes the importance of the mobile phone in such relations, particularly in terms of power relations, virtual presence and the multi-modal and space effects. There is a self-expression in the initiation of romance (which overlaps with the presentation of the self and identity). The previous studies relating to mobile phone use for close-kin and intimate relationships will now be discussed to inform the analysis of findings.

Being there: continuous contact

> My wife likes to call me on the mobile – she'd be lost if I didn't have it.
>
> Vincent, 2005: 118

The mobile phone is used to maintain contact with close ties, such as spouses and friends, throughout the day. The most notable value of the mobile phone is the ways in which the mobile phone is particularly used as an 'umbilical cord' by parents. Palen et al (2000) found that the mobile was described as an 'umbilical cord' in this way with reference to safety, thus illustrating the importance of connectivity and maintenance of contact in the family for safety and security, 'retaining a permanent channel of communication in times of spatial distance' (Geser, 2004; 12) in the form of a 'digital leash' (Ling, 1999). This is illustrative of the layered nature of the mobile phone; providing physical freedom together with a point of continual contact and presence. Keeping the link alive, by updating the knowledge of safety and location which is somewhat expected given the ubiquitous contact capacity, and maintaining contact maintains the strength of the tie.

Taylor and Harper (2003) address intimate relations as part of gift-giving in the obligation to return this contact for intimacy. In reinforcing continuous contact and in replacing actual presence, a participant explained that he sends his partner a text message every morning and night because it is 'a duty' as part of the relationship. This was also particularly noticeable in the participant diaries, where couples would text message or call each other to say goodnight. A participant in Taylor and Harper's studied also claimed that he rang his girlfriend before he went to bed but not in the morning when he did not own a mobile phone, and therefore a text would have allowed more contact in both the morning and evening. This is a ritual exchange, but it is also an expectation of intimacy, thereby creating a duty and an expectation. At the same time it simulates co-presence and keeps the link alive. In this way, the user views the mobile negatively as its capacities have created increased contact, and therefore increased obligation. In a more positive light, this contact is symbolic of the tie by making a rather mundane encounter become special through an observable 'ceremonial display' through which social bonds are made visible through what the messages represents (Swartz, 1967).

Making and breaking relationships

The mobile phone has been useful in forming personas to both attract and deter romantic attention. I discussed earlier in the chapter how men have used the mobile phone to attract women, in a similar way to driving the right car (see p.49). Further to this, use of the mobile phone for attraction establishes the device as an artefact in intimate relations, which may reshape ways of beginning a relationship. There are extensive interactional capacities given using text messaging, as opposed to the affordances of calling, which can be rather awkward (Grinter and Eldridge, 2001). The thesis will show in Chapter 6 that conversation can be difficult, particularly if a person encounters difficulties using the telephone, and therefore text messaging is preferred which, in turn, changes the communication etiquette at the start of these relationships. Grinter and Eldridge (2001) studied teenagers and the social contexts of text messaging, finding that this method of communication is effective for asking questions due to its directness through brief and rich exchange. It is also effective for both new and familiar connections for teenagers.

> It is so much easier getting a mobile number than a home phone number and it's a lot less embarrassing if you want to meet up with them again just doing a text message.
>
> G4, Grinter and Eldridge, 2001: 21

Not only is it more practical than phoning a landline of a non-familiar person, it is also utilized due to the hurdles of voice communication with unfamiliar people. This was also reported by Faulkner and Culwin (2005) who found that text messaging for first dates was often used by those in their mid-twenties. My thesis also finds that text messaging is a way to establish frequent contact non-intrusively; it is an easy way in, meaning that it is also an easy way to avoid the awkwardness in ending an intimate relationship, as Fleming (2004) also suggests. Three-quarters of those aged 15-24, and 44% of all adults, use text messages to flirt. The number of those who also do the opposite, namely end a relationship, through text messaging is relatively low at one in five.

> A lot of teenagers find it easier to talk by text. I've heard of lots of people, including a couple of my friends, being dumped that way. You are not face-to-face and you don't have to be embarrassed. I personally disagree with it because it's a coward's way out. It's really harsh and heartless.
>
> Female (15) in Fleming, The Telegraph, 05-05-04

The mobile phone has so far been presented as an extension or 'embodiment' of the person and has become a social and cultural relation whilst maintaining the intimacy of more personal communications. The limitations of text messages, written words devoid of tone and intonations, are, on the one hand, utilized to access closeness in a discrete way, while on the other hand, the same limitations yield an abrupt or 'harsh' ending to intimacy in a rather impersonal way to avoid awkwardness. However, it was found that those who end relationships through text are those who are not very good at communicating, and therefore this use *is* an extension of the expressive-self. The use of text messaging does not limit communication; it is in fact selected because it *can* express the self in terms of preferences and desires. Communication, self-expression and personas can be controlled using texts messaging. This demonstrates how text messaging is a powerful mediator of sexual interest and identity.

As the domestication model suggests, the mobile phone is used to fit into lifestyle and it is therefore appropriated to facilitate the co-ordination and sustained contact within the family and amongst other relations. It also has an impact on communication in terms of power and surveillance. This will now be discussed in the last sub-section of this chapter.

Intimate powers

Power and control overlap with all the aforementioned points in this section, particularly in terms of virtual presence, continual contact, obligations and the control of personas expressed in the beginning of new relationships. The effects of power and control exerted through mobile phone use in personal communication will therefore be discussed and extended in Chapter 4, particularly how continuous contact becomes a form of monitoring and accountability.

Green (2002) claims the mobile phone establishes visibility for peer, parental and institutional surveillance in a regulatory, free way. The study of teenagers has been the viewpoint through which this use is made explicit; this is due mainly to accountability to the family regarding whereabouts from both the parents and the teenagers, particularly from inaccessible places. This establishes mutual accountability, citing 'safety' and 'emergency' as primary reasons for mobile phone possession. Mobile phone use itself is monitored by the parents in terms of where, when and for how long

the mobile can be used and this places restriction and regulation on use. However, this is outweighed by to the capacity of private communication it brings within the home, and also the lessening of parental gatekeeping of the domestic space (Green, 2002). The findings will illustrate that use of mobile phones to establish a continued contact do not form a condition of surveillance as such. In fact, they create a reminiscence of surveillance and therefore practices of surveillance seem to be pervasive using ubiquitous technology. There appear to be practices of mutual monitoring using ICTs that are shifting in terms of surveillance and self-regulation through identity and community. As communication becomes easier and more convenient, this widens networks and produces more intense and frequent communication (Green, 2002); this comes to be expected due to the relational capacities of the mobile phone, particularly in terms of the 'anytime anywhere' nature of the mobile phone. The use of the mobile phone is relational in expressing the relationship with all the accompanying intensities and complications. The exact role that the mobile phone plays in this power of intimacy remains to be explored and this thesis intends to establish the dynamics of this power further. The mobile phone may amplify the complications and attachments in relationships, reshaping and intensifying ties perhaps; on the other hand, the mobile phone may simply express these aspects as opposed to enhancing them.

Conclusion

Beginning with an illustration of mobile phone use in terms of age, gender and socio-economic factors, this chapter has presented the breadth of previous research to inform the findings in social, intimate and consumptive uses of the mobile phone. The mobile phone was used in the same way quantitatively by both genders; the difference was in the qualitative patterns of use, with men using the mobile phone to expand networks, whilst women used the device to maintain bonds with existing strong relationships and with close-kin and friends. The majority of the UK population has used mobile phones, which has been made possible by the introduction of pre-pay services. There was a marked difference in how this technology has been used; use of the mobile phone was high when income was low, while the educated appeared to use the mobile phone as one channel among numerous digital channels used for interaction and communication. The mobile phone has incorporated into wider ICT use, and the device, as an artefact, has become a commodity integrated through domestication. The artefact was used as a presentation of the self, for communication, for decoration and to express distinction over exclusivity and inclusion, with reference to Goffman and Bourdieu. This will be

discussed further in Chapter 3. The effect of commercialization and marketing strategies has been examined, with particular attention to the aesthetic attraction and, in turn, the added value of the artefact once the device has been integrated into the values of a domesticated culture. The mobile phone was discussed as a form of display in terms of latest trends and group solidarities, including the obligation to reciprocate whilst involved in gift-giving. The use of the mobile phone in public has led to the blurring of public and private social spheres in work and leisure, leading to an invasion of privacy, changes in social conduct and the creation of m-etiquette regulating face-to-face interaction. The mobile phone has become a device for co-present use, particularly in terms of camera use. In friendship and in personal relations, the mobile phone appears has been used as a platform for self-expression and also a technology of power; illuminating the paradox of togetherness and monitoring, developing intimacy and solidarities while heightening insecurities in the relationships. Text messaging has been used to control expressed personas, while freeing self-expression in communication to attract and end romantic relationships.

Through example of the paradoxical nature of the data that will follow, this chapter has demonstrated how the five themes permeate the three arenas of exploration in the thesis. It is now the intention to add to this field of knowledge by further demonstrating the interconnection of these themes in the subsequent chapters. Chapter 3 will now develop the theoretical backgrounds to the studies discussed including mobility, social networks, the information society, surveillance, consumption and identity. This will entail contributions by Urry, Wellman, Bourdieu, Goffman and Mauss.

Chapter 3
Connecting People in Theory

Introduction

This chapter will introduce the theoretical background to the previous studies featured in Chapter 2, forming an overview of the distinctive qualities the mobile phone lends to relations in social life as a communication tool and social medium. This will provide a foundation on which to substantiate the five themes connecting the paradoxical findings, together with the arguments for using qualitative methods to examine how mobile phones are actually used in everyday social life. The five main theoretical areas will be associated with mobile phone use, mobility and mobile technology, the information society, the network society, and consumption and identity. This chapter highlights how the mobile phone becomes embedded in social processes, relations and identity representations whilst recasting interaction. This chapter will therefore encapsulate the theoretical social value of the mobile phone, informing the findings and thereby establishing basic elements of this thesis, concluding with a connection to the five main themes of the research.

Virtual presence and co-presence: mobility and mobile technology

Interaction using mobile ICTs cuts through time and space, allowing simultaneous virtual presence and co-presence. This allows both micro- and hyper co-ordination (Ling and Yttri, 2002). Moreover, the mobile nature of this communication tool consolidates, constrains and reshapes social life outside temporal and spatial constraints. The findings identify continuous contact in the maintenance of strong ties with family, friends and intimate partners. Chapter 2 has demonstrated the propensity for perpetual contact in work, intimacy and for leisure in the convergence of interaction, data transfer and mobility. Chapter 2 also outlined the significance of the mobile phone in terms of how the device is actually used, together with how the device becomes a cultural artefact in consumption and personhood. The mobile phone is part of the development in ICTs over a decade that has lead to practices and modalities integrated in lifestyle, mobility and social context. Use of mobile ICT for interaction integrates with pre-existing forms of interaction. At the same time, interaction itself changes to integrate with the mobile ICTs. The previous research reflects a convergence of meaning with historically based social processes in ways in which concern for individuality are revived together with the desire for difference (Nafus and Tracey, 2002). Furthermore,

the findings of this thesis emphasize the desire for inclusion alongside difference. I will outline the theoretical background to research on mobile ICTs and mobility with a view to focusing on theories of the Information Society.

Mobility theories

Mobility provides freedom at the same time as heightening expectation to contact and be contacted. The mobile nature of the device allows a freedom at the cost of heightening expectations and insecurities. As a result there is a change in communication practices and conduct, mainly due to the continuous virtual presence the ubiquitous technology allows. The use of the mobile phone in any place at any time therefore blurs the public and private barriers of social spheres. ICTs are reshaping our concepts of accessibility and interaction in time and space (Kenyon, 2006) due to this increase in power relations. Accessibility is the key to interaction, while time and space are potential obstacles to accessibility. Hagerstand's space-time theory (1970) defines accessibility in terms of distance and the time used to travel this space. Technology is therefore the means to virtual travel easing temporal and spatial constraints with an alternative to physical mobility. This is echoed in Giddens' concept of time-space distanciation (1990). Mobility often focuses on physical distance and the barriers to interaction that are created by space and time. When measuring constraint, attraction, benefits and accessibility (Kenyon, 2006), ICTs remove time, space and cost barriers. This will expand the opportunities to participate in work and social activities while exploring new opportunities without the constraints of physical movement.

Virtual mobility, or rather 'virtual presence', removes the importance of place in the accessibility to social, cultural and intimate aspects of life. This does not remove the importance of physical mobility. There are many theories that collectively suggest the benefits and limitations of virtual mobility (Golob and Regan, 2001; and Graham, 2001). Salomon (1986) notably emphasizes three likely mobility effects of ICTs, substitution, enhancement and complementary to co-presence. While virtual mobility increases the opportunities of inclusion by replacing physical mobility, virtual mobility can replace physical contact, or 'offline' relationships, therefore leading to reduced overall travel. This implies that instant access and virtual mobility overcome problems of access and social exclusion and allow inclusion for those barred by physical mobility and exclusion. Increased contact as part of virtual mobility could increase physical mobility by allowing efficient access and conduct of activities. However, the drawback

of virtual mobility that can arise from virtual contact is the reduction in face-to-face interaction for contact. Virtual mobility therefore affects those with excessive physical mobility, such as those who travel the globe. Often these individuals have limited or no means of virtual mobility or even accessibility, without the access to devices that allow frequent contact and virtual inclusion. The creation of additional time can be used for more travel further afield (Kenyon, 2006).

Co-presence

The virtual mobility brought about by ICTs overcome problems of accessibility by widening opportunities and social networks, condensing time and subsequently increasing the time given to physical mobility. Urry (2002) extends this to virtual and mobile interactions claiming that interaction in electronic spaces can depend upon moments of face-to-face and eye-to-eye contact. This explains why the mobile phone is often used to connect to people who are local, as well as frequently maintaining ties with social relations who are far away; mobile communication complements co-presence. Additionally, the mobile phone is used during co-presence to share material and consolidate friendship group relationships. This develops trustful relationships brought about by the 'purest' interaction and strong bonds in which sincerity and commitment can directly be assessed through non-verbal cues. This claim is based on Boden and Molotch (1994) who maintain that co-presence is essential to social interaction and to the increase in social capital[2] through re-establishing dense networks of reciprocal social relations (Putnam, 2000). Co-presence is preferred in the modern world, as 'thick' co-presence remains important. Urry (2002b) describes thick co-presence as,

> ...indexical expressions, facial gestures, body language, status, voice intonation, pregnant silences ... anticipated conversations and actions, turn-taking practices and so on.
>
> Urry, 2002b: 259

Successful and fulfilling relations loaded with this richness cannot be generated through electronic travel alone (Urry, 2002). Urry (2002) claims the community comprised of face-to-face connections may have diminished into a world of 'fragile, mobile, airy and inchoate connections' (Urry, 2002: 1) and therefore these moving societies can diminish

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[2] Putnam (2000) defines societies with high social capital as those that have dense networks of reciprocal social relations, mutual obligations, a high degree of trust in neighbours and bonds bridging social divides. These societies are those that depend on co-presence.

'old-fashioned geographical communities [and] are replaced by aspatial communities of interest – we spend more of our time, physically, in the midst of strangers' (Adams, 2000: 3). However, these looser forms of connections have always existed within the dichotomies of face-to-face/at-a-distance, community/virtual and immobile/mobile interaction. Latour (1999) claims that social relations are not fixed or 'located' as such; they are 'circulating'. Circulating entities and liquid social relations adopt a role in unfixed connections which are intermittent between present, absent and at-a-distant relations (Urry, 2002). There are a variety of connections not based upon in-person interaction which are in the form of 'imagined presence' perceived through objects and images of multiple spaces (Urry, 2002), leading to uncertain and weak associations.

This conception of the fragile and liquid associations that create a virtual presence is strongly associated to Bauman's concept of a liquid phase of modernity (Bauman, 2000). Nothing remains in a solid form; connections and relationships are in a constant state of flux in a way that is unrestricted by shape, time and space, continually 'disembedding without re-embedding' (Bauman and Tester, 2001: 89). The liquid relations and social structures are not easily hindered and therefore sweep through, soak and dissolve bonds which once soldered individual choices (Lee, 2006). Social relations and capabilities become unfixed and fluid via the mobile phone. There is a change to contactability i.e. it is in demand which brings the need to create new dimensions of everyday use. This change in use facilitates the reshaping of power relations and social expectations of availability in communication; demonstrating how social practices and expectations become fluid in consolidating, constraining and reshaping relations, thereby impacting on freedom and choice.

In the ever increasing world of global and multiple connections, the levels of virtual and face-to-face communication exist in parallel; virtual presence deemed to be somewhat 'real' due to an increase in such connections. Virtual contact can only complement actual contact, it cannot be a substitute. Those who use on-line communication resources are found to be the most socially active in their immediate environments (Wellman, 2001). The opposite is also true: 'the more people travel corporeally, the more that they seem to connect in cyberspace' (Urry, 2002: 4). Virtual presence is a successful interaction when there is co-presence at other times.

This suggests virtual mobility does not replace physical mobility; it is a supplement to physical mobility. However, these claims are rooted in establishing offline practices online without considering the new evolved types of activities that can be conducted online (Kenyon, 2006). Assuming that we take the physical into the virtual by projecting current ways of interaction into the new technological interactions, this would engender failure to recognise possibilities of new or reshaped ways of interacting (Kenyon, 2006).

Virtual mobility is a spatial technology providing an alternative to physical mobility which also increases accessibility. Kenyon (2006) claims that the extent of this is unknown. The accessibility function of virtual mobility and other mobilities, together with the social effects, are unclear. Therefore this deserves further research, particularly in regards to for whom accessibility changes, with what mobility it changes, and the social effects of these changes (Kenyon, 2006).

Having discussed the theoretical possibilities of virtual mobility, together with Kenyon's comments on time, space and travel, and with Urry's contribution to virtual presence, this discussion will extend using Urry's contributions. Automobility as a mobility theory will now be discussed before moving onto mobile ICTs.

The car is a consumption of identity incorporating physical mobility in terms of sign-values of freedom, masculinity, home, family, career success and safety. Urry (2006) understands the car as representative of culture, sexual desire and citizenship in society, creating a plethora of symbols and identities as a cultural artefact. Additionally, the freedom provided establishes 'quasi-private' mobility in time-space distanciation within a confined moving space. The car is also a social artefact contributing to fast and accessible physical contact and a medium through which interaction can occur. The significance of automobility is speed, instantaneous time and freedom; these are extrapolated to mobile technologies and mobile phones.

> Automobility coerces people to juggle fragments of time in order to assemble complex, fragile and contingent patterns of social life, patterns that constitute self-created narratives of the reflexive self.
>
> Urry, 2006: 20

Automobility of the car provides instantaneous freedom while creating seamless journeys and is not public timetabling. The car creates a fluidity and an 'individualistic timetabling of many instants and fragments of time' (Urry, 2006: 20), giving rise to new patterns and meanings in changeable social lives. Social life has changed because of the car in terms of 'drive-in' and 'drive-through' facilities and activities such as movies and safari-parks. The car has increasingly become a home on-the-move in terms of both domesticating and cordoning off space. The increase of in-car soundscape created by powerful hi-fi systems can be conceived as a ubiquitous concert hall that is privatised through the physical dimensions and individual use of the car (Bull, 2004).

Drive-through and in-car entertainment, together with the information flow provided by the car-radio, creates a personal habitable space and not simply a mode of travel. The car is now a substitute for other forms of sociality and lifestyles allowing contact through sounds and through technology.

> Indeed in some sense inhabiting the car becomes inhabiting a place of sound and of technologies connecting people to a world beyond.
>
> Urry, 2006: 28

The car is a form of technology that connects people and creates an additional pattern of social life, emphasizing the importance of physical mobility by providing the capability to travel. It is another medium facilitating interaction in ways that reduce time and space through speed. This creates more time for physical interaction. The popularity of the mobile phone, whilst on the move, demonstrates the use of virtual mobility to cut across time and space in freeing up time for physical interaction. This communication is engaged in simultaneous physical movement suggesting a convergence of both virtual and fast physical mobility.

Virilio's concept of inertia (2000) suggests virtual space is a replacement of the space of immediate action. Communication is being carried out in new ways, becoming increasingly faster with the utilisation of new technologies. Interaction is no longer governed by the constraints of time, place and space, but virtual contact is instant and timeless, and thus it has reached a state where we no longer have to move. All actions happen instantly without the requirement to be in any particular place at any particular time. 'The time-reducing machine is no longer the motor-car but audio-visual and real-

time technologies' (Virilio, 2000: 16), converting from a concept of high speed time-reduced action to instantaneous timeless action.

In terms of time-reducing, virtual communication provides instant connection and therefore Virilio's (2000) claim is valuable; real-time technology would appear to succeed high-speed in terms of instant or timeless connection. This supports the findings relating to power and virtual presence. There are instant connections outside of time, which can be used to empower those who use mobile devices. Contact becomes timeless and therefore powerful, providing a live-link to others in the form of a digital leash and also giving rise to a compulsion for contact and a need for increased and frequent contact. I have already touched upon mobile technology as virtual mobility as synchronous to physically mobile (Urry, 2006); I will now comment on mobile technology further, with reference to the theme of multi-modes and space, before turning to the theories of the information society.

Multi-modal use and social space

Chapters 1 and 2 present how the mobile phone has evolved from a wireless static technology to a pocket-sized mobile device capable of multi-functions aside from telecommunication. The mobile phone is a platform that provides 'modes' of interaction, through voice, text and pictures. Multiple methods of communication are converging to provide more options and broader availability. The connection of the intimate and the distant creates new social space through the blurring of dichotic social boundaries and conjoining the private and public sectors. This is a significant change in communications and cybernetic systems, marked by hand-held pocket sized portals to the internet allowing communication to anyone from anywhere (Urry, 2002). The findings will highlight how communication and etiquette reshape as a result of the use of mobile phones in the blurring of public and private spheres due to the accessibility of connections on the move. This reinforces unobstructed independent liquid flows (Bauman, 2000; Urry, 2002) at 'various nodes in these multiple machines of inhabitation and mobility' (Urry, 2002: 7).

The blending of private relationships with public space is one of the most prominent changes brought about by mobile phone use. There is a wealth of literature in this area (e.g. Geser, 2006; Monk et al, 2004; Gant and Keisler, 2001; Höflich, 2005) and how

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this relates to the presentation of the self in everyday life (Goffman, 1959); one of the main aspects of social life that has been transformed by the mobile phone.

> No longer is the private conceivable as what goes on, discreetly, in the life away from the public domain.
>
> Cooper, 2002: 22

There are no longer defined pockets of public and private domains in the sense of broadcasted and discreet events. Private conversations using the mobile phone are now broadcasted as 'half audible to the co-present and this is observable in confined spaces such as train carriages, hence giving rise to a 'co-existence' and friction of public and private interaction (Cooper, 2002); potentially exposing strangers to the most intimate personal facts. As a result, the stranger, or involuntary listener, and the mobile phone user adapt their behaviour to deal with the blending of private and public domains. This is achieved through managing gaze, namely using civil inattention. Civil inattention is the practice of averting gaze from others present to avoid drawing particular attention to the self. Mutual gaze is avoided and alienation is maintained, particularly in confined spaces. This explains why the co-present others avoid displaying that they can hear a phone conversation (Goffman, 1966). The data collected during this thesis will demonstrate that this avoidance of interaction with co-present others can serve to negotiate virtually private pockets in public space.

The mobile phone is neither 'new media' nor is it 'virtual' in terms of theoretical literature, but it is a 'convergence' with other media (Cooper, 2002). The mobile phone is in fact integration into 'a pattern of tension created by the co-existence of old and new' (Marvin, 1988: 8). The mobile phone does not lend itself to any specific existing literature. However, as a communication media, the mobile phone has qualities contingent with IT, psychology, human-computer interaction and social science (Cooper, 2002). The mobile phone 'promises to make possible communication at any time from any place to eradicate communication-free pockets' (Cooper, 2002: 21).

Cooper (2002) claims the mobile phone intrudes into public space while creating private space; achieving a personal space in the public arena through turning attention away from co-present interaction to avoiding 'strange encounters' (Smith, 2006). The duality of the mobile phone is an 'indiscreet technology' blurring the social boundaries through indiscretion. An understanding of such indiscretion is acquired through empirical work.

The mobile phone is a prevalent technology and a remarkable social phenomenon converging social relations and social conduct with time and space, together with the capacity of continual availability; a perpetual contact. This thesis will add to the concept of mobility and the associated communication capacities of mobile technology by exploring how the mobile phone is a powerful spatial technology through use in changing and creating accessibility in networks and relationships. The fluid communication in an information society promotes prevalent mobile phone use. The mobile phone is an extension of the convergence of communication and information from a computer to a hand-held personal device in human-computer interaction. This leads to further discussion on the significance of the information society, with a focus on how use of information technology results in consolidating, constraining and reshaping social relations in friendship, intimacy and identity.

The information society

Notions of the information society have dominated ICT literature. This is not surprising given the extent of media and information flows from all around us; at work, at home, economically and spatially. The information society is not just about technology; information is integral to cultural relations and therefore to forming part of an information and communication network that can become consolidated, constrained and adaptive to this technology in everyday life. This will now be presented alongside the themes of this thesis with reference to the paradoxical findings.

The concept of 'information society' is traced back to Touraine (1971) and Bell (1973) who analysed the social economic changes in society. Touraine (1971) focused on the power relations between social classes and the emerging potentially dominant technocrat class. Bell, on the other hand, analysed the economic and industrial developments in Western society in which the focus was the manufacture of commodities, predicting that the core focus for the economy in post-industrialism would be on 'information in all its forms' (Steyaert and Gould, 1998: 2). The most common definition of the information society is the technological definition. This is based upon the networked information and information supply; much like that of an electrical supply. Other definitions include the economical, occupational, spatial and cultural; it is the latter two that are of interest.

The spatial definition recognises that information is networked and channelled, producing a reduction in temporal and spatial constraints as mobile technologies condense time and space (Giddens, 1990). This allows businesses to operate on an immediate and global scale, shrinking distance across the world due to instantaneous information transfer using the internet. This is an additional element of value as time is not a factor (Bauman, 2000) and instantaneity implies there are no limits to what can arise out of any moment. The internet is the primary method of connecting nodes of information and information services. The increase in internet access in turn leads to a 'wired society' (Martin, 1978) in homes, cafés and in the work place. The wired society as the network society will be reviewed in the relevant section of this chapter.

Patterns of the information society are evident from 24 hour television, radio, the walkman, advertising and the internet. All of these facilities are integrated and observable in our everyday life and the lives of others. In more recent years, the information society has become increasingly observable and advanced. For instance, television and radio have become interactive with the use of digital television interactive systems, the internet and text messaging illustrate a convergence of the use of ICTs. The walkman has become outdated and replaced by the mp3 player which has become a popular source of mobile music. Recently, wireless internet connections have become widely available in airports, hotels, other transport hubs, in the home and in coffee houses, Starbucks being one of many. Internet access is becoming increasingly available using mobile phones. These examples demonstrate how ICTs and the interaction with information converge using different devices; for example, sending a text message to the number advertised on television to vote in talent contests or to evict a member from the Big Brother house. The cultural conception is not about what we use, but how we are using ICTs and why. The capacity of the mobile phone is the most prominent when we consider the interaction with the television and radio. Increasingly, ICTs are becoming integrated with other devices as an artefact, such as the iPod, evolving into the iPhone, which is capable of storing mp3s, watching movies, taking photographs, using the internet and many more features, together with telecommunication.

Digital flows of information not only define the cultural elements of the information society. An additional contributor is the availability of newspapers, magazines and books in corners shops and train stations. This is evidence of the habits of a media-laden society (Webster, 1995). The information exposure is continuous. We live in an

environment inundated with information; the information becomes explicit to us when we respond, and high street shopping is an example. The high street presents messages and is designed to maximise advertising and consumer opportunities to buy into the latest fashion and trends, using displays, pictures, slogans and sales in order to entice interest. A walk through a high street is an example of the information society, albeit often a bombardment of information in various forms, such as signs, visual-audio presentations, window-dressing, special offers and price reductions. We live in an environment of media and symbols and it is this deluge that is conceived as the 'information society'.

> We exist in a media-saturated environment, which means that life is quintessentially about symbolisation, about exchanging and receiving – or trying to exchange and resisting reception – messages about ourselves and others.

<div align="right">Webster, 1995: 22</div>

An information-saturated society implies that we are inundated with information, and therefore do not respond to it. We become selective in the information we chose to notice or use. The more information there is, the less valuable it becomes (Baudrillard, 2001). However, information has a purpose and use. If information did not have meaning it would not be embraced in contemporary society. Meaningless information can exist (Stonier, 1990); information becomes valued at interpretation and use. Culture itself is 'quintessentially' about meanings (Webster, 1995) and how people live and integrate in a way that creates meaning for them; from use and appropriation of an environment. Therefore, information is meaningful in context of use, integration and purpose; how information and technology are used create value. In the context of this research, it is how the technology mediates and reshapes relationships that is important. Cultural and social significance of information society will now be presented with reference to findings conveying the value of the device for friendship, intimacy and identity.

Harold Innis was interested in communication and culture, complementing his interest in markets, social-related structures and the role of transportation networks. Innis (1951) intended to demonstrate how the media became a social environment that determined broad-sweeping everyday forms of social consciousness and social relationships (Couch, 1990). Innis (1951) achieved this by using 'biases' of institutions, organisations

and technologies. These are the nodal points through which our knowledge and acquisition of knowledge are produced and reproduced (Comor, 2003). Innis (1951) produced a framework for the development of the bias of communication. He explored how organisations and institutions regulate everyday life and was then able to draw on how the nodal points of social-economic power affect thoughts and practices. This is a reflexive approach to the information society. The communication media contributes to the restructuring of the human and natural environments through using this media as focal points to understand macro-historical developments.

The concept of 'bias of communication' provides an analytical tool for communication scholars. Bias 'directs us toward a relatively sophisticated, critical and materialist assessment of why we attend to the things to which we attend' (Comor, 2003: 105). The flexibility of bias diverts us from determinist positions of the technological and structural and encourages the analyst to appreciate that physical and structural capacities are historically constructed. These capacities relate to the intellectual and cultural capacities of human agents. Bias also directs us to consider core institutions, organisations and technologies used to mediate social-economic power relations without using reductionist and determinist modes of analysis. The meaning of information is not without imposed analysis; it is the use of communication media and information that gives meaning to history shaping constructions. The media and their biases are socially constructed and form a relationship between information, communication and power, giving rise to the five themes from this thesis. The ways that media and communication are used establish power relations, virtual presence, co-present significance, identity aspirations and a change in modes of communication and space. It is these that become key aspects in the value of mobile phone use, making the device relational.

> Meaning is not in the technological object, but only in the particular practices to which society puts it.
>
> Marvin, 1983: 35

Information becomes meaningful in how it is analysed and used. Controlled freedom, continuous contact, the (un)togetherness, inclusion and identity representation are all examples of how use gives rise to communicative capacities, which become meaningful due to the consolidations and tensions that are brought to the social relations. Taking an Innisian approach, the internet and digital related technologies would be viewed as history-shaping constructions that have become inevitable or desirable due to the biases

at play. The biases are represented by the vested interest in use, the struggles and in the limitations to everyday life that they bring (Comor, 2003: 106), not forgetting biases formed by organisations in the communication of desirable constructs; in advertising consumer technologies such as mobile phones. The organisations and communication media shape the reception of information, developments, and advertising and manufactured designs. The character of the medium creates a bias towards to an overemphasis on time or space. It is only at rare intervals that these biases are set off course by another medium, reaching stability (Innis, 1951).

This is also how information becomes knowledge. Knowledge is created when information is part of a conceptual system defining the world in a meaningful sense. It is how the information is communicated through these systems that creates a bias and therefore meaning and knowledge. Biases change when new communication media are implemented to address uncertainty or to address the failure to control space and time. The internet, emerging technologies, organisations and institutions all shape developments and the attainment of knowledge in the social world. Communication media bias also deepens obsession with time and space convergence and control through shortened time-frames that technology provides.

Innis'(1951) theoretical view of the information society can be summarised to demonstrate the power of organisations, institutions, technology and the communication media in creating meaning (or bias) with respect to the conceptions of information. This indicates an association of power, knowledge and wealth in the effort to recast both existing and emerging means of mediating relationships (Comor, 2003) using ICTs. The implications of Innisian interpretation of the information society suggests that technology restructures both existing and new forms of interaction when information is communicated and knowledge is formed. This connects to the social constructionist approach of Pinch and Bijker (1984) in their model of the social construction of technology (SCOT), the relevance of which will now be explained.

SCOT is closely linked with Innis' claims with regard to the information society. SCOT emphasises how technology is constructed as meaningful and subsequently developed by 'relevant social groups' (Kline and Pinch, 1999). For example, social groups are collective of professions, interests and consumers, who share a meaning of an artefact due to the other properties of their group resemblance. For instance, women

users of bicycles shared a view that the high-wheeler was an 'unsafe machine' and they also shared the fact that these users happened to be women (Winner, 1993). Different social groups have different meaningful connections with artefacts, known as 'interpretative flexibility'. Kline and Pinch (1999) explain how interpretative flexibility crystallizes and reaches a point of stabilisation; this is usually when the technology is in widespread use as a dominant form of technology. Interpretative flexibility reaches a point where it is the same across groups, that is artefacts have the same meaning. Therefore interpretative flexibility is stabilised. However, new problems may arise and the process begins again; therefore stabilisation is not final.

As an approach to the history of technology SCOT does not limit itself to simply claiming technology is integral to relations. SCOT focuses on viable working artefacts in given spaces, times and communities. SCOT is concerned with the working and satisfactory testing of an artefact without considering the elaborate social dynamics in the human-computer interaction of technology, particularly in terms of social structure and power relationships within technological development and use (Kline and Pinch, 1999). SCOT appears to only consider one direction of integration, which is how the social groups consume the technology and locate it within their existing everyday practices and identities. The model does not illustrate the symmetry of human-computer interaction nor how the social groups adapt to technology and reconfigure identities in the light of new technologies. The findings will show how mobile phone use assists social life and fulfils needs to condense time due to the capability of co-ordinating daily tasks on the move and in an impromptu manner. They also show that frequent use raises other needs, such as the need to know what friends and partners are doing in order to remain included. Next, this gives rise to issues of expectation and insecurity which require accountability and reassurance; a compulsion to communicate arises from the mobility of the mobile phone, which, in turn, demands a further compulsion to communicate. Supporting these findings, Woolgar (1991) suggests that consumers are configured by technologies in the design stages of the device when the profile and potential use of consumers are defined. Mackay, Crane, Beynon-Davies and Tudhope (2000) extend this however, in claiming that the designers configure users, but designers are configured by both users and organisations. There is interplay of user-technology configuration in the use of technological artefacts, hence a user-designer power relation in the integration of technology in everyday life. This explains the following.

> ...why people say they do something – such as buying into a new technology –
> and why they actually do it... and how they actually wind up using the
> technology.
>
> Katz, 1997: 11

Katz (1997) illustrates this re-configuration as the first, second and third-order effects. The first-order effect is when technology results from social change and widespread use, therefore assisting us in daily life. This second effect is when technology also brings new forms of maintaining and co-ordinating the daily life of relationships and lifestyle. Finally the third-order effect is when there is a loop back and society adapts this new aspect of technology through fine-tuning. People use technology in a variety of ways, some not in accordance with the main design function. This explains the paradoxical compulsion to communicate to fulfil a need for inclusion, which then leads to a further compulsion to communicate as reassurance and to combat insecurities.

To expand this further, McLuhan (1964) conceives technology as meaningful in ways that differ from the purpose of original uptake. McLuhan claims that technology is 'any extensions of ourselves' and this extension is any media through which we exchange information. The key phrase that identifies McLuhan in culture and society is 'the medium is the message', used to claim that it is not the content that is significant, but the way the content is mediated. Essentially the medium amplifies and develops existing processes, reshaping and regulating human interaction. This brings about new social consequences and meanings to everyday life. The medium redefines how we communicate and interact, in turn adding meaning to our interactions. It is therefore the interaction that becomes the medium forming a connection. It is not the content that is valued as much as the medium that transmits interaction. The medium becomes the interaction. The medium then becomes a powerful interaction tool and a meaningful artefact, producing a valuable attachment. This supports the findings of why the mobile phone use appears to be more intense and intensely valued in close-relationships. For example, it is the main way through which couples can negotiate and manage their relationship with each other while maintaining a link wherever they are, whereas the friendship groups often use more than one channel to communicate. Additionally, the speed and times of their response is often less important for these interactions; the compulsion to communicate and remained connected is not as intense for friendship groups.

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Power relations

Technology becomes powerful by re-configuring the user, in terms of influencing interaction as well as mediating power relations. The analysis will show that the theme of power relations is most prominent in much of the data. Relationships can even be governed by the mode used to communicate. For example, text messaging was used when there were problems in a relationship, which avoided confrontation but placed constraints on communication and prevented problems to be solved. Feelings towards the mobile device itself intensified and frustration towards the handset was felt which was because this was symbolic of the frustration in the relationship. This illustrates McLuhan's ideas of meaningful mediums and technology further in terms of what users feel about their devices because of the relations mediated. However, these human-computer interaction theories do not reflect the power relations that are involved in the social use of technology and ICTs.

Technology mediates power, and the ability to use technology effectively brings with it considerable authority (Cockburn, 1985). ICTs in this case become a powerful relation in society through the mediation of power and control within relationships. Technology facilitates and shapes power relations which empower the uses of this technology through an ordering of society enforced by surveillance. Lyon (2001) recognises that 'all so-called information societies' are also surveillance societies, which have expanded and reshaped social relations through the use of new technologies. For example, the data shows how mobile phone use is powerful for intimate relations tagging and tracking each other for closeness and togetherness, which paradoxically serves to maintain a visibility on their absence and freedom. The rise in technology has therefore paved the way for new surveillance techniques in a wide range of areas. Use of technology leaves footprints, enabling the tracing of locations from the use of credit cards and mobile phones. Surveillance, as we understand it, both enables and constrains. Surveillance in society is used to catch criminals, to maintain order and to monitor events in order to mitigate danger. Mobile phone uses appear to be mediating and facilitating surveillance.

Surveillance orders society in new ways using technologies to keep track, tag and monitor the everyday lives of social actors (Lyon, 2001) through transformations of the private sphere of social life. Privacy becomes de-privatised due to the body data that technology produces. 'Body data' reveals information negating the need for questions

and answers to reveal this information. For example, employers have the capacity to collect data relating to non-work activities, reducing the need for questioning. The information society establishes personal visibility from a trail and tracking of 'body data' and therefore subjects employees to become accountable to employers. Technological surveillance establishes social order, relations and interaction through empowering those acquiring the trail of data. Lyon (2001) explains that this form of surveillance is unlike Bentham's understanding of surveillance, which is that surveillance is centralised and based on prison architecture. Surveillance is pervasive, in an unfixed or localised form, without site or source, as liquid data flowing across space, shaping and reshaping social relations and control within these relations and interaction.

Surveillance is not only an institutional and authoritative part of society, in which data flow is used to tag and track in hierarchies of government departments, business and other organisations. Surveillance is also a technology of personal communicative relations, in a more trivial and connective way. This data flow is also used among friends and families. Surveillance occurs across these personal and peer networks and vertically in networks of organisations. Additionally, technology in the information society is in continual use across work and leisure. It is this constant use that establishes the decentralised surveillance capacities of communication technology at any time, anywhere, in a network of relations. There follows a discussion of a decentralised network society that has been largely dominated by the information age and corresponding relational changes.

Network society in the information age

This section will now examine Castells' notion of the network society to understand how society is becoming dominated by mobile communication which is decentralising networks and communities. Technology has become embedded in daily life, changing interaction, social structures[3] and constituting a new society; essentially reconfiguring social structures to changes in social practice. Castells (1996) is concerned with how networks are comprised of subjects, technologies and the links between. These links have open structures which are dynamic and change to form a 'culture of endless

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[3] In using the term 'social structure', Castells refers to the organisation of arrangements of social actors in 'relationships of production/consumption, experience and power, as expressed in meaningful interaction framed by culture' (Castells, 2000: 695).

deconstruction and reconstruction' appropriate for a globalized and decentralised capitalist economy (Castells, 1996: 470). This section will illuminate Castells' notion from other interpretations of social networks. This section will draw on Wellman (1979) and also Mauss (1954/1990) and Douglas (1966) to link networked practices to social interaction and networked solidarity to inform the data with theory. As discussed in Chapter 2, many of the findings highlight exclusivity and belonging. This section will therefore provide the supporting theory.

Belonging

Networks are a universal form of social organisation which can be rooted in the both in the work of Tönnies (1887) and Durkheim (1964). Tönnies differentiated between gemeinschaft and gesellschaft, the bonds and ties of networks as communities in the former, and networks that can be defined more in terms of associative and instrumental weak ties in the latter. Durkheim, as a functionalist, focused on unity as forming society, particularly the relationship of the society to the individual; the cohesive ordered society gains solidarity in order to function. Networks do not demonstrate 'community'; they explain the linear or integral associations of individuals. Wellman (1979) wrote about community as being lost, saved and liberated. He studied intimate networks in the US, and has since studied online and offline communities and networked individualism (Wellman et al, 2002). In networked individualism people begin to connect in social networks rather than as communal groups; communities are formed but these are based on this more personalised networking (Wellman et al, 2002). These new communities are formed from a collective and are based on all-channel interconnected and distributed networks (Bell and Newby, 1976). Wellman et al (2002) claim that the difference of network communities compared to traditional close-knit families, lies in the mode of relations. Communities become personal communities.

> ...[these] supply the essentials of community separately to each individual: support, sociability, information, social identities, and a sense of belonging. It is the person, and neither the household nor the group, which is the primary unit of connectivity.
>
> Wellman et al, 2002: 152

Communities continue to remain in the form of sparsely and spatially-dispersed networks who intermittently communicate to people, not to places, creating a 'networked individualism' (Wellman, 2002: 15) in a mobile communication mode. The

one-to-one mode of communication is therefore establishing identity as a connection, not as part of a traditional collective. A community in this sense is made up of a network, rather than close-knit interlinked relationships that are localised.

Castells (1996) appreciates this theory of networked individualism as it supports the historical understanding of communities in terms of personal interaction for solidarity and also for reciprocal support. Castells claims that historical networks were ineffective in mobilising and focusing resources to perform a given task. This flaw has been overcome by new ICTs that can decentralise networks, globalising information and reshaping tasks as well as co-ordinating purpose and decision-making. In this recognition that networked forms of social organisation have existed in other times, Castells (1996) differentiates 'the new information technology paradigm' of networking as providing 'the basis for its pervasive expansion throughout the entire social structure' (Castells, 1996: 469). Castells' conception of the 'network society' is premised on the information society and the de-centralised electronic flows of information for social organisation and interaction, thereby reconfiguring social structure. Decentralisation allows flexibility due to the changes in power dynamics offered through electronically networked people (Castells, 2000). That is, hierarchical forms of organization become swept away by these horizontal flowing networks.

> New information technologies allow the formation of new forms of social organization and social interaction along electronically based information networks.
>
> Castells, 2000: 693

New information technologies do not determine social structures; they facilitate the processes of social change. These changes are those of new communication media, globalisation of culture and economy and new forms of production. As an interactive hypertext, the internet is the most dominant cultural evidence of the network society. The internet symbolises a culture of 'real virtuality' (Castells, 2000) in processing messages, sharing multimedia and linking other individuals and groups, the explosion of 'social utility', for example Facebook, being the prime and most current example. Through this social networking website, links to friends and acquaintances are made, pictures can be shared, messages sent and displayed and friendship groups are also formed. These all comprise a real virtuality of a social network.

These cultural, economic and global networks are susceptible to constant change due to technological advancements. 'Networks are a set of interconnected nodes' (Castells, 2000: 696) powered by information technology. This allows them to be flexible to expand and incorporate new nodes, providing that these nodes add a value-making function by reconfiguring themselves. The result is that these networks organise social practice and reconfigure social structures. Information technologies change social structures in terms of value, culture and space. Technologies allow the convergence of time and space and thereby increasing accessibility and contactability. Spatial and temporal factors are not diminished; in fact the networked society continues to place significance on space. Castells claims that this 'death of distance' does not end spatial concepts that remain important to society. As Boden and Molotch (1994) and Urry (2002) have suggested, physical proximity is important for meaningful experience and function in society and in interaction. Non-present interaction transforms space, as opposed to eliminating space. It establishes a space for the flow of information and communication, in which the function and meaning of nodes arise from the connection between nodes as opposed to localities of nodes (Castells, 2000).

Society has become a networked information society. The new information technology allows the transportation of social interaction along electronic communication networks of individuals. This redefines social structures and consequently reconfigures relations and meanings expressed in interactions (Castells, 2000). It is the meaningful interaction within networks that are expressed by the reconfiguring nature of these technologies. The mobile phone, as a networked information device, is a key artefact prevalent in everyday life; the artefact displays and transforms meaningful interaction. The qualitative research design would be appropriate to examine exactly how mobile phones are used socially to study the reconfigurations of users (nodes), meanings and practices in interaction, primarily because it is relevant to studying social relations (Flick, 2006).

Theories have been discussed regarding social networks and mobility. Electronic communication networks have drawn on the relations between other networks. These other networks include community-centred, dense networks of reciprocal social relations and mutual obligation. Sparse fluid networked relations brought about in the information age and maintained with co-presence are part of this relationship. The data established that the co-presence of gift-giving practices using the mobile phone consolidated friendships within networks. This discussion will therefore draw on

theoretical literature on gift-giving practices that consolidate networks, using reciprocation and obligation that are characteristic of networks high in social capital. This will further inform the analysis how new information technology transforms social interaction and changes meanings expressed in relations.

Belonging: gift-giving

Chapter 2 presented how the mobile phone is used as part of a gift-economy in friendship networks of young users. The findings discussed in Chapter 5 echo the findings of Taylor and Harper (2003) who found that text messaging, sending ring tones and sharing other forms of multimedia are forms of gift-giving; these contribute to the strengthening of bonds in networks and group solidarity through exchange, reciprocation and obligation. Mauss (1954/1990) identified widespread practices, or rituals, of gift-giving within groups of non-European societies in Polynesia, Melanesia and American Northwest. Within these societies gifts are given and then passed on or exchanged. These practices are, in theory, voluntary actions; in reality, 'they are given and reciprocated obligatorily' (Mauss, 1954/1990: 3).

Giving and reciprocation are traditional in these societies, and these are the defining practices of potlatch. 'Potlatch' is a term used to refer to the continual winter festival of feasts, fairs and markets which bring people of tribes, families, clans, chiefs and brotherhoods together. Potlatch is about feeding and consuming, and it is here that gift-giving takes place. 'The obligation to give is the essence of the potlatch' (Mauss, 1954/1990: 50); particularly the obligations are those of giving, receiving and reciprocation. Such exchanges are often acts of politeness and this gift-giving is an integral ritual of banquets, rituals, festivals and fairs. Gift-gifting is an economic transaction and it can also pass on wealth. Gift-giving or voluntary giving is more of an enduring contract of giving – the giving of presents and gifts is compulsory for private and public welfare. Alliances of two phratries of tribes co-operate with and complement each other for survival and gaining in economic wealth, through the inheritance of goods through rituals, marriages, legal ties and self-interest. The gift-giving and the alliances of tribes form a 'system of total services' through networking and allegiances. The gift-giving and reciprocation are obligatory practices that build on the alliances through symbolising respect and therefore strengthening the bonds.

It is wealth and good luck that is passed onto others. Luck and fortunes circulate and strengthen alliances and bonds through the 'courtesies' of gift-exchange. These courtesies are in fact fundamental to the system of total services of economic transmission, and here is where the obligation lies. It is through 'courtesies' that networks have become tightly constructed, and group solidarities have been created. Therefore, the obligations to maintain the system of giving and reciprocation through ritual serve to maintain and strengthen bonds. This extends to the network society in which the fieldwork takes place, where friendship groups use their mobile phones to share content as a form of transmitting gifts. Taylor and Harper's study of gift-giving (2003) is an example of a new method of traditional practices of gift-exchange and the circles of obligation in maintaining and extending networked bonds. The data reveals that friendship in particular is where bonds are maintained and strengthened through these practices, showing and sharing text messages and mobile phone content in ways that circulate within friendship groups, by maintaining and consolidating bonds both in and between groups. Individuals are the nodes that 'belong' to the network and one way to remain in this position is via the continuous receiving and giving of gifts. The obligations to give and reciprocate are therefore an act to sustain inclusion in the network and to maintain the group identity.

Co-present sharing of mobile phone content in the form of text messages and multimedia gifts enhance interaction within the group, as illustrated by Kindberg et al (2005). The mode through which content is shared redefines the social structures and meaning expressed in reconfigured relations and interactions when sending and sharing content, particularly when matter is out of context (Douglas, 1966).

Exclusive belonging: matter out of place

Although gift-giving can consolidate group bonds, many of the groups interviewed reported that this can also divide the groups into sub-groups, therefore creating solidarity of inter-relations within the groups. This leads to what I have called 'exclusive belonging', which is where some bonds within the groups are stronger than others and this is illuminated by the activities and interests of these sub-groups; exclusive interests and activities which can be reflective of group bonds or enable these bonds. The concept of matter out of place will now be discussed to inform the analysis of exclusive belonging.

Sometimes content is perceived as *inappropriate* when placed elsewhere. Here I refer to the private material viewed and shared in public spaces by the men who were interviewed. This consolidates the male bonds in groups through the sharing and gift-giving of masculine material. This material is matter; matter being the intangible content mediated through the mobile. Content can be received, viewed and shared without temporal and spatial constraints of the home or elsewhere. Content can be ubiquitously broadcasted using the mobile phone. Expanding on the notions of the network society using Douglas' concept of purity and matter out of place, the concept of matter being displaced has evolved through the mobile and resulting impurities that have arisen in the network society.

In *Purity and Danger*, Douglas (1966) accentuates the many everyday activities that are potentially polluting in terms of the transmission of germs and disease when matter is out of place. Douglas notes that practices of religious ritual used for worship also appear to be used for purification, given that 'the resemblance between some of their symbolic rites and our hygiene is sometimes uncannily close'[4] (p.40), particularly in terms of washing food and oneself in order to wash away any impurities before worship, as 'pollution lingers'. Douglas claims that these ancient ideas of ritual pollution and the more contemporary ideas of 'dirt' only differ in terms of symbolism and as a matter of hygiene. These customs express symbolic systems, and the only differences are between pollution of behaviour and a simple matter of detail.

> As we know it, dirt is essentially disorder. There is no such thing as absolute dirt: it exists in the eye of the beholder ... Dirt offends against order.
>
> Douglas (1966): 2

These symbolic systems both perceive impurities or 'dirt' in the same way. Something is considered as dirty when matter is out place and pollutes pure matter, when it is contrary to order, hence 'matter out of place'. Douglas uses the example of shoes. Shoes are not perceived as 'dirty' when they are worn outside, however when they are placed on a dining table (a clean place for eating) they are considered as 'dirty'. Dirt or uncleanness must not be included if a pattern is to be maintained without disrupting and polluting order. Uncleanness is matter out of place and there is no clear-cut distinction

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[4] Douglas is highlighting the Durkeimian concept of the sacred and profane. Religion divides the world into these two spheres, explaining the different behaviour between ritual and the practical. On the one hand, there is an everyday world of material and practical concerns and on the other a ritualised world.

between the sacred and the secular, or even between the primitive and the modern. In relation to the network society, the ubiquitous nature of the mobile contributes to matter being out of place. Personal files that are viewed between friends using a mobile phone are being viewed out of context, in new and unlikely environments. For example, sexual imagery is conceived as private and intimate content which becomes impure when it is shown in a public setting or when it can be potentially broadcasted. This imagery from the private sphere is therefore perceived as inappropriate or 'dirty' as soon as it becomes available or produced for viewing. This is therefore 'dirty' imagery; i.e. 'pornography' that was shared by many of the men interviewed in my exploration of the mobile phone. These concepts of impurities of matter out of place both reinforce and change collective identities and identity aspirations when they are used in a network. Exclusive belonging is strongly related to the themes of co-presence and identity. Therefore, this leads onto a discussion of theories of identity, particularly the co-construction of identity in a collective through consumption.

Theories of consumption and identity

Technology is part of material culture; in terms of how technology becomes a socially embedded process in organising and interacting within networks and also technology itself is a material that can be consumed through communication and as a displayed artefact in everyday life. The mobile phone is pervasive in our culture as a commodity and as a medium. This will be explored by drawing on theories of the consumption and construction of identity. Consumption is driven by the need to satisfy and to reflect tastes, distinction and lifestyle that characterise status positions in society. Furthermore, constructing and presenting an identity gives meaning to the consumer item (in this case, the mobile phone). The mobile phone is used as a prop in performance and in reinforcing identity (or habitus), through a process of disembedding and reshaping the use of the mobile phone, establishing this consumer item as a meaningful artefact. This emphasizes how a consumer item designed to assist social life adopts new cultural meanings through reshaping social life, a life that it was intended to assist. This adaptation alters the terms of how users communicate both through and with the mobile phone in a relational capacity - not as communication mediator but as communicator and consolidator of identity.

Consumerism and advertising

As a communication tool, the mobile phone is also an aesthetic artefact consumed in the same way that clothes are purchased to consume fashion. In the same way, the mobile phone is a utility and the artefact is a relation to others through a displayed symbol of fashion. Theories of consumption are concerned with how and why people consume goods, services and the effects consumption has on interaction, particularly in developing meaning and the portrayal of identity. Consumption has been traditionally viewed in terms of production and the economy. However, the focus has broadened to include consumer power, consumer identity, the growth of enterprise and advertising. Therefore capital is not dependent on labour, but on consumers (Aldridge, 2003) and their needs and satisfactions.

> The whole discourse on consumption ... is articulated on the mythological sequence of the fable: a man, "endowed" with needs which "direct" him towards objects that "give" him satisfaction.
>
> Baudrillard, 2001: 39

Baudrillard (2001) claims consumption is driven by a desire to become satisfied, on the premise that the object or 'thing' becomes meaningful. From a sociological perspective this is socio-cultural. An anthropological perspective would suggest the individual is 'endowed' with needs and moved by nature to satisfy them. Needs are socially dynamic because needs trigger conformity and competition to belong, to differentiate and to individualise. This is derived from others in the immediate environments who 'elaborate grand 'cultural models' which are related to society in general or to history' (Baudrillard, 2001: 39). Therefore, continued production and consumption is reliant upon the product having meaning in relation to the societal value system (Parsons).

Consumption is stimulation for Baudrillard, but Galbraith (1967) claims that the system of needs is part of the unlimited productivity and the need to dispose of the products themselves. The system controls production as well as consumer demand, the purchasing of goods shifts from the consumer to the producer in terms of decision-making (Galbraith, 1967). Advertising adapts to the system of mechanization of production and consumer demand. This is a system using social goals and adjusts these to meet its own objective of profit. For example, 'fashion is a commercial, industrial art, concerned less with beauty than with making money' (McDowell, 1994: 57). This is what Galbraith terms as the technostructural conditioning of needs and consumption.

Consumption is therefore a function of production, and is not reliant on pleasure as such.

> Needs are nothing but the most advanced form of the rational systematization of production forces at the individual level, one in which "consumption" takes up the logical and necessary relay of production.
>
> Baudrillard, 2001: 48

Marketing of mobile phones appeals to the tastes of a broad consumer group. There are simple-looking phones to appeal to all, complicated-looking phones to appeal to the gadget lover, and 'sleek'-looking phones to appeal to business persons and subsequently the mainstream consumer; the BlackBerry is a prime example. Marketing campaigns target gender; pink devices appeal to young women, while black minimal-looking phones appeal to young men. Advertising images are used to lure users into consuming a lifestyle and therefore consider the mobile phone handset as a by-product of this lifestyle.

Audiences are neither passive nor easily influenced as a homogenous mass. On the contrary, media and audiences are part of a social structure that is more complex than a simple stimulus-response mechanism. Dyer (1982) claims this as the basis of the 'socially-mediated' model. Advertising is culturally embedded in a fabric of influential factors on consumers' lives; people purposefully 'use' products in accordance to their circumstances. Consequently, advertising is dependent on how people domesticate products (Dyer, 1982) in order to establish meanings and expressions, which will be used as the grounds on which to influence consumers further. The media reinforces rather than changes a person's dispositions. Dyer uses the example of ineffective advertising using the fears of loneliness or social exclusion for people who are active and secure. Effective advertising is based on the dispositions that are already there, and in satisfying needs that already exist. There is also no uniform interpretation, as individual response and consumption depends on personal meanings and domestication into the context, class and lifestyle (Dyer, 1982). People respond differently depending on imagery, language and also advertisements they can identify with (Dyer, 1982).

Identity aspiration and exclusivity

The significance of consumer goods 'rests largely in their ability to carry and communicate cultural meaning' (McCracken, 1986: 71). When the goals and values

projected in adverts are consistent with those of the consumer, the advertising campaign will be conducive to effective sales. This is possible through the disembedding and reshaping of these goals and values in ways that 'socialize us into thinking that we can buy a way of life as well as goods' (Dyer, 1982: 77). This raises the point that advertising is a means of persuading consumers to buy into a lifestyle or class. This is domestication in reverse; buying a device in order to change the lifestyle in which the aesthetic is placed. In this case, domestication and aspiration are occurring against each other. A person's class can act like a filtering mechanism as well as a disposition through which advertising can market products to satisfy needs. Class and lifestyle relate to Bourdieu's notion of habitus in terms of 'cultural distinction'. This will explain this intersection of domestication and identity aspiration.

There is a combination of objective conditions of existence and a position in social structure, together forming 'a structured and structuring structure' (Bourdieu, 1990: 27) which is the habitus. There is a system of schemes that together generate 'classifiable practices and works' and also taste (which is a system of perception of appreciation). These systems together produce the classifiable practices and works of a 'lifestyle'. Lifestyle is therefore defined as 'a system of classified and classifying practices, i.e. distinctive signs' (Jenkins, 2002: 141). Lifestyle is generally perceived as individuality and personal choice. These choices however are products of the social categories and affective attitudes of the habitus. Individuals bear, continue and change the patterns of these social and cultural categories, rather than create them. This implies that people are branded by their habitus and not active in its construction. Lifestyles are characterised in an array of competing opportunities and advice, and lifestyle exists among individuals in the positions they place themselves in by their choices to impose continuity into their experiences.

> Lifestyles are thus the systematic products of habitus, which, perceived in their mutual relations through the schemes of the habitus, become sign systems that are socially qualified.
>
> Bourdieu, 1986: 172

Meaning, choice and status connotations depend on habitus, experience, early socialisation, routines (or habits) and use patterns. The habitus is within us, conditioning us to change things through socialisation. For example, aesthetic appreciation is learned at school but only in certain kinds of school by certain kinds of pupils, who have the

predispositions, which the school then encourages and exposes. The predisposition is cultural and a product of the educational system, which in turn applies to certain habituses of certain classes.

Speaking of class, Bourdieu associates taste to social class in a model of class life-styles. In this model the working class is obliged to continually define itself by referring to the dominant class because the working class is unable to adopt an aesthetic point of view, whereas the upper-classes do not have this necessity, making them distinct. Taste is part of the condition that links to a particular class of particular conditions of existence that consolidate those 'who are the product of similar conditions while distinguishing them from all others' (Bourdieu, 1986: 56). Taste is therefore a key signifier and element of social identity. Those perceived as the 'less distinct' i.e. all classes except the upper-class, will aspire to better their current position. They will shift from the pursuits of immediate gratifications to the pleasures of long-term pursuits. This is illustrated by a reward for working hard; become a better person, which is the main goal (Inglis, 2005).

Exclusive, without difference or exclusion
The habitus is, in a sense, lifestyle which is distinguished by taste; forming an exclusive lifestyle. However, choice is not always a free choice from agency, it is a choice both from and because of the habitus that is influenced by education. This explains people's aesthetic choices relating to the mobile phone. Choice is not free of individualism, and is not choice from agency. Choice is connected and defined by social class and therefore this is a distinction for other classes explaining group related consumption. Research generally suggests that teenagers buy into different mobile phone handsets and functions, and this differs to how adults choose their handsets. Choice of handsets and use patterns are not as individual as consumers perceive, it is appreciation and conduct within a lifestyle.

The analysis will show that many handsets are purchased because they are perceived as 'different' in the individual sense, to be set apart from others. However, the word 'different' also implies 'new', and this was why pink handsets were often purchased by the women in the study; it is new and is therefore different to other handsets. This is conditioned by class habitus and some experience of social class in earlier life. Buying a phone 'to be different' is not necessarily to be different at all; it is to remain distinct

from others of different class, habitus and lifestyle. Therefore, use and meaning are not merely specific and objective, but can in many ways be collective. Friendship groups use their phones in similar ways or have aesthetically the same or similar models of handset. Meaning is associated with class and lifestyle. Because of lifestyle and habitus the choice is not as free and disconnected or individual as the subject believes; it is relative to social positioning, distinction and circumstances.

Consumption is part of the structured and structuring structure that Bourdieu uses to define habitus and consumption is reflective of lifestyle in signifying tastes. If advertising is consistent with the habitus or represents the dominant class in terms of lifestyle, tastes and distinction it will be effective. Theories of consumption and class are both related to the performance and display of individual and collective identities. Examination of this will continue as the final part of this chapter.

Performance and the presentation of the self

MacKay (1997) claims 'our identity is made up by our consumption of goods' (p.4). These goods, in turn, become significant to us. Identity is made up of consumed goods, beliefs, values, experiences and a whole array of factors. Identity can often be constructed from patterns of consumption that reflect one's aspect of identity and conduct. This informs the findings revealing the reasons why users will select handsets. When a mobile phone was seen as 'sleek', 'funky' and 'trendy', this device would be purchased to present the self as sleek, funky or trendy. The mobile phone is consumed in both use and display, as an aesthetic; therefore the device becomes an artefact. An artefact is associated with the context in which it is being displayed and the cultural surroundings. These surroundings are also subjected to trends and the 'latest' technology. MacKay (1997) claims we consume goods to represent our identities, although the indication that identities consist of the consumption of goods is questionable. Identities are not solely dependent on or represented by the goods we consume, but depend on the culture and relations within which consumption takes place.

Individuals can transmit aspects of their identity through fashion in the construction of social interaction. McCracken (1990) claims that meaning transmits to goods in three ways. Firstly, goods become associated with established social categories. Secondly, the existing cultural meanings are shaped by celebrities who then disseminate these

innovative styles through society in a way that fashions are aspired to and imitated. There is a connection to Goffman (1959) who claims that we use 'props' to display who we are or 'mime' something in a compulsion to be something else (Taussig, 1993). Finally, cultural meanings of goods are transformed by the fashion system. This theory of the consumption of fashion takes account of the continual engagement between cultural meanings and interaction that continually change, signifying that therefore fashion changes. Fashion becomes fluid due to the influence of unstable cultural meanings and identities.

Identity is socially constructed by affirmation and reaffirmation within networks and communities; identity becomes an embedded and re-embedded public performance. The self-identity becomes a reflexive project, which is constantly renewed in the light of individual and global changes (Giddens (1990). Goffman (1959) presents identity as a construction of conduct in public places, which he aligns with front and back stage performances. Identity is affected by the performance of oneself as an individual, and also by how the audience perceive identity through that performance. The mobile phone blurs the public and private spheres through the concepts of front and back stage performance. Backstage conduct and conversation is performed in public using the mobile phone.

This provides the theory behind the changes in social behaviour towards those using a mobile phone. In co-presence, people remain to communicate, but they avert their gaze until the mobile phone user disengages with their mobile phone to rejoin the co-presence interaction. The participants in this research commented on how private relations are brought into the public and this can be rather frustrating when virtual presence, or the 'absent present' is attended to instead of those who are co-present. This leads to a change in etiquette; the more a mobile phone is used in public, the more it becomes accepted.

The mobile phone plays a key role in both reinforcing front stage behaviour and bringing back stage private behaviour to the forefront. The front stage defines what can be observed. This can be termed as intentional behaviour and the back stage is the private and, in some cases, unconscious conduct. The social actor uses props on the front stage as part of the performance (Goffman, 1959). This highlights why a pink phone is attractive for the women in this study. Pink phones can be used to accessorize

pink outfits and as a prop of femininity, as stereotypical as this may seem, serving to communicate femininity through symbolism. It is not the fact that the handset is pink that has value for these users, the value lies in what pink represents.

As a communication technology, the mobile phone is also a technology of performance as part of the self-identity. The mobile phone becomes part of the identity and becomes familiar to the audience in relation to performance identity. The 'prop' is a symbol not only of identity, but also of the person's role and how they wish to be perceived. It is no longer ownership of a mobile phone that displays an identity. Rather it is how the object itself is appropriated, used and displayed in terms of conduct. The design of the mobile phone becomes a performance of symbolism. The mobile phone in appearance and functions can be used to convey high and low status in society.

Conclusion

Using examples of the paradoxical findings emerging from the empirical work, this chapter has discussed how technology becomes meaningful in everyday life through integration into social practice. The technology contributes to the restructuring of interaction through fluid and decentralised flows of information, communication and interaction. The information age has brought about a convergence of meanings, historically based social practices and reconfigurations of the formations of these practices. This chapter has examined mobility in the convergence of time and changes to space for virtual presence, how co-presence remains essential for the virtual to be effective, and also how the mobile phone has become a way to continue old practices in consolidating co-present bonds. This chapter looked at the shifts in power relations from a hierarchical network to an all-encompassing network in terms of tagging and tracking of body data. It has also examined the power of new communication capacities in close relationships and in the merge of public and private spheres through fluid relations, redefining interactional space. Finally, theories of consumption and identity, including advertising and performance have established how consumption is part of a lifestyle, culture, class and a consolidation of a collective identity (and habitus). Identity and consumption are closely linked. Consumption satisfies needs, consumption of goods as part of a body of tastes, displays and distinctions characterise identity. However, both consumption and identity are subject to an expression of cultural meanings and interaction that is also subject to continuous reshaping. Identity is a performance and the mobile phone is a prop used in this performance of identity and position in society. The

reinforcement of identity is a result of the fluid disembedding and reshaping in the uses of the mobile phone. This establishes the device as a meaningful artefact in the utilitisation for identity. The next chapter will discuss the qualitative methods in the collection and processing of data in order to discuss how everyday interaction has become reconfigured and consequently how valuable the mobile phone is to social, personal and identity relations.

Chapter 4

Methods: Using Image for a good reception

Introduction

This chapter presents a combination of methods used in the ethnographic study of mobile phone use: participant observation, diarying, iterative semi-structures interviewing and group interviews. These methods are approached ethnographically utilising the tacit knowledge of the area gained through participant observation. Commencing in 2005, four months were spent working in a mobile phone retail outlet gaining valuable insights into the retail sector. This was followed by six months recruiting initial participants. Overall this produced data from 12 diaries on mobile phone use, 24 interviews and nine group interviews. Each stage of the research process informed the next, resulting in an iterative refinement of the data acquisition process. This chapter presents a structured methodical approach exploring how the mobile phone is engaged, defining social and cultural meanings of use in everyday life. The processes of research will present and evaluate the significance of mobile phone use in the relations involved in friendship, intimacy and identity, together with the conjoining themes. Beginning with access, this chapter will discuss the commercial setting, customers; the ethnography of working in the retail outlet, together with interviews and group interviews on friendship and commercial effects. The approach is reflexive and innovative in a way that progressively amends the research design to focus the data collection and the analysis. This chapter will then end with a discussion of the analytical methods employed to reach the findings.

Getting participation: image is everything

The mobile phone retail outlet was the selected ethnographic setting in which to observe and speak to consumer and to then recruit these consumers as research participants. This setting provided valuable insights into consumption aspects of mobile phone use, alongside the literature of current trends at the time. The store attracted the consumer group targeted in this research; the retail outlet was an ideal environment in which to observe how people are attracted to particular devices. Additionally, this was an insight into the decision-making processes in selecting mobile phones to domesticate into their everyday lives. Access to gatekeepers and participants was a significant and a determining stage of the research, involving both formal and informal contact between managerial staff and an unlikely informal acquaintance. This initial process involved

rapport building and image projecting in the progression towards participant recruitment.

Access

Beginning with formal channels, numerous mobile phone retail stores were visited in Cardiff. These stores were provided with an outline of the fieldwork proposal together with a request for permission to observe consumers purchasing mobile phones. In approaching these image-centred environments it was important to present myself using a business image that was adopted by the sales staff and marketing strategies, as opposed to an obtrusive presence in the store. This involved wearing a suit and presenting personal business cards, thereby displaying an image of 'professionalism' in the approach to this research and in communication with potential gatekeepers. Nevertheless, these efforts were unsuccessful in gaining access at this stage. Many stores did not allow the direct access interaction with customers, although the completion of questionnaires and interviews of the retail assistants were allowed. In most eventualities, however, managers would need to be contacted or letters would need to be written to company headquarters. These invoked either an apathetic response in most cases, and firm rejections in the other cases.

Taking advice from the store managers and staff, contact information was gathered from the store assistants and from company websites to contact companies directly regarding access. Letters and my CV were sent to the retail departments at company headquarters and to area managers and managers of the local stores. These outlined the research and offered my unpaid services as a retail assistant, in return for enabling me to blend into the retail environment to allow me to observe and question consumers (see Appendix 1 for access letter). Unfortunately, this also resulted in a lack of response and rejection.

Success, however, was eventually forthcoming from a chance meeting. Contact was re-established with a social contact who was met prior to the design of fieldwork. I met Josh in a nightclub and a friendship developed simply by chatting about his mobile phone. After discussing my intentions of this thesis Josh mentioned his job as a market analyst for O2 UK headquarters. Research information and emails were exchanged from time to time to maintain contact with Josh. This chance meeting has since proved invaluable to the research process. Together with his association to the Head of Company Retail Sector, Josh was able to grant access and became the key-holder of

access to the O2 Cardiff store. Instructions from O2 head office filtered down through to the area manager and finally to the manager of a branch in the city centre (See Appendix 2 for access email correspondence). This correspondence shows a level of informality and politeness following a chance meeting in a social setting. This also demonstrates the power and influence of gatekeeping in social research, how a chance meeting can lead to an important impact with regard to negotiating and bargaining, in particular, through the obligation to reciprocate as part of the 'strength of weak ties' (Granovetter, 1974).

In terms of access, it seemed that a formal and somewhat reserved image would not be helpful to gaining access, but a friendly and forthcoming image perhaps was. From first meeting Josh I was careful to maintain our communication as more informal as this is how I first introduced myself to him. A weak tie had been formed and it was the strength of this that granted access. However, it was not an action that took place alone. There were obligations to reciprocate good will as an expression of gratitude, strengthening ties through a 'gift-giving' duty (Taylor and Harper, 2003). I was asked to present the research findings to the company proceeding dissemination of this thesis. My 'gift' was therefore the agreement to do this. This served to strengthen the tie with Josh and the company as a whole. My obligation to reciprocate, together with my expression of gratitude also facilitated a willingness to meet the needs of gatekeepers and to respect the customs of the organisation regarding research initiated externally. Once relations with Josh and his colleagues became established the next step was to build rapport with retail staff that, in turn, facilitated the successful recruitment of participants. The strengthening of relationships and image in the retail store will now be discussed.

Working in the store: relationships and image

Four months were spent working in the mobile phone retail store developing relationships with sales staff, producing ethnographic data. This time was spent talking to customers, demonstrating particular mobile phones, discussing tariff options, answering queries and suggesting potential purchases. Talking to both customers and staff was a crucial stage in the research process leading to rapport building, integrating into the setting, asking questions and gaining knowledge about the industry and advertising. Aspects of this ethnography of the store will now be examined.

It was important to observe the hierarchical structure within the store. With this in mind an initial in-store relationship was established with Ed, the store manager. This was not only courteous but it also informed him of the intentions for research associated with working in the shop. It was important to convey myself as a flexible social actor within the setting as well as my role as a researcher. This would help me to integrate without disturbing the status quo. We agreed I would be treated as a staff member at the busiest times so I could observe consumer appeal process. However, as the time progressed I became more like a staff member.

Ed was accommodating during my time working in the shop. He allowed me to serve customers and to retreat at appropriate times to write up findings. There were, however, certain procedural conditions. Information concerning the devices and service tariffs had to be learnt to allow me to serve customers, although full sales transactions would not be completed without the assistance of staff members. This was because insurance cover was not provided due to the non-contractual unpaid nature of the employment. These conditions illustrate that negotiation and bargaining were a continuous part of my presence in the store and they demonstrate a degree of semi-membership as a staff member and as a researcher. I was treated the same as a staff member, integrating with them in terms of daily duties including mopping the shop floor and wearing the uniform. At the same time, I was given just half the duties and responsibilities of staff members, allowing field-note writing retreats. This was possibly due to the non-contractual agreement with the company. In respect of the consumers I was invisible as a researcher, while remaining visible to the retails assistants as a researcher. Customers were often informed about the research to justify the asking of questions while working. Over time, however, the understandings of my role in work and research changed, and I became 'one of us' (Anne, retail assistant).

Trust

> ...the relationships that develop between ethnographic researchers and the people they are studying are critical to the success of their research.
>
> Kornblum, 1996: 4

The relationships made in the research setting of the store and at the data collection stage were indeed critical to the findings of this research. This was primarily due to the

honesty over the personal and private information that participants divulged, the extent of which was dependent on the trust between researcher and participant. The time spent in the store was invaluable for rapport, developing trust and support through the close friendship established with the assistant manager and retail staff. Over the time working in store, I gained trust and the conditions placed were gradually relaxed and I was progressively accepted as one of the team, and I was often left to give advice to customers on the most suitable handset. This even extended to carrying out credit checks during busy periods. However, the extent to which I was integrated into the staff and store was limited by the extent to which I differentiated. I differentiated primarily due to the reasons for my presence; the fact that I was unpaid and, moreover, that I could retreat from the settings when I saw it necessary and appropriate to do so.

A week day and every Saturday during this time were spent in the store observing the consumer market and appeal of the mobile phone. Field notes were written at all opportunities in order to identify and hone in on key areas of interest (see Appendix 3 for an example of field notes). This gave me the opportunity to meet a variety of people in the store, ranging from temporary staff to area managers. Relations were established with my day-to-day colleagues and store managers to levels enabling me to be assistive to them at work, as opposed to a nuisance. After a short time, I was invited to birthdays, promotions, marriages, engagements and other friendly occasions both during the months in store and subsequently.

There was a lot of time 'working', but there was also a lot time waiting for customers to enter the shop. During this time, we would talk about our weekends, plans for evenings, personal lives and relationships. Therefore, a great deal of my time in the store was spent getting to the staff and allowing them to get to know me. This proved to be an important part of the process of eventually achieving consumer participation in the research. This time spent working with staff and observing customers was critical to the progress and the success of the recruitment, data collection and subsequent analysis.

Working alongside retail staff allowed a direct observation of the negotiation in the choices of handsets, in particular consumer decisions and the attractions to particular phones and the dislike of others.

A gentleman came in explaining he has a work phone on one network and another on this service provider, and now he would like to combine the two numbers and have a phone that has an mp3 player built in. Anne explained that it is primarily a phone and not an mp3 player (implying that quality will not be like an mp3 player) ... Anne said that Samsung do not have an mp3 player as such, but something else. One phone will not have everything; one model will have some functions that the others do not.

Anne told me about 'tyre-kicking' ... some people come into the shop to size everything up but do not intend to buy anything that day. On the other hand, some people come in, not knowing what to buy but end up walking out with an expensive phone.

Field-notes Excerpt, 15 February 2005

The excerpt above demonstrates the insights into the consumption of mobile phones. Moments observing were interesting regarding the initial consumption of mobile phones. This provided context in which to gain insight into the consumptive meanings. The ways consumers intended to domesticate their phones were evident at the point of purchase, as this sometimes differed from how they ended up using their handsets both in communication and as an object of identity.

It became difficult to foresee how meaningful mobile phones would become through observation and interaction alone. The retail setting, being removed from regular use, simply suggested how the mobile phone could be used; this was illustrated by initial consumption and aesthetic attachment. With the limitations of the store as a research site in mind, the intended fieldwork goals were revised and appropriate methods identified. It later became clear that managers and retail staff would support new directions of research due to the rapport and relationship established with the company. These relationships were critical to the development of the research design and collection. The company was happy to support me, facilitating the use of the store as a recruitment hub, as opposed to an observed setting. The trust that had been built proved to be invaluable to progress that was later achieved. I had to function 'in dual roles – that of a trained social scientist and that of a human sincerely interested' in the lives of the other people (Pitts and Miller-Day, 2007: 180), which allowed me to become closer to those who would make a difference to the research. This also applied to the relationships I was later to build with the participants. In these relationships, I was not only a social scientist, I was also somebody who was interested in their lives and developed trust in the relationships which enabled participants to open up their (mainly

private) mobile interaction. It was my initial openness and sincerity in the settings, in the research area, and more importantly, with the people in the setting and those using mobile phones that built rapport. Later, I was able to get close, talk to people and I gave them insights into some of my own experience as a 25 year old mobile phone user. In fact, giving a little piece of my benefitted the data collection; as it was such openness that developed trust between myself as researcher and the researched.

Recruiting for interviews: change of dress, change of role

The revised method incorporated marketing roles and retail strategies into how the mobile phone integrates into the everyday social and cultural lives of the consumers. In moving a research focus on the marketing element into a background of the study, the social and personal role of the mobile phone became prominent, together with identity and cultural meanings in everyday life. The retail aspect became used as a portal to recruit participants to take part in the research that would involve using a series of interviews, diaries and group interviews. Utilising the retail site to attract participation necessitated a change of role and a change in how customers perceived my presence within the setting. I had to become a separate entity as opposed to retail staff, retaining some level of familiarity and integration into the setting. The recruitment methods will now be described, focusing on the adjustment to self-image in light of the revised methods.

Prior to designing and beginning recruitment of participants, mobile phone marketing commercials, together with other imagery relating to the retail sector (July to September) were recorded from television and collated from magazines. This provided a basis for the design of interviews and group interviews which partially investigated commercial effects of the mobile phone as a cultural artefact. Following a month of commercial broadcasts I was able to approach consumers for participation in August 2005.

The role of researcher within the setting had become visible to customers, enabling a focus on recruiting instead of selling. This role was re-negotiated with Ed, the store manager, and with the retail assistants, who all supported this change. Support and co-operation came from the relationships developed with each and every one of them, in contrast to the initial refusal of access when stores were directly approached. Support and subsequent assistance had been merited through working alongside staff and

socialising. This level of co-operation and support may have been impossible without establishing this level of rapport.

The area manager, Drew, also responded positively to my role as a researcher providing £20 vouchers to offer as incentives to participants (see Appendix 4). I had met Drew on three occasions before approaching him directly regarding incentives for participants to become involved in the research and complete the data collection phases[5]. This demonstrates the importance of strengthening ties in the field, and the hierarchical nature of these ties, negotiation and compliance. I had gradually established relationships with gatekeepers, ranging from a social and email relationship leading to the retail head of department, continuing to the store manager and staff. I then became accepted by the staff through building relationships with them and particularly with Ed, the manager. Later this developed higher to Drew, who then co-operated and supported the research on the basis of the integrated relationships and rapport formed with store staff. After Ed and Drew had responded to my role, the onus of gatekeeping then shifted to the retail staff where it remained until recruitment was completed.

Concerning impressions portrayed, a business image was adopted again to project competence and professionalism using an informal and sociable approach to put participants at ease. It was necessary to remain integrated into the business style adopted by the store staff and in the commercialisation of mobile phones. 'The style of business' for example, was used to promote phones at the time of this fieldwork. The business image was therefore used to present myself in professional attire. The change of role led to a change of image in order to become visibly separate from the staff while, however, retaining a sense of inclusion within the retail setting; an image of difference from others, but an image that belonged to the setting.

Once customers had agreed to purchase a handset, the sales staff introduced me to them. The rapport with the sales staff granted me access through their co-operation as gatekeepers while they also performed the support of the company for my research through introducing me to their customers. This encouraged the trust of participants, allowing me to express the value of my research to potential participants through gaining their interest and getting them involved using the provided incentive. Therefore,

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[5] This was a reward given to participants for taking part. Offering these at recruitment serves to encourage participants to complete all four necessary data collection phases to follow.

the performance of trust and friendship was significant to successful participant recruitment, reinforcing the research and justifying my presence in the setting. To illustrate, one participant highlighted the credibility given to me, just through mentioning that I was 'in the O2 shop' among the staff (Ingrid, 17), when her partner was worried about her taking part in the research.

During a six month period six men and six women aged 17 to 27 were recruited. The recruitment specified that each participant had a local and accessible friendship group within which all participants were acquainted (see Appendix 5 for recruitment procedure). Meeting the definition of a social network[6] as an integrated network, the friendship group is an extensive connectedness for which the mobile phone is often used. Close friendship groups were therefore appropriate networks in which different people experience different mobile phone use.

As Appendix 5 illustrates, the participants were briefed on the requirements of the study, followed by a series of questions to identify demographics, the closeness and composition of their friendship groups and their availability for data collection. The problems encountered at this stage mainly related to recruiting users willing and able to give up their free time to assist with the research. There was also a dropout rate during the phases of data collection, ranging from people not answering calls to cancelling at the last minute due to time constraints and work commitments. Two participants were initially interviewed and then a second interview became problematic due to cancelling the interview and to subsequent failure in contact. This meant the recruitment procedure and data collection process were restarted with replacement participants, causing temporal issues for the schedule of the fieldwork.

Interviews

When participants were recruited interviews were arranged for approximately two weeks after the purchase of their mobile phone. Two weeks were not only the period in which customers could return the device, it was also ample time for participants to familiarise themselves with their new mobile phone and integrate it into their daily lives. These interviews were primarily a way to establish this aspect of people's lives, as well as being a method through which to explain the research and to distribute diaries.

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[6] A social network refers to individuals who are linked together by one or more social relationship, in sequence or integrated.

This method also provided the opportunity to get to know the participant and for him/her to become familiar with me.

On arrival at the interview, participants were given research information along with the request for social information intended to be used to interpret the findings (See Appendix 6). The information sheet explained the research, the data collection schedule, and their gift for participation, and contained the ethical statement. In following BSA guidelines for ethical practice, this information was designed to show appreciation for participation together with confirming the ethical rights to withdraw the information at any time, the assurance of anonymity and confidentiality and the protection of the Data Protection Act 1998, thereby covering ethical aspects of participation in social research.

Non-intimidating convivial and relaxed environments were selected for these interviews to facilitate open discussions. Interviews took place mainly in coffee shops, bars and the homes of participants. All locations were conducive to natural conversation and discussion, facilitating the discussion of feelings, meanings and social significance. This provided data that could not otherwise be derived from the rather institutional interview rooms.

> It is important for the researcher to identify a time and a place where the interviewee is going to feel comfortable.
>
> David and Sutton, 2004: 90

The setting in which data is collected adopts an important role in responding to open-ended questions of qualitative unstructured interviews. These social environments were relaxed; there were, however, drawbacks in that these were often busy environments and acoustics were therefore a problem. In order to avoid this, times and venues known to be relatively quiet were selected, particularly venues with enclaves in which the interview could be virtually sectioned off, away from the noise and ears of others.

Qualitative interviewing was used to explore lifestyle, identity and social and personal attachments of participants, both as individuals and as part of friendship groups. This was an appropriate data collection method because it delved into real social structures, through revealing the inner state of interviewees in terms of verbal accounts of thoughts, together with the reasons behind actions and feelings (Seale, 1998: 202). Simply asking how users feel is more direct than attempting to surmise and interpret

actions over time. This also allowed the participant to report on a range of situations that cannot be observed directly. This method was highly receptive to yielding data from the viewpoints of the social actors who experience the world using mobile phones.

A semi-structured design was selected allowing 'a certain degree of standardization of interview questions' with 'a certain degree of openness of response by the interviewer' (Wengraf, 2001: 62). The use of a semi-structured design was the most appropriate approach to adopt, requiring answers to both closed- and open-ended questions which allow the interviewer and interviewee to develop a shared understanding (Yates, 2004). The flexibility associated with the qualitative semi-structured approach allowed the interviewees to expand on the uses of the mobile phone that they considered as the most salient in their everyday lives. Structured interviews are designed with the consideration of predicted responses regarding what is relevant and meaningful to their participants, and the interview has therefore 'pre-structured the direction of the enquiry' (Jones, 2004: 258). Semi-structured interviews, in contrast, attract open and channelled unpredicted responses, providing far greater room to explore the interviewee's point of view. This approach allows insights into meaning and the interviewees' understandings of the place of their phones through their voices and experiences. In doing so, people often provide the answers to questions scheduled to ask them later (Fielding, 1993). The main benefit of using a semi-structured approach is the flexibility for expansion on interesting and unforeseen occurrences while using pre-structured questions.

Improvisation was sometimes necessary to prompt for further information on unforeseen dimensions of the data in order to identify any unpredicted aspects of mobile phone use as soon as possible. The skills to adapt to the data, improvising as the data becomes deeper, demonstrates researcher reflexivity in the conduct of research into people's everyday practices and relationships. The limitations, however, were that interviews often overran due to conversational tangents, which sometimes included too much of my own conversation. This was noted and amended prior to any subsequent interviews in a manner in which progressively amended the research design.

These interviews also built rapport with participants. Without explicitly explaining the self as integral to research, Hammersley (2006) notes that the researcher affects his/her research resulting from the participant's 'reactivity' towards the researcher, shaping both the observed and the spoken.

The self is shaped by relationships, interactions and experiences which are not suspended for the duration of the fieldwork. To deny the impact of fieldwork on the construction of self rather misses the point (Coffey, 1999: 158).

The participants and I were integral to the social terrain explored and together became interactive relations. Relating to how the mobile phone is integral to everyday life encourages participants to expand on uses of and attachments to mobile phones, complementing the depth of qualitative research. Fieldwork is a process which the researcher is involved in and becomes part of, emotionally, physically and relationally (Coffey, 1999). Examples of my own experience using mobile phones were given as a means to communicate scenarios and to provide substance on which the participants may be able to relate to me as the researcher.

The interview schedule was designed to focus on specific aspects of mobile phone use, a focus that was adjusted following preliminary patterns for analysis (Appendix 7 is an example of the interview schedule). The objective of the first section of questions was to highlight patterns of consumption behaviour of the main participants. These questions were adaptations of those provided by the marketing channelling department of O2. These questions determine the marketing segmentation of customers. The other questions focused on social life and friendship groups, purchasing, relational dynamics, emotion attachment to the device and finally, how the mobile phone is used in the attachment to friendship networks and identity. These defined sections were continually reviewed and adapted after the preliminary analysis of each interview in order to 'funnel' the questions (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983)

Diaries: 'I could live without it, but would rather not'
Diaries were effective in the design to triangulate methods. Diaries were intended to complement interviews and provide data on group interaction, thereby establishing grounds on which to design friendship group interviews specific to use of the device in their social networks. Diaries provided evidence of use and attachment not apparent in the initial interviews, whilst forming a basis for an open discussion in the second interview. This data collection phase was an information-supplying, interim collection phase complementing interviews by,

...providing a 'factual' record of participants' use of mobile technologies including time, place and description of use.

Carroll, Howard, Vetere, Peck and Murphy, 2002: 3

Diaries were given to participants to complete over a two-week period. The A6-sized diaries had instruction notes on the inside cover outlining how to log use of mobile phones (Appendix 8). The diaries were unstructured to yield data in the form of 'open-ended, stream-of-consciousness narratives about [the participants'] activities and experiences, which can result in very rich and detailed accounts' (Palen and Salzman, 2002: 89). This encouraged participants to write freely to expand beyond the topic under exploration. It was anticipated that giving no instructions would result in a lack of data. The diary was therefore semi-structured to request information regarding feelings experienced in use, in order to get to the centre of experience.

Diaries extend beyond the limitations of interviews and group interviews by allowing participants to record feelings and experiences through engagement with the device in a personal and confidential format. Keeping the pages blank allowed participants to write beyond the contextual data that was requested, and also allowed them to interpret the information requests in personal and different ways. This triggered open-ended to particular areas of mobile phone use. Although the semi-structured diaries outlined the required data, the absence of constant guidance throughout the diaries meant that participants did in fact provide detailed accounts of use. This made the data problematic to compare and contrast. However, all data given was potentially important, and therefore relied upon participants giving full accounts of use on a regular basis. Regular recording would avoid forgetfulness and savour the strength of the experience.

...informants may deviate from instructions...by failing to record the events while they are fresh in their memories; the main strength of the diary approach is the avoidance of reliance on memory, but, if the informant does not keep the diary up-to-date, at least part of that strength is lost.

Moser and Kalton, 1971: 82

Some participants reported writing the diary at bed time or at regular intervals while others settled into a routine of writing on alternate evenings. Many participants did not carry the diary with them, which suggested that information had been naturally lost, as

opposed to writing the diary soon after interaction via the mobile phone. Therefore, the participant's memories of the feelings may have faded during the time between experience and writing the diary. Additionally, diaries were often left in different locations and sometimes they were not written in at all, due to drunkenness for example (Eric, 23).

Participants also adopted their own style of recording use, which greatly varied in detail and style across participants. Many participants were systematic in their completion of the information, simply recording time, location, and type of communication, content and feeling (see excerpt below). Matthew (18) gave the basic data relating to content, mood and time of day. He later claimed that writing the diary for another two weeks would have given him the opportunity to be stricter and fuller in his explanation. Eric (23) differed to Matthew in terms of recording pieces at the first available opportunity and subsequently re-read the basic notes of use in order to reflect and remember how he felt. Occasionally there would be reflections at the end of each day, but this did not happen when content was not written on the same day it was generated and therefore reflections were omitted. Emma was somewhat stricter and wrote her diary as she used her mobile phone, reflecting briefly at the time and also writing a detailed reflection at the end of each day.

Thursday 25/08/05

5:45 pm: Walking to my old house to pick up a phone (proper one). I call Rob. One of those random uncalled for and very expensive calls – simply expressing affection.

You must think we are rather annoying as a couple – but I like him to know that I like him.

7:15 pm: Uni, alone. Rob answers my text – he keeps with the cheeky love of my earlier message.

7:30 pm: I send back a text message with reference to football (he likes football)

8:30 pm: Uni, alone, text message to my friend again in GER to arrange telephone conversation later.

8:31 pm: Text back from her about this. We "arrange" a conversation for about 9:15 pm

11:30 pm: At home, alone, text message from Rob – he's on his way home – will call later if I am still awake.

11:32 pm: My reply to him – arrange to call (or rather tell him he doesn't have to)

Reflections: I realise how often Rob and I exchange text messages or any kind of message – in that sense the phone is important to me and his messages usually make me feel a lot better (so you could say the phone makes me happy – although I really do not think that it is only the phone – it is the message) and the mobile, strangely enough, is important to arrange communication via other means – usually "proper" telephone. And I do use it more often with people I can't see regularly.

Diary Excerpt – Emma (27)

Saturday 12/11/05:

16:26 – 17:05 Text received x 3, 2 different people – personal. Arranged night ☺[7] Car, pub.
17:16 Call made arranging night ☺ pubs, 4 calls.
17:17 Call made arranging night ☺ pub
17:21 received as previous
17:45 Shared Debbie-like files with hockey boys :-0 :-0 Ho ho ho. Bluetoothed to everyone. Other lads showed their Debbie-like files and shared. Showed TV on mins. Banter about rubbish phones some boys had ☺ Ho ho ho
18:29 Friend used my phone to make personal call ☹ Pub

Diary Excerpt – Gareth (25)

In comparison to Emma (27), Gareth (25) was descriptive and used emoticons which are often used in text messaging. He used these to standardise the emotions he was representing, without giving any further detail. Emma gave more comprehensive accounts with levels of interpretation of how she used her phone. Many of the diaries gave examples of group use, although the most prominent use was for intimate and personal use with partners and families. These diary entries interestingly detailed contact with partners when the mobile phone did not appear as significant for contact with friends in the initial interview, thereby illustrating a shift in value. Emma gave the impression of placing little value on her mobile phone in terms of friendship with others, using the telephone and email to communicate with friends. In the context of her long-distance relationship the mobile phone adopted a different value. Feelings towards the device were representational of those in the relationship, expressed though mobile

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[7] This is an emoticon expressing the reaction to communication. ☺ = Happy/excited, ☹ = neutral feelings.

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phone use. It was at this point in the fieldwork that personal relationships became striking in the use and value of the device, a significance that cannot be ignored.

Wednesday 24/08/05

> Reflections: Oh, I have a rather strange relationship with my phone – Rob's message really made my day and possibly a couple of the following days as well. Without the phone, this would not have been possible, I admit – but really, it is also due to rob – after all, he sent the messages.

<div align="right">Diary Excerpt – Emma (27)</div>

Emma's diary was analysed in conjunction with her initial interview highlighting different interaction values in the use of the mobile phone. Emma (27) claimed to have a low and practical use of her mobile phone with her friends, but the diary highlighted that Emma also used her mobile phone as interaction in itself, expressed in the value she places on the text messages she received. This is an example of one nuance; another nuance is the excerpt below conveying how impressions in use were managed when the diary was being written.

AE: Do you think that your behaviour… your communication changed because you had to write it down?

James: Yeah I definitely thought about it more. I was definitely more selective than what I thought and what I was going to send…Yeah I was definitely slightly more selective … I wouldn't like be necessarily over-selective but I was definitely more aware of what I was saying to people … Because you are more conscious of it is like why … I don't think I should really say that by phone. It's like … You don't realise, you are more aware of… what you are actually saying but definitely, if you are thinking about it… without a doubt.

<div align="right">Follow-up Interview Excerpt – James (24)</div>

James (24) reported changing the way he used his mobile phone. He avoided the potential embarrassment of using slang in the projections he conveyed for the research. Writing the diary also allowed James to become aware of the ways in which he presented himself using the mobile phone in everyday life. He therefore changed his communication style to project an improved image of himself. Interaction therefore became reshaped by his interaction with me and the research.

The diary became an exercise for some participants in reviewing the way they use their devices and how they present themselves. James became increasingly selective over content he had mediated through text messaging, whilst Emma claimed to be an 'unrepresentative' user in the first interview, later claiming that the diary demonstrates she needed to reconsider her ideas.

AE: If you were to make a statement about using this in the last two weeks what would you say in relation to what you found out about yourself?

Emma: That I having had, having written the diary I probably should reconsider my ideas about what I think about mobile phone usage. Be less negative about it or accept that I am much more girlie than I would like to be... Won't wear pink from now on... Oh God.

Follow-up Interview Excerpt, Emma (27).

Emma (27) reflected how much she uses and values the mobile phone more than she initially realised prior to the diary task; actually using her mobile phone far more compared to how much she believed she had been using it. At the interview stage, many participants admitted that the diary made them realise how much they use their mobile phones in frequency and purpose, while also realising how attached to their devices they had become. For example, the mobile phone was often used as a form of surveillance (Emma, 27), while the device was significant enough to Eric (23). He 'could live without it, but would rather not'.

Follow-up interviews

These interviews were carried out in the same or similar locations as the previous interviews. Complemented by the trust established with participants, these interviews discussed the diaries to enable further development of emerging themes that arose in the first interview, though not explicitly. This stage also aimed to define topics to explore in subsequent group interviews through identifying the social and personal relationships participants had with friends, family and partners. These interviews served to review, reflect and refine methods in the clarification of ambiguities from the previous interview and diaries.

These interviews were a significant part of the adoptive and adaptive approach to fieldwork design. The interview schedules were often produced on the day of the interview following verbal contact with the participants following the first interview, as illustrated in question 4 of the schedule (see Appendix 9). The first three questions were

ice-breakers to elicit conversation concerning the diary. Using these questions identified how frequently accounts were made and if data was omitted, while the extra questions were to cover absent or vague topics from the first interview. These questions were impromptu, probing questions asking participants to expand on written passages of the diaries that were either interesting or unclear. The second part of these interviews was tailored to individual participants. These questions centred on previous findings, after a preliminary analysis of the first interview, gathered at intervals in the data collection. Appendix 10 is the final schedule of questions for the final participant interviewed, showing the areas of interest after an intricate processes of refinement.

A common issue for participants was the inclusion and exclusion of data that they were unsure would be useful to the research. For example, Eric (23) informed me that he used his mp3 player on his phone and did not include this in his diary in the belief that this data was of little use. This observation of how the diaries were completed relate not only to the importance of the participants' perceptions in value for the research, but also how they relate to me as a researcher. From the perspective of a researcher, I felt that the more I bonded with participants the more thorough they were in the interviews, together with the concern they showed for completing the diary correctly. Kirsty (17) showed concern over completing the task 'correctly' or whether she had provided the correct data in the correct way. There was no correct way to complete the diary or even a correct way to use the device. Kirsty's concerns were not related to correctness, rather they were related to providing what was expected and appreciated in terms of data.

This phase of the data collection served to develop the relationship established with the participants as mobile phone users. Many participants offered extensive detail to their responses, whereas this was not always the case in the initial interviews. One participant was rather evasive in this follow-up interview phase. Gareth (25) seemed reluctant to expand on details of the diary in his interview, particularly in terms of personal relationships.

These interviews provided data which was then used to focus the interview schedules in the subsequent data collection phases. Overall the reception of this interview illustrated trust together with a degree of obligation to provide the data. Although participants were briefed and informed regarding withdrawal and the absence of obligation to provide answers, there may have been some form of pressure to disclose information

and feelings. Through the agreement to take part participants might have perceived they had given their permission to be asked personal questions. Therefore, participants may have felt they 'ought' to provide this information as part of their agreement to take part in the research and proceed with the data collection in order to receive the gift on completion. The main participants adopted an important role in the design and the operation of the friendship group; this will be described in the following section.

Friendship group interviews

This phase of the data collection was designed from preliminary analyses of the data taken from each of the main participants. Seven of these participants became gatekeepers of access regarding their friendships, therefore providing a snowball sample of the people they interacted with using their mobile phones. The connection to and the trust of each member of the group was an extension of the relationship built with their friend, a main participant in the study. The main participants were therefore essential to the development of themes and design of the tailored group interview.

Data relating to location, time, content and method of contact was taken from the diaries and used to outline the topics for discussion in the group interviews. The diaries were carefully analysed with specific attention given to the ways in which groups used mobile phones with each other at a distance and co-presently. Additionally the piloting of the diaries enabled the design of the group interviews. Piloting was particularly powerful in terms of designing the pilot focus group, indicating the likely topics of focus for actual group interviews.

In semi-structured interviewing open-ended questions allow unforeseen meanings and values to emerge from the data using similar schedule designs to focus group interviewing, as an 'aide-memoire' (Bloor et al, 2001). A number of focus group interviewing methods were appropriated as a lens through which to view how users interact within a group. This provided a mesh of experience and views of collective experience (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999) 'on precisely the topic of interest' (Morgan, 1997: 13), thereby being a suitable method for peer groups. The richness of the focus group method lies not only in its efficiency to 'yield rich data on group norms', but also on the unforeseen dimensions to the research (Bloor et al, 2001) through the manifestation and clarification of opinions and understandings from listening to the group (Rossman and Rallis, 1998). Open-ended questions allowed the respondents to

give a full and descriptive response (Stroh, 2000; Fetterman, 1989). In particular, 'funnelled questions' (Hammersley an Atkinson, 1983) were used to 'probe' in order to 'encourage the respondent to give an answer and as full a response as the format allows' (Fielding, 1993: 140). The prompt and probes were used to understand circumstances and group interests such as attending concerts, watching motor sport and solving maths problems.

Following a number of interviews many of the probes became closed-ended after a preliminary analysis resulting from transcription. The design of the focus group was revised and focused to yield in-depth data (Strauss, 1987), particularly in terms of the bottom-up categories of data (Coffey and Atkinson, 1995). In contrast to focus group methods, each interview was individually designed to take account of the previous data from the main participant. These were designed to explore feelings and personal contexts, and also to allow participants to generate their own responses (Morgan, 1988).

Following the research briefing and the request for consent, ice-breaking exercises were carried out allowing the participants to become familiar with me, prior to asking questions about their private use of the mobile phone within their friendship group (See Appendix 10). There was a sense of duty to reciprocate the familiarity by showing them ways in which I used my own device, enabling all participants to feel at ease. I showed groups a file of me dancing and explained this was shared amongst my own friendship group. This was amusing for the participants and showed them that I too use the capabilities on my device to mediate entertainment and amusement with my peers. I had requested the opportunity to examine their collective and somewhat exclusive phone use and, in doing so, sharing my own mobile phone use encouraged participants to feel at ease, leading to more detailed accounts of mobile phone use.

Asking all members of the group to provide an individual opening statement produced individual data, before their different experiences and opinions began to enmesh and suppress in the consensus of the group (Morgan, 1988: 58) in the form of a 'groupthink' (Janis, 1982). This exercise asked the group members to write down what they use their mobile phones for in relation to their friendship group. Writing this opening statement reinforces the commitment to contributing to the group even in the likelihood of disapproval (Greenbaum, 1987; Templeton, 1987). Differences were distinguished

providing 'a basis for probing the strength and the breadth of the consensus' (Morgan, 1988: 58).

The main topic intended to uncover the group dynamics amplified by or reshaped by mobile phone use. Participants were asked to discuss the features used, and the contents, encouraging narrative accounts. This topic necessitated a number of specific probes and questions in the attempt to gain insight into the relationships within the group and the value of the mobile phone. Other areas of interest included the advantages and disadvantages of mobile phone use within the group, exclusive use within the group in comparison to use with friends outside the group, personal relationships, changes to social life, loss of the mobile phone, self-expression and aesthetic qualities of the device. The final topic of the interviews focused on the cultural significance of the mobile phone as a relational artefact, particularly in terms of personalisation in inclusion (Lasen, 2004; Green, 2003); thereby gaining an insight into the value of the mobile phone within their understandings of a consumer item.

The main participants acted as mediators in the relationship between their friends and me. This presence in the group was rather useful to the research because the relationship and rapport formed with the main participants transformed their role in the research design as proxy researchers, allowing the opportunity to probe for even richer data. The trust establish with the main participants granted me access to the group after they became progressively familiar with me and the research.

Although 12 group interviews were intended, only seven were conducted due to the dropping out of participants and the unavailability of friends. Groups ranged in number between three and eight, although many groups consisted of four to five friends. The research design specifically required groups of local friendship, with the focus on being together as opposed to a virtually present network. This was one of the factors for interviews not taking place, due to friends moving away during the time elapsing between agreeing to take part and the interviews taking place. Dropping out also occurred due to other factors; other commitments, impromptu changes to circumstances, work commitments and simply not responding were also factors of non-participation. Decisions over which friends to include were left to the discretion of the main participants. For example, Kate's (26) group consisted of only three due to recent conflicts within the group that excluded a possible fourth member.

The friendship groups were comprised of close friendships between work colleagues, friendships that were formed at school, university friendships and the friendship of housemates. Kirsty's group were all women aged 17 who had become friends at school, who shared these strong ties of friendship, as did Gareth's mixed-sexed group (all aged 25) who also had become friends at school and remained in close proximity. David (19) and Kate (26) had both established their friendship groups while at university. Emma (27) had also made her mixed-sex group of friends at university on a postgraduate course of study; a friendship that was only a year old at the time of the data collection. Claire (22) had established a close friendship with her three friends (a woman and two men) at work. Finally, Eric (23) had close friendship bonds with his housemates (mixed sex), some of which had known each other since university. This provides insights to the strength of bonds within groups, together with how these groups have become friends using mobile phones to mediate friendship. The findings will suggest that high levels of familiarity and similarity contribute to frequent use of the mobile phone. For example, the housemates use the mobile phone differently from the group who work together. The men use the phone differently with each other compared to how the mobile phone is used with and among women.

This section has presented the methods used in interviewing friendship groups to gain insight into use, shared use in groups, changes to interaction and an insight into understandings of identity and practices of consumption. The next stage of data collection further explores consumption and identity using advertising, commercials and marketing materials to produce data relating to consumption and identity.

Group interviews: commercials

An aim of this thesis is to establish the role of commercial images in consumption and identity. The effect of marketing and commerce contributes to how consumers experience the mobile phone as a cultural artefact and how they expect to experience the mobile phone as performance of identity, consumer item and as a communication tool. Friendship groups interviewed provided data of consumption to be explored further using the commercial discussion groups. Additionally, advertising material was gathered for interpretation by the main participants as consumers. Data relating to consumption, adoption and advertising was collected emphasizing the integration of the

device as a 'different' artefact (Kirsty, 17) and useful to everyday life. The interviewing methods will now be examined.

The 12 main participants studied were segregated into two interview groups according to gender. This segregation was primarily to split the participants to form suitably sized interview groups, six participants being the optimum size for interview groups that are similar to focus groups (Bloor et al, 2001: 26). Many commercials at the time used gender-targeted marketing, such as sexualised imagery and masculine and feminine associations in gendered preferences and style. The use of gendered marketing, evident in the commercials selected to show participants in the interviews, justified splitting the groups according to gender in order to identify any difference.

The interviews were held in seminar rooms in the University on weekday evenings. It became problematic to arrange a time suitable for everyone; many of the participants were often committed to work and leisure activities in the evenings. This meant that participants were unable to attend as complete groups of main participants. From the experience of people dropping out in the earlier stages of the fieldwork, substitution arrangements were made in advance. Using a convenience sample, three women unable to attend were substituted by colleagues and acquaintances of similar demographics, as were the men who were substituted by two of my acquaintances. This left the male group with five participants, as one of the main participants could not attend at short notice. Problems with participation meant that a number of the substitute participants had not purchased a new phone in the months prior to the fieldwork. Not all the main participants had, however, noted the commercial advertising at the time of their purchase. As the substitute participants met the age range criteria they were suitable substitutes; and they were as (un)likely to be influenced by the commercial advertising as those recruited in store.

To explore the effect of commercial material on the choice of purchase, material was gathered during the second trial when many of the main participants were recruited. Still images from retail and industry magazines were gathered and television commercials were recorded at peak times to subsequently show to participants. The commercials were those broadcasted by O2 and handset manufacturers promoted by the store during the retail quarter; the Motorola V3 Razr Noir, Sony Ericsson K750i and an O2 loyalty-rewarded commercial. Advertising from magazines included the pink

Samsung E530, Samsung D500, both of which broadcasted commercials which could not be captured, and the Sony Ericsson K750i. Still images also included the marketing of pay-and-go loyalty-rewarded scheme, as well as an associated marketing strategy between the service provider and Motorola to promote a combination of the Motorola V3 reward scheme.

Appendix 11 is the interview schedule for the group discussion of commercial material. The schedule is designed to have less interviewer intervention than the previous interview design, allowing for open discussion of topics. To commence the interviews, I re-introduced myself to the participants to encourage them to introduce themselves to each other in terms of age, occupation and handsets that they own, being that phones are the reason they have all been brought together.

Following individual introduction the commercials were viewed and notes were taken in terms of thoughts and impressions to form a basis for discussion. After participants had commented on their interpretations of imagery, prompts were used to discuss how the social relations and social capacities of the device were mediated, followed by prompts regarding the appeal of the handset. The commercial broadcasted by O2 was viewed using the same format of prompting as the previous commercial; relating to interpretation of impressions, mood, appeal and also the service that is being offered and the influence of loyalty rewards. The same process was carried out for the Sony Ericsson K750i and the discussion session moved onto the interpretation of the five still adverts, which again focused on the appeal of the adverts and the possible influence of purchasing of the mobile phones being advertised.

> ...that black one works ... there's more black space so it's more striking and black space does sell, not the same as white sells, but, it draws you into the phone more. But, that blue [green, UFO Sony Ericsson ad] doesn't really draw you in towards that phone really ... [Sony Ericsson] just much sharper and straight-lined, which is basically what the phone is really ... but, back on that [the UFO advert] there, the photo doesn't look particularly sharp, compared with that black one ... that portrays the phone much better ... It's a bit disappointing ... because that one could be just like a random camera phone really... and didn't really push that as a very detailed like focused camera.

> Group Interview: Commercials, Excerpt – David, 19.

A number of responses related to the effectiveness of adverts and to the appeal of marketing strategies. This is demonstrated by David (19) in the excerpt above. The findings suggest that the mobile phones are purchased because they are perceived as 'different' and stylish.

The Motorola commercial produced a large amount of data from the depiction of various capabilities inside a compact stylish phone. The women initially claimed that this mobile phone was attractive to them, later claiming, however, to require more information before purchasing the mobile phone. The Motorola also appealed to the men primarily due to the attractive female appearing in the commercial together with the 'sleek' look of the mobile phone. Men also discussed the shortcomings of this handset in terms of capabilities, concluding that the marketing imagery attracts their attention, although functionality would deter them. Both groups required additional information rather than simply relying on the appeal of the commercial imagery when purchasing a new handset.

These focus groups were the final stage of the data collection phase of the fieldwork. Before turning to the findings from this data in the Chapters 5, 6 and 7, methods of analysis will be described in the following section.

Analysis

The data collection processes were continually analysed and refined through the fieldwork; each method informed the next. This entailed preliminary analysis during transcription to adapt methods and funnel questions for the subsequent interviews. Data analysis and coding used a combination of software packages and traditional techniques. While computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (Caqdas) provided a means of accessing and searching the data, manual coding proved useful in terms of interpreting the data. All four stages of the data collection amounted to 24 interviews, nine group interviews and 12 diaries. This section will now present the methods used to analyse progressively funnelled qualitative data to arrive at the five themes across the three arenas of study.

The rich data, relating to unforeseen dimensions of mobile phone use in everyday life, can be defined as 'grounded theoretical' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), requiring a 'bottom-up' approach to interpret 45 pieces of data. This large amount of qualitative

data was organised into a workable order before analysis was carried out. A continuous preliminary analysis was used to adapt and adjust data collection methods, detecting rising themes used to design subsequent interviews. Atlas.ti 5 was used to organise the data at this stage and also to test the effectiveness of the software for a full analysis, ascertaining a coding framework, while confirming whether thematic patterns could be further explored.

Once the data collection was completed and transcribed, all data sets and types of data were used in one hermeneutic unit and coded. Coding required reading and re-reading to decide on the most prominent codes and themes in relation to the research questions. This involved reviewing and highlighting sections of data (Strauss, 1987) to indicate recurring codes forming code families or themes. These were grounded from collating the fragmented data. To begin this process, all the data was entered into Atlas.ti and codes were assigned whilst reading data, thereby using combination methods of analysis. Memos were attached to the data to identify and comment on interesting findings. These were, however, often single instances and not occurrences that could be applied to the whole data set. The hermeneutic unit started to feel confusing and cluttered, with many codes appearing only once. Often codes could be redefined and then merged with other codes, sometimes excluding significant fragments of data when these fell outside the coding framework. Additionally, many codes overlapped and intersected themes. This identified that many themes branched into all three arenas.

Coding for computer-assisted analysis proved an overwhelming task. In finding a less complicated way to manage the data set, three separate files or hermeneutic units were used according to social networks, intimate uses, and consumption and identity. This was also an insufficient way of coding the data as many codes and themes overlapped the three arenas, with many codes belonging to more than one code family (See Appendix 12: Table of preliminary codes and families). Using Atlas.ti as a preliminary method of analysis aided the process of getting to understand the data through quickly accessing and searching the data.

For the final analysis a thematic approach facilitated linking codes in the deduction of themes that were affixed to a wall. The data remained connected with each participant whilst maintaining social context. Codes were also produced that were applicable to the participants through listing the most significant themes vertically to the participants

listed horizontally. This approach managed, organised and aided the theme development of data, deriving the five themes: power relations, virtual presence, co-presence, identity reflections and aspirations, and multi-modal use and social space. The associations between the data were then established, using the wall to link the data to other data developing themes (see Appendix 13 for the format of the linking chart). It is this multi-linking from codes and themes across and to other themes that are the identifying features of this thesis. For example 'exclusion and inclusion' is a theme placed into more than one thesis theme; for example, power relations and co-presence. Appendix 14 illustrates these established relationships that are grounded in the data and used for a coding system, themes, mediators and thesis themes (See Appendix 14).

Examples of the data were then selected for Chapters 5, 6 and 7 which present the analysis, address research questions and provide themed illustrations of the types of interaction and social meanings prominent in the data. It has become unavoidable that much of the data is not presented in the findings due to the sheer quantity, and to the intent to present data that reflects the recurrent underlying themes that can be deduced from wider scopes of data. Writing about the data was crucial to analysis and interpretation in maintaining context and social demographics of participants (See Appendix 15 for social demographics). It was vital to note personal aspects such as background and experience, together with social demographics, often make using the device both socially and personally meaningful. This gives rise to local meanings of main participants and their friends in a specific location.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the various methods used for data collection and analysis during the fieldwork. Illustrations throughout this chapter have reflected on image and rapport building with gatekeepers and participants. The relations established with participants and gatekeepers produced rich data, by using a reflexive approach in my role as both a social researcher and a mobile phone user. This involved building rapport and led to trust between the research and the researched. This allowed the research design to be progressively amended in order to hone in and focus the data collection and preliminary analysis while maintaining centrality. Using a place, a space and a time a viewpoint was created to examine effects of marketing strategies, social practices, conduct and the reshaping of relations using the mobile phone in everyday life. This chapter has presented interesting stages of the data collection procedure, such as how

my role in the retail setting was negotiated and renegotiated for invisibility and visibility as an observer and, later, a researcher. The main participants adopted an important and reflexive role in the data collection process, switching between research subject, to a reflecting subject, gate-keeper and proxy researcher. These participants became conscious of mobile phone use, image projections and the self-expression they projected through the data collection methods, often eliciting them to redefine their use and image. Analytical methods were used in an adaptive manner, progressively informing each stage of the data collection and final analysis. The analysis used a combination of computer-assisted methods and manual coding to organise and interpret the data into themes and coherent findings chapters. The following three chapters will discuss all five grounded themes, considering these in terms of how the mobile phone is used in everyday practices and understandings within social networks, personal relations and identity. The next chapter presents the use of mobile phone in the social practices of friendship groups in a culture of communication.

Chapter 5
A Network Connection

Introduction

The first of three chapters will analyse actor categories of how people currently use mobile phones in everyday life. Recognising that friendship (social relations), intimate connections (personal relations) and identity are interlaced in a culture of communication, presenting these aspects as exclusive chapters is simply a workable way to extrapolate the findings, adopting a grounded theory approach to present the findings. Grounded theory is a keystone of qualitative social research in which theory is discovered through the analysis of data from empirical situations (Glaser and Strauss, 1968) and interactions, namely how people use artefacts in everyday relations together with the meanings they form. This will allow naturally occurring patterns and meanings to become visible without any bias from preconceptions of any particular established theory. Associations will, however, be made with other theories where empirical patterns echo a body of theory. A main objective of this thesis is to establish how the mobile phone is relevant in everyday life as a social relation. The role of the mobile phone will not be presented as constituting networks, more significantly the mobile phone structures interaction within existing networks. This chapter will now respond to this objective with findings that reflect the use and particularly how people negotiate cultures of communication by the use of the mobile phone within social networks. Underlying this, it will be investigating how actors construct the notion of different, similar and like practices to non-mobile phone practices of interaction.

The data analysis reveals a number of contemporary practices and understandings of the mobile phone as a social and personal technological tool used in everyday life. This chapter will present the findings relating to how the mobile phone becomes embedded in the culture of communication as a technology mirroring and reshaping interactions, together with responding to attachments between people. It will subsequently explore how mobile phone use becomes embedded in the most frequent and often the most mundane interactions of social networks in everyday life. The mobile phone has become an artefact through use and integration in our culture of communication and consumption, forming a relation between people in social networks. It is this very use between people that gives value to the mobile phone, moulding an 'artefact' of social networks, relations and culture. It is 'connectedness' of close relations and interactions

that appropriate the mobile phone in particular and specific ways conversely characterising friendship groups. The practices and everyday use of mobile phones are often rather personalised to the relations between people in the network, not only integrating but more importantly socially constructing a technology that has become more than a digital device. It is these social networks and relations within them that produce the practices, understandings and meanings of the mobile phone negotiated in the contemporary culture of communication. The mobile phone has become socially and culturally constructed. Common patterns of mobile use will be examined relating to 12 users (primarily middle-class students and graduates aged between 17 and 27) together with seven of their peer groups in terms of practices, understandings, belonging, mediated disconnection, unorganised co-ordination of organised contact, controlled freedom and connecting with mobile mode and gender.

Belonging

Friends use the mobile phone in a multitude of ways, from simple co-ordination of social activity and maintaining contact, to using the device when they are together. The mobile phone is used not only to share and compare content but to emotionally engage with each other. The data suggests that the mobile phone has become a technology providing the capacity of continuous connectivity to a social network. This is explicit from the data when the groups describe how they use the mobile phone on a daily basis. It is also clear, in a less explicit sense, that people become attached to the mobile phone device because of the attachment both mediated and signified. Owning a mobile phone and using it in ways that mediate feelings and symbols of belonging were evident in the data when the groups described how they access and include each other. The data conveyed more subtle negotiations in belonging, with owning a particular mobile phone having specific features appropriated by the group, characterising their collective use of the mobile phone. These features often signified inclusion in co-proximate uses and the togetherness of the group. This section will present such findings relating to the mobile phone as a 'belonging' technology.

Beginning this examination of belonging, the collective use of one mobile phone was often described as a way of speaking to the group. The younger friendship group described how they use the loudspeaker facility to form a group connection through including more than two members in a conversation.

> Sometimes if one of my friends' phones one of us, and we all want to speak to her, we just put her on loudspeaker so we can all talk together.
>
> Kirsty, 17

The telephone was traditionally a one-to-one communication device; nowadays both mobile and landline phones have the capacity to allow one-to-many communication through the use of the loudspeaker facility. This can be described as one of the most basic ways of establishing inclusion in communication of more than one group member, illustrating how practices have changed to facilitate the social situations of friendship groups. This use echoes conference calling, a practice of the business community. The mobile phone provides this capacity in another arena of everyday life distinct from business use, demonstrating how the mobile phone can cater for established practices in new spaces. The use of the loudspeaker facility illustrates how features are important to groups because of their capacities to include and reinforce belonging of group members. Divisions in groups become apparent when different handsets provided additional new social capacities, such as the capacity to share content via Bluetooth. These findings will now be discussed as part of the practices and negotiations of belonging to groups, as well as the fragmentations within the groups.

> I didn't have Bluetooth on my phone before and I was quite interested in having Bluetooth because I do swap sort of pictures and... ring tones between friends quite often. So, you know, I knew it was free to do it via Bluetooth... just swap between each other easily. So I *was* quite keen to have Bluetooth.
>
> Claire, 22.

It was not so much about having 'Bluetooth' capabilities that interested Claire (22); it was the actual capacity to swap pictures with her friends. Having the content swapping facilities creates the capacity to be included in an additional way. Claire was enthusiastic to use this form of sharing and exchange interaction in the same way as her friends. The data conveys a strong desire, even a compulsion, to be part of the group. This becomes increasingly evident in this chapter, particularly in relation to mediated alienation, which will be discussed in the next section. In extending this thread of sharing and belonging further in this analysis, Eric highlights how the mobile phone enhances the togetherness of the co-present friendship.

We were all exchanging ring tones for about half hour. Just having a giggle about it all ... it was a really... good... half hour, if that makes sense... because we were all laughing, and even though it was to do with mobile phones.

Eric, 23.

The exchange of mobile phone content was a common co-present activity among friendship groups. The mobile phone was not only used to virtually interact or communicate across space, it was more often a tool used to encourage closeness within a small physical space. Content would be shown and/or exchanged within the group, often content as simple as sending humorous text messages as though they are gifts. There is a need to have these capacities, through a compulsion to be included in the group practices, and gift-giving consolidates inclusion and the feeling that the actor belongs to the group.

This sharing activity not only echoes other studies and a theory of gift-exchange (Taylor and Harper, 2003; Mauss, 1954/1990), it is also an activity enhancing the togetherness of a network. The swapping of files echoes gift-giving, reciprocation and obligation that have been highlighted by Mauss (1954/1990), in which the process of economic transmission builds on relationships and consolidates relations within groups and to other groups. This forms friendships through giving or sharing and, in turn, builds a collective identity in sharing similar contents which emphasise tastes and preferences of groups. The giving and receiving of files as a co-proximate activity stimulates social engagement and reinforces friendship. This indicates respect through courteous giving and the reciprocation shows co-operation, linking to Mauss' claims of gift-giving. As mentioned in Chapter 3, gift-giving enhances alliances through 'courtesies' that work as fundamental obligations to be included in the circulations of transactions in and across groups. The entire process of reciprocating content and even text messages sustains group involvement and the sense of belonging to the group, together with playing an active role in maintaining group solidarity and identity. This will examined further in Chapter 7.

Much of the file-sharing and showing emphasises the capacity of the mobile phone as a mediator and a provider of fun and entertainment in both physical and virtual presence for the groups using them. Many of the participants described using the mobile phone to create mementos, to mediate same experiences and interests, to share jokes with the aim of reinforcing bonds within friendship groups through sharing particular content of

interests or of gender. For example, groups would often fragment when sharing, becoming gendered and therefore exclusive. An act of belonging, sharing and inclusion actually becomes an identity-defining practice of the groups, raising divides; namely gendered divides. The following section will expand on the use of mementos and the consequential group divides in terms of an exclusive belonging, focusing on these practices and negotiations using the co-present capacities of the mobile phone.

Mementos

Non-telecommunication capacities of the mobile phone were often embraced by the friendship groups when physically together; this was more often the case than sending pictures to each other during times of absence, which was not common practice among those interviewed. For many groups, the mobile phone was used in place of a digital camera, with the added capacity of continuous access to the photos for sharing. The mobile phone is more often in continuous possession, compared to digital cameras and photo albums, which are not. In the same way the mobile phone is instantaneous and provides reminders of a previous event. Eric's and Gareth's friends are using the mobile phone as an effective reminder of events to the groups at a later time, namely to 'compare notes' and to provide amusement to the group when together.

> Photos are a useful little medium to have. It's quite cool. It's always good to remember the nights out from before... comparing notes! 'What happened to you?'
>
> Eric's Friend - Alex, 23

The mobile phone is often used in a capacity providing banter, to amuse and to entertain friends while in a group, particularly for Eric (23) and for Gareth's friendship group, usually at the expense of fellow group members. Unexpected moments are photographed or filmed by the other members of the group, especially if they do not enjoy being photographed, such as filming each other asleep or intoxicated. This sometimes forms 'a whole gallery of me falling asleep in different places' (Gareth, 25). For Gareth's friendship group, 'if anybody's toppled, then people try and take advantage of the fun' (Louise, 25). It is about catching each other in situations to show the other members and the person in the photograph the following day. This echoes Kindberg et al (2005) who found that friends often share photos through simply showing each other and interact over them without actually sending the pictures. Gareth's friendship group illustrate that photographs were taken for the purpose of this

sharing in the group at a later time; for entertainment and, moreover, as a memento of an amusing event. Sarah (25), Gareth's friend, emphasises that these pictures are not always displayed to everyone, but shown to the person in the picture as a reminder, as a way of respecting the person who is potentially being mocked.

Photographs are shared for amusement and as reminders of pleasant experiences of the times when the groups were together. Additional multimedia on the mobile phone is also shared, for practices representing group interests and tastes of the collective. Theme tunes and video clips reminding people of their childhood were the most commonly shared material. It is this nostalgic material that people become enthusiastic to have as content on their own phones also, perhaps, to share with other friendship networks. Eric illustrates the extent of the extent of this multimedia content on his mobile phone.

> People think it's awesome. Go 'Wow, Red Dwarf, send it to me' ... On my Mp3 [player] I have got a whole play list dedicated to cartoons. Got Gummy Bears, Mysterious Cities of Gold, Racoons, Thunder Cats, Transformers. You've got to have the nostalgia! ... I just wanted Mysterious Cities of Gold, because that was like my favourite cartoon when I was little, and it has got an awesome theme tune.

> Eric, 23.

The nature of this type of sharing, demonstrated by both Eric (23) and Sam (25), can be compared to childhood activities, such as the swapping of cards or stickers in order to complete a collection. The mobile phone is being used for nostalgic practices between friends, and this capacity of the mobile phone not only mediates this content, but also produces mementos of childhood that can be given to others as gifts.

There is a paradox here. The co-present engagement with the mobile phone creates personal interaction. However, the material shared is not particularly 'personal' between individual members of a friendship group. The mobile phone has many personal associations in the ways it is used and understood in friendship, in intimacy, and also in how it became an embodied identity. These associations relating to intimacy and identity will be discussed in later chapters. These personal associations construct the mobile phone as a personalised technology, both in use and in appearance representing personal taste. Therefore it is somewhat strange that possessing non-personal shared content, such as the nostalgia of children's television shows which is not personal, is

then shared with others. An explanation for this is the need to share this commonly embraced material to reaffirm or gain acceptance and inclusion in multiple friendship circles. This demonstrates that file sharing in co-presence is a paradox concerning the more recent practices of mobile phone use. Not only does it emphasise social practices specific to groups, therefore defining identity, it also merges into groups outside these specific groups interviewed and into other groups to which the participants belong; to belong inside these as opposed to outside.

The main paradox of file-sharing relates to the virtual and co-present use of the mobile phone. The mobile phone was originally a communication tool for virtual connection, virtual connection being a main finding for discussion in more detail with reference to the intimate use of mobile phone in Chapter 6. However, the mobile phone has extra facilities aside from calling and text messaging and these are used to interact in physical presence. The mobile phone is not only used to interact whilst apart and on the move, the device provides the capacity to engage, interact and respond to those who are physically present. This is also discussed in depth in Chapter 6. The next section describes how the bond-enhancing sharing also creates exclusive bonds in sub-groups as a result of fracture and social difference in close-friendship groups.

Exclusive belonging

It is clear that the mobile phone is used to mediate shared interests as previously demonstrated. This use illustrates interrelations of each friendship group; sharing is often based on sharing material of shared interest. For Claire's and Gareth's groups shared interests were also frequently mediated through simple text messages giving commentary on motorsport; or the simple mediation of jokes sent with the knowledge that group members would appreciate the nature of the joke. Among the seven friendship groups interviewed, the friends within each group all had similar lives and shared interests, indeed as do almost all friendship and social groups. Some went to university or college together whilst others worked together. Each group had prominent interests, such as motorsport, playing squash and the enjoyment of Disney films. This is claimed on the basis of a large proportion of each group sharing an interest, as opposed to every individual in a friendship group. For example, Claire's group all worked together and Claire (22), Peter (22) and Simon (22) were each interested in motorsport, the exception being the fourth member, Gill (27). This did not lead to exclusion. Gill and Peter were interested in animals, whilst Simon and Claire enjoyed tackling

numerical puzzles together. In many groups, this accentuated the inter-relations within friendship groups, particularly the levels of friendships and attachment between two or more members of each group. This did not necessarily 'exclude' others; it emphasised the stronger bonds. The practices in friendship groups of sharing content and specific information reveal the relationship dynamic and pronounced relations. The mobile phone has the capacity to demonstrate the interaction of individuals in their extent of communication.

Exclusion, on the basis of interests, does not necessarily cause ruptures in a friendship group between an individual and the others within the group. For example, Gill (27) did not express a feeling of exclusion due to her lack of interest in motorsport. Exclusion occurs in the form of dividing the group into sub-groups, thereby excluding those outside of the sub-group. The most prominent division in a friendship group was in gendered file sharing. The study showed how certain sharing excluded women, particularly with regard to jokes and pornographic video messaging.

> If we go out with the boys, or if we have a poker night, there are usually a few
> dirty videos that get passed about the phones.
> > Claire's Friend - Simon, 22.

Using pornography in a collective and public environment echoes the secular concepts of 'dirt' and 'matter out of place' (Douglas, 1966), and the inappropriateness of the broadcast in public is illustrated by a reaction of disgust among the women in mixed friendship groups – a reaction that created divides within the friendship group as a network on the basis of gender. Further exploration on the use of pornographic material on mobile phones will follow and how this is an echo of older practices of the distribution of pornography yet reshaped into a new capacity.

> Generally all the boys, I'll normally send like videos, pictures, sound clips of
> anything funny, or rude or anything like that ... You'd [to Louise] just look at us
> in disgust if we sent them... you'd probably say, that it's like really rude and
> things like that.
> > Gareth's Friend - Jack, 25

This nature of file sharing is an example of how friendships divide and how people with similar interests from outside the group join. It is the nature of shared contact that determines who is excluded. Gareth and his male friends, and Claire's friends Simon and Peter together with their other male friends share material only in the company of

each other. This is not a conscious 'exclusion' of the women, more a strategy to avoid offence or negative impressions over distasteful material. It is common among these participants that material remains solely with single-sexed friends, regardless of whether it offends the women. The material remains between the men and their other friends. The reinforcement of ties occurred in both directions, the women exclude the men while the men exclude the women where appropriate. This is evident when content is to be shared, forcing a change in behaviour and causing men to be less explicit in their sharing with the included women. Gareth's and Claire's friendship groups differentiated between masculine and feminine use of the mobile phone in terms of file sharing.

Pornography was a subject of considerable disgust by the women in the study, as the exposure to it on mobile phones seemed 'dirty' because it was out of place and therefore unexpected. Viewing sex, or recording sex for later viewing, is the 'dirt' of pornography. Watching what is generally considered to be private and intimate between people is the impurity; it is somehow a 'public' viewing, be it through an open door or on a screen, which characterises the 'dirt' as 'impure'. It is this exposure to what is generally considered as a private interaction that pollutes. The women therefore become aware of the inappropriateness of matter in the wrong place; being viewed 'in the pub' (Gareth, 25) which implies there is a potential to be broadcasted anywhere. The men embrace this use of material in groups of friends to reinforce masculinities.

Using a mobile phone to watch pornography is not dissimilar to watching DVDs and looking at magazines with a group of friends; the new practices, however, arise from using private material in public. This transforms meaning when matter is out of place, namely through the mobile and the resulting impurities that arise in the network society. Furthermore, the mobile phone is a new mode and a new kind of dissemination of pornography. Collective viewing and sharing is a form of dissemination which is a broadcast of the intimacy, and file sharing extends this dissemination. The mobile phone adds to the limitless capacity of being able to view this content anytime, anywhere, together with reinforcing masculinities and other collective identities, a subject for further discussion in Chapter 7.

Previous sections of this chapter have concentrated on selections of the data illustrating the capacities and practices of the mobile phone in consolidating co-present togetherness and friendship bonds. The majority of this was established using the

mobile phone as a platform providing stimuli in order to engage with other members of the friendship group and to solidify bonds. Maintaining the thread of belonging and sustained togetherness, the focus now will be upon the mobile phone's capacity of togetherness at times of separation whilst sharing the same experience with others, through using the mobile phone to simulate togetherness; or rather virtual togetherness through real-time contact, using multimedia to create a presence or a reminder during absence.

(Un)togetherness

There was a common use of mobile phones at concerts to reconvene as groups (Catherine, 27), and also to share the experience when separated from friends. Peter describes below how the mobile phone was used to create togetherness in the same experience at a concert. The practice of establishing and maintaining contact at a concert creates the capacity of togetherness when actual togetherness is not possible.

> It was like, 'Simon, look up! The fifth row up, a few seats across'... It was good... actually at that concert then because we were all... even though we were at the other side of the stadium, it was like we were all together. It was like we'd all get in touch with each other. We all went to see them together, otherwise we wouldn't have.
>
> Claire's friend – Peter, 22.

Members of the friendship group were at the same venue watching the same performance, yet they were not physically together, although they were enjoying the same experience. This is a somewhat quasi form of co-presence, yet it is also a *non-presence* in terms of standing besides each other and sharing the experience; this is a form of un-togetherness. The mobile phone therefore acted as a bridge in this separated co-presence, allowing the group to communicate in respect of the event, as they would if they were physically together; in this way simulating togetherness in their enjoyment.

Prior to the mobile phone, communication would have been restricted to prior- and post-event. The use of the mobile phone at concerts affords the capacity to create a mid-way bridge in the event of co-presence; although in fact absent, the friendship group can enjoy an experience as a collective by linking them as 'one big triangle' (Peter, 22), as though standing side-by-side. Visually locating each other, as Peter illustrates, is a togetherness which is virtually enhanced using the mobile phone to share comments in a scenario where it would be physically impossible, given each of their positions at the

concert. Using text messages to communicate, locate and mediate enjoyment to each other is a seemingly basic use of the mobile phone. However, it is the practice of use in this situation that defines another capacity of mobile phone use as a connectedness at such a large event which would otherwise not have occurred. The continuous contact can also be interpreted as symbolic of the need to share the experience, wanting to be together or simply sharing it with absent friends. Contact with absent friends is richer than with those who are at the concert, using multimedia messaging as 'a picture says a thousand words' (Gareth, 25). This allows them to share the experience in a more fully conveyed way than possible through a text message.

> It's very rare that I get picture messages. A couple of friends from work went to a gig the other day and took some photos of the singer and sent me that... a sort of 'Wish you were here' kind of thing.
>
> Claire, 22

Using other modes of the mobile phone such as multimedia messaging are ways the users convey jokes and project a feeling that they were thinking about their friends, wishing they were there, similar to sending a postcard. Multimedia messages and text messages are used when a member of the friendship group is absent at a group event. This can be interpreted as a symbol that the friend is missing out or being missed; it is symbolic that the absent friend is being included, and still belonging even during times of absence.

Jack (23) and Phil (26) often send each other photo messages at times when either is absent on a particular occasion of shared interest, for example a cricket match, or when one of them has gone away, to symbolise their location in a humorous manner and therefore maintaining the tie.

> I had a picture of err, John Barnes, when I was in Liverpool recently... But you never received it (to Jack).
>
> Emma's friend - Phil, 26.

This use of the mobile phone symbolised a location but depended on the interpretation by the person receiving it and Jack (23), in this case, was aware that Phil (26) was away in Liverpool and therefore the contact made sense to him. This mode of communication also added humour to the circumstance by photographing somebody associated with the location, and not a landmark as one would normally expect. This use of humour in a

photo message is also symbolic of the humour Jack and Phil have in common, in the same way that David (19) and his friends send spontaneous pictures of Terry Wogan for example. Such interactions reflect the humour, mockery and interests within the group which appear to be sport and fun based for Jack and Phil, and Disney films for Kirsty's group. This form of contact enforces bonds and introduces an element of the good times through mocking one or more members of the group. In many cases the picture is symbolic of a group joke or mockery of an interest. Gareth's friendship group photograph symbolic amusement:

> They give you a free one of those [anti-bullying bands]... but then we took them off and chucked them away ... one of the boys he just had it on for months and months and months and we just, every time we would go out we would just make fun of him about it. But he just loved it so much, he kept it and then he sent a picture message with it broken on his hand ... and, you know, the message just said 'Bollocks'.
>
> Gareth, 25

Continuing on the subject of messages, photographs and symbolism in virtual togetherness, these modes of communication were used in practices to keep the communication channels open with friends. Messages and photographs appear to be strongly significant to maintain the more intimate ties in a virtual sense; this will be discussed in Chapter 6. Often messages were sent to maintain the bond and friendship ties to individuals and groups.

> I do like to receive text messages, because it makes me feel wanted [laughter], makes me feel special. It's always nice to get a text from someone you haven't spoken to for a while ... someone's thought 'Oh, I know I'll text Claire' ... I think it's quite nice.
>
> Claire, 22

For Claire (22), this was interpreted as a nice surprise, particularly as contact was infrequent, and emotional in terms of someone, somewhere thinking about her. This form of contact symbolises that friends are thinking about friends by the very act of re-establishing contact; this can be paralleled with the occasional card or postcard. Arguably these messages are not necessarily intended as a postcard; they can in fact be time-fillers or to counter-act boredom for example. This is a rather mundane use of the mobile phone; nevertheless it is a practice and a capacity.

> I was stuck in traffic, when they had the petrol strikes, and I hadn't texted Lydia for a while and I thought ... I was like, yeah, 'I'm stuck in traffic, how are you?!'
>
> Kate, 26

This interaction using the mobile phone is not used with any intent to strengthen or maintain a bond, although it somehow does strengthen bonds. The nature of the device as a ubiquitous communication tool demands diverse use throughout the day, between purposeful modes of use, to arrange impromptu meetings for example, or to convey information to others efficiently. The mobile phone is also used in moments of respite demonstrating that it not only contributes to the major aspects of life, but also provides a basic form of contact that can be utilised to fill in dead time. The use of the mobile phone with respect to co-ordination, boredom, loneliness and alienation will be examined later in this chapter. Disconnection is the next point of discussion, particular in terms of how the mobile phone mediates a disconnection as opposed to togetherness. The mobile phone is not always used in a relation-enhancing capacity. Practices of mobile phone use can in fact be quite the opposite, and the findings to discuss this further will now be presented.

Mediated disconnection

Much of the findings so far convey mobile phone social capacities leading to enhanced interaction, continual contact or feelings of belonging. On the contrary, social practices using the mobile phone can also contribute to exclusion, loneliness, loss of control and other negative effects. The mobile phone is often used in times of loneliness and isolation, feelings which are heightened when people are too busy to respond to the request for contact. In many ways, the ubiquitous use and the possibility of contact anywhere at any time raises the expectation of availability. There is consequently a need to stay in touch, to remain included in communication. The mobile phone allows and creates frequent flows of communication. When there is a lack of this flow people begin to feel lonely, especially when there is not enough contact compared to the frequent high levels of contact that the mobile phone mediates. Further discussion will present how high levels of communication can heighten feelings of disconnection, also establishing a paradox of compulsion to communicate brought about by social practices using the mobile phone.

> If you've sent a message out ... you're like, come on, there must be someone out there. Hahaha. You can't all be working or watching TV? Come on.
>
> James, 24

Many participants use text messaging during moments of boredom, for example in waiting rooms or whilst travelling on trains and buses. It is an opportunity to make contact with friends and family. James (24) claimed that he often sends messages to friends when desiring contact through boredom. There is an expectation of availability and response to this reaching-out brought about by the ubiquitous nature of the mobile phone. James described feeling isolated or excluded when there is no response, when in fact people are often too busy to respond or to take part in contact for the purpose of contact. This claim raises two points, the first being that isolation was not experienced in the same way before the message was sent, and therefore mobile phone use can increase togetherness whilst exaggerating feelings of boredom-induced loneliness when their friends are not able to come to the rescue. The second point is how this use defines etiquette and what accepted group practices are. It is ambiguous how non-response to text messages or even phone calls is defined as acceptable or rude within friendship groups; it appears that the friendship groups define their own ethics regarding these practices. In friendship, James demands a quick response to avoid feeling ignored or disconnected, whereas some are more relaxed and know that text messages will be reciprocated at a free or convenient time. This is related to understanding the daily commitments of one another together with their use of mobile phones. For example, Kirsty's friend Amy (17) sends high numbers of texts and in general she demands a quick response. However, Amy understands their friend Yvette is not quite so quick to respond as she keeps her phone on 'silent' even when it is placed in another room. Furthermore, this group were the most attached to their phones through the fear of exclusion or missing out on activities; however, they had an understanding of each others' mobile phone habits.

> I always take it everywhere. I can't leave it. It's like 'Oh my God I haven't got my phone', I feel lost without it ... I just feel as if like, you know, I am losing contact with people and if you haven't got it like or in case I miss a message or phone call ... When my old phone broke I couldn't believe it. It was like I couldn't ring, nobody could text me. I couldn't text anyone else. Oh it was horrible.
>
> Kirsty, 17

The fear of disconnection is heightened by the increased need to be included, a need brought about by high levels of use and various contact capacities brought about by the mobile phone. Above, Kirsty (17) describes what it is like without her mobile phone, after she conveyed her views on the convenient uses in communication. These are uses which have now become necessities to maintain communication and friendship bonds in her everyday life. Kirsty's comment displays how the phone remains in the intimate possession of the user, necessitated by fear of loss, depriving her of the ability to contact others. This heightens the fear of missing out and losing the information required to contact people (e.g. their phone numbers). For Kirsty, it would be paralleled by living outside the interconnected network of communication.

> I have got to look at it all the time and I've got to *be* with it all the time. It's weird. I can't go anywhere without it.
>
> Kirsty, 17

There is a compulsion to communicate inherent in mobile phone ownership, particularly when loneliness is experienced; the absence of a response leads to increased feelings of disconnection. These feelings become exacerbated in the event of mobile phone loss or malfunction (Kirsty, 17; James, 24). This compulsion reflects the desire to be included and to remain as part of the network, which is further exacerbated by the instantaneity provided by the mobile phone, as well as the mobile phone practices that display who is and who is not connected. There is a 'must be included' need that is fulfilled using the mobile phone, which becomes intensified into a compulsion to remain connected and heightens into a need to be connected.

There are associations with the social shaping of technology, which can be emphasised with reference to Woolgar (1991) and Katz (1997) in terms of the initial reasons for use and the resulting reasons. The first reason is for assisting connection and later avoiding disconnection. Both Woolgar and Katz imply that technology serves a purpose; however technology also reconfigures the user by changing the ways in which the technology is used in everyday life. The mobile phone meets today's important requirement for contact on the move. The capacities of instant contact suggest that the mobile phone is a prevalent device; therefore everyone is accessible and, in theory, can speak to each other anytime and anywhere. Together with the evident need to remain included, this gives rise to the compulsion to stay in contact, as the second-order effect of convenient communication, a re-configuration of the user. In terms of technology

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looping back on itself, the mobile phone is then used to relieve a mediated disconnection; the feeling of potential exclusion when everyone else is potentially involved in communication at all times. Therefore, a technology that is used to occasionally connect and maintain friendship becomes a necessity embedded into a person's communication practices in order to avoid disconnection from the friendship group. There is an element of empowerment within networks over inclusion and exclusion of friends in group activities. This is a subject that will be revisited later in this chapter regarding power relations of the created expectations resulting from prevalent mobile phone use.

The above outlines one aspect, namely that communication adapts conduct to the use of the mobile phone in everyday life. The compulsion to remain connected, granted by the mobile phone, has actually changed everyday practices of mobile phone possession. The necessity to stay in touch has become so important to everyday life that people have become both dependent on and attached to the mobile phone in an intense way. Kirsty (17) in the statement above, and many of the other participants, claimed to be 'absolutely lost without it' (Claire, 22). It is implied that it is not the loss of the phone so much as 'losing contact with people and if you haven't got it' (Kirsty, 17). The attachments to the social world are inscribed in the practices and understanding of the mobile phone, ceding value to the mobile phone. The mobile phone signifies inclusion in the social world together with the associated information it holds. It is because of this understanding that users will not risk the loss of the mobile phone. The mobile phone is a device which is very much attached and relied upon by Matthew (18), for example. The anxiety over the loss of the phone is symbolic of fears and anxiety over the loss of a close friendship. Matthew is so fearful of losing his mobile phone and becoming disconnected that this fear has changed his use patterns, to a point of temporary disconnection in particular contexts; this echoes what Vincent (2003) calls 'value paradox' in which value is so great that the phone is not taken out or used in certain places due to the fear of loss.

> I try to avoid taking my phone out. I got insurance on it, but I get so legless ... That's how bad I get on occasion. I've lost a few phones in town before ... I'm under no illusions that someone's seen you pull it out at some point in the night ... That's the only time it's never with me. It sleeps with me and everything, apart from it won't come to town.
>
> Matthew, 18

This statement emphasises the attachment Matthew has to his mobile phone, together with the importance of the 'contact' information. His decision not to use the mobile phone in particular locations, due to concerns such as theft, brings to the fore these attachments, and the resulting fear of loss emphasises how important mobile phones have become with regard to inclusion in the mobile society. This demonstrates the importance prescribed to a device capable of storing useful information and how it can be so easily lost. There is a paradox in the use and preservation of the mobile phone, between the compulsion to connect and the fear of no longer having the capacity to connect to friends. This forms a conflict between use and abuse. Prior to the mobile phone such anxieties were not as prominent because continuous contact was comparatively impossible; if you were not at home or work you could not be contacted. However, the increase in contact brought about by the mobile phone increases anxieties over loss of contact, together with anxieties over who is and is not being contacted.

Matthew's (18) voluntary disconnection from mobile phone use also demonstrates how the social shaping of technology is a reconfiguration of the user. We have this technology originally to assist our communication, forming intense attachments and compulsions through the capacities it brings. New practices therefore result at this stage. There is a voluntary but temporary disconnection in preserving the device for later use, due to the dependency and attachment to the device in terms of the mobile phone becoming communication and inclusion in itself through signification.

Matthew's (18) disconnection was intentional due to the value applied to the mobile phone from the capacities of communication and inclusion. Matthew's disconnection is intended to preserve his connection to others and to retain a place in his social network. Another ways that the mobile phone mediates a feeling of disconnection is as an interruption on the co-presence, which, in turn changes co-presence relationships and m-etiquette to adapt to the priorities given to the mobile phone. The following section will continue with the topic of mediated disconnection, focusing on the mobile phone's capacity to disconnect co-presence, in contrast to strengthening the bonds in friendship groups through using the devices with each other during co-presence. It will explain how social practices have accounted for and adapted to the use of mobile phones in social settings.

I was surprised by how often mobiles (and their features) are brought up in conversation and used as an edition to socialising. However, I often saw how they detracted from socialising.

<div align="right">Eric, 23</div>

Eric (23) recognises how the mobile phone enhances social relations through sharing ring tones and files, while also noting the constraints it places in changing the existing patterns of interaction in social relations, given that telecommunication takes priority when attention is divided.

When you're with your mates and then there'll be four of you and three of them are on the phone. And I'm like 'mate, I've invited you down the pub to be together'

<div align="right">Eric's friend - Alex, 23</div>

It is not a new discovery that telecommunication is responded to or takes precedence over face-to-face interaction. This echoes McLuhan (1964) on the one hand, in terms of responding to the noise of the telephone, which necessitates an answer in order for the ringing to stop. On the other hand, this finding echoes Lasen's study (2003) in demonstrating how the private merges with the public realm, in the case of open-air wireless phone booths. Alex (23) noticed how the mobile phone detracts from co-present interaction and causes their attention to be on the virtual presence. This custom of answering the phone in the presence of others has continued, only now the phone is movable, so it is taken into new social spheres and used in these environments, as opposed to a different space away from co-presence interaction. Co-present interaction therefore adapts as mobile phone practices produce new ways of interacting in social space. It thereby create new rules for face-to-face interaction, establishing 'm-etiquette' (Lacohée et al, 2003) as Kate (26) illustrates below when she began using her phone in a pub.

So everyone kind of moved over to the other side of the room ... to where everyone else was... because I was there looking at my phone like, you know... I had to apologise several times. You know I was looking for the... I explained what I was doing. But yeah they kind of, they leave you to get on with it.

<div align="right">Kate, 26</div>

This demonstrates how co-present interaction adapts to the pre-occupation that mobile phone users tends to have in public space; this is essentially self-excluding in a wireless phone booth manner, even when the mobile phone is being used as an object rather than a communication device. Once again this illustrates how technology is changing practices of interaction in public space, to the point that human-computer interaction can be annoying, although it is also accepted (as it is for Alex, 23), and is part of m-etiquette. Etiquette is not only changing spatially, but it is also changing in a temporal nature.

This section has discussed how the mobile phone detracts from enhancing the strength of social ties, creating both unintended and intended disconnectedness through the new social practices brought about by the mobile phone. This prevalent device assists everyday life practices, intensifying contact and creating a compulsion for contact. Consequently, practices of communication become continuous and 'fluid', involving the negotiation of inclusion and exclusion in social interaction. Exclusion is discussed here as a mediated 'disconnection', presenting a paradox in mobile phone practice; through enhancing interaction the mobile phone also exacerbates disconnection. This is due to the attachments to others inscribed in mobile phone practices and understandings. The understandings participants have of the mobile phone signify the value of association and inclusion in a strong relation to their friends. The mobile phone is therefore valued because of the connections it represents and the disconnection feared; a fear that leads to a voluntary and temporary disconnection. The mobile phone creates a disconnection from co-presence whilst blurring the boundaries of private and public interactional space. Public space and social etiquette are manipulated to adapt to the potential interruption on face-to-face interaction through privatising social space. This will be discussed further in the mediation of intimacy in Chapter 7. The mobile phone has capacities that reshape social co-ordination and the associated etiquette, particularly in terms of social commitment, causing loose or 'soft' arrangements (Ling, 2004). This will be illustrated as part of the next section of group co-ordination and social arrangements.

Unorganised co-ordination of organised contact
The data suggests that mobile phone use centres on perpetual contact, inclusion and co-ordination across the seven friendship groups. The mobile phone facilitates the co-ordination between work, leisure, and social time in particular. The discussion will

move on to how mobile phone practices have become integral to everyday organisation of collective activities while focusing on how the mobile phone adapts to everyday interaction, together with the new practices and understandings of co-ordination it brings. In organising collective social interaction, the mobile phone clarifies hierarchies in friendship groups and information flows within those groups, together with negotiating freedom.

> I couldn't manage without my mobile phone... No way! Much as I would like to... because it annoys me... because it's kind of where work and leisure meet... And I hate that, but, because of that, it's kind of essential.
>
> Emma's Friend – Jack, 24

For Jack and also for Claire, the mobile phone bridges work and leisure in providing the capacity to co-ordinate these two spheres of everyday life. The mobile phone facilitates scheduling between work and leisure, both quickly and in a flexible manner. However, this can compromise both work and leisure, becoming 'annoying' by blurring the divide between the two. The compromise must be resolved in the light of the necessity of the mobile phone in work, leisure and relations, given that the mobile phone is used by almost everyone and has therefore become the primary method of contact for easy connectedness and co-ordination. The overlap of the spheres is therefore the price that is paid for the convenience of the mobile phone. The mobile phone is therefore an essential tool in making efficient arrangements, simply because the groups are dependent on the device as the main method of contact in doing so.

Claire's primary understanding of her mobile phone is the capacity of being contacted at any time. This is the main reason for her owning a mobile phone; others can always contact her for work and maintaining ties, as opposed to her having to make contact. She emphasises the capacity for others to contact her, and for this reason she cannot imagine her life without her mobile phone. She contrasts her dependence on her phone to her life prior to owning a mobile phone, recognising the difficulties she encountered when she 'used to go out and nobody could get hold of [her]' (Claire, 22). It is about being non-contactable and this feeling of non-contact feels somewhat strange to Claire, especially now that instant contact is a capacity through which to fill-in free time with social time, as Eric (23) demonstrates below.

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> You can be gotten hold of straight away, so you don't have gaps in the day ... If you have got an hour which could be filled you can fill it easily ... It certainly allows a vaster social life. You know you are in town. You are going 'oh where are you? Where are you?' 'We are in this pub, we will meet you there.'

> Eric, 23

It is the instantaneity of contact in the case of sudden changes to circumstances in work, social and personal life that is the value of the mobile phone. The instantaneity of the mobile phone is convenient for spontaneous contact and arrangements with friends, organising sports activities and social activities for example, allowing the freedom and flexibility to re-schedule and to arrange activities. The paradox here is that a time-condensing everyday media for contact becomes a time-expanding tool for the co-ordination of everyday activities; thus it allows the formation of new forms of social organization and interaction (Castells, 2000; Kenyon, 2006), hence reconfiguring social structure (Woolgar, 1991; Katz, 1997). There is little need to be stationary or wait around at any particular time; in contrast the device is instead used to arrange an instantaneous face-to-face meeting at idle time. On the one hand, the simple contact practices using the mobile phone have changed the social practices of organising through sending 'more texts about impromptu sort of events' (Emma's friend – Jack, 24). This flexibility is advantageous in communication; arrangements can be established anytime, anywhere. This is demonstrative of the fluidity of communications and the consequential adaptability possible from this flow of contact. On the other hand, however, it can become difficult to structure arrangements in advance due to the flexibility of changing these arrangements when new or unforeseen circumstances arise.

> We used to make arrangements, we used to be firm we'd do it. We used to say we'd go somewhere; we'll meet at this place at 8 o'clock. And now it's all very vague ... it means that people turn up at different times and I find it raises confusion.
> Emma's Friend - Phil, 26

The 'anytime anywhere' social capacities of the mobile phone mean there is little need to be stationary or to wait anywhere. Social co-ordination has become elastic due to the mobile phone. There are no longer any certainties or commitments in terms of arrangements due to the capacities of flexibility brought about by the mobile phone for social relations. This, however, brings about a social by-product of non-commitment contact that can, in theory, always be made and then planned to confirm or amend at a

later stage. It therefore follows that there is no such requirement for solid arrangements to be made initially. This phenomenon of loose arrangements echoes the findings of Ling (2004) of 'softening of schedules', which emphasizes that arrangements can be adjusted in an impromptu manner. Mobile phone use therefore changes time-keeping etiquette in social interaction, which has been reshaped in ways that mean there is no longer the urge to be punctual, as the ubiquitous nature means that one can call ahead. This is not the end of time constraints; time is conceived and used differently, promoting flexibility rather than adhering to rigid commitments to time. Consequently, this change in etiquette also restructures the practices in the initial co-ordination of social activities; that there is no longer the need to plan socialising time. Social activities, such as meeting in the pub, become fluid in the sense that people will arrive as and when they wish instead of adhering to a pre-defined time to meet.

Phil (26) has illustrated above how social co-ordination has become relaxed and flexible through the use of the mobile phone; a capacity allowing for each individual's lifestyle as opposed to a collective and punctual reconvention of a community or group at a particular time in a particular place. The mobile phone allows a rather unstructured and relaxed way of organising group social interaction. However, the data also suggests that contact can become structured in the initiation of social activities. The following section will explain how the mobile phone has the capacity to structure contact within friendship groups, highlighting a hierarchy and chain of communication in social arranging.

> [Eric]'s the ringer. In friendships together, you're a ringer. He's the person who gets phoned and I'm one of those people who never rings people. I always get invited out... Because I've lived with him for two years, I'm just expected to turn up because Eric's there.
> Eric's Friend - Alex, 23

Both Eric's and Kirsty's friendship groups describe how information flows among the group through a gatekeeper, or a 'ringer' to use Alex's terms. Information is controlled and trickled through the friendship group, particularly when arranging car rides among Kirsty's friends, where friends are expected to pass on the messages that descend from a leader of communication or social organiser. Alex implies that friends do not communicate with him directly, but to Eric, who is then expected to pass on the information. This is perhaps an old occurrence in the social management of the group,

which has merely switched from landline mediation to mobile phone mediation. However, it is a use of telecommunication illustrating the dynamic of group co-ordination, power and control of the 'ringer', as the organiser.

This signifies a level of structure in communication of unstructured co-ordination; both are examples of how social practices have become altered. These practices reveal levels of power relations in the group in terms of gatekeeping and regulating the direction of information, together with decisions over who is and is not included in the invites to social occasions. Additionally, there is an expectation that information reaches people, as Alex implies above. This is due to the fluid information flow through the mobile phone (anytime, anywhere), particularly in the facilitation of friendship group activities. The following section will examine these power relations of control and expectation, together with the power relations in the need for contact that have evolved from the freedom the mobile phone confers.

Controlled freedom

The section above discussed the findings relating to flexibility and the potential freedoms provided by the mobile phone for the co-ordination of social activities. This capacity is limited in terms of aspects of social life that become visible through mobile phone use and therefore viewed and controlled by others. This section will describe the tension between freedom and control in terms of social relations and how this is negotiated and adapted to in everyday life in the rapidity of life that appropriates the mobile phone.

The mobile phone is a time and space releasing communication tool, in the sense that time and space are no longer restricting. This echoes Urry (2002) and Kenyon (2006). It is the capacity to communicate at any time without space constraint that is important. This temporal and spatial flexibility, the capacity to communicate at any time, together with the capacities to soften schedules, is the defining characteristic of what is considered to be the freedom of the mobile phone for many of the friendship groups. Perhaps it is freedom in the sense of physical autonomy and a perceived independence (because someone else can always be contacted if needed), but not freedom in the sense of being free of all ties and responsibilities. It is therefore possible that this 'freedom' refers to the freedom to make impromptu plans, as Eric's (23) claim in the previous section regarding gaps in his day suggests (see p.150). Freedom is used to refer to a

continuous flow of flexibility and change, as opposed to freedom in a liberal sense. Flexibility in the continuous adaptation of social plans as a type of social freedom is being consumed as a flow in these relations, and this relates to Bauman's notion of modernity (2000). For Bauman nothing is stable; there is a constant readiness for change in shape, space and the importance of time. This is a fluid change in terms of the continual alterations to social events as they occur, made possible by the flexible capacity provided by the mobile phone. Social interaction in this way has not changed due to the mobile phone. Instead it has reformed due to the fluid interactional capacities in time and space of mobile phone use. Ingrid illustrates below how the mobile phone has changed everyday life and interaction due to the 'flexible' convenience of being in continuous contact, which does not seem to be perceived as freedom.

> You would have to wait 'till you get home to get a message or something but now everything is rush, rush, rush, because you have got a mobile phone and you know *everything all the time*.
>
> Ingrid, 17.

Ingrid (17) sees the mobile phone as speeding up life as a result of constant availability and response to contact. There is an enforced urgency from the capacity of instant contact and up-to-date information. When a mobile phone is answered, availability is consequently assumed and a response is required at the expense of private, personal and leisure time. There is a level of expectation that has arisen through using mobile phones to arrange social activities, co-ordinate and maintain friendship. There is also an expectation of availability and therefore problems arise when contact cannot be made. It is this that adds to the practice of keeping the device switched on, mitigating unnecessary anxiety or alarm over safety. Prior to the use of the mobile phone, unavailability and time delays were not so much of a problem as they are today, whereas 'if you turn it off it's "Why was your phone off?"' (Ingrid, 17). On the other hand, Gareth is not governed by the demand to keep his phone on. Gareth (25) claims that he uses this as a benefit to control and filter his communication by switching his phone off.

> You can turn it off, if you don't want to speak to people. Off! ... If I want to keep it with me I will keep it with me. If I want to leave it, I'll leave it and if I want to turn it off, I can turn it off.
>
> Gareth, 25

The paradox here, however, is that the mobile phone does allow you to be free from communication, free in the liberal sense. It is the social practices and expectations that have emerged as a consequence of mobile phone use that have created this always on and always contactable demand. The mobile phone has the capacity to be switched off; however the capacities and expectations of social relations, derived from the convenient 24/7 availability established from widespread use, prohibit this because of the problems that can arise from unavailability. As a reaction to this control-mediated use of the mobile phone, Gareth (25) refuses to be governed by expectation and Ingrid (17) feels disempowered in turning her phone off due to the consequences. Kirsty (17) does not turn hers off due to anxieties over inclusion in group activities and interaction. Some participants have a need to be updated with information together with a compulsion to communicate. Others are concerned over causing problems through being unavailable. This leads to the misconception that a mobile phone cannot be turned off and, as a result, there is a feeling of disempowerment over the control of communication. This is a demonstration of how communication flow has become fluid and controlling, and this control is a third-order effect (Katz, 1997). It also demonstrates how this fluidity of social structures detracts from our individual choice and freedom (Bauman, 2000), particularly in terms of the mobile phone as a surveillance technology.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the mobile phone provides continual information updates to friends and family, and friends like to know what everyone is doing and where they are in order to sustain their place as a belonging member of the group. The friendship groups studied often claimed that they like to know what each other are doing in a tagging and tasking sense, and the mobile phone therefore becomes a technology of surveillance. The mobile phone makes a social actor visual; the social shaping of technology has extended this visibility into an expectation. Therefore, when the mobile phone is switched off, or unanswered, accountability must be justified in the form of an inquisition into the nature of the phone being switched off, as Ingrid previously illustrates. A way in which surveillance was evident in this study was through the use of delivery reports for text messaging, as Gareth (25) demonstrates.

> I love those because you can tell if someone is ignoring you or you can tell if they got it or they haven't got their phone with them. It's just nice to know that they've got the message and you don't have to worry about ... thinking, well 'shit, did they get that message or not?'
>
> Gareth, 25

Although text messaging can be used to co-ordinate activities and to maintain contact in an unobtrusive way, it can also be used as a technology of surveillance creating a technology of empowerment, whilst raising anxiety among those contacted. Gareth (25) comments on the advantage of using delivery reports. They are a useful acknowledgement of receipt, but they can also be used to detect if messages are being ignored. Gareth considers delivery reports useful because they avoid any additional contact to confirm if the previous message was received. In this instance the mobile phone is used to tag and track others remotely, establishing a trace to them at all times. The mobile phone is therefore a means of surveillance as it provides visibility, in similar ways to closed-circuit television. The mobile phone can reveal the actions of others, where this was previously left to the imagination prior to widespread use of the mobile phone and people had to wait to make contact or be contacted. These findings support those of Green (2002) and Lyon (2001) in which the mobile provides visibility into a moving life, allowing freedom through fluid access, with a new form of surveillance that is unfixed and horizontal in networks. Mobile phone use produces body data which can then be used to locate and monitor in a decentralised networked way.

The mobile phone, as a surveillance technology, was used in terms of tagging friends to become aware of group activities, to sustain membership within the group. Surveillance was therefore not a particularly strong finding in terms of friendship groups. Instead, it was strongest in the more intense attachments, particularly in intimate relationships with partners and family. For this reason, it will be discussed further in the context of intimacy in Chapter 6. However text messaging has been mentioned as a technology of surveillance; this was used due to the added capacities of delivery reports that track this mode of communication. Text messaging is used in particular ways when voice communication cannot be used. This leads into the final section of this chapter; an examination of the findings relating to the different modes of mobile communication and the associated values they have in everyday life as a form of interaction in terms of symbolism and gendered interaction.

Connecting with mobile mode and gender

The mobile phone is a multi-modal communication tool used by men and women in different ways, often reflecting how they communicate in face-to-face interaction. The mobile phone is very much a means to conduct purposeful communication to maintain relationships. Text messaging and calling were the most prominently used functions in

everyday contact within the group, not so much multimedia messaging or other add-ons which were expected to be appropriate in mediation (apart from in co-presence as gifts and mementos). The data reveals relational patterns in text messaging, the content of text messaging and also in calling. These patterns will be identified among the groups and within the sub-groups of gendered friendships.

> ...Kinda keeping in touch, finding out all the gossip, what's going on and things like that. Erm, keeping informed of, like, whereabouts, like if I need to know where Mia is... I don't *need* to know, but if and when, and 'why aren't you home'...
>
> Kate, 26

The most prominent findings were that women use the mobile phone for the purpose of interaction, to keep in touch with friends and remain up-to-date with their lives in a tagging and tracking sense, as claimed in the previous section. Claire (22) claimed that she sometimes has 'got too much that I want to say and that text just won't do', and text messaging is therefore limiting in self-expression. This communication is a more dedicated form of communication in contrast to that of men. This supports the research into the gendered communication of the intrinsic and social use of the telephone (Keller, 1977; Noble, 1987) as well as the research claiming that women use the mobile phone in ways that mirror kin and domestic relationships (Geser, 2006; McGuigan 2005). This can be translated into maintaining strong bonds with friends who are close by, and using the mobile phone as dedication of more time to telephony to maintain networks (Anderson, 2002), as Kate (26) claims above. Men are more direct in comparison to women, keeping communication simple and communicating purposefully. Men use the mobile phone to arrange social time, as Jack (25) illustrates below.

> More normally phone him [than text] ... It's straight to the point and I don't bother pussy-footing around him. I'll ask him if he wants to come out for a drink or when he wants to come and play squash ... and that's about it really.
>
> Gareth's friend – Jack, 25

The mobile phone is used simply to mediate information and co-ordination, a somewhat mundane use; nevertheless, the mobile phone meets a need for the men to simply communicate. As well as using the mobile phone to make arrangements, Emma (27), Claire (22) and Dawn (17; Kirsty's friend) all claimed to use the mobile phone as a way of 'express[ing] temporary waves of emotion' (Emma, 27) in a way that is a

commentary on feelings as they occur. This detailed communication expresses a current status and is another way in which strong bonds in a friendship are sustained, by providing a real-time view into the current emotional state of friends. This echoes Ling's research in 2004 which found text messaging from women expressed emotion and therefore made the messages longer. The mobile phone has the capacity to broadcast and release these emotions to a friend. Women are more expressive of emotion using mobile phones than men in both text messaging and calling, as they often make phone calls to each other as gap-fillers in the day, which serve to 'catch up' with each other (Sarah, 25 – Gareth's Friend). Men are also expressive using mobile phones, but in a different way. Women express their moods, frustrations and feelings, whereas men use text messaging to manage their clarity in communication in a detailed and considered response, and this was described by Matthew (18), David (19) and Sam (25).

> I find it a lot easier to write things, um, because you can amend what you've written ... and you can think about it. As a result, I send a text message ... If I wanna get a point across, I can sometimes do it a lot more calculated with a text message.
>
> Sam, 25.

Much of the contact among friendship groups is facilitated using text particularly when men are attempting to express themselves. Sam claims to speak before he has considered the point that he intends to make, and therefore text messaging is an advantageous alternative due to self-expression and the time flexibility in constructing a response. Therefore, text messaging is favourable and a rather complementary alternative to spoken communication. In another way text messaging is used in disputes, when disputing could be confrontational on a face-to-face level.

> The most arguments I have are over text messages. Not that I really argue that much ... I do find it easier to say something, like kind of subtly via text messaging... and just hope they take it the right way ... David left the lounge in an absolute state ... and I just texted him to say that I'd put all the stuff in his room ... I'd rather not say it to their face.
>
> David's friend - Hanna, 19

Hanna describes how she uses text messages to argue, in order to avoid a verbal argument, or to confront friends about things that she wouldn't say in conversation. She uses text messages to get her dissatisfaction across without the awkwardness of a face-to-face argument, replacing that awkwardness with ease when intending to clarify a point or defend oneself. Text messages of these feelings are sublimation, which are

similar to writing diary entries or letters to express these feelings. Such communication use in this way is replacing talk in the context of arguments and disagreements; issues are not being spoken but written in these friendship groups. Hence, the text is rather like writing letters to express such emotion, while it is simultaneously replacing talk.

Using text messages to express that which could be awkward in face-to-face interaction was not a gender-specific finding. Text messaging was often favoured when initiating intimacy due to the advantages of limited communication it has for both genders, in bending taboos for example (this will be discussed in full in Chapter 6). The use of kiss signatures in text messages, however, was a gender-specific finding.

> If I get a message from a girl and she doesn't put a kiss on the end ... I think she's in a mood ... With Caroline ... you know that if she hasn't, she's in a mood, and she's trying to make a point.
>
> Sarah, 26

The use of emoticons, or kiss signatures, as self-expression in messaging was not exclusively discussed anywhere in the findings. Kisses do not express mood; however they can symbolise affection towards the recipient. This is similar to using kisses at the end of letters, commonly used in contact with close-friends, relatives and partners. The same is true for text messaging where symbolic kisses are dependent on the relationship, such as general co-present intimacy, the duration of the relationship, and gender. Females use kisses to symbolise warmth, and the absence of these are also symbolic. The presence or absence is used to analyse and also to display mood for the females in this study. It is a sign of affection, yet its absence can be a sign of coldness. This depends, however, upon whether the sender frequently uses such symbols. If such symbols are not used, or used infrequently, its absence is therefore no measure of mood. Text messages signed off with the symbolism of kisses is open to interpretation by the recipient, being reflective of feelings and usual patterns of expression of the sender. This is a more feminine use of text messages, compared to those sent by men. The men use text messaging in a rather functional and blunt way compared with those exchanged between women. Men and women differ in text messaging and this will be discussed in depth in Chapter 6: Intimacy, where there is a different use in sexual relationships.

Expressive text messaging is used in friendship groups, and the content of text messages can perhaps be used as an indicator of the level of friendship, particularly for women. So far it is clear that text messaging ranges for instrumental communication that is short

and to the point for co-ordination, to the expression of mode and to maintain friendship, which is prominent in the ways that women use mobile phones. However, the different style of communication can also differ due to the context of the relationship, the level of friendships within the group and the duration of such relationships, as opposed to gender.

> I think it's because [Phil] and I are kind of perfectly comfortable to ring each other, have a thirty second conversation about where we're gonna meet up, and that's it. Whereas, if I ring one of you guys [the women] ... I'll sort of chat to you for longer ... depending on if I'm on my way to something. You know, that's not quite as convenient, whereas with Phil I can just ring him and say 'see you in half an hour. Turah!'
>
> Emma's Friend - Jack, 23.

Jack (23) is claiming that his contact with Phil is different to that with women, implying that there is no 'chat', as there would be with women and between women. Contact, again, is short and purposeful for men, whereas it becomes fuller with women. Compare this with Emma's diary entries, where it appears that the friendship is not exclusive compared to other friendships within the group; for example, Emma and Jack use their phones to text to arrange to meet socially without this being a group activity. However, it is the way the phone is used that is exclusive due to different types of friendship and familiarity. For example, the men who live together in these friendship groups claim that their mobile phone contact is minimal, if it exists at all. Whereas Sarah (25) and Louise (25), who are Gareth's friends, also live together, but text messaging and calling are used to keep in touch during the day time and are very much valued practices in their relationship.

Many participants had a close friendship with at least one person in their group and therefore use the mobile phone to remain in constant contact, to 'gossip', and not necessarily just to make social arrangements. It is unclear whether communication practices can be attributed to gender or to the relationship itself in terms of duration, activities or intimacy. For James (24), most of his mobile phone use is with friends with whom he is regularly co-present. This use is sometimes frequent, short in duration and purposeful, whereas contact with friends afar, who all meet less often, is often infrequent but long in duration, therefore less rushed and maintains the friendship, as was the case for Eric (23), Alex (23) and James (24).

The ones I talk to the majority of the time ... they're my friends from before uni. While I was in uni I probably didn't talk to them very much. I used to talk to all my uni mates on the phone instead. So they are just the closest people that socially I am with at the moment.

<div align="right">James, 24</div>

Virtual contact is an effective way to maintain and strengthen pre-existing bonds. The mobile phone is used in both co-present and virtual ways with friends complementing a greater scheme of interaction, primarily face-to-face interaction. The mobile phone has the capacity to extend pre-existing bonds and has become an effective interaction as a complementing technology of face-to-face interaction. This supports Urry's (2002) claims, that the mobile phone is no substitute for corporeal interaction; the virtual presence it provides is a successful form of interaction due to the co-presence at other times. This also complements Wellman (2001) who claims that those who use this form of communication tend to be the most socially active in their immediate environments. This is an ambitious association, but what it does tell us can be interpreted in the reverse direction for this research; those who are socially active with friends in immediate environments have a high use and attachment to their mobile phone.

This final section has revisited other parts of this chapter in presenting how the mobile phone is a capacity to manage interaction in group friendship while taking account of the gender differences and modal practices in self-expression; particularly that men and women integrate calling and text messaging into everyday practice according to their differences in understanding. Speculation arises over whether mobile phone social practices within friendships are coupled with the strength of the bond. This would therefore become a new line of inquiry. Mobile phones illustrate the friendship differences and similarities within a group, particularly dynamics to friendships and co-ordination. Whether this is related to gender, duration, proximity or even exclusivity of a friendship deserves further investigation. It can be concluded, however, that the value of communication is related to the value of the person communicating.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the features of mobile phone practices, understandings and social capacities in friendship groups. In examining friendship groups as an actor category, it further examined how people negotiate their cultures of communication and

in the social relations among groups. The mobile phone is both socially constructed by everyday practices and socially constructing through the possibilities and capacities for the social interaction it brings. The mobile phone enhances friendship bonds in terms of belonging through the continuous availability with new time or space constraints in this culture of communication. This continual availability, however, leads to compulsion and expectation to contact and be contacted, together with mediated anxieties of disconnection, which in turn has to be negotiated through the tensions between the capacities to turn off communication and the demands of this culture. This culture of communication demands instant contact; however this is fluid contact in terms of committal to the co-ordination of face-to-face interaction. This is a consequence of the mobile phone assisting social life (contact), then creating a social need (compulsion and expectation to communicate); we then loop and use this social need to soften our commitments and change our social etiquette in communication. This is an example of social networking as interplay between the social and technology, supporting Katz (1997). The mobile phone re-invents social conduct in friendship groups by integrating the new capacities that culture gives to the device. In another way, however, the mobile phone is a new platform through which to mediate traditional practices in close social relations; the most prominent were those of gift-giving and the use of 'dirty' material polluting interaction and forming exclusive sub-groups. The mobile phone has the capacity to illuminate dynamics and different relations in groups, while blurring the public and private spheres in which the group interact. The mobile phone also has the capacity to form privacy in public while making the private public. Finally, this chapter presented how gender and modes of communication relate and purposefully use modes in the management of interaction in ways that are instrumental, expressive and symbolic in the close friendship groups. These methods of communication in expression and symbolism of bonds echo those of postcards and letters in terms of emotion and affection. Chapter 6 will focus on the affectionate and intimate relations, together with the values of the different modes of communication provided by the capacity of the mobile phone.

Chapter 6

Intimately Connected

Introduction

The mobile phone took on a valuable role in intimate relationships with romantic partners and also in a relational capacity within families. The data reveals that these relationships are mediated and expressed using the mobile phone as a communication of intimacy and attachments. The mobile phone as a relational capacity was valued differently among intimate relationships compared to the value among friendship groups. In particular, the differences were more intense in the compulsion for continuous contact as a virtual presence. The appropriations of the mobile modes were valued more strongly, as were the power relations in terms of demand, monitoring, anxiety and the consequential disputes. The mobile phone establishes a meaningful position within the lives of those who use the device, due to the capabilities provided in sustaining continuous contact, together with affirmation of feelings and thought. Concentrating on the most prominent findings, the focus will bear on affectionate and intimate relations, together with the values of the different modes of communication provided by the capacity of the mobile phone. This data is extracted primarily from the interviews and diaries of the main participants. This chapter will relate to the topics as a method of presenting the data in terms of making and breaking relationships, being there (continuous contact) and intimate powers.

Making and breaking relationships

The end of Chapter 5 compared how the different modes of the mobile phone have produced different relational capacities and that these were also used in different ways between men and women. These differences were most prominent in the intimate and personal capacity between people. The discussion will now extend to the capacities of text messaging and calling in the making and breaking of intimate relationships. How these relationships are sustained will be examined in the section on continuous contact. This section will discuss the advantages of text messaging, a somewhat limited communication mode, together with conversions of face-to-face methods of flirting as a reshaped practice of initiating intimacy. In contrast, it will examine the ways in which relationships are ended using the capacities of the mobile phone, together with the associated social m-etiquette encountered. The discussion will commence by investigating the significance of the text message in the beginnings of intimate interest.

> I think, in this society, we wouldn't be able to pick up women if it wasn't for mobile phones ... It's so much easier to break ice and you can be a lot more charming and funny, because you can have time to think about it.

> Eric's Friend - Alex, 23

Alex (23) is referring to the use of text messages in the above statement. This was a general finding most prominent among the men who were interviewed, indicating that the pursuit of romance becomes substantially eased using text messages in contrast to verbal communication. This perception is due to the numerous paradoxes of communication that this form of contact brings in managing the impressions projected and controlled within the depth of contact and information given. The mobile phone is therefore able to mediate instant contact and affection. However, the text message can be deliberately used to maintain distance, particularly during the stages of getting to know each other in an affectionate way, in a regulatory manner over the progression of these stages. The paradox is in the finding of the communication mediator with the capacity to provide unlimited virtual interaction anywhere and anytime being used in a limiting manner. This finding will be examined further with reference to breaking these relations. The prime limitation is the absence of voice tonality; this is used as a way to break through the obstacles of potentially awkward conversations prior to first dates. This suggests that the lack of tonality in text messaging is made up for by the use of upper case and emoticons to add emphasis and to provide symbols of the tones in which a text message can be read. Text messages are not void of tone as such, they are absent of naturally intended and unintended tonalities and intonations that are abundant in talk, whereas intended tonalities are added when text messaging.

> I think texts, you can get away with certain things... you can be quite cheeky...
> Obviously I'm talking about texting the opposite sex.

> Eric's Friend - Karl, 23

Karl (23) uses text messaging in order to overcome the barriers of awkwardness; echoing Fleming (2004) who found that 44% of all adults use text messaging to flirt and to avoid this initial awkwardness. Text messaging eases inhibitions thereby permitting more freedom, with respect to content, in communication. The user cannot see or hear the initial, and potentially awkward, reactions particularly as there is a chance that this

'cheek' or flirting behaviour could be rather obtrusive in a phone call when it is unwanted attention. Karl was instrumental in his mobile phone use, using it very little in day-to-day life. Although Karl rarely used the mobile phone in terms of communication and co-ordination, preferring the internet for chatting, this infrequent use demonstrates how a low user of low dependency can appreciate the capacities the mobile phone brings to enhancing the early stages of relationships.

Flirting becomes easier using text messaging rather than verbal communication. There is an absence of time constraints in responding to this intimate interest in text messages. Time becomes flexible in deciding what and how to respond in a way to express oneself clearly as Sam (25) claims in Chapter 5 (p.157). Alex (23) suggests above that a text message can then be used to convey attractive 'assets' such as charm and wit. An identity is mediated and controlled through the limitations of text messaging. Text messaging affords the user an extra time capacity facilitating the initiation of conversation and dating, additional time allowing the projection of an ideal persona. The limitations or obstacles produced by text messages in comparison to talk are utilised in avoiding demand and allowing flexible response patterns. The paradox here is the most defining relational capacity of the mobile phone. It is the instant access to others together with the demands and compulsions of response (discussed in Chapter 5); which are actually the very capacities avoided when the mobile phone is used in the early phases of intimate relations. Perhaps an instant response to interest can be interpreted as over-enthusiasm. The mobile phone shapes interaction. However, social actors reshape the use of the mobile phone, in this case through the choice to take time to interact, as opposed to using instantaneity made possible by the mobile phone. To be concise, it takes time to project an identity that makes a favourable impression for effect.

This demonstrates that although we have new social capacities through which to engage with each other on a personal level, these capacities do not overwhelmingly change or dictate the ways in which people interact. Bauman's (2000) claim that individual choice is controlled by the fluidity of everyday life weakens in the light of the individual's non-compliance with this somewhat created need to contact and to be contacted through the capacities of the mobile phone. The mobile phone capacities impact differently on the personal interaction compared to that of social networks. The mobile phone in these aspects of interaction is an assistive technology to everyday interaction, or what Katz

(1997) defines as a first-order effect, in which technology is used in a purposeful facilitating way to communicate. It seems that users step away from the potentials of the mobile phone to regain time and space for natural, unaided intimate interaction to progress. The bonds of individual choice are not as 'dissolved' as Bauman (2000) claims.

Text messaging to establish intimate interactions, such as first dates, are therefore used in a relaxed way as opposed to the instant and somewhat continuous contact between friends. This is of course due to the more intimate relational use of the mobile phone in comparison to friendship groups. Text messaging facilitates this form of intimate instigation, and is therefore preferred over phone calls.

> I spend a lot of my time flirt-texting people ... It'd save me a lot if I just picked up the phone, if I rung them off the phone, but, no, it just seems easy to put it through a text message and less hassle. I dunno why, and then it goes into a text conversation.
>
> Matthew, 18

Matthew (18) claims that text messaging to flirt is easier than calling. Text messaging is convenient and a conversely time consuming way to express their desires in an ideal manner. Often text messaging becomes more frequent as interaction progresses, in ways which then adopt a conversational mode of communication. The text message is the new mode through which to perform the social practice of 'chatting up', simply by adding 'cheek' and humour (Karl, 23) simulating conversation through the written word, as Matthew (18) claimed. Both Matthew's and David's (19) claims over conversational problems support Grinter and Eldridge (2001) who also found that text messaging suits those who find spoken conversation for flirting problematic, whereas text messaging allows them to do this discreetly.

Together with controlling impressions portrayed, text messaging is selected as it is unobtrusive, instantly creating privacy if the recipient is in a public setting. The limitations of text messaging actually enable it to be an effective method to use in the early stages of romantic relations. The mobile phone filters tonalities when using text messages in this way (apart from when tonality is explicitly used in terms of using upper case to place emphasis on words). Supporting Grinter and Eldridge (2001), my findings suggest that the text message was effective for the capacities of directness through the brief yet rich exchange of conversation, which is preferred during the

instigation of romance. This supports the 'cheekiness' that arises throughout these rich chained messages, which are both functional and relational in the instigation of romance through bonding and taboo-bending. Taboo-bending can occur through the capacity to mention taboo subjects directly, a direct social capacity available via text messaging as 'a wall to hide behind' (Karl, 23). This was both a functional and relational use of text messaging through which daring statements could be made, when they would not necessarily be so easily made during a phone conversation, as Kate illustrates below when she described text messaging at the start of a relationship.

> You can easily say something in a text that you wouldn't possibly say in person or you would say in a particular way. It can be a bit more free... A bit more liberal kind of thing... and because it is not you... in a way. It's a bit of a mask there.
>
> Kate, 26

The mobile phone has both new relational capacities to the instigation of intimate relations, whilst at the same time providing another mode through which interest can be conveyed, rather like love letters. The love letter is a practice of courtship, and text messages are therefore similar; they can also be both direct and indirect which is possible because of the masked interaction, as there is no presence of face-to-face interaction. Text message interaction is an extension of this in the way in which it provides the capacity for the same practice; only this mode is quicker. This use of the mobile phone forms an interaction where the love letter and conversation meet the flexibility of response time that is possible through text messaging. This practice indicates how mobile phone use has both continued and reshaped social practices, given the similarities with love letters and the increased interaction and comparable reactions. Mobile phone use has been socially constructed by these intimate practices. These uses of the mobile phone reconstruct them through mediation via a new mode and therefore adding new capabilities of quicker responses to taboo-bending.

The mobile phone shapes behaviour and expectations of the counter-part by restructuring the unwritten protocols of relationships, both at the initial and developed stages. Text messaging speeds up interaction in relationships, detracting from the excitement and anticipation within a developing relationship due to quick text messaging and the immediacy of response. The instantaneity and availability the mobile phone brings reduces the anticipatory elements of surprise and excitement. Instead, as

these findings suggest, the mobile phone promotes expectation and paranoia in many cases. It is no longer a case of wondering whether the counterpart will respond, but rather "why have they not responded?" This illustrates a shift in the customs of courtship and romantic intimacy during absence, through a reshaping of interaction brought about by mobile phone use in intimacy, especially compared to traditional forms of interaction and communication.

Personal and discreet use of communication in the instigation of intimacy does not always result in chain messaging or taboo-bending. This capacity of the mobile phone, and particularly text messaging, offers the opportunity for flirting through reshaping conduct and the etiquette of response. Although text messaging allows the opportunity for fast interaction in flirting, silence is an acceptable response when silence would otherwise be viewed as inappropriate etiquette in face-to-face interaction. This is not suggesting that text and talk are polarised modalities or that text gives rise to simple yes or no direct responses. Text messaging allows the capacity to be more direct; this does not mean that the in-between talk variants cannot be conveyed via text messaging, for example 'sorry I'm washing my hair'. However, the findings of this research suggest that text messages were used as a direct approach towards dating, and that silence is a direct way to decline a date without the thunder of a rejection. The following section will discuss the use of silence as symbolic in the culture of this more personal use of communication.

Silence

The text message provides private and subtle interaction that does not demand instant reactions in the instigation of intimacy and romance. In fact, the use of text messages to initiate personal relationships appears to diminish the etiquette of face-to-face interaction, as the lack of response is not viewed in the same way as it would be in a phone conversation. A non-response would be a symbol of rejection, without feeling the embarrassment of a verbal rejection in face-to-face interaction.

> If they don't text back ... I've lost nothing. Whereas if you're on the phone and you actually have to deliver it, there's an instant thing ... 'You wanna go for a drink?' They are gonna go 'no, I don't wanna go for a drink', whereas if you ask for a drink in a text message... if they don't reply back ...You've lost nothing.

Eric's Friend - Alex, 23

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The difference between spoken and text practices is interesting, as there is a difference in appropriate and inappropriate conduct in terms of declining a date, or out-right rejection. Silence in text messaging is contrary to our spoken interaction customs; it is apparently accepted and a preferred way to decline. Alex (23) prefers this to spoken rejection, because it softens the blow due to the absence of face-to-face communication and non-verbal intonations. It does not have the same connotations as a verbal conversation. A spoken offer requires verbal acceptance or rejection, placing pressure on the person who is being asked. Silence in a spoken conversation would be interpreted as somewhat against customs, which is not the case for a text message.

Co-presence does not allow silence, but the mobile phone capacities have allowed some reshaping of what is appropriate social conduct in interaction; silence becomes acceptable in textual interaction. Silence is not the absence of response; it is has become symbolic of some form of rejection in this context. In this relational aspect of everyday life the mobile phone has redefined conduct in interactional practices. This use of the mobile phone has not changed these practices in the instigation of intimacy; interactional capacities have increased which make the interaction easier for both people. A capacity likened to the 'wall to hide behind' (Karl, 23) that filters out potential embarrassment. This conduct will be discussed further in terms of relationships and how silence is one way of breaking intimate relationships using the mobile phone.

Breaking

The text message as a 'wall to hide behind' (Karl, 23) is also used to end relationships due to it being a somewhat dislocated interaction in comparison to verbal communication. There is another paradox here, as it is a non-confrontational way to communicate and also a way of avoiding interaction. In ending a relationship in this way, there is no face-to-face interaction and therefore no reaction to observe or feel remorse over.

> I've probably finished with someone over a phone [text message]. I wasn't sad but I'm sure they were ... They like, just do my head in and I was like oh, I've had enough ... I wouldn't do that these days ... I'm sure they were quite upset (laughs), I was quite relieved.
>
> James, 24

The limitations are advantageous for James (24), allowing him to express his intentions with distance to avoid witnessing the consequences or consequently feeling guilty. This suggests that breaking up becomes easier to do, which supports Fleming (2004) as it is 'not face-to-face'. Sending an email in comparison would incur a call for a detailed explanation of the shortcomings within the relationship. Text messages, however, are smaller snippets of communication so the level of detailed explanation of feelings and intentions would not necessarily be included. Essentially, text messages are used to create distance from which to dislocate from the relationship. This capacity of the mobile phone shows how time and space become reconciled and are overcome as barriers in relationships. However, it is clear that the mobile phone can be used to recreate space through the reduction in interaction when the modes of communication shift from spoken to text messaging.

This is another illustration of how mobile phone capabilities can strengthen interaction whilst conversely creating instant barriers in the shifts between modes, shaping the practices of breaking personal relations. The next main section discusses and emphasises the value of the mobile phone as continuous interaction; phone calls being a valued part of this interaction. Combining this value with the findings on breaking ties, the mobile phone is an easy and powerful distance creator simply through changing the modes of communication. This demonstrates how changing the mode changes the interactional distance, a distance used to begin dislocation.

As well as using this shift from calling to text messaging to reduce interaction in ending relationships, the mobile phone is used to sign off from relationships. The mobile phone is not only a communicational device; it is also a storage device to store communication as sentiments of relationships. This was symbolic in the same way as keeping letters is symbolic of value and attachment to the person who sent them.

> And this stops you from flicking through and seeing what he had written and stewing over it a little bit more... If you delete the inbox... the messages from him. Delete him out of your life.
>
> Kate, 26

The content is data from the relationship and a reflection of the person with whom the mobile phone was used to relate intimately. When the relationship is problematic or breaking down, this content can then become symbolic of a failed relationship and

deleting it is a ritual of signing out of the relationship. Kate (26) describes how text messages and material would be deleted due to negative associations, such as a break-up or argument where they begin to represent the unpleasant, or a failed relationship. The feelings invoked by the content are not what they once were. Emma (27) describes how it can be rather satisfying to delete messages from that person.

> Of course, it *does* give me a little bit of satisfaction to delete messages of people who upset me.
>
> Emma, 27

This is a powerful act, a psychological function symbolising the clearing out of the last vestiges of a love interest and obtaining closure. The action of deleting messages from a romantic relationship is symbolic of deleting the impact of that person from one's life. This is a practice that is similar to burning letters or photographs once a relationship has ended, providing a degree of gratification following negative emotion.

This section has discussed the instigation and withdrawal from intimate relations, and how accessible and distant relationships can be through the interactional capacities of the mobile phone in bridging and creating distance. On another level, this instant access, together with the convenience and perceived unobtrusiveness of communication, means that accessibility is unproblematic and easily attained. This ease of access, together with the ease of instigation, means that often attention is unwanted and therefore perceived as intrusive. The data has revealed that mobile communication becomes somewhat disenchanting when communication becomes a nuisance from a nuisance romantic interest.

Unwanted attention

Eric (23) claims that the mobile phone is 'an easy way in' suggesting that there is the capacity whereby access can be gained, without the need to call and speak, in the attempt to chat-up and charm. Many of the participants reported the mobile phone as providing a very easy capacity through which to receive unwanted attention. David (19) describes how he had sent a text message to a girl when he was drunk.

> A rather flirtatious conversation with a girl from back home, and since then she keeps texting me and unfortunately … I have not got a clue what I said … because I'm polite, I keep replying. Whoops! … Girls read into texts different to lads I think.
>
> David, 19

The recipient of this text message used the gateway created by David (19) as an opportunity to flirt. David refers to the gender differences between men and women and how just talking (via text message conversations) was interpreted as interest, which encouraged the recipient to continue the chain messaging, leading to unwanted attention for David. David is claiming that men and women read text messages differently; this suggests that written forms of contact are polysemic, in the same way that talk is open to multiple readings.

Although sending text messages was unobtrusive compared to calling or sending a letter, it was unwanted attention for David (19) and therefore becomes obtrusive. Kirsty (17) also described a similar experience following a date.

> I mean there was someone texting before, I didn't really want them to text me. So I had been texting them back at first and then I'd leave it and no matter how much I told them, they still texted me anyway and it got really annoying ... 'What you up to? Ah you haven't got the money to text me back have you?' I am like 'Yeah, I just don't want to text you back' ... he just didn't worry about what I was saying and just carried on texting and phoning me.

> Kirsty, 17

Kirsty (17) describes the attention as annoying and talks about it as an intrusion. This communication is intended to instigate romantic interest, silence is used and the chain messaging is only a response to the nuisance text messaging. The unwanted attention illustrates how the mobile phone not only mediates but capacitates a liberal and obtrusive expression of intimate interest in the form of conversation through text messaging. In many cases throughout this chapter, such interaction is welcomed. However, the mobile phone restructures interaction by providing new channels of communication through which to transmit contact in projecting an intimate interest. Text messaging provides the mode to persistently post such interest in a way previously not possible. Such facile contact can lead one to feel irritated or crowded in the event of unwanted attention. The interaction taking place, on the respondent's part, is therefore due to the reaction to the feelings conjured up by the projection of the self, produced through mobile phone use, rather than the device.

Using text messaging serves to negotiate access into the personal life of another. These negotiations of intimacy are not new to everyday social practices, only now they can be conveyed using the mobile phone. Courtship and romantic attention' are pre-existing social interaction; the mobile phone merely provides a new platform through which this can occur, while emphasising these social structures of coquetry and courtship as opposed to determining them or revealing them. The purpose of everyday social practices and negotiations remain today as they always have. Use of the mobile phone simply highlights and restructures interaction and social dynamics without changing interaction. This section has discussed the prominent findings relating to the beginnings, terminations and avoidance capacities using the mobile phone while also discussing the use of mobile phones in managing friendships. The following section of this chapter will examine how the mobile phone is used to manage and maintain contact within the more intimate relationships of romance and within family relationships.

Being there: continuous contact

In Chapter 5 the mobile phone was found to facilitate anytime, anywhere contact to a point in which continuous contact was more or less a capacity of the mobile phone. Contact was established even more regularly as part of intimate relationships, not only to maintain the relationship but also to simulate presence as a live link to the nearest and dearest. This study has revealed the value placed on the mobile phone used in the foreground and background of intimate life. This is not to claim that the mobile phone creates relationships or even intimacy; nevertheless the mobile phone is used as an explicit expression of the practices and understandings between significant people. The mobile phone is 'just an expression of what is going on between people' (Emma, 27).

The mobile phone expresses complexities of relationships, complementing and building interaction. James (24), Ingrid (17) and Emma (27) all have long-distance relationships, reporting the exchange of text messages and speaking with their partners morning and evening to wish them a good day, good night and to simply catch up throughout the day. This was similar to the findings of Taylor and Harper (2003) who relate this exchange to gift-exchange as a 'duty'. These findings therefore reflect reciprocation to their partners in the duty of maintaining the relationship through this practice of continuous touch. Increased possibilities of virtual togetherness during snippets of the day therefore increase the obligation to be together by using this exchange.

The frequency of diary entries relating to romantic connections illustrates that the mobile phone is used to maintain contact and share news, or simply inquire into the general progression of the day, therefore keeping the link alive. This is similar to how the mobile phone is used in the family as a permanent channel through which to communicate (Geser, 2004) and maintain strong ties and reassurance over safety.

> The phone is important to be in touch with Rob [Emma's boyfriend], but as soon as he is here, I'd rather not be disturbed by it.
>
> Emma, 27

This contrast is an interesting finding. The mobile phone became discarded as a valuable technology through which to channel interaction as soon as the couple were co-present, subsequently switching it off. Emma demonstrates this in describing how her mobile phone use weaves in and out of her intimate life according to her context. It becomes synchronous with whether her partner is co-present when she would 'rather not be disturbed by it', or at-a-distance 'when the phone did help me to feel less lonely' (Emma, 27). The mobile phone regained value as soon as the couples were apart, and eased the feelings of loneliness by re-establishing the potentially perpetual contact with her boyfriend and substituting his presence.

The mobile phone was used differently in relationships where couples are married or live together. Catherine (27) co-habited with her partner and therefore the mobile phone has somewhat basic use in comparison to those who are together less frequently. Catherine's use consisted of organising shared activities such as dinner and other social arrangements; she claims that her phone is not used for intimate purposes. However, like Emma (27), the mobile phone adopts a degree of importance when Catherine found herself alone.

> Yeah it is the only time I have ever found myself looking at my phone. Because I knew he wasn't going to text until probably 6 o'clock ... but I was just hoping that he would text to say hi ... I knew he wasn't going to be there all night ... I am just used to having him in the bed.
>
> Catherine, 27

Catherine (27) and Emma (27) use the mobile phone to combat loneliness. Catherine becomes excited hearing a ringing phone, displaying a longing to be connected, a longing to interact with a loved one and a need to stay in contact. The anticipation for

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contact is evident, in a new form, without physically sitting next to the phone or waiting at home for the phone to ring. This indicates how people become dependent on the mobile phone because it becomes interaction in itself when people are apart and therefore begins to shape the relationship when it becomes the main way for people to maintain their closeness. The mobile phone structures interaction and attachment to communication as symbolic of attachments to people, rather than to organise or negotiate person-to-person contact. The relationship primarily takes place through the mobile phone which, as the findings suggest, inevitably leads to problems.

> I had a girlfriend back home in Cheltenham, um, so basically, we'd had a relationship through a mobile phone for five days a week, and she'd come up every weekend. And on the weekend, it'd be brilliant, it would be great. But, then, I was like ruled by barriers, 'are you going out again? That's the third time this week.' Then you get the negative stuff through your phone.

> Eric's Friend - Alex, 23

The mobile is used to keep the relationship alive through the open channel of contact between partners. This is a positive use to maintain and enhance the relationship by converging time and space. However, it is also a capacity for too much at-a-distance communication and a dependence on the device as the only way to interact, which can then detract from the strength of co-present interaction, as Alex (23) suggests. Chapter 3 outlined how Urry (2002) claims that there needs to be co-presence for distant interaction to be successful. The face-to-face interaction and eye contact is the purest interaction and is needed to develop trust. The deterioration of Alex's relationship could be attributed to the lack of co-presence and consequently too much dependence on the mobile phone's capacity for interaction as an interaction itself. Therefore, trust could not be sustained or developed and this became a negative impact on the relationship due to the lack of pure interaction and co-present affection needed.

The mobile phone has digitally restructured traditional rules of courtship and ways of keeping the affection alive. Letters and emails can state feelings, an in reciprocating time would be taken to think and respond; the original sender would be anticipating, becoming excited about a response, as there was time for such feelings to develop. The instantaneous nature of the mobile phone cuts across time and space, affecting the development of such feelings. There is a proverb 'absence makes the heart grow fonder'; the mobile phone disparages such feelings by replacing them with presence

during absence, displacing this important time needed to develop feelings. Having immediate intimate moments at free intervals throughout the day does not always enhance the strength of the relationship; it can in fact become over-powering with too much contact and absence. This was particularly problematic for Alex (23) when there was no co-present interaction to sustain the strength of the relationship.

Participants all reported affectionate aspects of their relationships, which the mobile phone then simulated when the couples were apart. This is supported by the mobile phone moving in and out of importance according to absence and presence as Emma's (27) claim above, leading on to discuss the capacities and understandings of the mobile phone as a mediator of affection in times of absence.

> NJ (boyfriend): Yes, I'm thinking about you. Wish I was there to give you a cuddle. Still out but home soon, hopefully.
>
> Diary Entry – Kate, 26

Text messaging provides expressions of affection and intimate desires in a way that may not have been so readily expressed in verbal communication, restructuring intimate relations by complementing and bridging the limits of at-a-distance communication. This serves to virtually 'cuddle' a person from a distance by merely stating this desire of intimacy in Kate's (26) case. Kate and her partner depend upon text messaging in relating to each other when they are apart. The mobile phone is being used to simulate virtual intimacy by explicitly stating and narrating the closeness that would occur if they could be co-present. It is also interesting how the number of text messages includes information about the location of the person, seemingly to compensate for the absence by attempting to forge a closeness through the simple knowledge of where each other is and what they are doing. Interestingly, the mobile phone is also used to consolidate closeness during co-presence in a similar way to the friendship groups reinforcing their friendships in the co-presence sharing and gift-giving of mobile phone content.

> I just send him a text. 'You look gorgeous from here' ... I would still just send a message while I am with him, that when I know that I will say goodbye. So that he can find it later... It's like leaving post-its.
>
> Emma, 27

This is an affectionate gift-giving practice that is neither used in absence nor in co-presence. It is a relational practice that creates affection to be received at a later time.

Emma continues to send text messages to her partner even when with him, to convey some of the co-present affection to be received later; the mobile phone is therefore a way of mediating and experienced the saved affection. Statements such as 'you look gorgeous from here' on the one hand, would have seemed a little embarrassing in front of bystanders if shouted across a public space. Text messaging provides an appropriate means to mediate private affection in public by forming a private booth in a public place, echoing Lasen (2003). This affection may have felt awkward or embarrassing to voice in closer-proximity (e.g. at the table before walking to the bar). The text messaging overcomes interaction obstacles by providing the capability to communicate affection whilst avoiding public embarrassment or awkwardness. As Emma (27) suggests; this is not a very different practice to the use of post-it notes, used as mementos of togetherness, and the mobile phone is therefore another platform to mediate affection through establishing a memento in the form of a text message. The new capacity is the blurring of co-presence with absence through recording affection in co-presence that can be received during absence. This is one way of simulating co-present interaction.

Interaction is continued when couples are apart and maintained in a number of ways by blurring presence with absence. This can be accomplished by using the mobile phone to narrate life and location. Chapter 5 referred to this in terms of belonging and tracking the activities of friends. The next section will examine narration and location explicitly in relation to the maintenance of intimacy.

Continuous communication was often instrumental for safety and security when women were travelling from work to home in Ingrid's (17) and James' (24) relationships, for example. Speaking while walking and mentioning where they were and the tasks they were doing reassured their partners of their safety. Ingrid's partner often makes contact to ensure her well-being and safety, together with a narration or a summary of the day.

> He rang me back a few times to check I was ok and got to the train station fine. We just talked about general stuff like what we did in work. At least I felt safer walking to the station.
>
> Ingrid, 17

The mobile phone is often used in situations when the user feels threatened. Speaking to another is reassuring and reveals the closeness of the relationship; the partner is the

person who can and will be contacted at any time. Intimate others and family members are therefore contacted in times of distress or potential distress. The mobile phone becomes an 'umbilical cord' described by Palen et al (2000) to retain connectedness in order to ensure safety and security, as demonstrated by Ingrid above. In structuring interaction the mobile phone becomes an umbilical cord not only between partners, but also amongst families. Information can be requested to organise and co-ordinate face-to-face interaction in addition to information simply to place each other on the map; information having no bearing on the purpose for the call or co-ordinations.

> ...Guess I passed about 12 texts to Mike today. All nice. He was just keeping in touch and letting me know what he was up to with his bros.
>
> Catherine, 27

This is an example of the common findings between partners. It symbolises that the partner is being thought about and not forgotten. Narration of activities bridges the distance between couples and family; it allows the partner or family to be virtually close by keeping them in their daily lives although they remain physically distant. This also helps to combat loneliness by reporting daily events to each other. Such narration also serves to fill in empty moments with intimacy. This is evident in the text messages sent in Ingrid's (17), Emma's (27) and James' (24) relationships; contact, replacing letters. Frequent letter writing to a partner is being replaced by snippets, narrating daily activity, heavy in description demanding an immediate response. This detracts from the depth that is possible in a letter. In comparison to letter writing, the text message is more of less, as opposed to less of more which limits the quality of contact.

Often meaningful text messages, similar to letters, were kept by the recipient and the mobile phone became used as a storage device; 'because some of them are nice and they have emotional value' (Emma, 27). Photographs are also stored 'because at least when I miss Vic I can see him in a way' (Ingrid, 17). The mobile phone is bridging the interaction gap. It is interesting that Ingrid values photographs on her mobile phone in terms of her relationship. She is keeping the sender present (Horst et al, 2006) and virtually reducing their distance. The same occurs with family; the mobile phone becomes a photo album, and a new way of keeping loved ones in everyday.

> I have got quite a few photographs on there actually. And it's quite nice to have them always with you to flick through. Because I've got my mum, my brother, my sister...
>
> Eric's Friend - Alex, 23

The mobile phone is being used in the same way that photographs of family and partners are kept in wallets or purses. These significant photos are easily accessible and used as a point of reference at any given moment, just as they are in a wallet. The difference is that the mobile phone has the storage capacities to hold not only pictures of partners and family but of anything. This practice of actively saving text messages, photographs and even videos of intimate partners and family members is an integration of a sentimental practice with ubiquitous communication technology. Jack (23) reports watching videos of his wife in the same way as other participants flick through (or rather 'navigate') the photographs that are stored on their handsets.

> If I'm ... really really bored ... I might flick through and watch, um, a video of, you know, my wife ... singing in the bath or whatever... and just cheer myself up with that.
>
> Emma's Friend - Jack, 23

This is exactly the same as watching videos of somebody during their absence or looking at pictures of them when absent, easing feelings of loneliness or sadness. In the same way, keeping and re-reading pleasant text messages are valued due to the interaction and presence within a relationship that they represent. This capacity of the mobile phone maintains close connection and the feeling of connectivity for couples because it provides a way of seeing a significant other, even when it is not real time.

The value of the mobile phone is additional to the value of the relationship by mediating value and feelings. It does not determine; however, it can shape the relationship by storing symbolic values reflecting the value of the relationship. The mobile phone is reshaping interaction, allowing communications in public and private, filling voids, remedying sadness and easing insecurities, without replacing co-presence itself. The mobile phone therefore bridges the gap between presence and absence using new modes of interaction and increased availability to enable this.

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This supports McLuhan (1964) in the claim that the medium is significant, the medium is the message. The mobile phone has become valuable due to its capacity to mediate interaction and therefore has become meaningful interaction itself. This explains why people become so attached to the mobile phone in an intimate relationship. The medium (connectivity) adopts the value of the communication it mediates, the communication and connectivity constitute substance to valued interaction, and the interaction is the intimate relationship. Hence, the medium is the message, the medium is the interaction, and the medium is the meaningful relationship. The messages and photographs retain similar meaning to that of keeping letters and carrying photographs. However, the mobile phone reshapes the value and symbolism of having this content readily accessible to re-read and uses simulating closeness to other people using the device. This content became reshaped meaningfully as an interaction through which to feel close due to the mediating capacity of the mobile phone. For example, Ingrid likes to flick through the photos of her boyfriend on her phone when she misses him. Vail's study (2004) can be referenced here; a tree became sacred and untouchable when it was mediated using a laptop. The laptop reformed the mundane tree and therefore the local villagers became interested in the laptop. The laptop and the mediated tree became valuable, but the real-life tree did not. The medium is the interaction, or the relation, not the information mediated. McLuhan (1964) is not implying that the content mediated is not important, it is the medium that makes the content significant, the medium forges the relation.

The section on continuous contact has explored how the mobile phone itself has become meaningful through the ability to simulate intimate connectivity in personal relations. On the one hand, the mobile phone emphasises the dynamics and mediates expressions of intense relations between people, whilst on the other hand this very capacity actually reshapes relations and creates meaningful interaction. This occurs due to the convenience of being able to connect at any place any time; the attachment and expectation of this capacity mediates a certain degree of availability of the intimate relationship. This illustrates how the mobile phone has become a powerful everyday interaction; not only used to mediate information, having become interaction itself, altering these intimate relations between people. This discussion will continue examining how the mobile phone has influenced dynamics of intimate relations in examining how intimate relations have become empowered resulting from mobile phone use.

Intimate powers

The findings suggest that the mobile phone is a technology through which power relations are expressed and enhanced. The term 'power relations' refers to how actors monitor, dominate and control within their relationships through monitoring, expectation, accountability and demand. The mobile phone is both a lens through which observe power dynamics in relationships, as well as an influence; it is far from passive in the power relations between people. The discussion will now examine how the mobile phone mediates dominant actors together with how the device itself becomes powerful in the intimate relations of everyday life.

The convenience of continuous contact across time and space becomes an expected connectivity which is depended upon as part of the interaction practices in the relationship. Receiving a text message can be a pleasant surprise or an expectation to use the mobile phone as an umbilical chord to maintain connectivity. Given that text messaging is easy and unobtrusive, Kate (26) claims that it has raised expectations for a friend of hers who is in a relationship, for example 'why have they not sent me a text message?' and this can lead 'to all kinds of arguments' (Kate, 26). This demonstrates a shift from the umbilical cord sustaining personal and intimate relations towards use in terms of a 'digital leash' described by Ling (1999) providing body data that can be tracked (Lyon, 2001).

> When she's busy and she doesn't reply I am like 'Come on, what are you doing?' Like the other day... She left [her mobile phone] at home. I was like 'Ah why are you in a mood with me now for? I was like 'Come on'. It was like 'I haven't done anything'.
>
> James, 24

James (24) illustrates how instant access affects the reactions to unavailability, revealing expectations of accessibility as well as the insecurities over the relationship. The mobile phone mediates James' relationship, revealing the expectations, tensions and potential disputes and causing apologies for non-response 'so he didn't think I was ignoring him' (Ingrid, 17). The increased availability and the need to be answered and to answer raises expectations; in turn, people feel they need to be available and apologise when they are unavailable to prevent disputes.

Families also expect to contact one another, and anxieties arise over safety and security if the predicted contact is not established. This monitoring of movement and safety

becomes possible through the expectation in using a mobile phone. The convenience of communication in preventing others becoming anxious over safety brings an expectation of contact, giving rise to anticipation and therefore increased anxiety when contact does not occur. This causes uncertainty in the family when a person has switched off their phone, when it is often on. Kate (26) uses the example of text messaging whilst overseas to illustrate these expectations when contacting her family.

> I was thinking that if I'm not texting, they know I've got the phone, are they gonna be worried? So I tended to text a little bit more then.
>
> Kate, 26

Kate (26) used her phone to confirm safety to her family in a way that she would not in her familiar environment. The convenience of the mobile phone is used to initially confirm safety, which gives rise to the expectation of further contact in order to prevent anxieties over why Kate does not contact them more often. Kate's use is therefore dictated by the connectivity capacities of the mobile phone and the social demands and practices that have arisen from the device. The mobile phone creates expectation followed by anxiety and, in turn, more use of the mobile phone to determine whereabouts and prevent worries over safety. The initial convenience contact established from overseas later became necessary contact to ease the anxiety arising from no contact.

Parents and siblings use the mobile phone to monitor each other by asking about whereabouts and what time to expect each other home. This is for no instrumental reason, according to Ingrid (17), who perceives this as an intrusion into her life. Prior to the widespread use of mobile phones, there was less of a demand for contact and to maintain contact. The mobile phone has created expectation and the resulting need to quickly respond, simply because the capacities facilitate a fast response. This is the power of the mobile phone, a compulsion to answer due to the somewhat created need to contact and be contacted that become compelling. This was discussed at great length in respect of friendship groups (Chapter 5). The expectation and compulsion to contact and to answer the phone applies equally to the more intimate relations. Although the contact could be intrusive Ingrid (17) continued to respond to the contact even when it was inconvenient, as this had evolved from the social practice of answering the telephone for the ringing to stop (Lasen, 2003). This is another demonstration of how

the mobile phone alters interaction; this particularly demonstrates the mobile phone as active in empowering relations so that people can virtually tag each other.

Delivery reports as body data were highlighted in this study as a way of monitoring others and empowering oneself. Delivery reports are used by Gareth to confirm that his message has been received, but Kate describes delivery reports as a weapon of power in the form of a tracking device. The text message delivery is often becoming a source of blame for non-contact, as Kate (26) describes, particularly to prevent the recipient claiming that they did not receive the text messages. The text message not getting through has been used to deceive, and therefore an additional text message is returned to track delivery, as a tool through which to monitor the partner.

> A friend of mine uses delivery reports to make sure that who she was sending it to got them, so she knew and they couldn't say they didn't get it ...They can be used for surveillance, rather than keeping in touch or for emergencies ... It gets quite deep, doesn't it?
>
> Kate, 26

Delivery reports have been designed to confirm receipt; they also raise expectation that the recipient will respond even when the recipient may not have engaged with the mobile phone around the time the message was sent. A simple function such as text messaging is used to co-ordinate activities and to maintain contact in an unobtrusive way; however this mode of communication can also be used as a technology of surveillance rendering it as a form of control. The mobile phone is not a surveillance technology; delivery reports and constant contact are capacities which have reshaped interaction, together with our expectation of the availability of each other. Kate (26) had to state where she was and Ingrid gave reasons to her boyfriend accounting for not answering her mobile phone. This conforms to Green (2002) and Gant and Keisler (2001) who stated that the mobile phone has brought about the need to be accountable to employers when they are out of the office and do not answer their devices. Therefore, the mobile phone is used to track and monitor people, being reminiscent of surveillance practices, echoing Lyon (2001). Both use and non-use (as an absence of availability or failure to respond) creates liquid data de-privatising privacy through tagging and tracking. This heightens accountability and reshapes relations, both positively as a live link and negatively in heightening suspicion and insecurities.

The mobile phone's capacity to track appears to have created the need to monitor each other. Arguably, however, this need may simply emphasise problems of trust in the relationship. This use of the mobile phone is therefore an expression of a problem in the relationship, and not so much the ways in which the mobile phone is used to co-ordinate and can dominate the relationship. It appears as though it is the social actors who use the mobile phone as one way of exerting control within a relationship. To say that the mobile phone is used for surveillance implies that partners and family are under continuous watch, when it is actually a form of tagging and tracking those to whom the user is strongly attached. The mobile phone therefore reveals the trust, feelings of morality and obligatory practices in these close relationships (in the form of continuous contact and accountability), as opposed to being used intensely as a surveillance device, such as CCTV would suggest.

Having control within the relationship using the mobile phone as a tracking device is one way of exercising power in relationships. Another way is through the modes of communication used to reflect the power dynamics within the relationship, particularly in long distance relationships. James (24) did not state any major concerns or problems regarding his relationship, whereas Emma (27) felt that the mobile phone compromised her control within her intimacy.

Problems and feelings relating to the use of text messaging are a reflection of the problems within the actual relationship for Emma (27). She claims that text messaging does not substitute conversation in intimate relationships. The capacity for interaction differs from spoken conversation, lacking qualities which are inherent in a verbal exchange and causing disappointment and disenchantment with the relationship. Restraints of the text message are implicated here due to the lack of capability to express emotion. This places limitations on the recipient, particularly when the physical presence of the partner is rare.

> You don't feel you have enough power in your relationship to choose your means of communication but stick to those that the other person is using ... And then you're restricted to one hundred and sixty signs and... How can I have a meaningful conversation? ... I hate it when people do that; when they think they can solve ... misunderstandings, or problems, by a text message ... If they don't grant you this way of communicating, then you're stuck basically ... This leaves you, I dunno, leaves me powerless.
>
> Emma, 27

Emma (27) is an interesting mobile phone user, being different to other participants in this sense because of her passionate claims to remain unrepresentative due to her low use, and even avoidance of use. However, mobile phone use in her current long-distant relationship suggests value as interaction while reflecting the problems in her previous relationship when using the mobile phone. Emma describes how she became frustrated with the mobile phone in a previous relationship; particularly in solving misunderstandings when the mobile phone was the only form of communication available. The ways in which the mobile phone is used is therefore a symbol of power in the way that modes of communication are 'granted' or denied through the refusal to talk in this case. The conformity to these 'rules' and the lack of control within the communication, thereby adapting to the situation, is illustrative of the power relations within intimate relationships, through the powerlessness of changing modes of communication. There appears to be a feeling about the relationship that cannot be clearly divorced from the use of the mobile phone. The mobile phone mediates unhappiness with the relationship and therefore becomes a frustrating medium in exacerbating problem areas. The disenchantment with the mobile phone and the disenchantment of the relationship are both affecting and consequential of the other. This form of mobile phone use displays the power relations of intimate interaction using the mobile phone.

This final section will discuss some of the findings relating to the power which is exercised in intimate relations through the mobile phone. Power is one of the main themes of this thesis; it is closely connected to all the prominent themes throughout the thesis. For example, the capacity for continuous contact together with the compulsions for communications that result from the promise of connectivity anytime, anywhere, leading to the rise of expectation and accountability, empowered actors in intimate relationships. This section discussed the power of connectivity as interaction, particularly how the modes of communication exercise power relations in long-distance contact and disputes. This section illustrates how the promise of connectivity becomes a digital leash, as opposed to an umbilical cord, in which the mobile phone begins to be used for monitoring and tracking practices. The mobile phone is not a surveillance technology as such. However, the capacities of continuous connectivity raise expectations for contact, where unavailability leads to a perceived duty of accountability with respect to whereabouts and actions. This amounts to a form of tracking or monitoring of the lives of a partner or family member. The mobile phone both

highlights power relations and extends them in intimate relationships, due to the mobile phone being as significant in relationships as interaction itself.

Conclusion

This empirical chapter has presented how the mobile phone is significant for intimate relationships, focusing on initiating and ending intimacy, sustaining presence and maintaining the relationship, and finally the intimate power within mobile phone mediated interaction. Intimate relationships are a complex social dynamic comprised of emotion, power, control and interpretation. It is the feelings, meanings and value of the relationships which the mobile phone mediates and reshapes. Looking at intimate relations through mobile phone use has illuminated the subtleties and private aspects of intimate relations in interaction, especially when connectivity is both easy and expected. It examined how the text message is used to instigate and end romance due to lack of awkwardness and confrontation, and the use of silence as an acceptable response when silence would be inappropriate in conventional conversation. The text message was used as a way to gain control through communication in a long distance relationship, and this highlighted how text messages can be used to increase interaction on the one hand and to gradually close communication on the other. The extensive connectivity that the mobile phone provides allows frequent interaction for both wanted and unwanted attention, emphasising the main topic of availability in intimate relations. The capacity of the mobile phone provides availability and this is used to simulate presence, mediate affection and enables the feeling of being valuable at times of physical absence. Traditional forms of communication and pre-existing methods of courtship remain; the difference is in how the mobile phone mediates interaction and therefore reshapes interaction and unfolds the contemporary dynamics of such relations. Mobile phone mediation of intimacy has become intimate interaction in itself, becoming as important as the relationship due to the value placed on the mobile phone to mediate relations. The mobile phone not only reshapes interaction; the device becomes meaningful interaction as part of the relationship, thus allowing social meaning and symbols to be explicated in new formations. The capacities for meaningful and continuous interactions become a form of digital leash in relationships, through which couples can tag and monitor each other. However, these highlighted problems in the power relations, and the trust involved in these relationships demonstrates how the mobile phone reshapes interactions. The mobile phone has value in intimate relationships in becoming an intimate relation and interaction in itself. The device becomes as significant to the

relationship as any other form of interaction due to its promised continuous connectivity. In the following chapter the promises of connectivity, empowerment, intimacy and friendship in terms of image and identity will be discussed. Chapters 5 and 6 indicated a collective identity of friendship groups in terms of belonging, gift-giving and sharing content using the mobile phone, as well as indicating how the mobile phone is used to project an intended and desirable persona when intimacy is being instigated. The final findings chapter will expand upon the consumer effect on identity which the mobile phone has in terms of consumption, personalisation and performance.

Chapter 7

Connectivity as Identity

Introduction

This chapter will discuss relations with the mobile phone, providing insight into how the device is a consumer object, together with how image is mediated to express the self and intended personas. The mobile phone has become a social symbol displaying connections, both intra- and inter-personal to social structures, conduct and practices. Chapter 5 briefly discussed how the device is used as a mediator of collective identities; together with the presentation of the self in the instigation of intimacy (Chapter 6), this leads to presenting how the mobile phone is a social and personal relational item. The mobile phone is significant in terms of both a desired and a representational object; this chapter will present the findings and analysis of the data relating to the objectified image and the mobile phone as consumption. Data from individual interviews, friendship group interviews and group interviews regarding commercial promises was gathered to illuminate how the mobile phone is being perceived and consumed, and also how the mobile phone embodies the self-identity. The chapter focuses on these findings in examining consumption, the connectivity of image and capacities, promised consumerism, personalisation and the presentation of the self.

Connectivity with image and capacities

This section focuses on the influences that have encouraged participants to buy new and particular mobile phones. This section will highlight the role of advertising in the promise of experiences and identities, mirroring gender stereotypes, the peer influences of belonging, together with the compulsion to connect. The main participants had recently purchased new mobile phone handsets prior to data collection; the findings will examine the influences on consumption they experienced.

> It looked nice... It just looked sort of like trendy. It was small ... I like a phone which is quite small, and it just looked trendy and I just liked it.
>
> Gareth, 25

In describing the purchase of handsets, many participants referred to the physical appeal. 'Small' and 'trendy' were the key terms used in Gareth's (25) account of handset selection referring to the latest style mobile phone as a consumer item. Gareth

acquired his mobile phone directly after it was released to the consumer market, being the most up-to-date in terms of size, style and capacities, although Gareth was attracted by the aestheticism of the handset. This demonstrated a degree of exclusiveness with respect to his friendship group in terms of the newest phone, as well as an inclusion in wider consumption on new and 'trendy' items. This supports Green (2003) who also found it was important for users to have the latest phones as symbols of rarity, expense and fashion; the rarity making it a 'flash' item and therefore trendy. Green (2003) found that larger phones are perceived as outdated and Gareth claims that small phones appeal to him, implying that size is symbolic of how the phone is up-to-date or 'flash'. Mobile phones become fashion items and Gareth is competing to acquire the latest model, as Plant (2002) also suggests.

Picture 7.1: Samsung E530
Source: O2 Retail Brochure

The mobile phone featured above is 'quite small and it does *feel* nice to hold as well' (Kirsty, 17). Diane (24) describes her mobile phone as 'pretty' as well as cute. She uses terms referring to style by use of the word 'pretty'. The physical features of the handset were mentioned by many participants, some even used affectionate and personalised terms to refer to how they found their mobile phone appealing. For example, in referring to the mobile phone featured in picture 7.1 above, Ingrid (17) claimed 'it's just cute'. The word 'cute' was a word most frequently used to refer to a small aesthetically pleasing mobile phone. There have been studies from Japan that concur with this finding, claiming that young girls speak about their phones as 'cute' (Hjorth, 2005) in

terms of personalisation. This use of the word 'cute' used to describe the mobile phone, implies that the device is something to cling on to or hug, in a way that changes the understanding of the mobile phone from an object and communication medium into a companion, or a pet. The mobile phone is talked about as a relation of attachment, which is more than just a technological device. This illustrates how the mobile phone has become valuable due to its capacities and therefore has value in itself as interaction; the device is not only a handset, it is a cultural artefact embodying relations and therefore becomes a relation in itself. As previously stated in Chapter 6, this can be related to the discussion of McLuhan (1964) who claims that value is placed on the medium as information and interaction (see p.179). The artefact becomes meaningful in itself due to the value of capacities. In this case, the mobile phone mediates intimacy and attachment, and attachment is formed to the artefact, making it valuable. Women in the study tended to use the term 'cute', with references to style and symbols of such style. There is no use of intimate terms, other than terms relating to style, in the appeal description adopted by men.

It looked nice... different colour, black, sleek, nice to pull out of my pocket ... To be honest with you, most people don't care what's on the phone... not my age. It's just the fact that it flicks up. That was enough... That sold it for me.

Matthew, 18

Picture 7.2: Samsung D500

Source: SAMSUNG's Digital World

Matthew (18) purchased the Samsung D500, both broadcasted and advertised as picture 7.2 above. Image was regarded more highly than function by Matthew, who describes his attraction to his mobile phone in terms of style and fashionable display; i.e. to pull out of a pocket and flick it up. A black sliding phone uses the depiction of use by people representing desirable lives. This in fact appeals to young consumers by way of modeling. This research suggests that the consumer, sometimes without awareness, desires to mimic the image in its entirety by adopting the product marketed.

> ...a vain person's phone... someone who wants to look good. Up themselves ... You'll find that most people that have got a D500 ... are people who like to look after themselves, top to bottom, and have got a high opinion of themselves ... it's a phone to look good.
>
> Matthew, 18

Matthew (18) aspired to these images in the desire to adopt the product; i.e. he is being coerced into what is 'sleek, different and nice', because the images in the advertising material can be described as sleek, in 'the style of business' at least. This form of advertising is selling the idea that slide phones are sleek and is associated with the business class and upper class; therefore owning and displaying this artefact is a way to symbolize this status. The images used in advertising have a role-model influence on Matthew, providing images that can be aspired to. Nafus and Tracey (2002) reported similar influences of the media, reporting how a working-class teenage girl aspired to a television character to become upper-middle class and therefore wanted to own a mobile phone. The contextual presentation symbolic use within a high social class is influential in selling the product featured in the advertisements through using desirable lifestyles. The mobile phone therefore becomes a 'prop' (Goffman, 1959) used to mime in the attempt to become similar to something or someone else (Taussig, 1993). Additionally, this corresponds to Bourdieu's conception of social class, in which lower classes continually redefine themselves referring to the dominant class, the 'distinct'. As Inglis (2005) points out, those who are anything other than this dominant class will refer to the dominant class and therefore will aspire to be better than their current position.

When the adverts were displayed to the male participants, David (19) interpreted the Samsung D500 marketing material above as 'trad[ing] very stylish chic business-like phone' and Paul (30) interpreted the people in the advert as 'all so vacant. They don't look clever or stylish to me. They just look like idiots'. The intention of the advert was

to convey a mobile phone used by chic business people, and this was perceived by Matthew (18) prior to the purchase of the mobile phone as an object.

Many participants initially referred to the physical mobile phone, and when the features and functions of the phone were discussed, the mobile phone promptly appeared. For example, Claire (22) initially claimed to have purchased this phone due to the Bluetooth function but she later claimed she 'mainly went for how it looked'. Matthew (18) is very much a consumer concerned first and foremost with the appearance and the style of the object, followed closely by an interest in portable music capacities.

David (19) was attracted by levels of capabilities, particularly the camera's capacity to take high quality photos; he is one of three out of 12 participants who were primarily attracted by capability. However, not one participant actually claimed they were attracted to the mobile phone due either to appearance or to capability in isolation; when appearance was claimed to be the attractive quality, capability had an effect on their decision to purchase their device. Sony Ericsson, featured below, was primarily marketed with a focus on capability, and this influence was echoed by the participants owning this handset, claiming that they chose the phone due to the camera or music function.
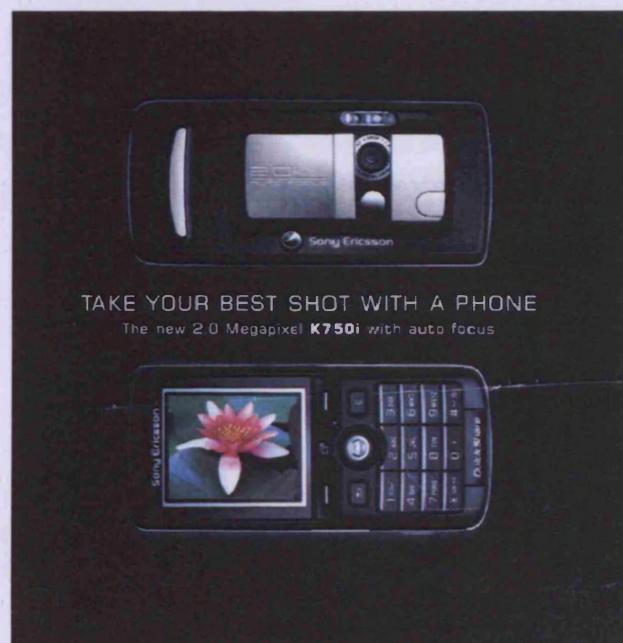
Picture 7.3: Sony Ericsson k750i
Source: Mobile News

David (19) claims that he purchased his phone due to the capacities of the camera; he also claimed the phone was quite 'funky'. The Sony Ericsson mobile phone marketed communication, function and experience of the extraordinary in a way that consolidated interaction with an event in the experience of the mobile phone. This mobile phone is marketed as being functional (in camera use), serving desires to communication (i.e. to send someone the captured experience), together with looking aesthetically pleasing. This could be because black was being marketed as part of desirable designs at the time, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Where appearance was the primary attraction six out of 12 were attracted, with these participants spanning the age range; Gareth (25) and Kate (26) placed appeal on appearance, but more specifically an appearance to be 'different' (this use of 'different' will be discussed in detail in the section on personalisation versus individualisation). For Catherine (27), Sam (25) and Claire (22), the appeal of their mobile phones was a combination of both new capabilities and appearance, together with similarity and ease of use in terms of function.

There was no particular gender difference in the accounts of mobile phone appeal in relation to capability. A small difference in age was found, the younger participants being influenced more by appearance than capability; however, this difference was not marked. This is perhaps due to the unintentional age cluster amongst participants. There are a number of participants in their late teens who, with the exception of David (19), purchased the phone due to functionality, but Matthew (18) and Ingrid (17) purchased mobile phones according to appearance. Although appearance was the initial appeal, in many cases functionality was also considered and therefore it was a combination of attractions that appealed when selecting mobile phones by the participants.

> That's why I stuck with the Nokia. So I don't have to learn how to use a new phone again ... I'd had enough of my other phone, um, and I wanted to have something that had Bluetooth on it ... It's a Nokia, but a different shape ... a bit of a change.
>
> Kate, 26

When functionality and capacity were important, participants claimed to prefer devices or user interfaces similar to previously owned mobile phones. They were however

interested by new popular capabilities such as Bluetooth, memory size and high pixel quality of photographs. The criteria for the majority of participants were ease of use coupled with an innovative design. This attracted Kate (26) to her mobile phone, an ease provided by similarity, as she claimed to prefer the straightforward and easy to use devices. This was reflected in her brand loyalty towards her previous and current mobile device; the expectation of similarity with a different feature and a different appearance.

It is evident that the attraction of the mobile phone is not solely determined by lifestyle; other factors affecting handset choice are fashion, collectives to which the consumer belongs, personal and gendered preferences, influences from commercial enterprise and the desire to be different. This section on image and capacity has introduced the findings relating to the main attractions of handsets for the participants as consumers. This examination will extend to the findings in branches that form the subsequent sections of this chapter, continuing with consumerism and influences on consumerism from commercial enterprise.

Promises of consumerism

This section will examine the process through which participants acquired their handsets with particular focus on meanings, representations of identity, and the mobile phone as an artefact. These findings will highlight consumerism of the mobile phone as an extension of the self-identity and responses to advertising as the integration into the pre-existing lifestyle of the consumer in terms of capacity, image and domestication.

> A lot of people buy a phone, not because of how good it is and how well designed it is, but because it's cute and it matches, and this, that and the other. It's an extension of you expressing yourself ... Consumerism is an extension of what you wear.
>
> Sam, 25

According to Sam (25), the mobile phone is like many consumer objects; it should look good as it is an accessory to be worn and displayed. It can be compared with matching an outfit or a style in terms of colour, whether it is sleek, funky or trendy; this becomes a form of expression and domestication. Consumerism is more than simply acquiring and experiencing an artefact; it is a means through which the person can express him/herself, as it represents style and cultural meaning as Matthew (18) has implied.

For Matthew (18), a stylish and sleek phone is a frequently displayed aesthetic object which also serves to contribute in the creation of impressions. The consumption of a mobile phone is not only the consumption of telecommunication for these users; it is consumption that reflects the desire to be different by purchasing into the new style. When Gareth (25) states it is to have 'something that no one else has', he is referring to something that is not owned by the people around him.

Commercial advertising

The commercial material advertising mobile phones at the time of the fieldwork used techniques to depict and convey the feeling of using the functions, or 'gadgets' encased within a mobile phone. This section will examine the interpretations of commercial advertising to explore the influences of imagery, highlighting that lifestyle and display were the prominent appeals to the participants as consumers, using the mobile phone as a 'prop' of identity and lifestyle. The mobile phone is a part of style and fashion which contextualise use, allowing the device to become an embodied artefact. The findings reveal that some participants are attracted to the depicted handsets by how the design integrates with their own style and fashion. Others are attracted by the price package offered; and others were not influenced by commercial presentations of the device.

Although the majority of participants claimed that they would not purchase a phone solely due to advertisement appeal, the Motorola Razr V3 television commercial triggered a positive response in terms of the phone's appearance and size. The commercial combined function with intimacy, using intimacy as the relational capacity through which to establish the appeal of the mobile phone. Many functions were presented in a compact, stylish shell to mediate seduction and intimacy of personal relationships (e.g. the video function showed a couple). This served to present the potential value of these functions, together with the overall value of the mobile phone, through the association of emotion and attachment.

Picture 7.4: Motorola Razr V3 commercial
Source: http://www.visit4info.com

The commercial establishes an initial interest as opposed to an outright desire. Both Sam (25) and Rhys (24) agreed that it had an appeal of style. The size of the phone was 'sexy', 'sharp and pristine' for Rhys, supporting Townsend (2002) who claimed that marketing focuses on power as a tool of fashion and the appeal of seductiveness; the group of men discussed the attractiveness of the woman in the advert used to lure their interest towards the mobile phone. It was practical for Ingrid (17) because it can be put into a pocket or handbag. The design is also practical and stylish for Sam, due to the thinness that appropriately adheres to style, suggesting the handset would be invisible when wearing a suit. It therefore has a unique design which enables the handset to be carried on the person in a subtle way.

> If I was wearing a suit, right, and I'd like to fill up one of my suit pockets with one of those slim, nice looking phones.
>
> Sam, 25

The focus of the Motorola Razr V3 television commercial, for the men, was the functions it contained in its compact form. For the women, the advertising projected a different lifestyle as a way to present the 'new', the modern and uniqueness. The advert was marketing a style, a way to present oneself; it was marketing an identity more than an object.

> I think it's more about the lifestyle almost because it's quite a funky apartment that she's got ... Isn't the phone, like on the table with another bit of funky equipment? They both look like quite cool people so I think it's that kind of the package almost ... The icon, rather than the actual phone itself.
>
> Rachael, 24

Rachael (24) identified that the phone was not being portrayed; it was the iconic user that was the focus of consumption. The function of the mobile phone, together with the intimate communicative relationship within a contemporary lifestyle, was used to market the phone. For Sam (25) also, the phone fits in with the style of dress and lifestyle, or a desired lifestyle, as previously discussed with reference to Matthew's (19) reasons for purchasing his particular phone. It is perhaps that the phone is a means through which this lifestyle can be displayed in a material form.

Although James (24) was attracted to the style of this phone, claiming it looked 'quite funky', he 'thought it had more on it than it actually did' and was rather disappointed with the capabilities of the mobile phone; he regrets not enquiring about them beforehand. In a similar way to the women, the men considered the appearance of the phone. It was the many gadgets and branding that were discussed in relation to the appeal of the device. The gadgets misrepresented the capabilities of the phone and for that reason David (19) was not influenced by the commercial or attracted to the phone, because it promised capability but delivered very little of them. This is not to say that the users were misled; the capacities advertised were not evident in everyday social and intimate practices.

> I like the fact that it's really slim ... I really would like one, because I want a new phone, um, but I think I'd have to know more about it ... But it is ultra sort of sleek and trendy, and I'd like to just flip it open.
>
> Diane, 24

Like many participants, Diane (24) claims that she requires additional information relating to ease of use before she would purchase the mobile phone. She is loyal to a rival brand and claims that the functionality would need to be similar. Although Diane is attracted to the appearance and width of the handset, this supports claims that purchases are not entirely based on advertising, and that there are, indeed, factors of use to consider.

The choice to discuss this particular advert was due to the high frequency of broadcast at the time then participants were purchasing mobile phones, together with high sales at the O2 shop. Therefore, the comments on this phone and the commercials have been used as an example of the responses to marketing. In relation to identity and consumption, the particular marketing strategy used for this handset appeals to the consumer in terms of practicality, sex, desirable relationships and a desirable lifestyle. This handset was appealing through the presentation of material possessions in the advert manifesting an impression of an identity. It intimated that consumption of the product would contribute towards such an identity and exert the associated desirable impressions of sleekness, sexiness, style and difference, in terms of design and colour.

Black or pink

The colour of the handset seemed to be significant for participants. At the time of the data collection pink and black mobile phones were relatively new in terms of aesthetic design. Black handsets were desirable as they symbolised the new and different. Pink mobile phones were marketed towards women; the pink Samsung E530 (shown in picture 7.1, p.188) was owned by four out of the six women in the study. The following section will discuss this significance of colour in the consumption of the mobile phone as an artefact.

Black is associated with style, particularly the chic business look; 'it looked nice, different colour, black, sleek' (Matthew, 18). At the time of the study, black was new, and was therefore different; five out of six male participants owned new mobile phones that were black. The paradox here is over the term 'different'. It could be that stylish and newly designed mobile phones happen to be black; therefore black becomes different through association with the latest and sleek handsets on the market when, in fact, it is not different in terms of being unlike other people's mobile phones, but different to their own previous mobile phone. In this case the use of black is a new and different design in terms of the latest but not 'exclusive', as Rachael (24) and Kate (26) highlight overleaf.

R: I thought, like, silver was the new and trendy colour for phones, or am I just way behind? ... Didn't phones used to be black?

K: Well, maybe it's just they know they'll sell the phones and it's a bit different. You've got a lot of black phones and they'll sell, then go for that. Give it a year or two, or month or two.

Excerpt from commercial group interview.

Manufacturers design devices with the intent to sell and therefore market or brand them as 'different' when they perhaps mean 'new'; they influence what is 'cool' and 'different' until it reaches beyond the business user to the mainstream consumer. There is a switch between black and silver to create 'difference', until the different becomes mainstream, and leads to the difference of having a 'silver' phone after a long period, as Rachael (24) claims in the extract above. A switch between two colour schemes takes place to sell more products as soon as one becomes the mainstream; the other colour scheme is re-invented to serve the demand for difference. On the one hand, black is used again in designs when previous black mobile phones have successfully sold; whilst pink, on the other hand, is relatively new in the design of the mobile phone. The discussion will concentrate on the significance of pink in the appeal to women and, in turn, maximize uptake in the attempt to appeal to half the nation, in theory.

Catherine (27), Claire (22), Ingrid (17) and Kirsty (17) all purchased the Samsung E530, which was marketed and perceived as a pink mobile phone in order to appeal to the female market of young socials and affordable on many contract deals.

In the winter I don't get to wear lots of pink so I have my pink phone now.

Catherine, 27

Catherine (27) suggests that the pink phone becomes part of her attire for the winter, to compensate for the lack of pink worn in comparison to the amount worn in the summer. The pink mobile phone symbolizes her preference for pink as a fashionable colour. For many of the female participants, owning a pink phone can be associated with owning a pink item of clothing or even an item of jewellery, as conveyed by Catherine (27). It serves to complement a representation of a person who prefers pink and uses pink in her everyday styling. The femininity of the 'pink' phone was an appealing factor because it

is aesthetically pleasing and serves to reinforce a feminine identity in a way that is recognised in contemporary western culture, albeit a stereotyped identity.

> I get it out just like to show off because it's pink and girlie.
>
> Kirsty, 17

The mobile phone is a tool to communicate, but it is actually serving to communicate sociological symbols simply through possession and display. Sales techniques use stereotyped femininity; this was a different way of promoting sales of mobile phones at the time of the fieldwork. It is therefore assumed to be 'different' because it is a pink phone; new and a little exciting with some additional features appealing to the female participants, such as the 'pink chart' and 'it also tells you what fragrance to wear, it's very *girlified*' (Sam, 25). Therefore even the add-on capacities are aimed at the stereotypical female identity. Participants claimed that they are not very 'girly' (e.g. Kirsty, 17), but like to show objects symbolizing femininity and are therefore consuming and reaffirming a feminine identity in this artefact and communication medium. Motorola even used the slogan "Pretty in Pink" to refer to a limited addition of the V3 Razr mobile phone to appeal to their female market, featured in picture 7.5 below.

Picture 7.5: Motorola V3 Razr Pink

Slogan: 'Pretty in Pink'

And now they've got it in *pink*. Get in!

Diane, 24

The men perceived the Motorola Razr to appeal to men; the mobile phone was then manufactured in pink to appeal to women, which created enthusiasm as Diane (24) demonstrates above. The pink Motorola Razr phone was advertised as available for a limited period, serving to hasten consumers to purchase the product and infiltrate it into the mainstream. Advertising a product 'for a limited period' or 'while stocks last' lures the consumer into believing they will have a rare mobile phone which will be different and unique compared to the mainstream products. This is an effective sales strategy to recruit consumers into purchasing and 'needing' a product that is rare and therefore different from the majority of mobile phone users. This illustrates how the culture of consumerism creates the need to consume using imagery and offers to lure the consumers into 'needing' the artefact for expressive purposes. The pink mobile phone as a designed artefact illuminates a need to display femininity, a need to do so in an exclusive way to others, through a fashionable and 'flash' item because the artefact is conveyed as rare (Green, 2003).

This suggests that mobile phone design is another mediation of the expression of identity, when in fact these new designs impose expression of identity given the lack of alternative available to consumers. For example, Ingrid (17) claims that she has a pink phone because it was the only available colour in the Cardiff store, suggesting that the choice of design is often dictated by the outlet. Ingrid's choice to purchase the pink handset was not driven by marketing techniques. In fact, a family member owned the same handset and this influenced Ingrid's selection. This means that although the handset is 'cute' and 'girly' Ingrid 'got stuck with the pink one' and therefore did not buy into the device as marketed. Ingrid was attracted to seeing and using her sister's mobile phone, but she could not purchase the handset in her choice of colour as this aspect was limited and dictated by the retail store and associated service provider. However, it remained popular for these women, if not for the pink colour, then by the shape and 'cuteness' described.

Media marketing strategies using colour influence consumer choice, as users associate themselves with the meaning that is conveyed by colour. An interesting finding is how black mobile phones also appeal to the women interviewed. The black handsets are

marketed to appeal to men in terms of advertising the 'gadget' of the phone, together with the intimate capacities by using imagery featuring women. It appears that women were also attracted to the sleek, slender and business appeal of the mobile phone. However, pink only targeted the women, as appeal was featured as having more value for women who associated colour with femininity and themselves; an identity was projected through the mobile phone as an aesthetic object. Therefore appeal reveals gender difference in the purchasing of mobile phone as objects in the construction of identity representation, particularly how a colour, symbolic of femininity, becomes embodied in the mobile phone as a cultural artefact. Just as the pink mobile phone becomes integrated into the person's colour scheme, the design of the artefact also becomes integrated into the style scheme, this will now be examined.

Style-schemed mobile phones

The mobile phone has become not only an integral part of the way people interact, but also integral to the lifestyle and part of an embodiment of artefacts that are important in people's lives, as Paul (30) illustrates below.

> I think it would match my car as well ... the way that the Aygo's styled ... I like to think of these combinations ... Does it fit with ... how I've styled my life?

Paul, 30

The mobile phone becomes part of a broader style scheme for Paul (30). Paul highlights how the design of his mobile phone is consistent with expressed style in other everyday possessions. It is interesting that he has mentioned an item that has traditionally been perceived as a symbol of status and power in modern society. Hence, an attractive phone, for Paul, is one which he is able to integrate with other fashionable, well-designed items that he regularly displays. This relates to the theory of consuming items that fit into one's own domestication framework and also as part of habitus.

The display of the mobile phone is part of Paul's style tapestry of life, just as Catherine integrates her pink phone with her fashion tapestry or item of jewellery. The mobile phone can be aligned with an item of jewellery; it accessorises, decorates and complements an outfit, and therefore it must integrate effectively with an attire and lifestyle of the user. Additionally, many of the female participants claimed that the mobile phone was purchased to integrate practically into their everyday lives;

specifically, that the mobile phone should be small enough to fit into handbags or pockets in a practical way whilst at university for Mia (27; Kate's friend). The selection of the artefact is influenced by how the device integrates with other everyday meaningful objects, and this echoes Silverstone et al (1992) who found that ICTs become domesticated, both functionally and aesthetically, through objectification or personalisation in the home or extensions of the home. The essential point is that objects become embedded in the environment or even consumed due to compatibility with the environment in terms of appearance and social capacities. The findings suggest it is this process of domestication, how the user integrates the device, which gives the consumptive meanings that define the mobile phone as an aesthetic artefact. The mobile phone becomes objectified and personalised into an existing body of values and objects. The consumptive meanings convert the mobile phone from a commodity to a personal 'artefact'; the mobile phone therefore becomes a valuable relation through expressing identity, empowerment, gender, class and the characteristics of the individual by becoming personal. The mobile phone communicates an identity symbolic of belonging and of a habitus expressed through lifestyle. Arguably, mobile phone selection appears as an individual choice, when in fact choice is influenced by habitus; a choice that will cohere to lifestyle, taste and, moreover, distinction.

The mobile phone is advertised and consumed in a domesticated and expressive way that integrates with image and identity. This section has demonstrated how the mobile phone is marketed and consumed using feminine symbols to target women, together with the portrayal of class, gadgetry, intimacy and the concepts of 'different' and 'flash' which appeared to attract the men i.e. the men bought into the black phones due to the gadgets conveyed. The colour pink appealed to women by the social associations of pink, together with displaying the phone as an item of jewellery to 'match clothes'. This section illustrated how marketing creates a need and lures consumers through expressive purpose of femininity and class aspiration. The mobile phone becomes embedded into the style embroidery of everyday life through the process of domestication, and therefore adopts consumptive meaning as an artefact, expressing identity, personalisation and value through the decorated aesthetic. This section also highlighted the concepts of 'difference' (in terms of distinctiveness) and personalisation of the mobile phone, in terms of new, rarity value and exclusivity. This implies that mobile phone handsets are selected to express individual identities, as well as for inclusion in the possession of 'trendy' and 'latest' devices. The discussion will now

examine the tension between identity and individualisation from the findings in the following section.

Personalisation is not individualisation

This section will focus on the tensions between personalisation and individualisation, highlighting that personalisation can be a practice of belonging and not necessarily a practice reaffirming distinction, difference and individualisation. The dichotomy is that the mobile phone highlights trends and the preferences of friendship groups (e.g. the pink appeal portrays a trend, as opposed to distinguishing differences), as well as highlighting perceived individual differences. The mobile phone is therefore subject to the same critiques as any everyday object used to convey messages about the self. The mobile phone is personalised to express an identity, an identity that is symbolic of shared lifestyles and identities and not unique identities as such. The understanding of the mobile phone as an identity will now be examined in the tensions between belonging and individuality.

The mobile phone is an accessory used to symbolise style preference. The device, however, is also a prop that is domesticated and embodied into one's own lifestyle; to individualise by individualising a commonality of everyday life. Kate's claim reflects her desire to individualise away from the people in her immediate environment.

> There's actually people in work, I think three of them who have got exactly the same phone. Whereas I wanted something a bit different ... That's also a big part of it.
>
> Kate, 26

Gareth (25) buys the most up-to-date handset creating the impression of style and uniqueness and to present himself in a way that is different to his friendship group. The mobile phone is a means through which a group member can present themselves as distinguished from their peers, or to be external to group norms. Gareth purchased his mobile phone to consume something different and 'unique', creating the associated impressions. Many participants purchased what they defined as a 'different' phone, and this could be interpreted in three senses: that it was different to mobile phones owned by members of their friendship group; different to their own previous phones; or different as 'unique'. Gareth and others in this study select different mobile phones, in the sense of uniqueness within friendship groups, in order to have the trendiest, funkiest and latest

devices within their peer group. However, the paradox is having a 'different' mobile phone reaffirms the norms found amongst the majority of this sample which are trend, uniqueness and 'funkiness' – there is a commonality, as opposed to a difference in itself.

Although external to the group in terms of difference in aesthetic objects, the user is actually adhering to common trends by reaffirming the trends of contemporary consumers in acquiring the best looking phone and, thus, an 'up-to-date' presentation of the self. Hetherington (1998) claims belonging, expression, performance, identification and communication with others are all the defining characteristics of identity. This does not present identity as being identified as distinctive. On the contrary, Gareth (25) is reaffirming an identity; integrating common trends and styles for inclusion in the latest use and display of technology. This illustrates the tension between personalisation and individualisation in a similar way to Lasen (2004). Mobile phones become meaningful and symbolic of lifestyle, they are not exclusive to particular lifestyles. Style and use symbolise choice and preferences of people forming a collective identity, not individuality. The mobile phone is therefore not individualised in appearance, but personalised in the way in which the mobile phone becomes an extension of personality and how the device, as a relation, enhances the daily life for the user.

In response to particular mobile phones being perceived as 'cool', trendy or the latest handset, Emma's friend Jack (23) claims that his phone may not be 'cool' but it is accepted as it lacks the embarrassment associated with the out-of-date larger sized mobile phones.

> It's not cool because it's not kind of got all the bells and whistles but, it's acceptable, it's not a brick.
> Emma's Friend - Jack, 23

Handsets were often purchased to remain included and integrated within the group. The size of the device was a point of discussion when 'different' mobile phones were being described; size was important to consumers. They did not want to attract attention by having large phones, as size symbolises the out-dated 'brick' and are a source of mockery or even exclusion. Therefore small phones allowed users to identify with the latest designs whilst sustaining a level of acceptance, emphasizing that, in terms of image, many users considered size to avoid exclusion or mockery as opposed to being

up-to-date. Moreover, users avoided being out-dated in their handset ownership; the capabilities of new handsets were also important.

Amy: Everyone's got the camera and everything.
Yvette: Everyone's got basically the same, haven't they?
Amy: Yeah, they've just got different makes.

Excerpt from Kirsty's group interview.

When asked as a group about the mobile phones as consumer objects, Kirsty's group commented that all mobile phones owned in the group are the same in capability, but vary in make. Mobile phones were purchased because they were different, and in many cases they were purchased to belong. Participants often wanted the same capacities on their phones as their friends. Members of each friendship group had very different brands and models of phones, but they were all defined as 'funky', 'trendy' or 'new' and many of the groups had the most recent capabilities. However none of the participants in Kirsty's group owned the same phone. Therefore, it is capacities that are used to identify the group identity, and appearance is used to aspire to identities away from the group as part of the desire for distinctiveness and individuality (Nafus and Tracey, 2002).

This examination of personalisation and individuality in the data established that users select handsets due to 'difference'. In most instances, this required a unique or distinct mobile phone to that of others. However, they were also the latest and most trendy handsets that did not distinguish these users in terms of the display of the mobile phone. Moreover, it established a desire for distinction but not exclusion, highlighting the participation in the use of latest technology by consumers on a broader scale. The sense of belonging applied both to the display of the mobile phone and to the inclusion of having the same social capacities as the friendship group. Drawing on Lasen (2004), the mobile phone becomes personal but not individual because the style symbolises collective identities; hence the Samsung E530 (the pink is marketed generally towards women and not to women on an individual basis, and it is different compared to previous designs, but not unique) appeals to women and not to men. The mobile phone cannot be individualised but personalisation occurs through use and, consequently, meaning is derived from the relational and interactional capacities in daily life. Finally, some aspects about the appearance of the mobile are preferred due to acceptance as

opposed to conforming to latest fashion. The size of the mobile phone is an important aspect symbolising that the user is not out-of-date, even if they are not up-to-date as such; this alone prevents exclusion as opposed to being trendy. The discussion will now continue to examine the mobile phone in terms of image, focusing on personal performance of mobile phone use and the mobile phone in the presentation of the self, and also examining how the mobile phone becomes a personalised artefact through use.

Performance and the 'Presentation of the Self'

Collective identities and personalisation will now be examined further, focusing on the role of the mobile phone in everyday relations as a performance and a presentation of the self. Chapters 5 and 6 mentioned how the mobile phone is used to express oneself and form intended personas by extending this further, examining personalised communication and the use of the mobile phone as a prop in performance.

The mobile phone as an aesthetic device and as a communication mediator can transmit information about the self; much of this communicated information is performed in a personalized way which expresses the self in a desired way. Both David (19) and Sam (25) report to be expressive in text messages.

> Sometimes I rant a lot ... We [family name] don't necessarily consider what we're saying and ... find it a lot easier to write things ... you can amend what you've written ... and you can think about it ... I wanna get a point across, I can sometimes do it a lot more calculated with a text message.
>
> Sam, 25

Both Sam (25) and David (19) use the text message as an alternative to speech, because of 'ranting' or, in David's case, simply finding the spoken word rather difficult at times, most notably when he was not relaxed. Therefore, text messaging is favourable and a rather complementary alternative. Sam, on the other-hand claims to speak before he thinks. For him text messaging becomes a more personalized form of communication; perhaps due to the text message being created after much thought, whereas spoken communication is more spontaneous and perceived as a communication that is likely to be unclear in its delivery.

> I personalise my texts, err things, I don't personalise everything ... I think it's a stupid ...I don't think a phone needs to look good.
>
> Eric, 23.

Eric (23) refuses to buy into the individualisation of the mobile phone as an object in terms of colour and design. He does, however, use the mobile phone as a device to communicate personalised communication in the way in which text messages are written, signed and decorated with emoticons. Individualising an identity through mobile phone use occurs through personas and the impressions they convey. Alex (23) uses full words and grammar to avoid the impression that the opposite use of language would create. He wishes to avoid projecting a negative image of himself to the recipient and therefore coheres to using words and grammar as they are used elsewhere and as standard.

> They are all very structured... direct. And I'm not one for texting, I like proper grammar ... Otherwise I think they think that I'm stupid... I have to do it. I even do capitals when there's supposed to be... and lower case.
>
> Eric's Friend - Alex, 23

Alex was concerned about the misrepresentation of himself as somebody who is unable to spell correctly, in the traditional sense, and what any misrepresentation may entail, such as negative social prejudices and judgment of those who are unable to spell. Text messaging was being compared to talk and other textual modes of communication by the participants, such as letters, email and the spoken word, and one aspect of comparison was the representation of the self. Alex was concerned that his use of text messaging would portray him differently to his actual self, or his spoken self.

> You can be a lot more charming and funny, because you can have time to think about it ... On the phone, it's a lot easier to be your ideal self than it is to be your actual self.
>
> Eric's Friend - Alex, 23

On one hand, Alex (23) was concerned about the possible negative representations; on the other hand, he used this possibility of different impressions and representations in portraying what he terms as an 'ideal self'. This is due to the control with relations that text messaging allows in the instigation of intimacy. Alex highlights the convenience of text messaging, given its flexibility and lack of time demand in comparison to verbal communication. There is time to produce a text message in the way that the sender intends it to be perceived, manipulating a text message to convey charm and wit; an identity via the presentation of the self by personalizing textual communications. This

was discussed in detail in Chapter 6. The text message allows the creation of representations through filtering out potential embarrassment.

> A text provides ... a wall to hide behind ... I think texts, you can get away with certain things... you can be quite cheeky.
>
> Eric's Friend - Karl, 22

The presentation of the self can be created in an idealistic form; it is easier to initiate a text conversation and to create an intended, or designed, impression of the self through a textual performance. This is being used as a mode of communication that allows for delayed responses through time flexibility used to establish a front-staged self. This supports Goffman's theories of performance of the self in everyday life (1959), in which social actors present themselves as they do when they are expecting to be seen, as part of a performance identity. The 'wall to hide behind' is somewhat of a staged self; it is also a barrier of protection against rejection effects and the resulting emotions which would otherwise be displayed in public. These emotions are actually pushed to the backstage and therefore cannot be observed by the interacting person.

Ingrid (17), Matthew (18), Eric (23), Claire (22) and Kirsty (17), describe their use of the mobile phone as an individual entertainment device in terms of individual use as a time-filling activity and to prevent boredom or waiting. Catherine (27), Kate (26), Gareth (25) and Ingrid (17) use the mobile phone to combat boredom in a similar way to using mobile game consoles. However, this behaviour can become an escape strategy from the immediate social environment via the opting-out of co-present interaction; similar to how listening to iPods or reading the newspaper exclude the listener/reader from interaction with others. This results in narrowing the likelihood of conversations with strangers when using devices, such as iPods and speaking on a mobile phone on trains, for example. This is mainly due to the user looking away from other people when they are concentrating on their mediated communication, and other people are aware of them using the device in a pub for example. Civil inattention is not a form of non-attention; on the contrary, it is a form of acknowledgement, but it is often expressed by strangers not showing that they hear the conversation. Civil inattention maintains the alienation that allows the mobile caller to perceive other co-present others as non-hearing. The mobile phone as an artefact is used as a tool through which to communicate but use of the mobile phone can induce a performance of civil inattention from others in environments which are potentially awkward. There is the potential for a

discussion of private matters to be overheard in public because the mobile phone user is able to forget that other people are listening. Situations are those such as waiting for peers, trains, buses and whilst in waiting rooms.

Such settings can often make people feel isolated, so Matthew (19) likes to use his phone so that 'at least it looks like I'm doing something,' particularly when there is no where to focus attention. Kate (26) talks about this civil inattention in a quiet room:

> Everyone's quite quiet and instead of standing there looking like a lemon as well, I thought I'll fiddle with the phone, looking like I've got something to do.

<div align="right">Kate, 26</div>

This served to remedy feelings of isolation by being elsewhere through using and playing with the phone, because one's mind is not on the awkwardness of the quiet room anymore. The mobile phone is therefore replacing the newspaper as a device. The use of a mobile phone to play games or search through text messages often serves to avoid engaging in civil inattention. Engaging in something takes the attention away from interaction with strangers, and looking occupied; this is a social display. The mobile phone is used to detract one's own attention from others by diverting attention, as opposed to averting attention. Civil inattention is avoided and replaced with attention onto a single artefact. To illustrate, participants claim that they use it when they are 'bored'; this can be when they are alone somewhere waiting for somebody, for example.

Performance and the presentation of the self are facilitated using the mobile phone and reshaped given the capacities of control over the expression of communication and of the portrayals of the self using text messaging. Text messaging allows a more 'calculated' and created interaction, which is not the case in spoken interaction. There is a level of control due to the 'wall' of text messaging; the freedom to be direct and say what is meant, also due to the wall that shields embarrassment. The mobile phone mediates communication and performance and is very much a front-stage act through the mobile phone. Hence, communication styles, be it the communication of contact or the use of the phone to avoid looking at other people, are personalized communication and performances using the mobile phone as a prop. It is also through these processes that the mobile phone becomes a personalized artefact as opposed to an individualized device.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the mobile phone as a personal artefact for image to communicate a presentation of the self. Mobile phones are marketed towards obtaining maximum sales and not towards any particular lifestyle. The design of the mobile phone is marketed in a way that will appeal in terms of being new, up-to-date and trendy. The consumer purchases a mobile phone they consider to be different to their previous mobile phone and from those of their friendship group. However, this practice of consumption is exclusive in a local context while remaining up-to-date and included in the consumption of the latest fashion patterns.

The importance of colour became evident in the marketing of handsets and the ways in which these were understood as 'new phones' and fashion accessories. The pink phones were unique in targeting women in their advertising through the suggestion that these mobile phones express femininity and therefore complement stereotypical feminine fashion. These were advertised as new and expressed an identity; not a different individualised identity, however, but a reinforcement of a collective identity, using the pink handsets as a prop of this identity. The difference therefore was not in the handset but in the advertising used by enterprises. Colour is therefore a feature that is considered when the mobile phone is to integrate into the consumer's colour and style schemes, as one of many props expressing aspirations of style.

The mobile phone was often advertised as part of 'the style of business' or in a functional and intimate capacity, which attracted users through their aspirations of a more glamorous lifestyle. The mobile phone therefore became significant as an artefact because it could be used as a prop to mimic this lifestyle, and became valued through symbolising such a lifestyle. The mobile phone is marketed as integral to lifestyle and it becomes meaningful through integration and domestication into the social and consuming tapestry of everyday life. Analysis of this integration concluded that the mobile phone becomes valuable through expressing identity and social relations of gender, power and class as part of an existing body of values and objects. It is these consumptive social meanings that established the mobile phone as an embedded personal artefact of everyday life, and explained how the mobile phone fits into a person's aesthetic and fashionable array of items, together with how the devices integrate into social practices of communicating the self identity.

There was a tension between personalisation and individualisation of the mobile phone; findings suggest designs were produced appealing to many and consumed to be included in the latest fashionable technology, expressing a performance or belonging. It was personalisation however that allowed the mobile phone to become meaningful to the individual through what it meant and symbolised. It was therefore not individual or unique in appearance but personalised as an extension of the self through integration and values acquired in daily use. The mobile phone becomes valuable in itself due to the communicative, meaningful and expressive capacities as extensions of the self identity. The identity and attachments that the mobile phone mediate become a prop, adding value to the medium and also to the identity and communication mediated, hence attachment to the device is formed, producing an artefact.

The mobile phone is not only a communication medium, but as a consumer item it communicates styles and meaning of the self. This study found that communications of the self-identity and presentations of the self are performed by the mobile phone, allowing a degree of freedom with expression, the creation of personas and control over impressions of the self created in interaction. This control over expression, when and how things are expressed, illuminates a front and back stage of performance and choices over expression and performance, given the use of text messaging in communication. There are communication styles evident with the mobile phone as a medium and also in the role of a prop in public spaces to avoid interacting with others who are co-present. It is the combination of uses and communications of the self-identity that adds meaning and value to the mobile phone as an artefact, not just as a device. The mobile phone mediates and reshapes expressive meanings and communicative capacities that mediate personas, control, identity reaffirmation and style aspiration; femininity and lifestyle aspiration for example.

The mobile phone is therefore an extension of the self-identity, changing communications, meanings and affecting relations. The mobile phone has become integral to the communicative identity of the self among others in a way that does not differ from an item of jewellery; however, the artefact has created communicative identity as a significant part of consumer and social life. The next chapter will discuss this communicative identity and extension of the self along with the findings relating to social and personal relational capacities of the mobile phone from Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

Chapter 8

Reconnecting the research: Overview and discussion

Introduction

Mobile phone use has become embedded into our everyday social, intimate and cultural relations in the interactions with and attachments to others. Uses of the mobile phone express the dynamics of relations with peers, personal relationships with intimate partners and families, together with the dynamics in the representation, or an extension of the self as a cultural artefact of consumption and industrial enterprise. This thesis has set out to explore the sociology of the mobile phone in three relational areas of everyday life; as a social, intimate and cultural relation (in terms of consumption and identity). In particular, this thesis has explored the social uses and how the device is used and the meaning of use. Such use has provided a visibility into social relations, it is the social use of the device that reshapes these relations and forms new cultural practices through mobile interactions. This has resulted in an overarching finding; that the mobile phone use in everyday interaction consolidates, constrains and reshapes relationships. I will now attempt to highlight this and locate the main findings discussed in the empirical findings within the wider bodies of literature reviewed in previous chapters. In doing so, the contribution each salient empirical concept makes to the present understanding of the sociality of mobile phone use will be defined in terms of the mobile phone as a facilitating yet evolving relation in social life. This chapter will connect the findings to the four research sub-questions. This chapter will also evaluate the limitations, together with the contributions of this thesis to the wider body of research.

This chapter will define the significance of the mobile phone in relationships and self presentations. Illustrating aspects of everyday life the mobile phone has strengthened, constrained and changed within social, personal and identity relations and interactions. This chapter will link these findings to the social studies of science and technology and to sociological literature associated to the empirical findings. This will allow a summary of the implications the mobile phone has on how interaction is mediated, controlled and displayed in the UK. The mobile phone is used to mediate traditional social practices in new forms, changing the significance mobile phone use has in relation to pre-text messaging mobile phone use. Implications of marketing strategies towards mobile phone consumption will also be identified. Finally, this chapter will close with a prescription for various avenues for further research.

Main findings

Mobile phone use has shifted from low use in emergencies, co-ordinating business activities to an extensive use within the tapestry of social life. There are extensive implications for those who use the mobile phone, in changing the nature of communication and the effect use has on identities, relationships and how users perceive themselves in the world (Plant, 2002). Furthermore, bonds between people are strengthened through the relational capacities of the mobile phone mediating and maintaining interaction. These relationships provide the stimuli for people to form attachments to the mobile phone as a relation. At the time of the fieldwork, marketing strategies emphasized the mobile phone as incorporated into everyday life and lifestyle. The device as an extension of the self was portrayed in commercial advertisements. Shifting from the portrayal of the mobile phone as a practical handheld device, commercial imagery began to convey social and relational capacities and feelings; for amusement, happiness, and intimacy. The conclusive findings will be discussed in context using the summary table in Appendix 16 demonstrating the significance of the mobile phone amongst friends, in relationships and as a cultural artefact. This table shows the age and gender dispersion that will be used together with the social demographics outlined in Appendix 15.

The most prominent findings in this thesis are related to the effects the mobile phone has on relations with others and relations to surroundings. Moreover, these show the extent to which mobile phone users, in the selected user-group, are actually affected in the ways suggested by the literature. Previous empirical studies suggest mobile phone users, particularly the younger users, embody the mobile phone as a social and cultural relation (Nafus and Tracey, 2002; Green et al, 2001; Berg et al, 2003). They thereby form an attachment to the device in terms of the relations it facilitates, together with the relations to the world that it symbolises. However, this is balanced by studies suggesting practicalities of mobile phone use, for example the display of the mobile phone due to the expectation of incoming communication. We must not therefore assume that the mobile phone is equally significant to all users and those around them in the same attached and extensive ways; as demonstrated by studies of low use and non-use (e.g. Selwyn, 2005).

This thesis has intentionally focused on users who have high use patterns to establish the extent to which the mobile phone is significant for users, and in particular how these

users domesticate the device into social, intimate and cultural relations. Previous research, discussed in Chapter 2 referred to the significance of using a sample of mobile phone users ageing from late-teens to late-twenties. There cannot be a single conclusion relating to the significance to this group due to social demographics such as gender differences and the 10 year age span of participants. Within this age range, there are differences in social relations and culture. Users aged 15-19 were the most enthusiastic about mobile phones in social, personal and cultural ways suggested by previous studies and supported by this research. However, this thesis makes no age distinction for 'enthusiasm'; enthusiasm over mobile phone use was often evident in friendship groups when the device was used to share content. Furthermore, the marketing styles and commercials featured in this thesis convey mobile phone use as having positive effects on everyday life and relations, in ways conveying happiness and excitement. This implies that there is a certain amount of enchantment and sensual value of mobile phone use in interaction, as well as in the use of the device itself as a gadget.

Meaningful messaging

The findings within the relations show that the mobile phone is significant in a myriad of ways. Some users are attached to the mobile phone as a relation in a sentimental way due to its capacity to mediate meaning and symbolise existing ties (Vincent, 2005), whereas others find the mobile phone a facilitator in co-ordination. The attachment to the relations people have through the mobile phone suggest that the capacities of the mobile phone become valuable and therefore the handset itself becomes meaningful due to capacities of mediating attachments. This echoes McLuhan's theory of media, that the medium is the message and the medium forges relations and attachments, and therefore the medium becomes interaction. The findings are not polarised in age or gender as previous studies have suggested. However, there are different levels on which the mobile phone has become a relation and an integral part of participant identity. This is due mainly to their private lives, in terms of long/short-term relationships or marriage, as well as work commitments and the effect of peer use of mobile phones and how particular groups use the phone excluding others.

The summary table in Appendix 17 conveys that personal relationships play a key role in the value of the mobile phone for those who do not co-habit or are not married. The mobile phone becomes integral to long-distance relationships, to a point in which they are practically depended upon for contact, most notably for Emma (27, who had a long-

distance relationship and low use with her friendship group). In contrast, for both Catherine (27, co-habits) and Sam (25, married) the mobile phone was merely utilised for co-ordination and to maintain contact, and as an extension of affection on the occasions when the couples are separated by distance.

The mobile phone promotes virtual presence in the mediation of continuous contact, the narration of daily tasks and location, simply to remain close maintaining continuous contact and, moreover, a virtual co-presence. The close-knit families and close-by families appear to use the mobile phone to carry out daily tasks and to keep informed of each other's locations, in the same way as other relationships. It appears that all participants use the mobile phone to coordinate with partners and family who are close by, and also to express these relationships with distant family.

The convenience of continual contact for a virtual co-presence intersects with power relations, together with multi-relations, particularly in the personal realm. Emma (27) reports that the modes of communication themselves express and affect power relations in long-distance relationships. For Emma, the use of text messaging and avoidance of voice calls control the interaction within the relationship and represents power relations within the relationship itself. The mobile phone is, in a sense, an extending media. Virtual presence is control by the power relations already inherent within the relations, and the control of multi-relational ways of relating through the reliance on one mode in comparison to another is symptomatic of such power.

Multi-modal use and social space
The power relations of text over talk in communication and in co-present social etiquette have changed; this is evident at the beginning of intimate relationships, when the mode of communication can become the relation. There is often a preference to use text messaging over verbal communication. Text messaging is written communication, and therefore, like other forms of written text, it can be retained. This illustrates how traces of communication are becoming permanent in a liquid life. Although the text message does not have the canonisation of the written word as a potentially permanent record of communication, the text message is becoming powerful in relation to the spoken word.

The use of text messaging affects levels of interaction, given how 'naked' or concealed the person feels using talk or text. The findings revealed that text messaging allows new relations in ways that do not facilitate face-to-face interaction. New relations are products of the transience of mobile phone use in a liquid life of the written word. The text message was used to initiate contact in a controlled, concealed and regulated way (hence, linking to power). Concealing the device means that the device is not simply a non-intrusive more private form of communication; this conceals intonations and regulates unconscious impressions. In fact, the prevalent use of the mobile phone as communication media changes the acceptability of silence. In spoken communication, silence would be regarded as bad social etiquette when intimacy is initiated in the offer of a date, for example. However, textual communication changes the customs in this arena of social life. Using a non-response to signal disinterest does not have the same connotations as verbal conversation. Silence in this way is not only accepted, it is preferred, due to the lack of embarrassment that would be felt in face-to-face interaction. This is due to the barriers to interaction that text messages usefully provide. This change in the acceptable conduct of interaction is a defining characteristic of the culture of communication brought about by the mobile phone, part of the m-etiquette of interaction (Lacohée et al, 2003).

M-etiquette and co-presence

The findings suggest that the mobile phone is used to communicate messages to others through being used as a prop in a performance. The mobile phone is also used for avoiding mutual gaze in confined public spaces. In this sense, functions on the mobile phone, such as games and scrolling through text messages are often used to display that the user is occupied with something in public venues where eye contact with strangers is probable, and therefore the discomfort and reservation towards this are avoided, not just by averting mutual gaze, but actually diverting gaze onto something else. The findings also showed that when the mobile phone was being used in any way, this created virtual pockets of private space around the user. The user would be concentrating on the mobile phone as a device or on the mediated communication, while others would avert their gaze from the mobile phone user to display that they are not listening to the private information being broadcasted in public. It is both the preoccupation with the mobile phone and the aversion of gaze by the co-present others from the person using a mobile phone that creates space. It could be that this aversion of gaze occurs to recreate privatised space when a mobile phone conversation moves from

private to public space. This was illustrates in Kate's (26) description of using her phone in the pub; she found that her co-present friends stopped talking to her and left her alone, until she was ready to stop using her phone and return to interacting with them

The mobile phone facilitates the performance of social customs. Again, the mobile phone is not giving rise to new customs. Use of the mobile phone provides a new platform through which old customs are lived out. Mobile phone use in public has replaced the newspaper in waiting rooms and at bus stops when the phone is used to communicate preoccupation in an implicit form of 'do not disturb'; when messages are being re-read, photos being scrolled through, and ring tones being listened to, for example. The mobile phone shifts from a mediating platform of pre-existing relations to an influencing factor on relations, through reconfiguring social etiquette due to virtual presence provided by mobile phone use (conversations which perhaps broadcasts private information) interfering with co-presence (in a public space). This was particularly prominent in the findings relating to social networks, where the mobile phone is perceived as an interruption of co-presence, which in traditional customs takes precedence over distant or electronic communication. Although the mobile phone overcomes time and space in bringing people together, it actually becomes intrusive for those who are co-present through favouring virtual interaction. Moreover, the mobile phone enhances interaction on a global level, whilst detracting from those who co-present. The implication here is that the mobile phone contributes to multiple and simultaneous methods of communication which overlap, forming barriers to communication and prioritisation. This then forms a hierarchy of ties between the co-present and virtually present, in a way that displays not a consolidation of togetherness but a fragmentation of these co-existing bonds when simultaneous interaction is negotiated.

Identity reflection and aspiration in communication
The control with impressions occurs through multi-modal effects to convey a desired portrayal of oneself to those of intimate interest and also to friendship relations, in order to become accepted and to belong to a collective. Notably, there are strong links to expression and to the presentation of the self in everyday life (Goffman, 1959), thus identity reflection that is attractive in terms of self-expression. Under these circumstances the device is not a prop in the performance of courtship; mobile phone

use mediates courtship and controls, or filters, self-expression and impressions reshaping interaction. Without a radical change, the mobile phone is used to facilitate natural interaction using capacities to project the person in ways in which they wish to be portrayed. Using the mobile phone to begin personal relationships provides the capacities to bend taboos and be 'cheeky' in the conduct of this type of interaction; this may not necessarily occur face-to-face or even speaking on the phone. The capacities of the mobile phone have restructured aspects of initial courtship serving to express the self in a desirable fashion. The use of text messaging is a form of communication that is deliberately used due to the somewhat enhancing limitations that textual contact has; it is a new relation or interaction, however, it is also 'a wall to hide behind' (Karl, 23) in the initiation of romance. Calls were in fact used in the initiation of romance, but usually to confirm a date, for example. The text message, however, was the primary relation establishing contact in the first instance, and this was apparent in the findings. The text message allows freer communication without being subjected to potential awkwardness. There is a paradox in the heightened control with communication techniques for impression management while limiting how much information is forthcoming. However, there is a certain freedom to say that which would not necessarily be spoken. Mobile phone use has therefore added a relational capacity to the instigation of romance, a middle-way between the said and the unsaid.

Power relations

To return to the intersection of virtual presence and power relations, the capacity for continuous contact raises the expectation of further continual contact, and therefore adds custom and regulation to relationships. The capacities of contact have shifted from convenience and unexpected contact to the expectation of contact, given the nature of 'mobile' phones and the consequential culture of communication patterns. The findings suggest that regular mobile phone contact raises expectation of contact, consolidating bonds and paradoxically raising insecurities in relationships when contact is not established or responded to. This culture of communication diminishes personal functions such as time for reflection and time to miss friends and relatives. There is no surprise contact from a significant other, because contact is expected. Both Ingrid (17) and James (24) are continuously in contact with their partners. This raises a compulsion to remain in contact while raising insecurities when their partners cannot be contacted; this in turn calls for accountability of location and activities. There are questions asked when Ingrid cannot be contacted and a heightened paranoia when she does not respond,

all compelling her to account for her actions and location, thereby rendering reformed behaviour necessary to avoid not only concern, but arguments. The mobile phone is used to maintain virtual presence, while also facilitating control and the monitoring of significant others in a decentralised fluid way. This form of communication is forever-changing and is not limited by space and time. This decentralised fluidity therefore links to Bauman (2000), Giddens (1990) and Urry's notions of mobility (2000). The way in which the mobile phone is used as a technology of control with relations and surveillance relates to Lyon's (2001) claims on surveillance in the information society, in which surveillance does not refer to the institutional meaning of watching; it is about knowing as opposed to watching in social and personal relations through the mobile phone. The mobile phone is used to track each other through the visibility made possible from continuous contact in all places at all times. This contact creates body data which highlights action and locations of others so that friends and family are aware of each other in times of absence without watching them. This not only supports Green (2002) and Lyon (2001), it also demonstrates the extent of the network society in which every node is continuously interacting with others (Castells, 2000); disembedding and reconfiguring in a fluid form (Bauman, 2000). Castells' theory of the network society does not, however, explain social interaction between nodes. In fact, Castells has been criticised for treating nodes as passive and mechanized. Therefore, the rich data acquired for this thesis closes this gap between the technical and mechanized treatment and the social aspects of a network society; simply by supplying social explanations using empirical data and other theories, such as Bauman. Knowing the location of each other was not connected to control within relations, but more symbolic of the bond in relationships, of obligation, trust and relations of duty (Mauss, 1954; Taylor and Harper 2003). It is these obligations, trust and relations which provide the social explanations of a network society in relation to mobile phone use.

Power relations are not confined to intimate relationships; they have a significant use and expression of power in social networks. In the same way as in intimate relationships, there were accounts of location and activity knowledge. The visibility established by 'knowing' reveals the dynamics of belonging and disconnection; who is (not) being included and in what way. This study found that inclusion involved owning the latest but different mobile phone, having the same features on the phone as the other members of the friendship group, and simply being communicated to and involved in social arrangements and knowing what others are doing. The communicative capacity of

the mobile phone actually produces this need and, in turn, serves this need. Mobile phone use extends the need to be included in the interaction of the friendship group (which was not evident prior to the heavy social use), or simply the need to be aware of the interaction, whilst providing instantaneous information thereby fulfilling the need. This is demonstrative of Woolgar (1991) and Katz (1997) who suggest that technology reconfigures the users by creating needs as a result of new uses of the technology. This also demonstrates power relations with respect to belonging to a group. The theme of inclusion and exclusion has been linked more to identity reflection and aspiration. It is also connected to power and surveillance. Such theme intersections demonstrate that the mobile phone not only reflects power relations, it also reshapes them and creates new power relations of potential control and surveillance.

Consolidating relations and co-presence

This multi-modal effect on identity intercepts again with co-present use in the realm of the friendship. Many of the groups shared material that consolidated members, segregated them and defined inclusion relating to interests and gender. This was one of the most prominent findings of this thesis, illustrating that groups are dynamic in terms of interests and individual, gender-related, strong ties within the group. As well as for co-ordination, the women would maintain contact by calling and text messaging each other throughout the day to express emotion, pass the time and to gossip. For women the purpose of contact was for intrinsic social communication and to maintain contact (Keller, 1977; Noble, 1987; Geser, 2006) in ways that were rather exclusive to women of the group. Although file sharing occurred in all the friendship groups interviewed, these often occurred according to gender as well as to interest. The most interesting finding, however, was the use of pornography. This act of sharing is similar to sharing DVDs and magazines. The change in practice is that this activity now occurs anywhere and often in public and therefore this sharing of content in new settings is 'out of place' and extending impurity further (Douglas, 1966).

Gender and power dynamics were revealed in relation to masculine behaviour in the mixed groups who were interviewed, displaying a change in behaviour and exclusion. File sharing between men is often centralised around pornography, and this is filtered around women thereby leading to exclusion. This sharing of material as a collective is not a new dimension; the mobile phone facilitates pre-existing interaction in a new form. The mobile phone has provided a new channel that reshapes relations within the

group, through explicitly excluding the women in this interaction. However, this sharing of masculine material segregates the group and exaggerates the gender divide of exclusion, whilst defining identity.

Other accounts of friendship in file sharing relate to motor sports, nostalgia and photographs of social activities. Unlike pornography, this sharing does not segregate friends, but it consolidates ties in social networks through sharing images that have captured togetherness. The sharing cements this bond through re-living the fun and entertainment value (e.g. the photo gallery of Gareth, 25). These photos and ring tones are shared in co-present settings, and they provide stimuli over which to interact through laughter and leaning in to see and hear the material. This echoes the research into camera phones carried out by Kindberg et al (2005) finding that such co-proximate sharing enriches social experience, as Taylor and Harper (2003) have also found in gift-giving. There were accounts of sharing ring tones of nostalgia that provided laughter and interaction, and this reinforces bonds through the giving and receiving, together with the obligation to reciprocate. Again, this interaction of mobile phone use is not a new relation. This demonstrates the intersection of the themes in a way that not only displays co-present dynamics of friendship groups, but also enhances gender and identity effects in the powers of inclusion through new and influential ways to interact, using the numerous forms of communication through the mobile phone.

Inclusion appears to be an aspect of everyday interaction that has become increasingly evident through the mobile phone as a relation, closely linked to power, identity and co-present use. In reiterating Green (2003), this research has found that having the latest phone was about having the new trend and remaining included. It was not so much about the device and what it can do, but more about what the possession of it represents in social networks in terms of the reinforcement of difference yet inclusion. This was more apparent with the young users aged 17-18.

Bonds and attachments
There was a high level of attachment within co-present bonds in Kirsty's friendship group, particularly to contact each other via text messaging for co-ordination and to simply maintain ties. This group are also attached to the phone as an aesthetic artefact which, again, signals the relevance that the medium is the message (McLuhan, 1964). This friendship group was the youngest and also the largest all-female group, suggesting

that such value may be linked to age or gender. These findings may, however, say more about the composition and context of this specific group than be accurate in assigning such dynamics to gender and age. To illustrate this, Ingrid was the same age as Kirsty (17), and although she was attached to her mobile phone as a tangible aesthetic, her mobile phone became integral to her life in a very different way due to her individual circumstances. Kirsty and Ingrid (17) placed different importance on their mobile phones, one prominent difference being that Kirsty attended sixth form with her friendship group, whereas Ingrid left her friends behind at the sixth form to start a full-time job. The other difference was that Ingrid was in an intense long-distance relationship (which often consumed her weekends), whereas Kirsty was not in a relationship at the time of the data collection. Therefore, it was not surprising that Ingrid's use was rather personal and private in comparison to Kirsty's use, which was with a friendship group for co-ordination and shared files in co-present use.

Claire (22) was similar to Kirsty (17), as she too used her mobile phone as an integral part of group interaction and was also without a partner with whom to connect on the personal level. The way in which Claire used her phone with the group was actually rather different. This may have been due to the fact that they were mixed gender, slightly older and their friendship originated from being work colleagues. Kirsty's group and her other friends became quite involved with the features of their phones in terms of multimedia, although most of their use was text messaging to simply establish contact. Claire's friendship group differed due to using text messaging to remain in touch through the mediation of common group interests and also for mockery through such interests.

Eric (23) and Gareth (25) used their mobile phones in very much the same way as Claire (22), and also shared similarities with those of Kirsty (17). Gareth (25), Claire (22) and Eric (23) were a part of mixed gender groups; Eric's was primarily comprised of men. Kirsty's group was the only one of single sex and still in education, whereas all the other groups were in full-time employment. Eric's group was comprised of his house mates and therefore mobile phone use was rather minimal and purposeful in co-ordination, with only co-present use at home. Gareth's group however can be compared to Claire's group in co-present uses, but not so much sharing interests; more in sharing the fun and entertainment of pictures of each other. However, Gareth's and Claire's groups gave accounts of a gender segregation in terms of the shared activity and

material, which lead to exclusion; the men shared pornography and the women would contact each other more for intrinsic talk and to maintain contacts (McGuigan, 2005). This defined gendered friendships within groups, as opposed to the integral bonds of the group.

On another level of relations, Emma's (27) friendship group used the mobile phone as part of other communication media to keep in touch and to co-ordinate, such as email. This was due to the fact that her friends all study and therefore have access to email, which was often used in preference to the mobile phone, echoing Geser (2003) and Ling et al (2003) who found that various media was used according to levels of opportunity. Those consuming in the upper-classes consumed mobile phone use among broader ICT use, while those with poorer socio-economic backgrounds are confined solely to the mobile phone use. This emphasizes that the mobile phone is part of an expansive and extensive network of media in everyday life, with which men and women engage differently.

Men were more extensive in use compared to the women in this group by sending jokes and photos to each other, which were often entertaining or had a specific meaning. In this way mobile phone use added capacities to their bonds, meaning that they could continue to amuse each other whilst apart. This was not so much a gender related interaction, it was perhaps a bond related interaction, in which the men where closer to each other than they are to the women. Additionally, the men had the multimedia capacities or were familiar with their use, unlike the women. Therefore, this finding can be associated more with the strength of the tie and the functions used on the mobile phone than with gender or age.

This is illustrative of the differences in terms of group compositions, contexts, interests and interactions, although not so much of the gender and age. The mobile phone expresses and shapes the distinguishing interaction of the group, which may be influenced by gender and age. However, this would perhaps be a strong claim when there are numerous other influential factors, such as power relations, interests and the extent of familiarity between people, for example. From the beginning of this chapter and throughout the findings, it has become apparent that there are gender differences in the 'image' communicated using particular handsets of the mobile phone and the perceptions of personalisation and 'difference'.

Identity Reflection and aspiration: 'It's different, it's pink'

At 19-24, David (19), Claire (22), Eric (23) and James (24) were interested in the functions. James, however, was interested in the communication aspects of the mobile phone more than the device representing his tastes or interests in the functions integral to the mobile phone. An interesting finding was how consumerism appeared important to those aged 25-26, particularly the men, who purchased the mobile phone for 'difference', compared to their friendship groups, who identified themselves with the looks and capacities of the mobile phone. The mobile phone is a prop embodied into the user as a fashion accessory and therefore used to communicate as an aesthetic object. The findings suggest a significance of the importance of colour, pink in particular. Pink was used in the design and in advertising to link to femininity. Female participants associated it with 'girly' and therefore used it to reflect and identify with the stereotypical feminine identity. It combined with other tastes and styles of a feminine nature for many of the participants, such as clothes. Additionally, the use of pink is a point of referral in the aspiration towards a more feminine identity. Owning a pink phone was aligned with owning a pink bracelet or watch for example, by complementing the person's use of pink and general style. This concurs with the domestication model of Silverstone et al (1992), who claim that items are adopted, objectified and appropriated to fit into an existing body of cultural meaning value and self-expressions of identity, as Paul (30) claimed. This finding also supports the research by Green (2003), Plant (2002) and Katz and Sugiyama (2005) who claim that the mobile phone is becoming a 'flash' fashion accessory that can also contribute to group solidarities (in having the same and therefore identifying with each other).

Having the latest mobile phone was a symbol of exclusivity while buying into the latest market trends, to be distinct from the friendship group. Following the fieldwork, exclusivity of taste has been demonstrated in the use of gold and diamonds in the design of handsets, appealing to the wealthy and the celebrity market and available only from jewellery stores, as opposed to mobile phone stores. Are these encrusted mobile phones further reinforcing symbols of wealth and upper-class status, or are they symbols of the aspiration upwards towards distinction (Bourdieu, 1986)? This extends the symbols of status to permanence amid a mobile fluidity. The mobile phone is an ephemeral object in a mobile changing world of relations that is being marked with permanence in the form of diamonds. This raises the question over fluidity; is fluidity becoming

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fragmented by permanence, or is the appropriation of these artefacts simply a means of expressing distinction as a status symbol that is so distinct even such an ephemeral item as the mobile phone can be encrusted? Moreover, this is domesticated into lifestyle and distinction, as a symbol of wealth displayed as having the best. This extends and illustrates social redefinition and aspirations towards the betterness; and a desire to better oneself through defining one's own identity with reference to what is perceived as the dominant class (Bourdieu, 1986; Inglis, 2005).

Participants purchased pink and 'sleek' devices for newness and to differentiate from their social networks in a way that is unique in the 'latest' and 'novel' sense, as opposed to be different; a difference that is defined as a funky and stylish deviance from the group. This is inclusive of the current trends depicted in marketing commercials; however this can be exclusive within groups. The aspiration to individualise was not in an exclusive sense, but in a personalised (as a domestication) and also in an included sense (Lasen, 2004), or in an exclusive though not excluding way. Pink phones were purchased because they appear to be different, whilst at the same time reaffirming inclusion in the perceived feminine latest fashion, and buying into the particular model because of the way it was marketed as a feminine phone. The case was also true of the black sleek slide phones, in which the mobile phone was purchased as part of the aspiration towards a 'stylish' lifestyle. In this way, the mobile phone serves as a fashion entity, to communicate style and taste in a presentation.

Role of commercial enterprise

I will further consider the perceptions of personalisation and 'difference' and the impact of commercial enterprise on the main participants and in friendship groups, in terms of appeal, effects on interaction and image.

The mobile phone both differentiates and integrates and these are a focus of this thesis. As a cultural artefact of consumption and embodiment, the mobile phone serves to symbolise aspirations perceived as different, in terms of a fashion accessory conveying individual tastes, particularly in terms of the marketed pink mobile phones for women and the sleek stylish phone for men. This gives the impression of difference and 'betterness' or uniqueness; however, as the findings and studies of Plant (2002) and Green (2003) suggest, these devices are purchased for inclusion of having the latest devices amongst peers. These findings relate to the slightly younger participants in the

sample; the dichotomy between the aspirations for difference and the need to belong to relative networks are significant. Additionally, the mobile phone as an aesthetic artefact is purchased to integrate with the pre-existing cultural meanings and expressions of consumption. Dyer (1982) claimed that the success of advertising depended on how closely it uses lifestyle to appeal to that lifestyle, and for use of the product in accordance to the user's existing lifestyle.

The competition in the mobile phone industry is dependent upon the marketing strategies of the mobile phone, as opposed to the services provided. The de-regulated and neo-liberal approach adopted to attract consumers was to display gratification in terms of the interaction capacities and image through which users relate to others and to the world. In the adverts selected, commercialisation attempted to perform this gratification of interaction and image in selling a desired lifestyle via mobile phone consumption. To illustrate, David (19) interpreted the Samsung D500 as a 'very stylish chic, business-like phone', although David himself purchased a different handset due to its photographic capabilities. Matthew (18) found that the Samsung phone was aesthetically pleasing and 'sleek', a phone for people who want to 'look good' and 'look after themselves'. Matthew selected this particular handset for image and the symbol of heightened aspirations that the handset and the marketing of the handset convey. In a similar way, many of the women participants owned a handset that was designed for and targeted towards women. Essentially, the Samsung E530 used notions of femininity in terms of symbols and discourse in marketing; image and feeling were the key components of the marketing in the slogan; 'looks good, feels even better'. This refers to the aesthetics of the mobile phone in terms of colour, shape and general image, and also the duality of feeling good to hold and feeling good to use and experience. 'Feeling' is the significant word in this advertising, as research has shown that women are emotional in communications in the maintenance of close ties and the intrinsic contact made, compared to men who are more purpose-driven, (Fox, 2001; Crabtree et al, 2003; Palen et al, 2000), therefore appealing to women in terms of the significance of feelings in communication. The appearance of this device and the self-image the handset contributes to was, however, the appeal of this phone for most participants; that it is 'cute' and 'different', and that it integrates with colour preferences. Additionally, the Sony Ericsson commercial used these differences in the marketing strategies of the K750i. This phone was marketed as a functional phone as opposed to a stylish phone. The handset was black, functional and appealed to men, rather than women. To

illustrate, three out of six men owned the K750i or a variation of it whereas none of the women studied owned one.

This handset was advertised in terms of communication and the sharing experience. The Sony Ericsson handset marketed communication with functions emphasizing the capacity of capturing unforeseen events to send to absent others. The same is true of the most dominant advert at the time, the Motorola V3 Razr, which mixed function with intimacy and seduction. This was the means of applying and representing the potential value of these functions to consumers and, in turn, to the mobile phone through the association of emotion and attachment. This advert depicts the artefact as functionally and emotionally valuable in one relational context.

The mobile phone is valuable and meaningful for interacting with those of a close emotional attachment. The feelings towards the device were similar to those regarding the feelings the mediated by the device, rather than to the actual phone, echoing McLuhan (1964), who suggested that the method of interaction is as valuable as the interaction. There are different levels of value between the mobile phone, as a social relation (in friendship groups), a personal relation (in intimate relationships) and an identity relation (as image). Those in different times, places and space adopt different understandings on the devices, accounting for how the mobile phone has contextual value and changes in value depending upon events. It becomes as valuable as the person who is contacting, symbolising that person, and transferring the feelings through interaction onto the medium itself (McLuhan, 1964).

The commercials often did not have any effect on the mobile phone consumption of the participant, and often such adverts were perceived somewhat differently to the intention. For example Paul (30) interpreted the people in the Samsung D500 advert as 'idiots'. The appeal of the handsets often came from external influences such as family, friends and work colleagues, through which the participant could often browse through and 'play' with the phone and also become attracted to the appearance of the phone.

The intimate capacities conveyed in the commercials do associate with the intimate relations mediated in the relationships explored. Ingrid (17) reported photographs and flicking through photographs so that she can see her partner when she cannot be with him. The Motorola adverts conveyed an air of sexual attraction and flirtation within a

personal relationship. This conveyed that a mobile phone, with these functions (depicted in the advert), is valuable in relationships, as the mobile phone is used to communicate and mediate intimacy and flirting in the way the man greets the woman. Advertising of the mobile phone has become sexualised. The findings from this thesis suggest that the mobile phone is being used in similar ways to which use is portrayed in adverts. For example, Matthew (18) and Eric (23) use the device to flirt or initiate interest, Sam (25) uses the device to mediate sex through the description of sexual desire to his wife. In addition to these personal relations, there is also the sexual use of the mobile phone in the accounts of viewing and distributing pornographic images in friendship networks. These all demonstrate that the mobile phone is an intimate relation and somewhat of a sex mediator within interaction, as well as in the depicted images and the relations conveyed in mobile phone commercials.

The mobile phone was not used to the extent used in the marketing imagery of mobile phones. Not all functions on a given mobile phone were used by any one participant. Often participants listened to their mp3 players, occasionally the internet would be used, but this was rather goal-orientated for ring tones and football scores, for example. The use of these 'add-ons', except for the camera, were generally low and findings suggested that text messaging and talk were the most significant functions of the mobile phone even in light of these alternative features. These were used in ways symbolising attachments, mediating feelings and creating continuous contact, with photo sharing being complementary. Therefore the multi-relational effects are primarily those of talk and text, which, by themselves, sustain relations. Commercial portrayals were therefore not mirrored by these participants in terms of use or even gratification.

Many of the participants reported buying their handsets out of necessity, and not so much due to the exposure to commercial advertising. Reasons behind purchases included breakages of the previous handset, aesthetic qualities or because they wanted a particular feature such as Bluetooth. James (24) had purchased the Motorola V3 due to a broken mobile phone and he reported his disappointment with the lack of functionality. This handset had been advertised emphasizing functions, but not the quality of these functions. The users were not misled as such, but the commercial contributes to raising expectations of the capacities of a particular mobile phone; capacities which were not evident in practice. In contrast, the Sony Ericsson commercial promoted the capacities of communication along with a single add-on, and conveyed the quality of the camera.

Participants were enthusiastic about the Sony Ericsson. The users were particularly enthusiastic about the camera as an integral part of a high quality mobile phone. In this instance the commercial delivered impressions of the mobile phone that were promised.

There were different effects of adverts. For Matthew (18) and Rhys (24), the perception, lifestyle and fashion impressions they had of the handset corresponded to the impressions exerted by the corresponding commercial. However, Paul (30) a group interview participant, did not find the advert appealing at all, claiming that the actors looked vacant in the marketing imagery of an unappealing phone. Different consumers look for different qualities in mobile phone capacities, noticing the aspects in the corresponding commercials that are important to them and fit into their existing cultural values and meanings (Dyer, 1982). For example, the camera-focused commercial appealed to David due to his interest in photography, therefore it follows that the way this phone was advertised would attract those specifically interested in cameras (and at the time of the fieldwork, this was one of the best camera-phones on the market). Paul was just outside of the target consumer range; there was a twelve-year age gap between Matthew and Paul, and therefore age and, in turn, experience of consumption may account for the difference in the perception of the commercials and/or the handset.

This section has discussed the impact of the role of enterprise on mobile phone consumption, in terms of the mobile phone as a cultural artefact and also in terms of the consumption of a functioning and practical device. Individual differences relating to levels of interest in style and functioning of the mobile phone influencing consumption patterns have been explored. Moreover, the use of intimacy and sex in the commercial imagery, as well as in the proceeding use, impacts on handset consumption; sex therefore becomes integral to the consumption of intimacy. Finally, exposure to the latest technology owned by family and friends appears to have a large impact on preferences and the selection of a handset. Therefore commercial advertising is among the plethora of effects that can drive consumers to purchasing the 'latest' devices.

Social dimensions of mobile interaction

This chapter has referred ways in which mobile phone use mediates interaction, together with becoming a relation in reshaping aspects of interaction. Using this as a viewpoint the most prominent findings of mobile phones will now be discussed to provide an outline of the meanings attached to the mobile phone discovered by this study.

Across all the themes in the three relational areas of everyday life explored, the mobile phone has enhanced pre-existing strong bonds in terms of friendship and intimacy of the family. Both virtual presence and co-present use mediate and enhance the feeling of togetherness; in terms of stimulating affection, the use of the mobile phone in sharing material also provides a stimulus over which to interact. This co-present interaction is, however, compromised by the mobile phone and this is often perceived as an interruption in co-present private interaction. The mobile phone provides communication that can be established anywhere, anytime and therefore a cocoon of private interaction can be retreated to in public as well as through the mode of text messaging. On the other hand, this creation of privacy in terms of the silent use of text messaging, can be easily corrupted as the mobile phone messages can be sent to the wrong recipient or the mobile phone itself can be read by others (for example, Ingrid's sister and Gareth's friends). This demonstrates how the mobile phone can override the problems of time and space in maintaining strong bonds; however, the device manages this at the expense of interrupting those interactions that are co-present, and thus that which the mobile phone brings to interaction it also detracts from.

For social and personal relations, the mobile phone is very much a technology of power in terms of highlighting relations between people. The mobile phone allows power relations to become visible, particularly inclusion and exclusion in the relationships among friendship groups in terms of who's watching who and communicating with whom (Green, 2002). In performing inclusion as part of interaction, the mobile phone can allow people to feel valued and appreciated, thereby enhancing interaction. At the same time, however, the mobile phone has provided an insight through which to view exclusion. The ease of use of the mobile phone in co-ordination can lead to such complications within friendships regarding who is and is not invited to social events, leading to ill-feeling or disputes. It is a powerful medium displaying the strength of ties in friendship groups that can both enhance and inhibit interaction. For intimate relationships, the mobile phone provides a live link and therefore allows regular interaction sustaining intimacy at the same time, promoting visibility. This in turn, leads to monitoring and thus accountability for activities and locations. Again, the closeness that the mobile phone can sustain comes at the price of the visibility and expectations it brings through the decentralisation of networked body data (Castells, 2000). Furthermore, this closeness and expectation of continuous contact eradicate the element of surprise contact in the intimate relationship. There are no surprise virtual encounters

beyond the initial stages of intimacy, as there is with text messaging that is 'given' to and reciprocated between friends. Surprise contact is therefore lost due to the compulsions and expectations to communicate anytime, anywhere.

This leads onto the use of interaction in terms of 'gift-giving'. The sharing of ring tones, music, and amusing files is another form of sharing and reciprocating. The giving and reciprocation in the sub-groups of men and Kirsty's group in this way was simply another method symbolic of rituals in the group, obligations of gift-exchange and the cementing of bonds, as found by Taylor and Harper (2003). The social capacities of the mobile phone, in terms of sharing, highlighted inclusion relating to gender, interest and the acquisition of social capital; having the latest phone in the friendship group to earn social capital. This concept of gift-giving was explored as a co-present use in Taylor and Harper's study (2003), and was also found as virtual use in this research, in terms of text messaging.

Other elements of gift-giving were the meaning and value placed on the virtual presence in the exchange of receiving and responding in text messaging. Text messaging continues to be as meaningful as any other form of sharing; the difference lies in the surprise contact and to convey that the person is in someone's thoughts (as in the case with Claire, 22), and a response is therefore reciprocated. Arguably, however, this echoes old forms of displaying and, moreover, appreciating a friendship bond in sending cards and postcards for example. Therefore the mobile phone is not creating new forms of interaction. In fact, the social capacities of the mobile phone actually reshape such interaction in allowing easy and frequent communication and instant response. At the same time, the mobile phone is becoming relied upon for this surprise interaction, and therefore older methods of cards and post cards are becoming displaced and replaced by mobile phone use, without the input of much thought. Although this use is symbolic, the recipient is thought about; the effortless use of the mobile phone almost detracts from the special effort needed in other forms of symbolic communication. Much of the interaction in friendship groups and intimate relations involves mobile phone use. The device facilitates and enhances interaction in ways that are symbolic of the value of bonds; the capacity to express value and meaning from anywhere, anytime means that more traditional or 'romantic' methods are becoming phased out due to the mere convenience of the mobile phone. This demonstrates how

mobile phone use brings interaction, yet it can lessen or even replace some sentimental ways of interacting.

Returning to the new dimensions of interaction while continuing on the topic of expression, the mobile phone has provided a way to express feelings; particularly for those who have difficulty in expressing themselves. For communication, both David (19) and Sam (25) claim they can be expressive using text messaging in general when they cannot be expressive in voice communication. This demonstrates that social capabilities of the mobile phone can facilitate people to communicate that which is difficult to express using the spoken word; particularly in flirting and in the initiation of romance. There can be frequent communication at this stage, but such convenience can lead to too much contact, resulting in expected communication detracting from the surprise contact and excitement at the start of a relationship.

Text messaging was the most popular form of communication for the participant study, and was valuable in expressing general feelings and mood updates. The use of text messaging was used to transmit thoughts and emotional status when a call would otherwise be deemed unnecessary to express this snippet of personal information to friends, partners and families (Claire, 22; Emma, 27). The text message provides a middle-way mode of communication, between no contact and the in-depth description of feelings and events which is often the case in a phone call. These frequent pieces of communication contribute towards a flow of contact. This demonstrates how the mobile phone has transformed communicative capabilities, revealing a new capacity to the instigation of relationships by bringing a middle-mode that is free from embarrassment and confrontation providing a degree of freedom with expression. The mobile phone has therefore transformed the processes within both making and breaking relationships.

The mobile phone is valued due to how uses of the mobile phone have in expressing relationships between people. The handset becomes an object of attachment because of what it symbolises. The mobile phone is only as valuable as the value of how it is used. The identity expressed through the mobile phone is also valuable in terms of power relations and the friendship group. Power relations were evident when the mobile phone is integrated into everyday life as a fashion icon. The device was integrated as 'different' or exclusive, contributing to the culture of belonging. The need for inclusion

is not new; expression of inclusion is merely displayed through a new platform. Having similar functioning handsets is symbolic of group cohesion, and belonging, rather like having the same tattoo, for example. However, there is a compulsion to remain in contact, through fear of not belonging, or fear of becoming disconnected from the continuous communications.

This shows how communication has transformed; there is now an evident tracking of each other and each other's lives which have been made possible and visible by mobile phone use. Additionally, extra needs have surfaced through these transformed social capacities. Convenience creates a necessity and a compulsion to communicate, assisting the user while reconfiguring use, extending capacities and extending needs (Woolgar, 1991; Katz, 1997). It provides empowerment and knowledge regarding the whereabouts of others within relationships, visibility and therefore insecurities over exclusion giving rise to disputes within intimate relationships. This paradox is a strong implication of the role of mobile phone use in enhancing and inhibiting social life and relations, by providing freedom and visibility while heightening anxiety and disputes. This is an important characteristic of the culture of communication. Within this culture there is continuous contact, giving rise to body data merging the public and private spheres, altering social conduct and creating needs to remain in contact, due to the constant accessibility brought about by the mobile phone and now embedded in culture. Communication and relations in a social and mobile life have not changed from how Urry (2002) describes mobility with the need for co-presence and also how Giddens (1991) conceives time and space; that mobile communication contributes to time-space distanciation. The findings suggest that space and distance are not eradicated as Giddens (1991) suggests, but that they are no longer hindrances to interaction and the strengthening of bonds. The difference is in how space is used; there is no death of distance (Castells, 2000) as distance is used differently. Distance is still travelled because co-presence remains important to interaction (Boden and Molotch, 1994; Urry, 2002). The culture of communication has shown the fluidity of the individualistic networking across instants and time. This suggests that communication and interaction have not changed, but have become liquefied, supporting Bauman (2000).

The thesis has focused on how people relate and interact with each other through the mobile phone, in pre-existing, evolved and new ways, including the reconfiguration of users, and how the mobile phone becomes domesticated into interaction and then being

used for other purposes. Essentially, there is interplay between how the technology configures users and how users configure the technology (Crang et al, 2006), and this interplay highlights how the device changes interaction and is also changed by interaction. In following on from the effects, or non-effects, the mobile phone cuts across the constraints of space and time and redefines social interaction. Essentially, there is a reshaping of social interaction, whilst social interaction itself changes the mobile phone. This will now be explicitly unfolded by revisiting the four research sub-questions.

Reconnecting the mobile phone to the research sub-questions

1. How do mobile phone uses bond and consolidate relations in friendship, intimacy and identity?

This thesis has revealed an array of paradoxes in everyday relations. These have become observable and extended by mobile use in these social relations. There are many interrelated findings that apply to all four sub-questions. For the purpose of approaching the above question, I will discuss the most prominent findings. Most notably, mobile phone use has an important role in consolidating friendships and closer relationships; by extending that which is already there. Mobile phone use with friends, partners and families maintain closeness and establish a virtually continuous presence; a digital cord. This allows people to know where each other is and what they are doing, while sending affectionate text messages to each other that sustain and enhance intimacy through virtual presence. In friendship, spontaneous messages and photos were sent, often conveying that the sender is thinking about the recipient and/or wishes to be with them. This produces a new visibility serving to strengthen interaction and bonds by using the mobile phone. Additionally, the use of text messaging has allowed people to become closer. The men in the study claimed that this mode of communication has allowed them to become more expressive in communication. This therefore strengthens interaction simply by providing the capability and freedom to express what one feels, or means.

Use of the mobile phone in co-presence has also served to strengthen and communicate bonds. Often friendship groups would scroll through multi-media files, ring tones and photos on their phones. Sometimes amusing text messages would even be sent via

Bluetooth. Friends would swap files and this was a form of gift-giving and the obligation to reciprocate. The mobile phone consolidates group bonds, both at-a-distance and in co-presence. Group interests and identities were enforced by this collective behaviour in both the modes of communication with each other and through sharing and, in turn, laughing, during co-presence; while segregation and sub-group identities were consolidated; gender divides and gender interests were the most common reason for any group divides.

In terms of identity, exclusivity and the avoidance of exclusion were powered by the need to belong, yet to be distinct from the other members of a friendship group. A handset was often purchased because it represented a degree of 'betterness'. There was an aspiration; to be perceived as distinct from others, yet still integrated, in terms of not being excluded. Therefore, buying a handset because it was 'different' distinguished them not through differentiation, but through novelty. This was another aspect of the findings which separated the genders. Men were concerned with being seen as sleek, and stylish and having the latest gadget in terms of functionality, while women were concerned with fashion and the novelty of pink phones. The reasons behind the purchase of the pink phones were because they were 'different' (novel) compared to other handsets. These handsets were purchased because they were marketed towards women; they matched clothing, included particularly feminine functions such as an ovulation chart and the aesthetic design was 'cute'. This phone was purchased for exclusivity in terms of buying the latest handset, but owning the handset did not display distinction or taste. In fact, there was an aspiration towards femininity symbolised through the colour pink, as opposed to the aspiration towards individuality. Buying into 'new' handsets therefore consolidated gender identities and group interests.

2. *What are the conflicts and constraints to these everyday relations that can arise from mobile phone use?*

The findings suggest an interception between the themes. This has highlighted the conflicts and constraints to social relations brought about by mobile phone use, along with tensions, stretches in relations and contact compulsions. I will now discuss the prime findings that suggest that everyday relations have become constrained as a result of mobile phone use. The most prominent finding relates to the interception between virtual presence and power relations. Mobile phone use provides freedom of

communication that sustains a continuous connection at any time and anywhere. This creates a feeling of togetherness, while creating a visibility that can strain relationships. Continuous contact produces body data, a trail which produces patterns and therefore expectations. The capability of the mobile phone to provide connection at all times raises expectations of being able to connect with loved ones at any time. When this is not possible, this raises suspicion and insecurities which later leads to accountability over whereabouts. This expectation of availability has revealed tensions over unavailability and this compromised the freedom of switching off and disconnecting from others. This lead to a form of surveillance through tagging and tracking, made possible through mobile phone use. In friendship, the social capacities of the mobile phone also raised insecurities relating to exclusion, anxiety over disconnection and loss of the device. These insecurities were brought about by high use and various contact capabilities of the mobile phone. Mobile phone use heightens contact, therefore heightens the expectation for contact and the fear of disconnection, in which loops back by heightening the need to be included. As a result, there is a compulsion to communicate to remain included.

Mobile phone use is therefore particularly powerful in mediating relationships. Use of different modes and the preferences of modes have raised issues in close relationships. Although the text message can be used for improved self-expression, this communication can prevent interaction. Text messaging is also used to avoid awkwardness and to limit communication, which can be harmful to a long-distance relationship (as described by Emma, 27). Therefore, text messaging can be used to create communication barriers, when more intense interaction could occur via spoken communication.

Social space has been compromised by the use of the mobile phone, in public spaces particularly. Having private conversation in confined public spaces has blurred the boundaries between the private and public. This can feel rather intrusive for the co-present others. This is particularly applicable to mobile phone use when friendship groups are together. Often the mediated communication takes precedence over the co-present, which was annoying for Alex (23), yet accepted by Kate's friends. This demonstrates how co-present interaction is becoming constrained, although these instances are becoming more accepted, leading to changes in social customs, namely social etiquette. This will be discussed further in relation to the next sub-question.

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3. How have everyday communications and the sociality of these relations changed as a result of mobile phone use?

Many of the new social customs and rules of etiquette reflect changes and transformations in social relations. Everyday communications and relations, together with the culture of communication have reshaped due to reconfiguring the technology by the user, and have together reconfigured users as a result of using the technology. Use of the phone in public and in the presence of others has become accepted; social behaviour has been reshaped to account for it. People manage their gaze to virtually cordon off a wireless phone booth (Lasen, 2003) in larger public places, and those who are co-present avert their gaze in an attempt to maintain alienation and remain detached from the public broadcast of a private conversation. Therefore the mobile phone user benefits from the civil inattention and the display of disinterest of others (Goffman, 1966), thus creating social space for them.

Spoken communication has changed etiquette in public, and text messaging has changed the etiquette of communication in private space. Text messaging has changed social conduct to begin and end romantic interest. This is because communication can avoid the potential awkwardness of face-to-face interaction. Written communication allows people to restructure the unwritten protocols of relationships. There is an immediacy of text messaging; there is no longer as much surprise communication as such, or even anticipation over responses, or even surprise communication, due to a state of inertia (Virilio, 2000) made possible by the speed of contemporary technology. This means that text message conversations are replacing the love letter. This demonstrates that the cultural practices are not changing; they are becoming reshaped with the use of new platform used to interact in the same ways. M-etiquette is now being used. Text messaging has allowed directness, control over personas expressed, taboo-bending and a transformation to the culture of communication. Text messaging is used as a middle-way when contact is to be established but a phone conversation would be, perhaps, too much interaction. Text messaging is a middle-way and this can sometimes lead to conversations via text messaging when the people communicating would rather not speak to each other.

Silence in communication has become accepted when a relationship is being initiated as an easy way out. A non-response is accepted as a valid symbol of disinterest and rejection, as it saves awkwardness and embarrass of the person initiating a relationship. This would not have the same connotations in verbal interaction, when it would seem rather rude.

As previously discussed in this chapter, this is a defining characteristic of a culture of communication affected by mobile phone use. The same social and cultural practices are occurring using a new medium, which can reshape the practices and the customs of the practices, without replacing, removing or even changing them. For example, the sharing of pornographic imagery is no new occurrence. However, this private cultural practice is being brought into the public social sphere through sharing the file using mobile phones and doing so in pubs, for example. The mobile phone is a different channel through which to conduct an old practice, and the material is more likely to be exposed in new venues using mobile phones.

There has also been a change in etiquette towards simple organisation and co-ordination of social events. The mobile phone provides a freedom to communicate any time and anywhere and to make arrangements on the move and in an impromptu manner. This means that interaction is constrained in arrangements are being formed and broken easily. This means that people are not committing to times and venues because they can phone ahead if they are running late or they can even cancel five minutes before a social gathering, for example. Mobile phone use facilitates impromptu co-present interaction, but the device has often been used to amend arrangements, therefore removing commitment and, in turn, co-present interaction. This will be discussed further in answer to the final sub-question.

Mobile phone use has reshaped communicative practices, expectations and intense interactions. Interaction has become continuous and fluid; as people are able to communicate more freely and frequently outside of temporal and spatial limitation, and between private and public social spaces. This is possible due to the mobile nature of the device; a mobility that has reshaped cultural and social practices and restructured social customs and etiquette.

4. What are the dualities and paradoxes in relations that have become visible due to mobile phone use?

The main finding of this thesis is that mobile phone use changes relationships through consolidating bonds and constraining interaction, through the fluid relations, practices and negotiations that have become possible. The mobile phone has, on the one hand, become meaningful because it can increase freedom, the frequency of communication to friends and loved ones. It has also been used as a prop of identity and inclusion. On the other hand, this has given rise to insecurities, anxieties and additional needs in relationships. There are a number of dualities and paradoxes which have become visible and affected by mobile phone use; these have been highlighted through the findings in this thesis, particularly with reference to the thematic interceptions. I will now discuss the most prominent dualities and paradoxes.

The mobile phone connects people at any time and anywhere, and use of the device overcomes the limitations of time and space. This leads to an almost continuous connection and a virtual presence; a virtual togetherness which can strengthen bonds in both friendship and intimate relationships. However, this can also strain relationships and cause tensions because this use of the device becomes a technology of surveillance. Unavailability can be unexpected, leading to suspicion, insecurities and therefore accountability. This also compromises the freedom of the mobile phone; switching the device off unexpectedly can lead to many problems and suspicions. This is where power relations and virtual presence intercept each other. As I have already outlined in this chapter, insecurities have arisen in friendship groups over exclusion. This includes the increased need to be involved and remain in the circle of communication. The freedom to communicate therefore leads to additional needs of continuous contact and this can exacerbate feeling of disconnection and exclusion. Mobile phone use is socially constructed and socially constructing through the multiple social capacities that can be beneficial and problematic for social relationships. The mobile phone has become like a digital leash for close relations, evidently leading to suspicion and the questioning of trust in a relationship, as a result.

There is a freedom for 'impromptu' co-present interaction, made possible by instantaneous rescheduling using the mobile phone due to continual availability. However, this has lead to a lack of commitment and changes in social etiquette as a

result of the fluid communication made possible via the mobile phone. This has reshaped social conduct in the organisation of social activities. Therefore, the impromptu scheduling compromises commitment over social plans, leading to a softening of arrangements. This is where virtual presence (being, continual availability) intercepts multi-modal use and space. Often arrangements are made and then text messages are sent later cancelling events, due to the awkwardness and confrontation that is avoided in text message communication.

Another thematic interception is that of power relations with multi-modal use and space; in which the use of text messaging become powerful in controlling relationships, or simply reflecting these power relations, and in changing the etiquette of communication. Social conduct in establishing or ending romance and intimacy has become paradoxical due text messaging and the avoidance of talk. Text messaging is void of tone and intonation, therefore interaction is less intense than spoken communication, and therefore limited. This was rather frustrating for people who had problems with their relationships or those who were at the end of such relationship; because this exacerbated communication problems, as Emma (27) claimed. However, this mode of communication is preferred at the beginning of romantic relationships, particularly when a phone call may not be made. This is because there is no pausing and they are void of the potential awkwardness in a spoken conversation. Ironically, this can lead to text message conversations that, in turn, lead to more meaningful communication than in a short phone call; as in Matthew's (18) account of having text message conversations as a way of flirting or to arrange, a date for example. These limitations of text messaging actually serve as beneficial to express themselves, particularly for men, and to control exerted personas.

In terms of identity relations, the main paradoxical findings are those relating to exclusivity. This highlights the thematic interception of identity reflection and aspiration with co-present use; in handset ownership and in sharing files and jokes, for example. Initially, it appeared that devices were often purchased to differentiate from the group, but this was not to exclude oneself from the group. These purchases were made in order to become distinct and exclusive to own a fashionable item that represented the latest trends. The handset became a fashionable prop of identity and it therefore represented distinction and the aspiration to be included in either feminine identities or to those representing a style of business. Therefore, there was a need to be

exclusive but also included. This was also evident in the gendered communication and sharing of files, which illuminated exclusivity and inclusion.

Contributions and research parameters

This chapter has focused on the most prominent findings resulting from a qualitative study configured by a particular context. The research sub-questions have been answered, yet there are questions remaining over the limitations of the study in terms of the research parameters. These limitations will be discussed following an acknowledgement of how this thesis contributes to the field of knowledge, whilst recognising its parameters as a qualitative exploration of the mobile phone in everyday relations with others and to the world.

Contributions

Throughout the duration of this social research there has been a wealth of research into the use and advertising of mobile technological devices, such as mobile phones, Blackberries and iPods. Many studies have been carried out with the goal of improving user-design and human-computer interaction in terms of user-interfaces and the physical ergonomic design of such devices. My research is not prescriptive in terms of design and use of the mobile phone; there was no necessity to explore the mobile phone, as the importance of the study was in exploring the relational use, social effects and influences the mobile phone has on daily life. This study differs from many other studies because it provides social explanations of mobile phone use. Many of the previous studies have focused on the technical functions and frequencies of use, whereas this study attempts to explain the sociology of the mobile phone. The findings produce viewpoint from which to look at how the mobile phone is domesticated and meaningful in the everyday life of one generation of mobile phone users, together with how communicative repertoire capacities have transformed.

The fresh findings have been accumulated from the innovative and authentic methods used to capture the data of a time, place and small number of users, and interpreted by a social researcher. Although this data cannot be replicated, the findings derived are informative of the significant changes the mobile phone has brought to people's lives. The most prominent findings are simply those aspects of social life that the mobile phone has replaced or reshaped, together with the capacity to reveal relational dynamics in sociality, intimacy and identity. The most interesting findings of interaction are

emphasized where the themes of this thesis intersect. For example, forming the findings relating to the tensions between being different and conversely included; inclusion in terms of gendered material such as pornography and bond-strengthening through gift-giving (co-present use and power relations); and the use and reliance of text messaging in close relations (virtual presence, power and the multi-modal uses in social spaces).

Research parameters

Although the findings speak volumes about the mobile phone use of an impressionable generation for whom mobile phones are prevalent, the findings cannot necessarily be generalised beyond the participants, time or place from which the data was collected. This is the main parameter of in-depth studies of this nature; that it is restricted to too few resources to achieve extensive detailed findings relating to meaning and value in everyday life.

The research provides a snapshot of how the mobile phone is integrated as a relation in everyday life among a single generation of users. Although this appears to be a rather narrow capture of mobile phone use, it was important that focus was on a group in which the mobile phone and frequent use prevailed. This generation of mobile phone users were selected due to lifestyle and work commitments that would allow them to interact with a friendship group both virtually and also in a co-present sense. In the main, they were all conscientious people, who socialised by spending their free time with friends and communicating with friends.

Therefore, the findings were rather located to a small number of graduates and those in further and higher education who had bought a mobile phone from a Cardiff O2 retail outlet and were targeted by marketing and commercial strategies between August 2005 and March 2006. The findings relate to gender and age contexts and the specific lives of the 12 participants (and their friends) interviewed. In Appendix 15 it is clear that most of the participants are clustered around the age of 25, which was my own age at the time of recruiting and data capture. It is possible that my own social positioning and demographics have in some way influenced the sampling, in the recruitment of mobile phone users who shared similar views and experiences to my own, so they could possibly relate to me beyond my role as researcher. This effect of my own attributes was demonstrated by recruiting most of the women months prior to the men.

With all the researcher effects considered there is little doubt that a new study would unearth other findings, primarily due to the qualitative nature of the study, the progressive amendment of research design and also due to the difference in time, space, access and participation. The findings of this exploration are the result of a chance encounter from which space, time and the relationships built with consumers influenced the outcome of the research.

Together with researcher effects, the time taken to complete research of this scale and the time period over which the data was collected set the parameters of any research exploring technology, due to the high turn-over of innovation and technological advances. The data was collected between August 2005 and April 2006, and since then technology has progressed with yet more add-ons and capacities; the Apple iPhone is an example. On the one hand, devices do not appear to have radically changed in use; they are simply more capable of communication and other functions similar to those mentioned throughout the findings chapters. On the other hand, the mobile phone as a cultural artefact has developed in terms of image and identity. As mentioned above, the mobile phone has been turned into an item of jewellery for some (Vertu) and a highly desirable fashion item due to the branding of a leading fashion design (Prada). These are both further illustrations of how the mobile phone is being incorporated into image and identity to create difference yet inclusion, through buying into the latest trends projecting status.

The discussion has examined the contributions and the parameters of this research regarding the qualitative approach and small samples researched. This was followed by the developments in mobile phone use since the data was collected. The most notable aspects are those relating to the mobile phone as an artefact representing image and identity, particularly how the mobile phone has become an item of jewellery and high street fashion. After discussing the most prominent findings together with the recognitions of the contributions and limitations raised, the following will discuss the research implications of this thesis.

Research implications

The implications of the research suggest that the mobile phone provides the visibility through which inclusion in friendship networks and identities can be displayed, whilst providing a platform to co-ordinate daily activities and to share every moment with

close-kin, partners and friends. The mobile phone was used in very few ways by the participants and, mostly meaningful, these will now be outlined together with the implications for marketing and the design of mobile phones as a social and cultural artefact.

The research revealed that the 12 participants used their mobile phones in very different ways when interacting with their friendship groups, and the findings suggest that the mobile phone is used primarily for telecommunication. The additional functions are used in forms that communicate with others, in terms of sharing and gift-giving; ways that communicate bonds. Above all else, the primary use is text messaging, whilst the add-ons remain as 'add-ons'. The majority of consumers use these extra facilities very little, apart from in moments of boredom or isolation, unless they have purchased the handsets particularly for the integration of these add-ons, just as Sam and David did in terms of music and camera. Claire purchased her mobile phone due to Bluetooth capacities, but this was driven by interaction purposes to share files with friends.

For marketing and design, the novelty element noted in the research findings is an important point to draw some implications from. There was enthusiasm over the new device as well as the perception that it was different in terms of looks, due to novelty and being the 'latest' (Green, 2003). At the time of the study, Bluetooth, high mega-pixel cameras, and the mp3 player, together with the pink phones, were all novelty aspects of mobile phones for the consumers who had recently purchased their phones. Multimedia messaging (photos and videos), however, had been a feature on mobile phones long enough for the novelty to have disappeared. It was the sharing in co-presence and intimacy of this sharing that was the most interesting use arising from multimedia in this study. In terms of the design of the 'new' aspects of the mobile phone, the appearance and image projected by the mobile phone were prominent among the majority of participants; there is evidently a fashion element that appealed to these consumers. Sometimes adverts did trigger a purchase, but in most cases participants purchased a phone because friends or family had domesticated the handset. Therefore, not only did they have the opportunity to use a particular handset prior to purchase, they have also integrated them into their close-knit groups in terms of image and capacities – even when those capacities are used infrequently.

In terms of 'new' and 'different' designs, the pink phone owned by participants was the first of a kind due to initiating the niche marketing towards women; four out of the six women interviewed owned this phone. It was not only a feminine image and identity projected phone that was perceived as new, it was the way in which the device was advertised that was also new and different. The phone was somewhat novel in terms of design and marketing strategy, and instigated interest from the female consumer. However, this strategy can be criticised for using feminine stereotypes in the design of the phone; obviously in terms of the colour pink, fragrance type, shopping list, calorie counter, biorhythm, and ovulation schedule, and it has even been dubbed the 'lady phone'. All these features define the stereotypical female identity and the participants did not report using any of these functions frequently as an everyday mobile phone use.

This demonstrates how handsets are often adopted due to their new and different features. Many of these features however are not integrated into frequent use in social and intimate relations, although the image that the mobile phone contributes to is somewhat evident as a relation in this research. Findings established that not one individual used all the functions on their mobile phone and every group and intimate relationship use the device in a different manner, whilst all participants use the mobile phone for valued interaction, practical co-ordination, together with the expression of social and personal relationship.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the thesis, in terms of the most prominent findings and arguments relating to social, personal and identity relations of the mobile phone and research sub-questions. The chapter progressed to discussing how the mobile phone has become a platform for traditional ways of interaction, without forming new interactions. The mobile phone has, however, reshaped existing interaction and relations through transforming social and communicative capacities. The contributions of this research were next acknowledged in terms of originality and key findings, together with the limitations of this study in terms of the single generational effect and the researcher and context effects. Finally, the research implications were noted in terms of fashion, design and friendship uses of the mobile phone with reference to the functions used and the impacts of marketing strategies. The following chapter will present the three key findings as the culmination of the thesis.

Chapter 9

Conclusion: Hanging up on the mobile phone

The introduction identified a need to understand how the mobile phone is used in people's lives, to what effect, or indeed whether the mobile phone significantly changes the lives of those using the device at all. Focusing on the social, personal and cultural integration of the mobile phone, this thesis has highlighted a complex sociality of the mobile phone in social and intimate relations. It has explored friendship groups, intimate relationships and identity in UK culture in order to understand how and why the mobile phone has had huge implications on the ways interaction is mediated, controlled and performed. This final chapter brings together the main conclusions from the analysis and discussion of the grounded findings that represent how primary market-targeted users, aged between 17 and 27, integrate mobile phones into their everyday lives, together with the value and meanings attached to use. Together with the contribution this thesis makes to the small amount of mobile phone research in UK culture, the originality of this thesis lies in its innovative methods and the related findings. Katz and Aakhus (2002) claimed that there is the need to understand better the role of the device in people's lives and to what effect. This thesis has responded to this need for further study by exploring the mobile phone use, social practices and understandings of a small number of commercially targeted users to explore the social, personal and consumer areas into which the mobile phone has become embedded. In presenting the prominent conclusions to bring this thesis to a close, this chapter will highlight three key findings established through the five themes of mobile phone use: power relations, virtual presence, co-presence, identity and multi-relational space, and how they affect society in everyday life and interaction.

Reconnecting to the research question

- *How does mobile phone use become integrated into social, intimate and identity relations in everyday life?*

The ubiquitous mobile phone provides a form of connectivity though which relations become visible, fluid, controlled and reshaped in everyday life. The mobile phone has become a meaningful social and cultural artefact valued as an interaction alone, because

of social capacities in mediating and expressing relationships, together with symbolising these relationships and collective identities. The findings of this thesis present dualities and paradoxes in social life. From facilitating daily life, the mobile phone both enhances and hinders sociality in a complex and fluid way, in our social practices, relations and negotiations that define everyday social life.

The findings in Chapter 5 illustrate a culture of communication that highlights the reshaping of *social* and communication practices in friendship groups as a social network. The mobile phone is socially constructed by social relations and socially constructing through the multiple social capacities and possibilities it brings. Time and space converge forming a continuous availability and this, consequently, enhances friendship bonds and feelings of belonging and exclusive belonging while exacerbating feelings of disconnection and exclusion. The need to remain included becomes extended into a compulsion to communicate, thereby heightening insecurities and anxieties of disconnection. Expectation of availability has demonstrated tensions over unavailability and the freedom of switching off, establishing a controlled freedom in the frequent contact and non-committal or 'impromptu' arrangements in group organisation of social activities. The softening of arrangements and lack of advanced commitment resulting from this prevalent technology leads to a change in social conduct, producing m-etiquette. This illustrates how a device designed to assist everyday life conversely changed social practices. For example, it is not unacceptable to cancel social plans at short notice. The mobile phone has shaped group conduct through providing the social capacity to share experience and, in turn, strengthen bonds while forming exclusive bonds. These bonds are often according to gender, and blurring public and private spheres through gift-giving consolidating bonds and the distribution of exclusive or private material in public. Co-present communication capacities of mobile phone use blur the spheres by merging them and by also privatising booths of communication. Gender and multi-relational modes of communication, or modes of communication, were associated in the management of relationships and purposeful contact, expressing instrumental and strong social ties. The mobile phone has become a platform through which to mediate social practices in bond consolidating, whilst also defining relational divides within groups.

The use of multi-relational modes of communication and the social capacities they brought were illustrated in the changes of acceptable social conduct and social space,

particularly in opening and ending *intimate* relations. Chapter 6 focused on how text messaging is often used to make and break intimate relationships. It gains control in the instigation of romance, relieves feelings of awkwardness, reduces confrontation, and makes silence acceptable as a form of communication. This use of the mobile phone can increase interaction through the acceptability of continuous and expected contact while providing the capacity to close communication, gradually and abruptly. The mobile phone became a viewpoint through which the complexity of power, emotion and meaning in relationships has become visible and reshaped by the mobile phone. For example, the continual availability through the mobile phone can strengthen intimate bonds in the simulation of presence when co-presence is not possible, as a sort of umbilical cord. However, this can be potentially damaging to relationships through the compulsion to communicate and expectation of availability, and in turn, accountability, since the mobile phone becomes a digital leash. Mobile phone use reshapes control within relations using a different viewpoint of surveillance to be together, yet heightens insecurities and suspicion, questioning the trust expressed in personal relationships. Practices of courtship remain, only they are mediated in new and more immediate forms, thereby mobile phone-mediated courtship becomes interaction in itself, as opposed to simple mediation, due to the value placed on the social capacities of the medium. The medium adopts the value of the relationships and interactions mediated.

Mobile phone use projects persona and performs *identity* through the consumption of an aesthetic artefact. Chapter 7 focused on identity and consumption in the marketing strategies and the domestication of the mobile device as a cultural and symbolic artefact. Commercial advertising and consumption of the 'latest' and 'different' handsets reinforced a desire for distinction with the aspiration towards the inclusion in the latest trends. This illustrated exclusivity without exclusion; the desire to personalise is rooted in distinction as opposed to individualism. This is a performance of local exclusivity in terms of the friendship group, with inclusion in the broader fashion trends of consumers. The desire to belong and integrate the handset into an existing lifestyle was prominent in terms of identity and particularly femininity, while aspiring towards the perceived dominant or distinctive lifestyle. Advertising targeted women using different and new marketing styles with regard to mobile phones, reinforcing collective tastes and identities in consumption as opposed to 'difference'. The colour of the handset was different in terms of marketing the mobile phone as integral and domesticated into colour and style schemes of consumers. The mobile phone was advertised representing

a distinctive lifestyle and was therefore used as a prop in the performance of aspiration towards a more distinctive lifestyle. The mobile phone creates presentations of the self through the control over communicative projections in interaction and as a prop to avoid interaction with co-present others. The device as an artefact is domesticated into a performed identity in communication together with use as a prop of identity, and therefore as an extension of the self through the values acquired from use in communicative, meaningful and expressive capacities. The mobile phone adopts a value as an artefact through the values in relations symbolised through use. Therefore, the mobile phone is valued as a stimulus of attachments. The mobile phone is not only a communication medium, but as a consumer item it communicates styles and meanings of the self. The mobile phone mediates and reshapes expressive meanings and communicative capacities that mediate personas, control and identity reaffirmation. The mobile phone is an extension of the self identity, changing communications, meanings and affecting relations.

There are three main findings resulting from this thesis; these answer the overarching research question together with the sub-questions. The first finding is that there is a sense of bond sustaining and strengthening that has become possible through mobile phone use in close and intimate relationships. There is a sense of belonging that has been illuminated and mediated by mobile phone use. This has given rise to group solidarities, in terms of co-present uses and identity reflections and aspirations. Secondly, there are tensions in relationships that have been illuminated and extended through mobile phone use. There are heightened anxieties over inclusion, insecurities over relationships and suspicions raised that can reflect and cause problems in relationships. The mobile phone can help to overcome communication difficulties by allowing contact beyond the restraints of time and space, but this has evidently caused further difficulties in relationships, such as expectation, accountability and a form of surveillance. Third, and finally, the multi-modal uses of mobile phones have changed social space, conduct and social etiquette of communication; thereby reshaping the culture of communication and establishing m-etiquette. Text messaging has had an unforeseen affect on everyday communication, limiting and controlling communication while providing the opportunities for increased expression. Overall, mobile phone use has changed relationships through consolidating, constraining and reshaping everyday interaction.

This thesis has taken a snapshot of mobile phone use targeting one generation of mobile phone users within a set time frame, the mobile phone as integral to the social, intimate and identity relations in numerous ways. If the same study were to be carried out with a different section of society, both the value and integration of the mobile phone, or mobile devices, would be somewhat different. In business use for example PDAs and Blackberries facilitate mobile work. Children have been somewhat over-researched when it comes to mobile phones, particularly in terms of playground use for inclusion, exclusion and bullying. This is logical; they will be the subsequent generation of primary users after all. There is also the somewhat underground use of mobile phones for criminal acts, from burglaries and muggings to plotting terror and filming torture. These are areas that could suggest different slants in terms of relations used as alternative viewpoints from which to view how the mobile phone is integrated in different lifestyles and specific activities within these niche lifestyles, in particular how the mobile phone enhances and hinders lives. Finally, this leads to suggest further avenues of interest arising whilst completing this thesis, extending this further to discuss the current possibilities of further research in light of new uses, together with new restrictions on the social use of the mobile phone.

A final comment: avenues for further research

The mobile phone is a powerful communication tool in the everyday relations of a fluid society. This power and other forms of power exerted using the mobile phone deserve closer inspection. This section will suggest further avenues of research in light of the findings and other uses recently reported and researched.

On 27th February 2007, new legislation came into force banning the use of a hand-held mobile phone whilst driving (UK Department of Transport, 2007). The Direct Line Mobile Phone Report 2002 has shown that using the handset slows down reaction by 50%, and therefore restrictions and penalties were introduced. The legislation came after years of telecommunication whilst driving, which was in the form of radio transmitters and CB use by lorry drivers, and it is only with the increase in the volume of vehicles and younger drivers that such mobile technologies became banned. A teenage driver aged 19 caused a death as she crashed whilst sending a text message (BBC News, 2007a); this is illustrative of the effect on driving reactions in light of the prevailing mobile phone, and moreover the compulsion to communicate. There are research opportunities in consequence of this ban on mobile phone use, particularly for

those who rely on the mobile phone for business, such as the haulage industry, taxi drivers and pharmaceutical representatives, for example.

Moving on now to mobile phone use in other inappropriate, even criminal, use of the mobile phone; there is a pollution of mobile phone use in places and for reasons that we are not accustomed to, raising issues regarding respect as problematic and torture as an extreme use of the device. Firstly, the mobile phone is being used to create a souvenir moment, as in the case of using mobile phones to take pictures of Pope John Paul II (Winterman, 2005). The cultural interpretations of this recording and sharing using the convenience of a mobile phone deserves further research regarding custom, respect, etiquette and appropriateness of the situation, especially when the subject of the material is that which is feared and somewhat glazed over in talk within the UK culture. The use of the mobile phone with sensitive issues and taboos in everyday life is therefore another strand of research.

Finally, a bolder integration to our lives is the use of mobile phones to film and later broadcast acts of crime. There have been reports of attacks on vulnerable people which have been filmed using a mobile phone. The mobile phone has therefore become an object of assault to a sordid broadcast medium, for example the 'compulsive practice of happy slapping' (BBC News, 2007b). Crime is also filmed on phones as a form of capture or surveillance in order to catch those who assault others, which can then be shared with others forming leads to criminals. The sharing is a form of networking and therefore the footage can eventually be traced back to the person who captured such incidents. These are examples of the uses that facilitate and extend crime, yet the surveillance and convenience of capture can help bring criminals to justice. This too is worthy of further exploration, specifically how the mobile phone is being used to mediate crime and also to prevent it. The very act of filming or taking pictures and distributing these through sharing is a form of power through monitoring. The use of file sharing provides a visibility. In filming a crime, the mobile phone becomes a power tool for those who make the recording, having the power of the victim and the abuser. This would be an interesting avenue to follow for further research.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Access letter

Mr J Nelson

Miss A C Elderfield
PhD Research Candidate
Cardiff University
School of Social Sciences
21 Senghennydd Road
Cardiff
CF24 4AG

Tel: ***** ******
Mobile: ***** ******
******@Cardiff.ac.uk

25th January 2005

Dear Mr Nelson,

Request for (Paid or Unpaid) Employment as an Academic Secondment

I am writing to you to introduce myself with a view to obtaining the opportunity to employment for the <company name> as a floor assistant either in a single store or on a contingency basis as an academic secondment to aid my doctoral thesis.

I am Cardiff University Ph.D. candidate funded by the Economic and Social Research Council to research the impacts of new and emerging mobile technology on social interaction. I am studying the social and personal experience of 'delightful' mobile telecommunication devices, to determine the true extent of emotional experience with mobile telecommunication devices. I will explore the extent to which users become excited and happy by using these devices. I am therefore exploring the extent to which mobile telecommunication devices are 'enchanting' our lives, and particularly, the extent to which the advertised 'exciting' experience appeals to consumers of mobile devices. In the long-term, this research may contribute to the improvement of products in the area of social and interaction design; by increasing positive outcomes of the use-experience of such devices.

Employment with the <company name> will enable me to explore how people are initially attracted to and become attached to mobile devices, at the early stages of experience. Such an opportunity of secondment for me in this area will be invaluable to not only my research, but to your company in the future. I believe working for the company as a retail assistant will immerse me into the retail setting by making my research presence implicit, as opposed to somewhat 'additional' to the setting and/or customer-retailer relationship. It is therefore my intention is to 'talk' with (not interview) customers, not as a researcher, but as a retail assistant. As with other members of staff, I will promote your sales of devices and services, of course, but I will witness consumer experience of delight. This in turn will enable answers to some questions (through observation and listening to comments exerted) such as:

- What are people buying?
- Why are they (not) delighted by the product at the time of shopping around for mobile telecommunication devices?

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> Who is delighted by particular functions/aspects at the time the phone is novel to consumers?
> Are people buying into the appealing and advertised happiness? (As shown to be experienced when the user is engaged with the device)
> Are the devices truly delightful?

Although I live in Cardiff, I have my own transport and I am therefore able to work at a single store in my area, or any of your retail stores between the areas of Bristol and Swansea at short notice. In this way, employment with a retailer will not only be of great assistance to me, but I believe it will also be beneficial to them in the long-term. Alternatively, I will be happy to work in a single store and I am more than happy to work for free.

As a sociological researcher, it is my paramount concern to maintain confidentiality and anonymity, in respecting of the corporation, its drive to promote the sales of devices, as well as the integrity of the sociological inquiry itself. My doctoral thesis is not one intending to divulge information regarding corporate strategies, customer service and technical advancement, but rather a thesis that is interested in the social progression of technology in relation to lived communicative use and user-experience of mobile telecommunication devices in everyday life. I aim to witness the social and personal engagement at the simultaneous moment of promoting sales of devices.

I have attached my curriculum vitae for your perusal. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Alison Elderfield *B.Sc. Econ, M.Sc.*

Enc.

Appendix 2: Access correspondence

>>> "**** (UK)" <****@****.COM> 26/01/2005 14:51:26 >>>
That's cool, we will be around somewhere just text me and we can catch up.

Don't panic about the presenting too much, there is no rush and I can help
you out with how to tailor it etc

See ya, J

-----Original Message-----
From: AC ELDERFIELD
Sent: 26 January 2005 14:31
To: **** (UK)
Subject: RE: FW: PHD Help

Cool! I'll text you nearer the time on Friday - I think I'm gonna head out
at about 8ish - have no idea where to yet, though - it's a mate's birthday!
But, whatever happens, I'm gonna buy you some drinks!

Yes, I'd be happy to do that - we'll need to talk about it a bit though. It'd
probably involve me writing and presenting a paper, so I'd have to know who
the audience is, what the best focus would be etc.

See you soon!
Ali :-)

>>> "**** (UK)" <****@****.COM> 26/01/2005 14:20:59 >>>
I am out in town on Friday yes, would be cool to meet up for a bit. Also,
how would you like the opportunity of presenting some of your thesis to some
of the relevant people here at O2 head office? Obviously all your expenses
will be covered. We can talk about it Friday

J

-----Original Message-----
From: AC ELDERFIELD
Sent: 26 January 2005 14:14
To: **** (UK)
Subject: RE: FW: PHD Help

J,

I'm going out into town on Friday and I think that Saturday night is on the
cards also - too much drinking!! Will you be out in town, do you think?

Ali x

>>> "**** (UK)" <****@****.COM> 24/01/2005 13:06:46 >>>
Nothing like having a request from the head of retail to instil a bit of
politeness in someone is there ;0)

Sounds like you have everything under control then, let me know how you get
on in store would be good to read the relevant bits of your thesis on it.

Im back in wales this weekend for my mates birthday but its probably going
to be a bit of a flyer, if not though ill give you a shout ;0)

Enjoy, J

From: AC ELDERFIELD
Sent: 24 January 2005 12:04
To: **** (UK)
Subject: Re: FW: PHD Help

J,

It certainly is who you know - I really can't disagree with that now !
Thanks for the text message and the email which made it happen. I really
must buy you a drink or three when you come to Cardiff next! You star!!!

I've just a really good chat to Paul - what a helpful man! You must have
paved the way very well for me there. I told him that I'd like it to be
some kind of unpaid employment whereby I can engage with customers etc. So,
he said that's fine and I will be treated like other staff. He said that
it's best for me to go in each week when it's busy to get a good
cross-section of customers, and I can go in as much as I liked, but may need
to be watched/get other people to do the customer contracts, which, of
course, is fine. He said to give him a call if I need anything! Now he's
going to give the branch manager my contact details etc and get him to phone
me.

Excellent work! It's all good! It goes without saying that if you need
anything from me, just shout!

Loads of thanks,
Ali

>>> "*****" <****@****.COM> 24/01/2005 11:13:42 >>>
Clearly, its not what you know but whom ;0)

Give Paul a ring ASAP and he will sort it out with the Cardiff store manager

have fun, let me know how you get on

Cheers J

-----Original Message-----
From: **** (Retail) (UK)
Sent: 24 January 2005 11:00
To: **** (UK)
Subject: PHD Help
Importance: High

Hi J,

I have contacted the Area Manager for Cardiff - Paul Kemp and the would be
delighted to accommodate this request.

Can you please contact him on ***** ****** (preferably this morning - he is
on a training course this afternoon for the rest of the week) and he will
make the necessary arrangements with the Branch Manager.

Regards

C

O2 RETAIL - SIMPLY DELIVERING THE BEST CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE.

Enthusiastic Welcome : Need to Know More : Essential Demo : Recap : Give
Recommendations : Invite Purchase : Surpass objections : Express Thanks

Head of Sales

O2 (UK) Retail

>>> AC ELDERFIELD 18/01/2005 12:47:18 >>>
Hi J,

Happy New Year! Did you have a nice Christmas here in good old Cardiff? I ended up going
back to Southampton for two weeks!

I've just got yet another quick question to pick your brains with:

I know it's not in your area, but I wonder if you would know who I could speak to directly about
the possibility of working as contingency staff? It's just that, in order to understand why phones
are delightful to some people and not others (and therefore makes them socially better in the
future), I'm trying to get a job as retail floor staff, in any of the O2 stores between Bristol and
Swansea, when someone's sick, for example. If I'm very lucky, I'd just like to get a straight
forward part-time floor staff position in the store close by - but they told me there is nothing
available right now.

I'm guessing that I might just have to write to the retail recruitment in your location with the
application form from the internet, but I'll need to explain that I'm on academic secondment for
research into enchantment etc.

Not really sure how to go about it, but I'm offering help so that I can crack on with my fieldwork,
which is simply to answer the questions like: what are people buying? Why are they (not)
excited/delighted by the product at the time of shopping around for new devices? And who is
delighted by particular functions/aspects at the time the phone is novel to consumers? The list
goes on, but those are the kind of questions I need to answer at the same time as actually
selling phones to customers.

Ok, I think that's about it. How's your own work going?

Hope to hear from you soon.

Many thanks,
Ali

Alison Elderfield
PhD Research Candidate
School of Social Sciences
Cardiff University
Glamorgan Building
King Edward VII Avenue
Cardiff
CF10 3WT
United Kingdom

Appendix 3: Field notes excerpt

22nd March 2005

I can define what I am supposed to be looking for, being that it is no longer ethnography, but a participant observation.

- I will analyse texts, then sales techniques; performance and performances. These will be analysed as texts because I will not use video cameras.
- Write fuller descriptions
- This shop work is another angle on commercial stuff – how are they told to frame the sale/representation
- Observe people's reactions, good and bad!
- Campaign, then track campaign the whole way

Today was a relatively quiet day in the store, because it is the Easter holidays for all the students in the city. So I used the time there to do some research on their internal site for business. And, therefore, browsing at marketing campaigns to understand how is targeted in order to ascertain groups and redefine my research groups.

Sarah told Liam, Graham and I about pushing sales, and needing to meet targets and that the store has not met targets. Mark was busy with paper work and Liam and Graham had to do more Computer Based Training (CBTs). Matt would be in at 11, so we were a little thin on the ground.

When Graham was doing the CBT, an older lady came into the store because she wanted to check the balance on her husband's phone - only a slightly old Sony Ericsson flip phone. She could not work it out and Graham told me exactly what to do, I then showed her that it had around £50 on the phone. I then had to write it down as well as the number to call customer services.

Energise stands for: Enthusiasm, Need to know, Emerging technology, Requirements Validated, Give Reasons, Invite Purchase (Ask for business), Surpass Objectives, Express Thanks.

At lunch I had a chat with the Sarah about getting hold of sales data and she told me about the area manager changing, so it would be a good plan to get in contact with him during the next two weeks. They do not hold sales data in the store. This is held centrally at head office and I would need to ask high up, probably my contact.

Mark started to chat and Sarah asked him about getting hold of data. I then told him that, in order to do further research I need to find my target groups and know about any up and coming campaigns. I need to know about social factors, such as what do most men buy? Which age group buys what? He told me that people into their 30s have business accounts, in which case they do not have a lot of choice over the phones they have. And then older people have a very basic use, and difficulties with use, and then Sarah and Mark began to talk about their experience with their parents and customers. For example, Mark's father thinks that if he has a message and can't read it, how would he find out if he has a message... Mark was laughing saying that he simply asked what it says on the screen... 1 message received! He said that customers come in complaining that the battery is dead. He asks when the last time was that it was charged

and it was 6 months ago. He said that some of the older consumers do not understand that it needs to be charged regularly, and even if it is switched off when charged - when it is turned on again months later, it will need to be charged. He then went into his office and showed me some areas on the intranet which may help me. I told him I would use one of the stations to have a look.

A lady came in the shop with a Sony Ericsson S700i:

She asked for a memory card 128, because she has used it up already. She also wanted a carry case, to stop the screen from getting damaged.

A lady entered when Liam, Matt and Graham were all busy. She had come in previously and one of the male shop assistants had spoken to her. However, she came in and demanded a sim card, because customer services had informed her they would send her one. I told her that she may have to pay for it and they would reimburse her. She said that she is not paying as she has being paying for a service since the beginning of March and has not been able to use it. There were also queues behind. Therefore, I went upstairs to get Sarah and told her about the situation. She later told me that the lady was getting angry and she had found a way around the system to keep the customer happy. Customer services had said they would send her a sim card and hadn't, so the situation had to be rectified.

On the website, I found the following:

For the pre-pay – 50% under 24, this sector leads the market forward. They want total control on their spending and often switch networks when upgrading. For these reasons, our pre-pay campaigns focus on value for money (such as Bolt Ons) and emphasis on continual innovations. We work closely with sales channel, Marcomms and CRM to develop and execute the strategy.

O2 Active – simple proposition aimed at the youth sector who would typically be interested in ringtones, chat, video downloads and entertainment news. The theme was built around an urban environment with hooded figures interacting with their mobiles and becoming completely oblivious to their usual surroundings! Medium: TV, outdoor, press, online, ambient and cinema.

April 2004, Quarter 1: Digital Music Player. Music space, key to 'Ambitious Techie' and 'Young Social' audiences. New landscapes set in the O2 blue world worked well

as a new end device to communicate "fresh thinking" – "see things differently. See what you can do... O2"

2004 Quarter 3: O2 Friends. 3 friends and receive 50% (or 30%) off calls, text, picture and video messaging. Ensure the friendliest welcome, customers can subscribe free for the first 3 months. The campaign captures beautiful images of Britain set behind 3 famous friends' name in neon, all against the backwash of the blue world of O2. These were screened on TV, outdoor, press and online activity.

All the new campaigns will start at the beginning of the new tax year. The company are trying to keep all the money at in the bank. All tariffs are re-jiggled yearly and new tariffs for 3G, and the BlackBerry. Over 25s – business, so they do not choose the phone so much.

Lots of courtesy phones being taken away and returned.

A customer phoned the store telling us to help him get a number transferred to the sim. Usually customer services deal with it, but because he had brought it in and some one had helped him before he thought we could do it and speed up the process.

A man approached me at a computer station and he wanted to know about upgrading his monthly contract. He could not remember his number, so he went away and during that time a young man (about 18) entered. He was quick with his approach, asking what the latest phone is, and enquired about the latest one we had in stock. Then he said he could start a contract if the phone wasn't in stock. When I told him we had the D500 in stock, he said he would shop around and then come back later. We do not sell a contract before we sell a phone (the computer will not let us). The previous man came back and we found he was eligible for an upgrade on an old tariff, with £20 discounted off the upgrade price. I asked him what he wanted, and he said that he had to have video to film his grandchild. He did not like the look of the Sony Ericsson S700i on the chart but he liked it on the display. I asked him about Bluetooth and he was not too bothered, he already had the Sony Ericsson 7250. He asked his son and he told him that he could not have a particular Sony Ericsson because he himself had it. He then asked to take away the catalogue and think about it.

A man came in with a 6310i wanting to upgrade. He brought all the necessary documentation so he intended on an upgrade that very day. He had two numbers and initially wanted to end one of them. He travelled and he was on an expensive tariff, Band F, £200 per/month so he was entitled to an £80 discount off his phone. He requested a bluetooth headset too. He ended up going for the Nokia 6230 and asked about a Blackberry, and we said that Blackberry's have their own tariffs. So he left the shop with the intention of coming back the following week to get his other, now none-binned, number to be for the Blackberry phone. Before he purchased it he told me that he travels a lot so the phone had to be tri-band. I therefore had to show him the table of features. He said that his phone was too old and needed a replacement; this was his rationale for buying a new phone.

Sales techniques –'good eh?' and 'how does that sound?' Matt attempted to get me to change over with a pack code, showed me the tariffs, with the double minutes and double texts and 30% discount from being on friends and family of a staff member. But I had to do a cost-benefit analysis and found that people would not phone me because I

would be on a different network. Also I would drop in the number of talking minutes. Matt told me that I was stupid to renew my contract with Orange when I worked in O2.

Sales techniques sometimes do not have to be high, because people often know what they want before entering the shop.

I will have to talk to <Area Manager> before he disappears about this sales data.

Appendix 4: Incentive voucher
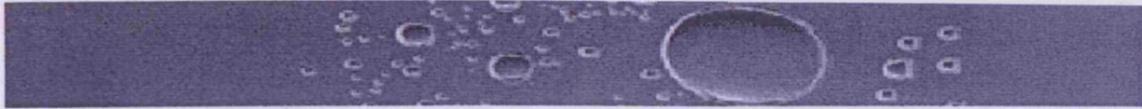
Dear.........................

At O2 we are committed to deliver an outstanding experience. We are always looking for ways to improve this & seek new ideas to help us get feedback to ensure we are delivering this throughout the business.

As a way to thank you for helping Alison with her research we would like to offer you a special reward.

You can choose from one on the following:

- £20 off a Prepay mobile*

- £20 off a Bluetooth handset*

- A free triple pack with every new connection or upgrade.*

*Please not that these deals are only valid in the Cardiff O2 Stores.

We hope that you enjoyed taking part in this research project & your feedback will be a great help for us going forward.

Thanks again for taking the time.

Area Manager

Appendix 5: Recruitment procedure

Under 29?

1. **Purchased a phone, spare moments for my research**
2. **Few quick questions.**

3. **PhD; how people use mobile phones and what they use them for in their friendship groups.**
4. **Your help - possibly improve the social designs of mobile phones.**

5. **Where do you live?**

MAIN QUESTION
Do you have a circle of friends who ALL know each other and speak to each other via mobile phones?

- **Do they all speak to each other as well as to you?**
- **Do you all meet anywhere regularly?**
- **Over the last few days, have you met up with any of these friends?**

FULFIL REQUIREMENTS?
NO   **Thanks – helpful info**
YES   **Willing to help further? It involves being interviewed *initially* in the next couple of weeks....**
      And then on 4 occasions, only for about an hour each, at times which suit you.
- **There's something in it for you.... At the <u>END</u> of interviews**
- **Offer £20 off a Prepay mobile, £20 off a Bluetooth handset, or a free triple pack with every new connection or upgrade. Since all offers are valid for a year, so it will cover your next upgrade..... Unless there is something else I could offer you**

HOW?
1. Meet for a **chat** about your mobile phone use,
2. **User-log - circle friends - what, when and why it's used, and the outcomes of use**
3. **Watch and talk about recent mobile phone ads in a focus group.**
4. **Discuss your user-log - who of your friends could all meet up to talk to me about their phones?**
5. **Meet with you and them for a focus group?**
      - **Do you think your friends could do this?**

Until around the end of November

THANKS!

CONTACT DETAILS
Title:
Forename(s):
Surname:
Area of Residence:
Phone Purchased:
Phone No:
Email Address:

Appendix 6: Research information for participants

Thank you for agreeing to take part in my research. It really is very much appreciated. I've asked you to meet me today to have a little chat about you, your friendship group and your mobile phone. As you know, I'm interested in the social use of mobile phones; how people use their mobile phones and what they use them for. From what you tell me, you have a sociable circle of friends and this is why I have selected you, because I am interested in use of phones and how you all engage with your phones together.

Future importance

I am interested in the social roles they play in people's lives and so far, there has been little research carried out on the social uses of mobile phones. By being involved in this research, it is possible that you will make a difference to future designs of phones; essentially allowing them to become more sociable.

Your Involvement

The study will require you to be available to meet up another 3 times until early November. Today, we will have a chat about you and your mobile phone. I will also need you to take away a user-log. For about 2 weeks, I would like you to record uses of mobile phones within the circle of friends you mentioned before. This is quite simple, it asks for you to note who used it, when, the purpose, content and the outcomes of use as they occur. However, I would also like you to reflect upon your use at the end of each day – to include your thoughts and feelings about your mobile phone and those of others you have been with during the day. For example, it may have made you laugh or feel upset, it may have even served to comfort you or make your life easier. It is quite important to do this because it will help me to understand how important you phone is to you and your friendship group.

1. We will then meet again to have a discussion about your user-log, so I'll need you to have completed that by then.
2. At some point during this time, I would like you to take part in a focus group discussion about TV adverts (45 minutes).
3. Finally, I would like to have a focus group discussion with you, together with some of those in your circle of friends.

Gift for your participation

As a token of thanks for your kindness and willingness to take part in my PhD research, I am offering you a discount off of your next purchase plus an accessory from O2 up to the value of £20. Since we spoke, I can now offer you half-price on accessories over £20. All offers are valid for a year, so it will cover your next upgrade. You will receive these when all interviews and focus group sessions have been completed.

Ethics

I will at this stage tell you that you are under no obligation to take part or to answer any of the questions if you do not want to. But, by participating you are protected by the Data Protection Act 1998, therefore everything you say will remain confidential and your identity will remain anonymous. You also have the right to withdraw this information at any time.

Social Information

Age:	
Sex:	M / F
Nationality:	
Ethnic classification:	Please select: □ White Caucasian □ Black □ Asian □ Irish □ Other
Marital Status:	
Occupation:	
Place of Residence:	
Phone use - Make/Model: New contract /upgrade contract/new pay & go/upgrade pay & go:	

Interview 1

Participant A (Matthew, 18)

- **Permission to record?**
- **Thanks!**

EXPLAIN THE ABOVE – with all stages of data collection fully explained in terms of what will be required.

- **Any questions?**
- **This interview - you, your lifestyle and your phone use.**

Consumption:

1. **When you buy something you really want is the shop you buy it from as important as what it is you are buying?**

2. **I'd like you to consider some gadgets, such as Personal Digital Assistants, digital cameras, games consoles, iPods etc...Are you among the first to buy or use these devices?**

   If not covered: Do you feel you have enough money to do what you want to do?

3. **Are you the kind of person who likes the straightforward and easy to use device, or a more sophisticated product with many features?**

4. **How would you describe yourself with regards to knowing your preferences when buying something new? For example, do you stick with what you know and like, or do you try new things?**
   If not covered: brands?

Social life & circle of friends:

5. **Can you tell me more about your circle of friends we spoke about in the shop.....***How did you all get to know each other?*

6. **What kind of things do you have going on?** *And when do you get to see each other? In the week, at weekends, or even at lunchtimes?*

Mobile Phone:

7. **Why did you upgrade to / buy this new phone?**
   How did the phone appeal to you? What made you chose this one?

   How does this phone compare to your old one?

8. **Does it meet your needs?**
   Have you found any surprising features you didn't know were there?
   Are you disappointed with anything on your phone?

9. **Can you think of a time when your phone has made you happy, or excited?** *Were you ever 'delighted' by something someone sent you, or a new feature you have been using? Such as sending a video, or a picture you took,*

10. **Has your phone ever left you feeling irritated/annoyed/sad? Both in terms of contact and using the 'techie' stuff.** *Delivery reports, waiting for contact*

11. **Do you ever find yourself fiddling with your phone?** *When?*

12. (dog owner example) **Do you think your phone reflects your identity in anyway?** *What do you think your phone says about you? What role does it play?*

13. **Some might say that they couldn't live without their phone...How do you think you'd feel if you found yourself without it?** *If this has happened, what happened?*

14. **I was recently told about how a mobile phone wrecked someone's marriage... Has using your phone, or someone else's use of a mobile phone ever affected your life in a big/detrimental/memorable way?**

Nature & Content of Communication:

15. **What form of contact do you have with your friends? What's usually the nature of it?**

16. **How do your friends use their phones?**
    Which phones do they have?
    For what reasons?
    What is sent back and forth? **Can you give me examples?**
    Do you send anything, such as pictures? *For example, do you send each other anything like pictures, sounds, music, videos, jokes via multimedia/Bluetooth/infrared etc?*
    Have you been there when any of your friends have responded in a happy/disappointed way when/after using their phone?

17. **How important are the phones to your daily life of the friendship groups?**
    Can you give examples

18. **Do you think the phones say anything about the group?**
    The look, the features? Any similar content on screensavers etc?
    (Identity and dynamics of the group, characters of the group)

THANKS!

Close with information about:
- First focus group session
- 2nd Anchor interview

Final interview schedule (Eric, 23)

- Record? Thanks! Any questions? This interview - you, your lifestyle and your phone use.

Consumption:
1. When you buy something you really want is the shop you buy it from as important as what it is you are buying?

2. I'd like you to consider some gadgets, such as Personal Digital Assistants, digital cameras, game consoles, iPods etc...Are you among the first to buy or use these devices?

3. Are you the kind of person who likes the straightforward and easy to use device, or a more sophisticated product with many features?

4. How would you describe yourself with regards to knowing your preferences when buying something new? For example, do you stick with what you know and like, or do you try new things?
   Brands?

Mobile Phone, friends and communication:
"I love my phone... why?" "It's brilliant... why's it brilliant?" "It's just nice isn't it... but why is it nice?" "What is it about that, that is nice?" Why is it great fun? What did you feel about that? You say it's amazing, how? Why? Why do you love it? In what way does it brighten up your day to receive it? Why do you not care about it?

5. Why did you buy this phone?

6. Why did you buy it from O2?

7. People are attracted to particular phones for different reasons, and there is sometimes particular features that impress them... was this the case for you? If so, can you tell me about how you were impressed with your phone when you bought it... *and why this impressed you*

8. Was/Is there a WOW factor for you? *If so, what makes you go wow about it?* Many people say it's the colour, the way it looks, others were impressed by the camera or mp3 player

9. Tell me about your use of your phone... How do you use it as a communication tool?

10. *If in a relationship>>* How do you think your patterns of use compare to those before you were in this relationship? Or when you are not in a relationship?

11. How well do you think you can express yourself through your phone?

12. Can you tell me how you've changed things on the phone since you bought it? *How? E.g. with logos, ring tones, mp3s.* Why did you do this?

13. Some people 'love' their phone. They like the way it looks, they like to touch it and play with it. They also like to display it. How does this apply to you? How would you say your phone is personal/individual to you? How do you 'wear' it?

14. Some people say that their phone says a lot about them – the way it looks and what they use it for. How do you think this may apply to you? *What do you think your phone says about you? What role does it play?*

15. How do you and your all friends all use their phones? Do you and your friends have any of the same things on your phones?
Do you have similar phones?

16. How do shared features or looks of the phones represent the group? What do you send to each other? Purposes?

17. Can you tell me more about this circle of friends .... *How did you all get to know each other?* What kind of things do you have going on? *And when do you get to see each other?*

18. How important are the phones to your this friendship group?

19. People are often delighted by things they receive on their phones. Can you tell me about times you have felt happy, or laughed at things you've received on your phone? I'm trying to understand how a phone can brighten up your day – it may be something technical or very simple. S*uch as a video, or a picture you took, or even a text – excited, impressed... Why is it brilliant?*

20. I'm interested in people's emotional experiences with their phones and how meaningful it is to them. I am wondering how you feel about your phone, and the value you place on it....

21. How do you think you'd feel if you found yourself without it? *If this has happened, what happened?*

22. Is there anything about your phone that irritates you? Again, this is about the actual phone and even through contact with people through it.

23. Do you ever find yourself fiddling with your phone?
How much do you look at it and touch it? Do you ever watch videos/flick through pictures? When? Do you check it a lot?

THANKS!
Close with information about:
- First focus group session
- 2^(nd) Anchor interview

Appendix 8: Diary

Instructions

For two weeks, I would like you to log every time you use your mobile for any purpose, as you use it. Please include details of those you are with that are using their phones, particularly your circle of friends as discussed. This log will provide me with an eye into your daily life of phone use, which, in turn, provides the material for subsequent stages of the study.

Treat this log like a personal journal, i.e. feel free to write anything you wish. However, it would be helpful, if you could ensure you log the following details at the time, or very shortly after the times when you and others use mobile phones (i.e. *to record it before you forget!*):

- Where you were & what you're doing
- Date and time of day
- Who it was using a mobile phone
- How it was used

If it was you using a mobile phone, I would also like you to include the following:

- A summary of the content
- Who was contacted/who contacted you (if anyone)? As you may just be fiddling with it.
- The purpose and outcome of using it on this occasion.

At the end of each day, I would like you to use what you have logged to write a reflection on your use of your phone during that day. In doing this, it would be good to include your thoughts and feelings about the role your phone has in your daily life, and also what you notice about other people around you using phones during the day, particularly your circle of friends. E.g, it may have made you, or someone else, laugh or feel upset, and it may have even served to comfort or make daily life easier. Tell me how your day would have been experienced if you did not have your phone. Again, it is important to do this on the same day, before you forget what you think and feel.

You are under no obligation to answer any of the questions or describe anything if you do not want to. But, by participating you are protected by the Data Protection Act 1998, so everything you enter will remain confidential and your identity will remain anonymous. You also have access to your data and the right to withdraw this information at any time.

Many thanks for your help.

Si

Mobile: ***** ******
Email: ******@Cardiff.ac.uk

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Appendix 9: Follow-up interview

Participant N (Eric) – Male 23

1. **How did you get on writing the diary?**
   When did you write it?
   How did you write it? **In the thoughts and reflections – what sort of things?**

2. **Whilst doing the diary, when have you found yourself using your phone the most?** *Why? For example, you said you used it a lot one day, and not much on other days.* **What times of day?**

3. **What have you noticed about your use of the phone and way you feel about your phone as a result of writing the diary?**
   Do you use anything more or less than what you thought?
   Do you use it to maintain contact more than actually having anything of significance to say? Social etiquette?

4. **You said last night that you had felt stuff about the content you received, and you were reminded of these feelings when going through them to write the diary at the end of the day, because you had to look through what you had sent and received. What sort of feelings?**

5. **How do you use it as a personal object, to reflect your identity perhaps?**
   "Her silver cell phone is experienced as a liberating extension of her body"

6. **Have you found that you've been more switched on and noticed how other people use their phones? For example, anything about what your friendship group? How did they use their phones and why?** (names and how they all use it, what they've been sending)

7. **Some people omitted things, or didn't do things because they had to write the diary... Do you think your behaviour/communication changed because you knew you had to write stuff down? – or did you just not include it?**

8. **What did you not include in the diary? Did you write that contact was made at a time, but obviously didn't list the content?**

9. **How do you think your patterns of use are now, compared to just before you started seeing your new lady?**

Extra-questions:

1. Tell me about this phone... the stuff you didn't write down. i.e. Times you used the Bluetooth, internet, I-mode, listened to music, took pictures, videos. Have you used any of the lifestyle facilities on the phone?

2. Any videos or pictures recently that made you impressed? Taken many videos?

3. Times you played on it and why, when have you fiddled with it?

4. How you engaged with you friends/colleagues through using the phone

5. Now that you've had it for a while longer, can you tell me about the things you cherish on the phone? What about the things you dislike?

Appendix 10: Friendship group interview

Group L (Claire, 22)

Introduction

- Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. It really is very much appreciated.
- PhD - How you all engage with your phones together,
- Talk about how you use your mobile phones amongst this friendship group, and what you use them for.

Ethics

- No obligation to take part or to answer any of the questions if you do not want to.
- By participating you are protected by the Data Protection Act 1998.
- Everything you say will remain confidential and your identity will remain anonymous.
- You also have access to your data and the right to withdraw this information at any time.
- filming and recording this interview? I can see who's talking...

ANY QUESTIONS?

ICE-BREAKERS

Who's who?

1. If you recognise your phone's sound correctly, you will be rewarded with what I've just sent you!
2. I have to warn you, I'm probably gonna be a bit nosey, so I thought I'd break the ice a bit, and tell you about an embarrassing moment of mine regarding my mobile phone ---- the dance file – explain the story.

OPENING TOPIC: *Role of the Mobile Phone within the Group*

TASK 1:   **Please write down what you use your phones for in relation to this friendship group**
E.g. to check how each other is, arrange, co-ordinate, send pictures etc

QUESTION: What did you write?
How important to the daily life of the group are they?

MAIN TOPIC: *Communication and Experience (What & why)*

TASK 2:   **Jot down the main ways you use your phones with each member of this friendship group – the features used and notes about content**

Peter – Simon – Gill – Claire

QUESTION: **How do you {name} use your phone with {name}?**
Why/when? Last sent what? Content? Capability? How did you feel?
Texts - Pictures and videos – WAP
How do you all use ...together? What is ...? Why is it great fun?

PROBES: **When was the last time you {e.g. texted/sent vid/picture} to**
{name}?

Content of the {.....}?
Purposes - For fun, or laughs - *Pranks on people?* **Why is it great fun?**
Reacted/responded when received - **Were you impressed/did you laugh at that (to recipient)? Why did it make you laugh? What did you feel about that?**

- **What was it that {feature} allowed you to do that you couldn't do before?**
- **Why do you love it?**
- **How does it brighten your day?**
- **When does your phone make you feel happy?**
- **Does it ever make you feel sad? Why?**
- **You say it's amazing, how? Why?**
- **"It's brilliant... why's it brilliant?"**
- **"It's just nice isn't it... but why is it nice?"**
- **Why do you not care about it?**

Sub-topic: **What do you think the advantages and disadvantages of your mobile phone use are within this group?**

Sub-topic: *Are there any overlaps within other groups?* **Is there anything specific about your use of mobiles relating to this group, in comparison to the other groups you may be part of?**

I'm very different with my PhD friends to those ones who
received the video clip I showed... we just use the phones, spec.
videos for pranks and wind-ups! – the dancing file, for example.

If required: Do you use your phone in any other way on your own or with
                other people outside of this group? Because this is just 1 context!

Sub-topic: A theme that has arisen is romantic relationships – who's got a
                partner? Ok, if you don't mind me asking – *What are the*
                significant changes in mobile phone use, since you settled
                down/been with .... ? In what ways? What was it like before?
                How do your patterns of use now compare to those before the
                time of your relationship? Or when you are not in a
                relationship?

Sub-topic: **Many people say to me that they couldn't live without their**
                phone. Could you ever go out without your mobile phones?
                What about when it dies on you?

CLOSING TOPIC: *The Mobile Phone as a Consumer Object & Personalisation*

Sub-topic: **What does the phone represent to you?** I mean, do you look at
                it and think, oh yeah brilliant someone sent me a message,
                brilliant, nice phone. *What place does it have in your life? Or is*
                it more of an object that you use to fiddle with, hold, and use for
                other reasons other than communication?

You all have . . . Phones on the table –
                State similarities & differences between phones
                Why do you think this is? Do the phones say anything about the
                group – in terms of looks/the content you share?

                • **Is the way they look important to anyone in this**
                  group? Do you think they're quite sort of cool, your
                  phones? Does that come into it at all? Why did you
                  choose them?

                • **What's more important – the look vs. what it does?**

                • **Any other brand that you really want?**
                • **Any other features that you really want?**
                • **How could they be improved?**
                • **Why do you value it?**

Thanks!

Appendix 11: Commercial discussion (Women)

How does commercial imagery effect the social and
cultural experience of mobile phones?

ICE-BREAKER TASK

Introduction – I think we need to get to know each other before we start talking to each other. I'm Ali, 25, and I'm too single right now, but I blame the time I'm spending on my PhD for that, and I have a 6230 Nokia!

1.   **Motorola V3 RAZR NOIR phone**

OPENING TASK: **You've probably seen it before, but can you please take a couple of minutes to write down what comes to mind when you see this advert**

FOCUS QUESTION: **So what did you write?**

TOPIC GUIDE:

- General impressions of representations of the moving images and music. The ways the sound, movement, pictures and sounds fit together – *look of the phone, model, style that are used to sell it*

- **What do you think about the phone?**

- Did you write anything about the phone displayed?

- **What does the advert tell you about the phones social uses?** *Why?*

- **How does it make you consider buying it? Or why wouldn't you buy it**

2.   **O2 50% Extra for life**

TASK: **Can you now do the same for this advert and write down what comes to mind**

FOCUS QUESTION: **So what did you write?**

TOPIC GUIDE:

- Music, mood and impressions of the commercial

- **What does it offer to you? What does it make you think about the network service provider?**

- What impression do you get from the use of the people in the advert, and the way they are engaging? What does it say about O2?

- Did these 'loyalty rewarded' ads influence your choice to purchase from this network service provider? How? And that includes the pay-and-go equivalent (of 20% more on top-ups)?

  How did they appeal to you? When you look into it and see the setting... the mood and hear the music...how would it have appealed to you when you were upgrading with O2?

3.   Sony Ericsson K750i

TASK: Can you now do the same for this advert and write down what comes to mind

FOCUS QUESTION: So what was written?

TOPIC GUIDE:

- Music, mood and representations of the commercial.
  Realistic, focus on functionality, not so much style, it is sold as a digital camera

- What do you think about the phone you saw?

- What does it tell you about sociability between people? *Why?*

- None of you have this phone – but would you consider buying it? *Why?*

4.   Stills

1. Picture from the campaign
   The O2 50% Extra/Motorola V3 Poster

2. Two pictures of a mobile phone
   Sony Ericsson K750i – with the UFO, and one accompanying the adverts viewed

3. 150 extra off-peak minutes to pay and go O2 customers
   O2 tend to put WO2W next to these.

4. Samsung E530

AND FINALLY: What do these say to you?
                 Which ones appeal to you most? Why?
                 Which one sticks in your mind? *O2 have that background*
                 everywhere – think they rely on it working because it's not all
                 just on the TV
                 Did any of these adverts influence your purchase? Kelly E530

Commercial Discussion (Men)

How does commercial imagery effect the social and
cultural experience of mobile phones?

ICE-BREAKER

Introduction – I think we need to get to know each other before we start talking to each other. I'm Ali, 25, doing a PhD and I use a Nokia 6230. I should have done this focus group at the time that the adverts where being broadcasted, but things have taken their time.

All participants introduce themselves.

1.   **Motorola V3 RAZR NOIR phone**

OPENING TASK: **Please take a couple of minutes to write down what comes to mind when you see this advert**

FOCUS QUESTION: **So what did you write?**

TOPIC GUIDE:

- General impressions of representations of the moving images and music. The ways the sound, movement, pictures and sounds fit together – *look of the phone, model, style that are used to sell it*

- What did you write about the phone?

- **What does the advert tell you about sociability between people and through the phone? *Why?***

- **None of you have this phone, but how does it make you consider buying it? Or why wouldn't you buy it?**

2.   **50% Extra for life**

TASK: **Can you now do the same for this advert and write down what comes to mind**

FOCUS QUESTION: **So what did you write?**

TOPIC GUIDE:

- What are your general impressions - music, mood and impressions of the commercial

- **What does it offer to you? What does it make you think about the network service provider?**

- What impression do you get from the use of the people in the advert, and the way they are engaging? What does it say about O2?

- For those of you with O2, Did these 'loyalty rewarded' ads influence your choice to purchase from this network service provider? How? And that includes the pay-and-go equivalent (of 20% more on top-ups)?

  How did they appeal to you? When you look into it and see the setting... the mood and hear the music...how would it have appealed to you when you were upgrading with O2?

3.   Sony Ericsson K750i

TASK: Can you now do the same for this advert and write down what comes to mind

FOCUS QUESTION: So what was written?

TOPIC GUIDE:

- Music, mood and representations of the commercial. *Realistic, focus on functionality, not so much style, it is sold as a digital camera*

- What do you think about the phone you saw?

- What does it tell you about sociability between people? *Why?*

- Would you consider buying it? *Why?*

4.   Stills
What do these say to you? - - Which ones appeal to you most? Which one catches your eye? *O2 have that background everywhere – think they rely on it working because it's not all just on the TV.* Did any of these adverts influence your purchase?

5. Picture from the campaign
   The O2 50% Extra/Motorola V3 Poster

6. Two pictures of a mobile phone
   Sony Ericsson K750i – with the UFO, and one accompanying the adverts viewed – black background with pink flower – focuses on the camera capabilities

7. 150 extra off-peak minutes to pay and go O2 customers
   O2 tend to put WO2W next to these.

8. Samsung E530 – looks good, feels even better – females, listening to music – white background, shows the phone

almost closed and then one at the side where it is open,
and then it explains it's features along the bottom

9. Samsung D500 – business people

Appendix 12: Table of preliminary codes and families (themes)

Code Family: Advanced features

HU: Ali 01 270406
File: [D:\Atlas\Atlas file\Formatted\Ali 01 270406.hpr5]
Edited by:Super
Date/Time: 18/07/07 09:42:58

Created: 27/04/06 12:37:41 (Super)
Codes (5):   [3G] [internet] [service controls - porn] [shared moments] [valued features]
Quotation(s): 38

Code Family: consumption | purchase

HU: Ali 01 270406
File: [D:\Atlas\Atlas file\Formatted\Ali 01 270406.hpr5]
Edited by:Super
Date/Time: 18/07/07 09:43:37

Created: 27/04/06 12:22:17 (Super)
Codes (9):   [adverts] [appearance] [attraction/appeal] [capacity] [cost] [disappointment] [features] [features
over appearance] [gender]
Quotation(s): 100

Code Family: entertainment

HU: Ali 01 270406
File: [D:\Atlas\Atlas file\Formatted\Ali 01 270406.hpr5]
Edited by:Super
Date/Time: 18/07/07 09:44:01

Created: 27/04/06 12:40:13 (Super)
Codes (11):   [3G] [all-in-one] [fun/entertainment] [handset interaction & proximity] [impressed] [internet]
[multimedia] [music] [shared moments] [valued content] [valued features]
Quotation(s): 135

Code Family: physical phone

HU: Ali 01 270406
File: [D:\Atlas\Atlas file\Formatted\Ali 01 270406.hpr5]
Edited by:Super
Date/Time: 18/07/07 09:44:22

Created: 27/04/06 12:26:55 (Super)
Codes (14):   [all-in-one] [appearance] [attraction/appeal] [back to basics] [confusion/hard to use] [cost] [ease
of use/usability] [features] [features over appearance] [handset interaction & proximity] [improvements]
[management] [practicality of use] [tariff]
Quotation(s): 146

Code Family: social change

HU: Ali 01 270406
File: [D:\Atlas\Atlas file\Formatted\Ali 01 270406.hpr5]
Edited by:Super
Date/Time: 18/07/07 09:45:03

Created: 27/04/06 12:42:30 (Super)
Codes (10):   [dependency] [everything all the time] [forms of communication] [intrusion] [occupied w/(non)presence] [sociability change] [social arrangements] [social etiquette] [spur of the moment] [surveillance]
Quotation(s): 62

Code Family: Value

HU: Ali 01 270406
File: [D:\Atlas\Atlas file\Formatted\Ali 01 270406.hpr5]
Edited by:Super
Date/Time: 18/07/07 09:45:17

Created: 27/04/06 12:40:30 (Super)
Codes (15):   [appearance] [contact] [dependency] [family/loved ones] [forms of communication] [friendship] [fun/entertainment] [inconvenience of non-use] [necessity] [shared moments] [social arrangements] [text messaging] [valued content] [valued features] [work/life]
Quotation(s): 235

Code Family: advantages of use

HU: Ali 01 270406
File: [D:\Atias\Atlas file\Formatted\Ali 01 270406.hpr5]
Edited by:Super
Date/Time: 18/07/07 09:45:38

Created: 27/04/06 12:39:18 (Super)
Codes (20):   [advs-non-f2f-comm] [all-in-one] [boredom] [compatibility/synchro] [contact] [convenient] [dual-activities] [easy to locate] [escapism] [everything all the time] [express] [family/loved ones] [fun/entertainment] [loneliness] [maintain relationships] [multimedia] [safety/emergency] [social arrangements] [spur of the moment] [valued content]
Quotation(s): 158

Code Family: disadvantages of use

HU: Ali 01 270406
File: [D:\Atlas\Atlas file\Formatted\Ali 01 270406.hpr5]
Edited by:Super
Date/Time: 18/07/07 09:45:55

Created: 27/04/06 12:39:35 (Super)
Codes (25):   [annoyance] [confusion/hard to use] [dependency] [disappointment] [disruption] [inconvenience of non-use] [inconvenient] [intrusion] [isolation] [Loss] [love-hate feelings] [mishap] [network service] [phone absence] [powerless] [private/public info] [restriction] [ring tones] [sadness] [scared] [security] [social etiquette] [technical failure] [user-interface] [work/life]
Quotation(s): 152

Code Family: Friends/relationships

HU: Ali 01 270406
File: [D:\Atlas\Atlas file\Formatted\Ali 01 270406.hpr5]
Edited by:Super
Date/Time: 18/07/07 09:47:54

Created: 27/04/06 12:38:23 (Super)
Codes (13):   [basic use] [contact] [expectation] [friendship] [gender] [handset interaction & proximity] [happiness] [love-hate feelings] [maintain relationships] [occupied w/(non)presence] [romantic-relational] [sadness] [surveillance]
Quotation(s): 154

Code Family: presentation of self

284

Created: 27/04/06 12:42:11 (Super)
Codes (8):   [appearance] [deception] [handset interaction & proximity] [isolation] [personalisation]
[representation of self] [ring tones] [text messaging]
Quotation(s): 144

Code Family: text messaging

Created: 27/04/06 14:27:47 (Super)
Codes (10):   [deception] [disruption] [happiness] [intrusion] [maintain relationships] [micro-coordination]
[mishap] [quality-social interaction] [sadness] [text messaging]
Quotation(s): 102

Code Family: co-ordination

Created: 27/04/06 12:38:42 (Super)
Codes (9):   [basic use] [convenient] [dependency] [dual-activities] [everything all the time] [hyper-
coordination] [micro-coordination] [necessity] [relay circumstances]
Quotation(s): 48

Code Family: Emotion

Created: 27/04/06 12:19:16 (Super)
Codes (20):   [attraction/appeal] [boredom] [escapism] [expectation] [express] [friendship] [fun/entertainment]
[gender] [happiness] [impressed] [loneliness] [Loss] [love-hate feelings] [maintain relationships] [multimedia] [neutral]
[romantic-relational] [sadness] [valued content] [valued features]
Quotation(s): 221

Created: 27/04/06 12:35:09 (Super)
Codes (15):   [adverts] [ample features] [appearance] [compatibility/synchro] [confusion/hard to use] [handset
interaction & proximity] [happiness] [impressed] [improvements] [multimedia] [music] [novelty] [ring tones] [user-
interface] [valued features]
Quotation(s): 193

Code Family: reasons of use

HU: Ali 01 270406
File: [D:\Atlas\Atlas file\Formatted\Ali 01 270406.hpr5]
Edited by:Super
Date/Time: 18/07/07 09:50:55

Created: 27/04/06 12:26:15 (Super)
Codes (19):   [basic use] [boredom] [contact] [convenient] [deception] [escapism] [express] [family/loved ones]
[flexibility] [friendship] [fun/entertainment] [hyper-coordination] [micro-coordination] [necessity] [reassurance] [relay
circumstances] [safety/emergency] [social arrangements] [text messaging]
Quotation(s): 175

Code Family: user-interface

HU: Ali 01 270406
File: [D:\Atlas\Atlas file\Formatted\Ali 01 270406.hpr5]
Edited by:Super
Date/Time: 18/07/07 09:51:09

Created: 27/04/06 12:35:33 (Super)
Codes (6):   [attraction/appeal] [back to basics] [confusion/hard to use] [ease of use/usability] [personalisation]
[user-interface]
Quotation(s): 56

Appendix 13: Coding chart

Participants>	A – m	B - f	D - m	E - f	F – f	H - m	I - f	J - m	K - m	L - f	M - f	N - m
Themes												
Text Vs. Talk												
Everyday & Mundane												
Romance												
Proximity, Absence												
Exclusion & Inclusion												
Symbolism – feeling, meanings												
Identity, representation												
Colour												
Power & freedom												
Multi-functions – camera etc												
New modes & new etiquette												

m = male, f = female

Appendix 14: Table of codes, themes, mediators and thesis themes

Themes	Mediators	Thesis Themes	Research Arena

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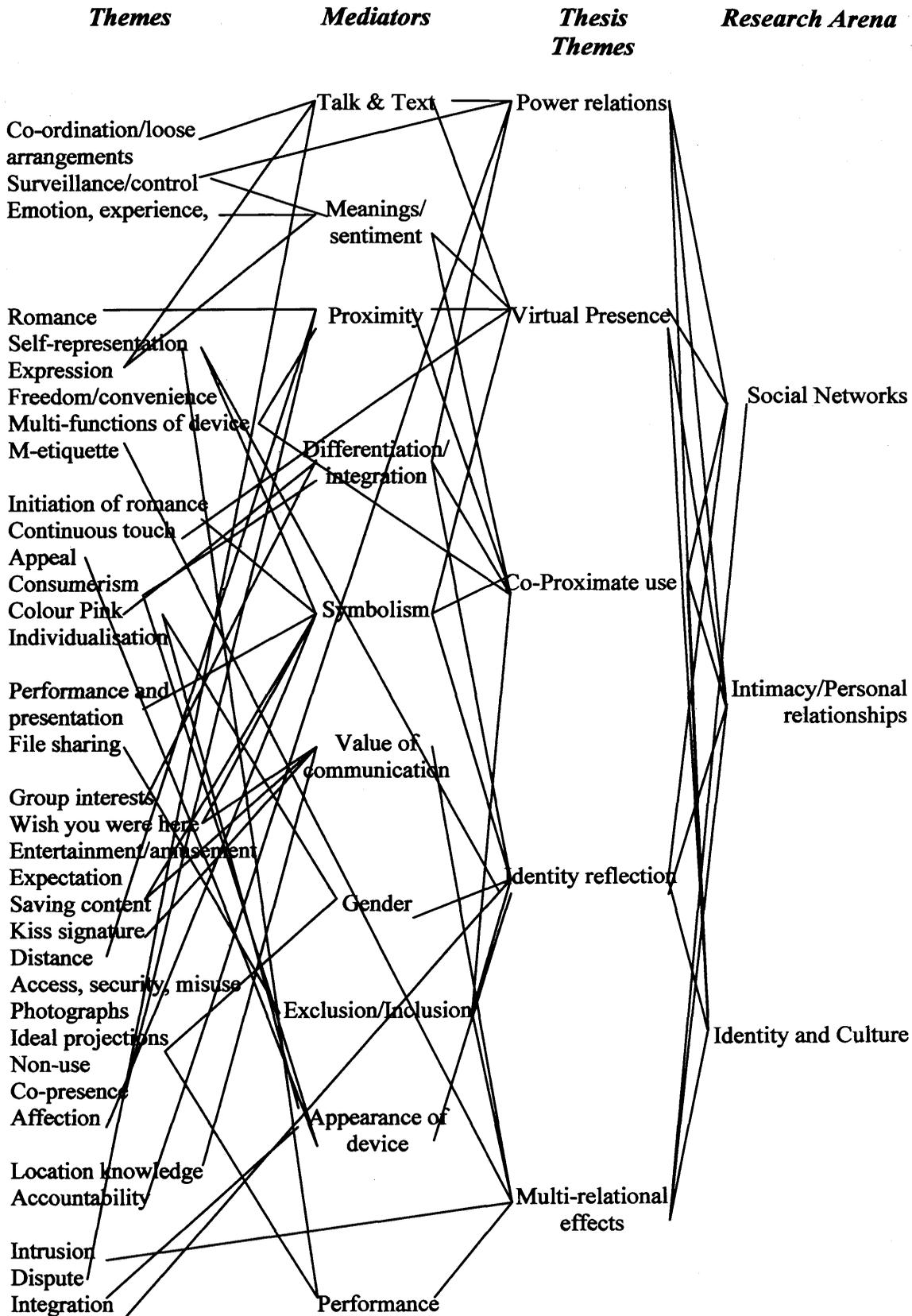
Appendix 15: Social demographics

Participant A	
Name	**Matthew**
Age	**18**
Gender	**Male**
Nationality	**British**
Ethnicity	**White**
Marital Status	**Single**
Occupation	**Student**
Area	**Cardiff**
Handset	**Samsung D500**

Participant B	
Name	**Emma**
Age	**27**
Gender	**Female**
Nationality	**German**
Ethnicity	**White**
Marital Status	**Single**
Occupation	**PG Student**
Area	**Cardiff**
Handset	**Nokia 3100**

Participant D	
Name	**James**
Age	**24**
Gender	**Male**
Nationality	**British**
Ethnicity	**White**
Marital Status	**Single**
Occupation	**Graduate. Events co-ordinator**
Area:	**Caerphilly**
Handset:	**Motorola V3**

Participant E	
Name	**Kate**
Age	**26**
Gender	**Female**
Nationality	**British**
Ethnicity	**White**
Marital Status	**Single**
Occupation	**Graduate Deputy team leader, chemistry manufacturing**
Area:	**Cardiff**
Handset	**Nokia 7610**

Participant F	
Name	**Catherine**
Age	**27**
Gender	**Female**
Nationality	**British**
Ethnicity	**White**
Marital Status	**Single**
Occupation	**Graduate Researcher**
Area:	**Cardiff**
Handset	**Samsung E530**

Participant H	
Name	**David**
Age	**19**
Gender	**Male**
Nationality	**British**
Ethnicity	**White**
Marital Status	**Single**
Occupation	**Student**
Area:	**Cardiff**
Handset	**Sony Ericsson K750i**

Participant I	
Name	**Ingrid**
Age	**17**
Gender	**Female**
Nationality	**British**
Ethnicity	**White**
Marital Status	**Engaged**
Occupation	**Sales Assistant**
Area:	**Miskin**
Handset	**Samsung E530**

Participant J	
Name	**Sam**
Age	**25**
Gender	**Male**
Nationality	**British**
Ethnicity	**Other**
Marital Status	**Married**
Occupation	**Graduate. Youth worker/sales assistant**
Area:	**Cardiff**
Handset	**Sony Ericsson W800**

Participant K	
Name	**Gareth**
Age	**25**
Gender	**Male**
Nationality	**British**
Ethnicity	**White**
Marital Status	**Single**
Occupation	**Graduate Company Director**
Area:	**Swansea**
Handset	**Samsung Z500**

Participant L	
Name	**Claire**
Age	**22**
Gender	**Female**
Nationality	**British**
Ethnicity	**White**
Marital Status	**Single**
Occupation	**Graduate Radiographer**
Area:	**Cardiff**
Handset	**Samsung E530**

Participant M	
Name	**Kirsty**
Age	**17**
Gender	**Female**
Nationality	**British**
Ethnicity	**White**
Marital Status	**Single**
Occupation	**A-Level Student**
Area:	**Rhigos, Rhondda Cynon Taff**
Handset	**Samsung E530**

Participant N	
Name	**Eric**
Age	**23**
Gender	**M**
Nationality	**British**
Ethnicity	**White**
Marital Status	**Single**
Occupation	**Graduate. Sales assistant**
Area:	**Cardiff**
Handset	**Sony Ericsson K750i**

Appendix 16: Summary of prominent findings

	Social networks	*Intimate/personal*	*Culture/identity*
Kirsty **F** **17**	Text messaging, share files of sounds and video, ringtones, extensive use within network, mainly text messaging,	Text messaging more with (ex)-partner. Practical family co-ordination. Privacy	It's different, it's girly
Ingrid **F** **17**	Not much with friends, text and call them	Maintain contact continuously with long-distance partner, family intrusion and accountability, expectation is present. Privacy	Sibling had the phone, it's 'cute'
Matthew **M** **18**	Co-ordinate nights out, coursework, time-space convenience	Flirtation, text messaging, not in a relationship	Fiddle with phone when waiting/alone, stylish sleek and lifestyle aspiration, marketing influenced
David **M** **19**	Text messaging, sharing files, extensive use with friends	Flirtation, but not in a relationship	Practical for his needs, uses the camera, it's a bonus that it is 'funky' looking, influenced by advert
Claire **F** **22**	Text messaging, shared interests, fun, co-ordination at concerts – extensive group use, male friends use mp for pornography	No relationship, but maintains contact with family as she lives away from her.	Practical uses, Bluetooth,
Eric **M** **23**	File sharing, ringtones, videos of nostalgic nature, text messaging to co-ordinate activities with friends, speaks to long-distance friends in comparison, but contact is irregular	Text messaging, limericks and more text messaging with partners. Practical use for family, co-ordination	The functionalities are important (like David), the appearance is not important

	Social networks	*Intimate/personal*	*Culture/identity*
James **M** **24**	Text messaging to co-ordinate with those close by, contact is low with those afar, not many other features use, calls friends	Continuous contact with long-distance partner – texts and calls, rising expectation of communication	Needed a phone quickly, did not think about the model he bought, not influenced by advert. Practical use
Gareth **M** **25**	Extensive use with friends, pornography, gallery of photos to share, text messaging, prank calls	Text messaging a girl he was dating, no extensive use. Control access from family by switching off.	Affected by appeal, looks of the phone, best feature, latest model, 'different'
Sam **M** **25**	Practical co-ordination with friends, shares files of nostalgic nature	Married, parents live abroad, maintain contact and affection with wife when away	Consumerist, the look of the phone is important, and 'different'
Kate **F** **26**	Text messaging and calling, mainly text message to stay in touch, text message to co-ordinate with flatmate	Text message conversations, maintain contact with family	It's 'different'
Catherine **F** **26**	Low use, co-ordinate everyday work with work friends, arrange cinema meals	Co-habits with partner, maintain contact and affection when away, co-ordinate meals	It's girly, matches her choice of colours
Emma **F** **27**	Low use with friends, apart from texting those near and far. Prefers to use landline and email	Significant use with long-distance partner	The most basic phone, inverse identity aspiration, to be excluded from the craze

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