Chapter 90
Youth and Mobile:
An Investigation of Socialization

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ABSTRACT

While the rapid growth in studies on the effects of mobile phones has deepened our understanding of the role mobile phones play in the socialization process of youth, further work is required in reviewing the growing influence of mobile phones for continuing socialization. The objective of this paper therefore is to assess literature from a range of selected studies and in doing so, highlight the role of mobile phones in contributing to youth socialization. This state-of-the-art review demonstrates that mobile phones are a powerful socializing tool that can lead to plentiful consequences. It will show that the influence of mobile phones can be beneficial. It explores the harmful effects of mobile phones. Finally, this chapter will incorporate previous advancements in research to inform forthcoming research and identify new concepts, themes and theories to support or improve the role of mobile phones in increasing the socialization skills of youth.

INTRODUCTION

The wide scale usage of mobile phones by youth has been a worldwide miracle, playing an essential role in youths' lives, especially in electronic communication. The mobile phone was invented a decade before youths began to use it for their daily lives. The reduction in prices for mobile phones and the creation of pre-paid phone cards in the last decade had led to widespread usage by youths (Ling, 2004).

The new generations are very energetic users of these communication tools. During the year 2010, Pew's review reported that 75% of 12-17 year-olds now have cell phones, up from 45% in 2004 (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2010). The percentage had also increased from 58% to 83% for youths between age 12 and 17. In 2012 there were around 5,020,000 mobiles in New Zealand whereas the population was only 4,433,087 (TNS Global Market Survey, cited in New Zealand Herald, 2012). The demand for mobile phones are worth researched on as it has the capability to considerably alter social interactions. The usage of mobile phones has augmented a novel aspect of virtual mobility to a continuing trend for geographically extended, quicker, and more individualized social interaction. These usages of mobile phones have altered the forms of coordination in many parts of our public life, including friends, relatives, and work. Particularly between youngsters, the mobile phone has two functions: on the one hand it enables parents' interaction and care; however, on the other it facilitates massive social interactions with groups of friends outside of parental influence (Oksman & Rautiainen, 2002).

Furthermore, research has revealed the benefits of its usage, including the ability to maintain social relationships, intensify individual and collective identities, and enlarges social circles (wherein friends are vastly prominent (Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006). Dresler-Hawke and Mansvelt (2008) explain that mobile phones play an important role in youths' lives, and are accepted as a required part of social communication through the upkeep of main social networks. Consequently, the mobile phone is found to be the starting place for youth socialization (Harper & Hamill, 2005). Previous research has shown that fast usage of mobile phones increases the socialization process with an individual's family and friends (Ling & Yttri, 2006).

In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of studies on young people and mobile phones carried out in different settings. Largely, social scientists consider the popularity of mobile phones in many areas in addition to the social function of the device in the lives of youths. Some researchers have paid attention to the social characteristics of mobile phone diffusion (e.g., Rheingold, 2002), while others (e.g., Ling, 2004) have investigated the influence of mobile phones in daily interactions (i.e. teenagers' social relationships and networks). However, limited researches have studied the function of mobile phones in youth socialization (e.g., Kalogeraki & Papadaki, 2010). The purpose of the current review is therefore to increase our understanding of where this tool fits in the association between youths, and to identify whether mobile phone use has an effect on youth socialization. Our aims are, thus, to prepare an inclusive evaluation of the writings published to date which has reported directly on mobile phones and their effect on primary sources of socialization such as peers and family. This review will attempt to integrate these past advances in research in order to inform future research and identify new findings to support or improve the role of mobile phones in increasing youths' socialization skills.

STATE OF THE ART

The role of this literature review is to consider major current studies in the field of mobile phone use and youth socialization. It will examine two divergent areas: how young people utilize a mobile phone's email and texting functions as tools to socialize with their family and peers, and the usage of mobile phones in the context of socialization. For the purposes of this review, we restricted our search to encompass studies that measure the association between mobile phone and socialization in youths. Electronic research was conducted using Google Scholar and ISI Web of Science, using the following key phrases: mobile devices and youth socialization (i.e., social networking, group/self-identity, social interaction with families/ peer

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