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VIRTUALLY PRESENT: AN ETHNOGRAPHY
OF COMMUNICATION LOOK AT THE
SHAPING OF SOCIAL RULES IN SMALL
GROUP INTERACTIONS MEDIATED BY
MOBILE DEVICES

Pamela Gerber

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**VIRTUALLY PRESENT:
AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF COMMUNICATION LOOK AT THE
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INTERACTIONS MEDIATED BY MOBILE DEVICES**

by

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**B.A., ANTHROPOLOGY
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, 2007**

THESIS

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Requirements for the Degree of

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my amazing sister, Melissa. Who, since I'm dedicating it her, will now have to read in its entirety, even if it's not about zombies.

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MEDIATED BY MOBILE DEVICES**

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Bachelor of Arts, Anthropology

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ABSTRACT

In this study I describe the communication rules that inform how particular bar patrons use mobile device technologies to shape particular types of small groups. Mobile devices have increasingly been naturalized into the communicative landscape and the effects of this need to be explored. I focus on a college bar, MVF, to answer the following research questions: (1) What are the sets of rules surrounding mobile device use in small groups at MVF during late afternoons and evenings? (2) What are meaning(s) users and other group members attribute to the use of mobile devices at MVF during late afternoons and evenings? (3) What particular type of small group does the use of mobile device technology enable and mediate? I argue that mobile device technologies enable and mediate the presence of three types of social groups, specifically, “suspended groups,” “procured groups,” and “transitory groups.”

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

(505)867-5309: Humans have been rendered a ten digit number, contactable anytime, anywhere. Some believe that without this number, without our mobile device, we are incomplete. At times, some of us even feel as if we are missing a part of our body (Turkle, 2011). People's ideas about mobile devices have extended these communication apparatuses beyond a tangible piece of technology, to almost literally comprise our sense of what it means to be human. Mobile devices have had such a profound effect on our sense of personhood that scholars contemplate the dehumanization and increased mechanization of humanity (Turkle, 2011) and, have questioned: "Are we becoming machines or are machines becoming us?" (Katz, 2003).

This is a significant question as our mobile phone number enables us with abilities to control others access to ourselves while simultaneously allowing us access to others, regardless of occasion, time, and geographic location (Gergen, 2002; Caporael & Xie; 2003; Licoppe, 2003). As devices have been designed to circumvent barriers and to overcome challenges presented by geographic boundaries (Aakhus, 2002) our own physical limitations as humans for connecting with each other are no longer an insurmountable problem. Thus, in a sense, mobile devices do become us and vice versa as "technologies become extensions and representations of the communicators" (Katz, 2003, p. 1), are equated as a body part (Turkle, 2011), and are regarded by users as a part of their personhood (Okmans & Pirjo, 2003).

Devices such as the telephone and Internet have long been praised for enabling communication with other individuals anytime, anywhere, and despite physical

constraints (Caporael & Xie, 2003; Licoppe, 2003); however, there are numerous repercussions from their use (Gergen, 2002). Technology is developing and changing the societal framework at an astonishing rate (Katz, 2002; Srivastava, 2008; Turkle 2011). As geographic boundaries and barriers are removed, an overarching result of mobile devices has been the loss of privacy, the redefinition of public space(s), and the reshaping of interpersonal relationships and human socializing (Katz, 2002; 2003), among other possible consequences.

These effects are the result of mobile devices being increasingly naturalized into society and into communicative interactions (Gergen 2002; Katz, 2002; Turkle 2011). Moreover, mobile devices have infiltrated nearly every facet of discourse affecting perceptions and norms in cultural groups (Srivastava, 2008). The presence of mobile devices and their repercussions on human communication-mediated relationships are so prevalent, and perhaps alarming, that movies and books have been created pertaining to the effects and affects of technology. Are these stories just imaginative parallel universes, or are they possible portents of things to come? If these movies and books are the social interpretation of the possible effects of mobile devices and technology now and in the future, then the role of such devices in everyday human life is of worthy study.

Research Questions and Rationale

My study seeks to better understand mobile device use in human communication. Specifically, I investigated the communication rules informing how particular bar patrons use mobile device technology to shape particular types of small groups at a common venue utilized for social interactions, a local college bar, that I will refer to as MVF. A rule is “a prescription, for how to act, under specified circumstances, which has (some

degree of) force in a particular social group” (Philipsen, 1992, p. 8). In order to ascertain sets of rules and groups enabled and mediated by mobile devices, the following questions focused and guided the study:

RQ1 What are the sets of rules surrounding mobile device use in small groups at MVF during late afternoons and evenings?

RQ2 What are meaning(s) users and other group members attribute to the use of mobile devices at MVF during late afternoons and evenings?

RQ3 What particular types of small group does the use of mobile device technology enable and mediate?

To answer the above questions, I conducted an ethnography of communication (EOC) (Hymes, 1972) using speech codes theory (SCT) (Philipsen, Coutu, & Covarrubias, 2005), an interpretive discourse analysis perspective, to explore communicative phenomena through a culturally contextualized lens. The EOC uses ethnographic methods, such as observations and interviews, to study the communication patterns of a group. Through the EOC, interactions among particular groups of people, or what is called a “speech community,” can be investigated. A speech community is defined as a group of people who share at least one code or system of rules for enacting and interpreting their own and others communicative conduct (Hymes, 1972). The EOC “consists of hearing and representing distinctive ways of speaking in particular speech communities” (Philipsen, 1992, p. 9) because each speech community has its own norms and sets of rules pertaining to communication.

An SCT approach offers a way to explore and identify sets of rules, norms, and meanings in communicative interactions by highlighting the cultural and contextual

aspect of communication, wherein context is believed to influence communicative interactions and vice versa. Culture is a resource from which individuals draw to give meaning to communicative actions and interactions (Hall, 2002) and it (culture) influences and posits rules in interactions. Additionally, culture influences an individual's and a group's perception of reality (Gergen, 2002), as well as contributes to the perceptions of personhood (beliefs about persons, loci of motives, site of consciousness, and links to history)(Carbaugh, 2006). SCT was ideal for this study because it allowed for the exploration of social rules and appropriate communicative behaviors surrounding mobile devices. Observing interactions, identifying sets of rules, and meanings about communication allowed for an understanding of a particular speech community's shared psychology (Philipsen, Coutu & Covarrubias, 2005).

Additionally, bona fide group perspective (BFGP) was utilized in this study as a compatible and complimentary theory for SCT. Like SCT, BFGP employs a contextual lens to view social interactions (Putnam & Stohl, 1990). BFGP stresses that a group's members belong to multiple groups and this makes a group's boundaries fluid and permeable (Putnam & Stohl, 1990). BFGP and SCT are compatible as SCT also recognizes dynamism and fluidity across discursive interactions resulting in the enactment of various codes. A code is a socially constructed, historically transmitted, system of symbols, premises, rules, and meanings pertaining to communicative conduct (Covarrubias, 2002). Together, SCT and BFGP were ideal methods for studying small groups at MVF.

The theoretical input of this study includes contributing to the corpora on mobile devices, the ethnography of communication (EOC), speech codes theory (SCT), and

small groups research. This study holds possible implications for societal framework and health studies as users are viewed as 'tethered' to devices and report feelings of loss, fear and anxiety without them (Turkle, 2011). Additionally, the identification of sets of social rules currently operating in small group and mobile device discourse can aid in answering broader questions about personhood.

As a result of my inquiry, sets of rules surrounding mobile device usage have been identified, as well as three types of groups enabled and mediated by mobile device technology, specifically, “suspended groups,” “procured groups,” and “transitory groups.” The discovery of these groups and their associated sets of rules guiding interactions are important as they explain what, in the particular MVF context, it means to be part of a group, who’s part of a group, and how people are part of a group.

Theoretical and Methodological Standpoint

My theoretical standpoint for this study is interpretive. The interpretive perspective seeks to better understand phenomena with importance placed on an individual’s subjective experiences. Perceptions of experience(s) can vary greatly between individuals, cultural groups, and throughout discursive interactions. However, experiences must contain common elements within a cultural group in order to effectively communicate and foster a shared understanding. In other words, members of a cultural group must be intelligible to one another, via shared meanings, in order to be able to communicate (Hymes, 1974).

Key to the interpretive perspective is the notion that reality is socially constructed. This means that reality is actively interpreted, constructed, and contested in context and through interactions by individuals, as opposed to being innately known or passively

received. The shared perceptions of members in a cultural group are shaped, influenced, and constructed in and through communication. Culture is revealed in communication and communication allows for members to co-create a shared reality. There are, of course, different individual constructions that should be accounted for, however, interlocutors' conduct in a speech community reflects certain underlying patterns and rules that aid in interpretations of events and allow for comprehension across individual communicators. As stated by Schwandt (1999) "...language is not private but shared, and hence meaning is not subjective but intersubjective" (p. 453).

Underlying patterns and rules about communicative behavior in a shared social reality can be examined using an interpretive approach to communication. An interpretive perspective places importance and stresses linkages between communication and culture in the shaping of social reality. An interpretive approach to studying communication includes using ethnographic methods, such as observations, participant observations, individual and group interviews (Lindloff & Taylor, 2011) to uncover patterns across interactions. Ethnographic methods are integral to understanding human experience, culture, communicative strategies, and the phenomena under investigation.

Researcher's Assumptions

For the reader to better understand the present study it is important to address my assumptions as a researcher. To understand these assumptions, a definition of communication and culture must be first established. For this study, I use Hall's (2002) definition of communication, as the "generation of meaning" that is interdependent and situational. The meanings generated by and attached to communication are culturally based, thus without culture, communication would not exist and vice versa. Additionally,

these meanings are dependent upon the situation or context in which the particular communication occurs.

For the definition of culture, I also utilize Hall (2002) who defines culture as “a historically shared system of symbolic resources through which we make our world meaningful” (p. 4). To fully comprehend this definition one must understand all of its parts. The first, 'historically shared,' means culture is shared by members of a cultural group and is, to an extent, a learned behavior (Hall, 2002). Meanings, values, and norms of a particular culture are passed from one member to the other and allow members to understand and share commonalities (Philipsen, 1992). Meaning that, shared symbolic resources as constituents of culture enable communication to occur in situations even if interlocutors have not previously met (Hall, 2002). This communication is accomplished through the use of symbols, verbal and nonverbal. By definition, symbols represent something else such as a person, a place, an object, an idea, etc. that is tangible or intangible, physically present or not. Symbols are shared by cultural groups and allow group members to make sense out of interactions. Symbols provide a way for individuals to act meaningfully and to understand the behaviors of others as meaningful, assuming that the significance of that behavior or object is shared (Hall, 2002).

By understanding a basic definition of culture one can better understand the following assumptions regarding culture. My assumptions encompass three major components: assumptions about culture, assumptions about communication, and assumptions about the phenomena under study, mobile devices.

Assumption #1) Culture is dynamic. As stated above, culture is historically shared. However, this does not mean culture is unchanging or fixed, rather, it has a duality of

nature because it is both stable and shifting (Covarrubias, 2002; Hall, 2002). Some elements may remain the same over time, but others are constantly changing. Key to this assumption is that culture is learned and shared, not something with which we are born (Hall, 2002). Learned behaviors are often altered, modified, and/or contested dependent on the user(s) and culture is dynamic because learned behaviors are subject to individual impromptu agentive enactments (Covarrubias, 2002).

Assumption #2) Culture and communication are intertwined. “Cultures are the creation of human interaction” (Hall, 2002, p. 12) and culture is a resource that allows individuals to communicate effectively and navigate throughout discourse. Culture holds distinctive psychologies and rhetoric that are linked to ways of speaking (Philipsen, Coutu & Covarrubias, 2005) and other enactments of communication (Covarrubias and Windchief, 2009). Communication would not be able to occur without the shared understanding that culture provides. Likewise, communication serves to reflect and constitute a group's perceptions of the interaction and cultural meanings embedded in communicative behaviors.

Assumption #3) Communication is contextual. Context refers to the situational elements of a communicative interaction. Hymes (1972) embraces these elements in his SPEAKING mnemonic: Scene, Participant, End, Act, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms and Genre. Each one of these is a contextual element, from the scene in which the action occurs (at a bar, restaurant, in a home, etc.) to the genre (a lecture, joke, etc.). This idea of context being essential to communication is supported by Hall (2002), who states that “...context modifies the meanings that are generated” (p. 19). Thus, it is necessary to

understand all parts of the contextual features to understand the meaning of the particular communication phenomenon under study.

Assumption #4) Communication is patterned and purposeful. Communication follows a pattern (Hall, 2002; Philipsen, Coutu & Covarrubias, 2005) that allows individuals to make sense of their own and other's interactions. Without mutually intelligible patterns or schemas, individuals could not effectively communicate or understand one another. However, since communication is patterned, it can also be modified and changed to suit the context. Individuals are active participants in interactions and capable of evaluating the context and utilizing communication systems, or codes, to achieve a purpose.

Assumption: #5) Individuals are active and discerning users of mobile devices. Humans have agency (Covarrubias, 2002) and are strategic users of communication (Philipsen, Coutu, & Covarrubias, 2005). Individuals use mobile devices as a means to achieve particular social ends. Mobile devices have functions to meet a variety of needs (Leung & Wei, 2000). They can be used for communication, coordination, entertainment, information, business and organization, to name just a few options. Instead of regarding users of technology as passive, I assume users are active and discerning in their choices. Just as individuals are conscious users of culture and communication (Philipsen, Coutu & Covarrubias, 2005), they also consciously choose the means for conducting the communication, including technological means. Individuals decide to purposefully engage with their mobile device across contexts and in communicative interactions. In order to understand the effects of mobile devices on interactions, to discern norms and

meanings surrounding their use, it is important to understand what needs and purposes they are fulfilling for individuals and individuals in groups.

Overview of Chapters

The following four chapters of this study explores the three major facets comprising the present study, provides a theoretical framework and methods used to collect and interpret data, identifies sets of rules and groups surrounding mobile device use, and discusses key contributions of this study. To begin, Chapter 2, makes an argument for this study by exploring the influence and impact of mobile device technology, by discussing speech codes as both a theory and methodology, and by addressing the population under observation, small groups. In Chapter 3, I present my theoretical framework and methods used to conduct an inquiry into sets of communicative rules at MVF and answer the research questions guiding this study. In Chapter 4, I present and explain my findings using data obtained at MVF to support my conclusions. Finally, Chapter 5, discusses contributions of this study, addresses its limitations, and concludes by positing recommendations for future research in this area.

CHAPTER 2: Review of the Literature

When I was a growing up my father had a beeper and a carphone; I had a landline telephone in my room. Less than twenty years later these communication devices are considered relics. Currently, the majority of people own communication devices, which would not only make my father and my, then, state-of-the-art communication equipment obsolete, but laughable due to their large size and limited capabilities. I used to consider myself technologically savvy, but technology has superseded me and I find myself astonished and sometimes perplexed by current mobile device usage. Yet, it is their uses in conjunction with their impact and influence on society that has drawn me to them, piquing my interest as a communication scholar and researcher and motivating me to pursue this study and enhance understandings about human communication in a world much effected by and quickly changing because of communication technologies.

In order to study mobile device usage more in-depth, to answer my research questions and to explore sets of rules surrounding their use, I will address the three major components this study encompasses: mobile devices, communication, and small groups. I begin by discussing technology, specifically, mobile device technology. I then move on to discuss two communication theories, the ethnography of communication (EOC) and speech codes theory (SCT). I conclude by addressing the population under study, small groups, and present a small group communication theory that enabled me to explore my research question in-depth: bona fide group perspective (BFGP).

Mobile Devices

Do you own or have access to a television, a computer, or a cellular phone? Have you ever walked into a store, a school, or even a church and not seen someone using a

mobile device? These are all examples of technologies that are commonly used around you, in your home and in your workplace; their (the above mentioned technologies) presence is obvious and undeniable. The United States is often referred to as the information society (Green, 2001) and the network society (Barney, 2004) because of the ubiquitous presence of these types of technology in the conduct of everyday life. Through the use of technological devices one is able to obtain information and stay connected with family, friends, and colleagues despite geographical or time constraints.

However, despite these communication benefits, everyone does not view information and access positively. These communication devices, specifically mobile devices, are embedded with a duality due to the contradictory perceptions held by users and nonusers; such as, the necessity of mobile devices, their use in the public and private spheres, and their impact on socializing and interpersonal relationships.

The following sub-sections discuss these problems more in-depth, after first framing mobile device use and describing what Katz has termed “perpetual contact,” or the constant communication that mobile devices enable (2002). I conclude by addressing the need to study mobile device usage in context and supply a cultural and contextual lens to do so, the ethnography of communication speech codes theory.

Perpetual Contact and Saturation

Perpetual contact, or the constant availability enabled by technology has changed the way people communicate (Katz, 2002). Mobile devices are unique because they allow for communication anytime, anyplace by anyone (Caporael & Xie, 2003; Licoppe, 2003). Previously, time and space constraints limited relationships (Caporael & Xie, 2003) and made communication challenging. Communication technologies were developed as a

way to circumvent and solve challenges presented by temporal and spatial barriers (Aakhus, 2002) and this has resulted in the emergence of a reality “cut away from the pragmatics of everyday life” (Gergen, 2002, p.235). In other words, technology has allowed communication to occur that otherwise would have been impossible due to geographical, physical, and temporal parameters.

“Life in a media bubble has come to seem natural” and has reshaped “the landscape of our emotional lives” (Turkle, 2011, p. 16-17). Despite its benefits for connecting people with each other, perpetual contact is paradoxically problematic because, by definition, it cannot be turned off. Without their mobile devices, users feel as if a part of them is missing and the loss of this device has even been equated to death. In situations where users cannot constantly check their devices for missed calls, text messages or emails, users report feelings of anxiety (Turkle, 2011). Additionally, mobile devices have affected how individuals manage their relationships, both professionally and personally, as family members, employers, and friends expect individuals to always be accessible and have their mobile devices close by (Katz, 2002). As such, turning off these devices is not considered to be an option for many.

Due to hesitations and disinclination by many people to turn off mobile devices, these devices can be regarded not merely as a temporary presence, but as fixtures (Katz, 2002). That is, mobile devices are an obvious presence across contexts, and they are here to stay for good. However, perceptions held by both users and non-users are complicated and often contradicting. These conflicting attributions, in conjunction with their ubiquitous presence in society, have caused scholars to come to the realization that

mobile devices should and must be studied in-depth (Katz, 2002; 2003) in order to better understand their effect on discourse and other dimensions of human life.

Necessity or Hindrance

As already mentioned, a conflicting viewpoint in mobile device discourse is that these devices are both a necessity and a hindrance (problem). Cell phones are no longer viewed as a luxury, or in the possession of a select few, but as a necessity in an “increasingly hectic and unpredictable world” (Leonardi, 2003, p. 167). It is a device greatly praised for its usefulness in emergencies and crises, ability for coordination and planning, and role in organization and managing practical affairs (Katz, 2002). The assertion that a cellular device is essential for emergency situations has resulted in many people obtaining cell phones. For example, some youth are given these devices as a digital leash (Nafus & Tracey, 2002) that enables their parents to keep track of them. However, while emergencies may have been the original purpose of mobile device obtainment, they are rarely utilized for such (Nafus & Tracey, 2002) and problematic discourses surrounding mobile devices have arisen in public and private spheres, by both users and non-users.

Perceptions surrounding mobile devices by users and non-users are complex. The continuous access and availability mobile devices have enabled is blamed for the deterioration of public space, the loss of leisure time, and even attributed as a catalyst for the “loss of control over life” (Katz, 2002, p.8). Rules (2002) discusses in-depth the impediment of mobile devices in social life, presenting several models and even making a striking argument comparing mobile device use to a drug addiction. In this model, information and personal communication technologies were developed to solve a

communication need, however, the solution to the problem generates a greater need, which requires the development of additional technologies (Rule, 2002). If one were to follow such a view, then society would be 'addicted' to mobile phones. In this view, necessity and hindrance would act as a social binary embracing competing human needs. However, despite all the problems mobile devices produce, and ill feelings surrounding usage, many people nevertheless consider them necessary elements of life.

Reclassification of Space(s)

A by-product of mobile device use is the disintegration of the line between public and private spaces, or what some would term as the destruction of public space (Katz, 2003). It is a controversial and debated topic that has spawned ill feeling because those who choose not to own or use a cellular phone are still affected by those who opt to this technology.

There is an encroachment of space coinciding with technologies because many users are uncertain of how to negotiate spaces (Robins & Turner, 2002). This is because mobile devices alter “the traditional nature of public space and the traditional dynamics of private relationships” (Katz & Aakhus, 2002, p. 302). This alteration renders the same spaces “simultaneously public and private” (Campbell, 2007, p. 748). Fortunati (2002) attributes this appropriation of public space as social space because it has been “subjected to temporary dismantling by modern day citizens who exploit it as if it belonged to them” (p. 522). Such appropriation generates need disputes about who owns the space one finds oneself in. Moreover, such contestation also fuels questions about who is privileged in society, the individual or the group?

Previously, public space has been guided by a set of norms and rules enacted in order to benefit the collective good. As Fortunati (2002) states:

Public space... had tacit rules that placed the public good above the individual. At the communicative level, that was transformed into a series of norms and laws that regulated, for example, permissible behavior on a communicative plane... The use of mobile [devices] in public space has taken concepts, norms and laws by surprise, catching them on the completely wrong foot. (p. 522)

In other words, mobile devices have transformed previous social norms and sets of rules guiding communication in public places rendering them ambiguous and questionable. As new technologies are being introduced, new norms and etiquette surrounding them are brought into existence (Turkle, 2011), which “gives way to new behavior that is unanticipated, often objectionable, and open to redress” (Katz & Aakhus, 2002, p. 307).

Several studies have been conducted to ascertain norms of appropriateness surrounding cellular phones; specifically, places where use is considered inappropriate, such as concert halls, theaters and churches (Caporael & Xie, 2003; Cambell, 2007). However, as noted by Caporael & Xie (2003), what is of interest in these studies are places where turning off a mobile phone is not mentioned, such as in social situations. The presence of mobile devices in social contexts is important, as it holds implications for how mobile devices are affecting interpersonal interactions and socializing.

Interpersonal Relationships and Socializing

There is a generation gap in how age groups perceive and utilize mobile devices (Nafus & Tracey, 2002; Katz, 2003; Rice & Katz, 2003). “There seems to be a noticeable digital divide between ongoing users and non-users, and possibly more distinctively,

between earlier and later adopters” (Rice & Katz; 2003, p. 103). This could be attributed to mobile devices being an influential force in the shaping and reshaping of socializing practices (Rule, 2002), especially for adolescents and young adults (De Gournay & Smoreda, 2003; Katz 2003; Licoppe, 2003).

Younger generations view mobile devices as social capital (Nafus & Tracey, 2002) and integral for socializing, identity and perceptions of self (Katz, 2003). Adolescence, which extends into the late 20s to early 30s (Jensen & Taber, 1994), is an important time for social development, and adolescents are limited in the types of resources they have at their disposal. As such, social capital plays a major role in their development (Franzen, 2003) and cell phones “have a very high economic value among young people” (Green, 2003, p. 204). Social capital refers to the amount and quality of an individual’s social relations (Franzen, 2003). In other words, mobile devices offer a way to be connected and build relationships in this age group. Functions such as instant messaging and short message service (SMS, also referred to as text messaging) “constitute a strategic resource in managing relationships” (Licoppe, 2003, p. 181). For this age group, it is not necessarily about the content of the communication, as SMS are usually short and brief, rather, their frequency indicates interests and connectivity to the individuals exchanged with (Licoppe, 2003). Additionally, mobile devices are not only used to manage relationships with peers, but family members as well. Particular communication functions are even associated with the type of relationship. For example, calling and talking are associated with family and romantic partners, where as SMS is associated with friendships and acquaintances (Licoppe, 2003).

Mobile devices extend beyond communicative aids, as they are fundamentally (re)shaping the nature of society (Katz, 2002; Srivastave, 2008; Turkle, 2012). Mobile devices are a necessity, not just for emergencies, but also for micro-coordinating (Green, 2003), creating and maintaining social networks, and the social environment (Katz & Aakhus, 2002). For adolescents and young adults, this is an ingrained and natural way to construct and manage social networks, as a mobile device “constitutes an important part of themselves” (Okmans & Pirjo, 2003, p. 307). This assertion that mobile devices comprise personhood strengthens the notion that mobile phones are not only a force changing and shaping society, “but the framework in which society lives” (Fortunati, 2002, p. 513).

Connectivity and its Discontents

Another social binary surrounding mobile devices is that frequent communication has increased connectivity, but because it is through a mediated-technology, we are, in other ways, more disconnected and distant from each other. Due to the saturation of mobile devices in discourse, “it is easy for people to end up unsure if they are closer together or further apart,” because “technology re-draws the boundaries between intimacy and solitude” (Turkle, 2011, p. 11). Additionally, while mobile devices may increase connectivity and communication with those not physically and geographically present, it serves to distance those who are co-present.

Face-to-face interactions no longer hold the same value and importance. Previously, face-to-face interactions were seen as the richest form of contact (Licoppe, 2003). Now, in technologically-mediated interactions, people are being put on hold and rendered unimportant (Gergen, 2002). Face-to-face interactions now require the

participants to share diverted attentions and consciousness as “one is physically present but is absorbed by a technologically mediated world elsewhere” (Gergen, 2002, p. 227).

Fortunati (2002) explains:

individuals apparently present in a given place are actually only half present.

They split themselves into two, to be present and absent at the same time present in body, attention, mind and senses can be drawn elsewhere by their communicative network, contactable at any moment. (p. 518-519)

In other words, because of technology, across many interactions humans are neither fully present nor fully absent. Thus, diverted attention from mobile device use during interactions is a behavior that seems to be considered acceptable by many.

The acceptability of mobile device use could be attributed to the value and importance placed on time and the necessity of multitasking. Turkle (2011) states that, “we make our technologies, and they, in turn shape us. Technologies in every generation present opportunities to reflect on our values and direction” (p. 19). In a society that views time as a resource and commodity, it is essential to manage these resources effectively. Mobile device use allows for effective time management because it enables people to layer activities (Turkle, 2011).

However, this layering of activities comes at a price and there are ramifications of diverted consciousness and absent presences:

...the erosion of face to face community, a coherent and centered sense of self, moral bearings, depth of relationship, and the uprooting of meaning from material context: such are the repercussions of absent presence...in the manifest structure

of privilege, one is defined as secondary, not significant after all (Gergen, 2002, p.236).

Not only are public and private spheres being transformed, but, so are notions of intimacy. Even though people are more connected, they are more alone and view others as objects to be accessed (Turkle, 2011). The creation of a separate 'inside space' in interactions underscores the importance of those physically present in that space (Gergen, 2002). People are more in control of their environment, of intimacy, and decide when and where to access it (Katz, 2003).

Control

Face-to-face interactions and mediated communication entail obvious differences. Through mediated communication we are able to regulate, check, and distance ourselves from the interaction as mobile devices control our access to others and to ourselves. Mobile devices are a means to regulate one's social environment through the integration of social contact (Katz & Aakhus, 2002). Mobile devices are a venue for people to access, modify, and/or control the amount of social contact and participation in interactions (Katz, 2003). The notion of regulating social contact is supported by Fortunati (2002) who discusses in-depth the difference between physical social-ness and controlled social-ness. Mobile devices allow for the control of both intimacy and social-ness. Regardless of the physical situation, via a mobile device, one's entire social network is available (Fortunati, 2002).

In sum, mobile devices work two-fold in that they offer continuous connectivity and availability to ones social network at one's fingertips and likewise limit the amount of access other individuals have. This management is appealing because it offers control

in situations that otherwise could be uncertain or frightening. “Technology is seductive when what it offers meets our human vulnerabilities... we are lonely but fearful of intimacy” (Turkle, 2011, p. 19). Social interactions are uncertain, as information on other interlocutors is often limited (Fortunati, 2002) making them unpredictable and/or awkward. A mobile device offers a sense of control in social interactions that can help to calm or reassure.

Toward a new direction

As noted by scholars and researchers, mobile devices need to be studied to ascertain their impact on discourse (Aakhus, 2002; Katz 2002; Katz, 2003). Mobile devices are a unique technology (Srivastava, 2008) that has soaked the social landscape, resulting in a perpetual and inescapable contact (Turkle, 2011). This inevitably leads one to the question: Are they bringing us closer to intimacy (Katz, 2002) or bringing us further apart (Turkle, 2011)?

Further research is needed to answer such questions. Katz and Aakhus (2002) note that social theorist believe “social science is generally interested in developing context-free knowledge” (p. 305) and that this practice needs to be changed. If one were to agree, then an ethnographic approach would offer a way to circumvent context-free research by studying the phenomenon under investigation in context.

Rules that govern behavior and norms surrounding cell phones are the result of social interactions among users and non-users (Katz & Aakhus, 2002). It is through socio-logic, a socially developed sense of social reasoning (Goodwin & Wenzel, 1979), that contributes to (re)shaping and affords new norms surrounding these technologies (Barney, 2004). Currently, rules and norms are ambiguous and being (re)shaped, in

context, by participants. If norms are socially reconstructed and contested by some interlocutors during social interactions, it is necessary to observe and study these interactions. By utilizing ethnographic methodologies and speech codes theory, this can be accomplished.

Speech Codes and the Ethnography of Communication

Subsumed under the ethnography of speaking (Hymes, 1972), speech codes theory (Philipsen, Coutu & Covarrubias, 2005) originated from sociologist Basil Bernstein's (1975) notions of speech codes and Hymes' (1974) SPEAKING framework that provided a new way to view communication through a cultural lens. Through this lens, culture and communication are "inseparably intertwined" (Covarrubias-Baillet, 2009, p. 355) and speaking is viewed as a deeply cultured process (Philipsen, 1992). In other words, culture is viewed as a resource through which individuals draw upon to make sense of and navigate through discursive interactions.

The ethnography of communication (EOC) offers a way to study communication patterns of a group, which in turn reveals norms and sets of rules guiding communication in that particular speech community (Hymes, 1972). A speech community, which is the unit of observation in the EOC, is composed by a group of people who share at least one code or system of rules for enacting and interpreting their own and other's communicative conduct (Hymes, 1972). Hymes (1974) elaborates that the importance and significance of a speech community lies in that "it postulates the unit of description as a social, rather than a linguistic, entity" (p. 47). In other words, the focus is not on the linguistic aspects of words such as grammar, syntax, or phonetics, but, instead on the how,

why and for what end(s) interlocutors in communicative interactions use words and other means of communication.

The ethnography of communication (EOC) and speech codes theory (SCT) share a reciprocal relationship: the EOC gave birth to SCT (and in turn SCT helped to broaden the EOC.) SCT is unique in that it includes both a theory and method for examining particular groups of people and communicative interactions (Covarrubias-Baillet, 2009). It is this combination of theory and method (both discussed more in-depth in the following sub-sections) that make it ideal for identifying the associated sets of rules surrounding mobile device use.

SCT as Theory

SCT posits a way to interpret or explain observed communicative conduct by reference to situated codes of meaning and value, and provides a general understanding of communicative conduct (Covarrubias Baillet, 2009; Philipsen, Coutu & Covarrubias, 2005). SCT allows the researcher to identify sets of rules that guide appropriate interactions among interlocutors in a given context. To remind the reader, “a rule is a prescription, for how to act, under specified circumstances, which has (some degree of) force in a particular social group” (Philipsen, 1992, p. 8). SCT has three defining characteristics that are discussed below for their relevance to the study.

SCT is grounded in the notion that by observing other’s communicative conduct in a particular speech community, the observer can abstract patterns that can then be examined and analyzed to extract codes or sets of rules that guide member's conduct. Communicative conduct is observed in a given speech community for patterns that are then examined to reveal codes. Codes, or the communication systems utilized by a group,

are contextually dependent. Context refers to observable and unobservable features of the speaking situation such as location, time, other group members, motives, and means for communicating. Hall (2002) stresses the need to understand each interaction through the context in which it occurs as context serves to modify the meaning associated with a word or a clustering of words. Since context shapes the interactions occurring, the site for this study, MVF, likewise influenced communication behaviors of its interlocutors.

SCT posits a way to interpret or explain observed, patterned communicative conduct. This comprehension is possible because of code. A code is a socially constructed, historically transmitted, system of symbols, premises, rules and meanings pertaining to communicative conduct (Philipsen, Coutu & Covarrubias, 2005). In other words, a code is a set of rules associated with conduct, a guideline for what is acceptable and accepted in particular situations, for what a person should or should not do (proscriptions and prescriptions) and/or what is expected. Humans have long been viewed as “symbolizing, conceptualizing, meaning-seeking animals” (Geertz, 1973, p. 140). This is evident in the use of codes and sets of social rules as they reflect culturally distinctive symbols and ways of speaking and responding that can be used to interpret and understand communicative interactions.

SCT provides a general understanding of communicative conduct. The extraction of codes and rules allow for in-depth examination into the meaning(s) and the reason(s) for their enactment. Codes are based on beliefs and premises that are not superficial, but that are profoundly linked to a culturally distinctive psychology, sociology, and rhetoric (Philipsen, 1997; Philipsen, Coutu & Covarrubias, 2005). Codes enacted by interlocutors give meaning to the interaction(s). Since mobile devices are now a part of interactions,

how interlocutors perceive them will manifest itself in the codes and sets of rules used and be normalized in communicative interaction(s).

SCT's Propositions

Speech codes theory (SCT) is comprised of six propositions resulting from ethnographic fieldwork and was first published by Philipsen (1997) and later revised by Philipsen, Coutu and Covarrubias (2005). These propositions form the heart of SCT and pertain to its existence, substance, sites, observation, and force (Philipsen, Coutu & Covarrubias, 2005). Although there are six propositions, only those relevant to this study are presented and discussed.

Proposition #1) Wherever there is a distinctive culture, there is to be found a distinctive speech code. To address this proposition, the definition of culture must first be established. This study utilizes Hall, who defines culture as “a historically shared system of symbolic resources through which we make our world meaningful” (Hall, 2002, p. 4). This system enables group members to communicate effectively with each other. According to Philipsen (1992), “a culture transcends any individual or any individual's social network, such that two people who meet for the first time can partake of a common culture and use it in making sense with each other” (p. 8).

The purpose of a code is for members and individuals in a cultural group to communicate effectively and understand each other. Culture can be conceptualized as a communicative system, or code, that distinguishes one group from another. Cultural groups have their own set of shared symbols that another cultural group may not utilize or may attribute different meanings to; thus, a distinct cultural group will have a distinct code.

Using SCT, this study explores sets of rules in interactions that have come into existence as a direct result of new technologies. As mentioned previously, there is a generation gap in both the use and meanings attributed to the use of mobile devices (Nafus & Tracey, 2002; Katz, 2003; Rice & Katz, 2003) because each generation holds different perceptions of what constitutes acceptable and accepted behavior. These generations represent unique groups that hold distinct and differing sets of rules and norms surrounding device usage.

Proposition #4) The significance of speaking is contingent upon the speech codes used by interlocutors to constitute the meanings of communicative acts. Proposition #4 pertains to how individuals make sense of their discursive experiences and the world around them. Individuals strive to make sense of the environment and effectively navigate through discourse. To accomplish this, interlocutors need to be aware of the codes deployed and interpret and derive meaning from them.

As previously mentioned, culture and communication are a reflexive force and the relationship between the two (culture and communication) is one of sense making (Hall, 2002). Codes are like a blueprint used to 'read' and make sense of communicative action(s) and interaction(s). These blueprints (codes) that aid in interpretation, are influenced by culture. Culture is used as a resource to understand communicative interactions. However, cultures are different and thus do not share the same understanding or interpretation of actions and interactions.

A common example of this is a wink (Geertz, 1973; Philipsen, Coutu & Covarrubias, 2005). A simple movement of the eye closing and opening quickly can be interpreted by some as a playful gesture, by others as a flirtatious gesture, and still to

others may be offensive. Geertz (1973) comments on how a simple movement of an eyelid can be either a twitch or wink, but the way they are perceived and the associated meaning is vastly different, the latter containing a communicative end “the winker is communicating, and indeed communicating in a quite precise and special way” (p. 6).

Cultures assign value to actions that are then manifested in the codes utilized and thus codes are meaning. In order to ascertain the meaning and significance of mobile device usage in the speech community under study at MVF, sets of rules surrounding mobile devices will be identified and explored.

Proposition #5) The terms rules, and premises of a speech code are inextricably woven into speaking itself. As previously mentioned, SCT is not only a theory, but a methodology; this proposition alludes to that method. In order to identify codes in operation and ascertain their meaning(s), one can employ ethnographic methodologies such as observations and interviews.

It has long been recognized that there are superficial rules (grammar) interlocutors must use to construct sentences, but, meaning is revealed by the choices interlocutors make while following these grammatical rules, not in the in rules themselves (Pierce, 1967). The use of words and phrases, or the lack of use (silence), reveal codes. Words and expressions are linked to a psychologically distinct way of speaking and thinking (Philipsen, Coutu & Covarrubias, 2005) and thus, behind code use, are group-associated values and meaning.

Humans are purposeful creatures and to reveal the purpose behind a code(s) one needs look at the codes in action (Philipsen, Coutu & Covarrubias, 2005). Though 'looking' at codes in action, or what is commonly referred to as observation, norms and

rules that comprise a code are discernible. Utilizing SCT as a method allowed norms and sets of social rules surrounding mobile device use in a speech community at MVF to be revealed.

STC as Method

To recap, as a theory, the EOC and SCT is concerned with a particular group's means and strategies for communication (Covarrubias Baillet, 2009). SCT posits explanations for how individuals use symbols to make sense of their experiences and discursive interactions. Symbols and their associated meanings are enacted through the use of codes. One strategy utilized by researchers to identify codes in a given speech community is ethnographic observations.

Ethnographic observations are performed on site or within the context that the communicative interaction is occurring. Hyme's (1972) SPEAKING framework can be applied to communicative interactions as a guideline for describing and examining interaction(s), and unveiling norms, patterns and themes. SPEAKING is a mnemonically coded acronym which consists of eight social units (containing sixteen components) that suggest criteria for gathering information on rules of speaking.

Situation, also referred to as scene and setting (Hymes, 1972) "refers to both the physical and psychological settings in which the communication takes place" (Hall, 2002, p. 68). It pertains to the location of the speech community and the context in which the communicative behaviors occur. **P**articipants are comprised of four components: the speaker (or sender), addressor, hearer (receiver or audience) and the addressee (Hymes, 1972). The participants are those involved in the speaking situation and should be

analyzed for personalities, relationships and social positions that are attributed to them by other group members, not by the researcher (Hall, 2002). **End** is comprised of the outcomes and goals that are desired and obtained in the speaking situation (Hymes, 1972). **Act** is the analysis of the content or substance and “refers to any important content matters that must or must not be included in the situation or type of talk under investigation” (Hall, 2002, p. 69). **Meaning**, it focuses on form and sequences of acts within the speaking situation. **Key** refers to the tone and mode of interactions and can be signaled verbally or nonverbally (Hymes, 1972). **Instrumentality** refers to the communication channels present and “channel is understood choice of oral, written, telegraphic, semaphore, or other medium of transmission of speech” (Hymes, 1972, p. 63). In this study, one type of communication channel present is a mobile device. **Norms** of the interaction(s) are sets of rules that govern speaking and behaviors (Hymes, 1972) or what is also referred to as proscriptions and prescriptions. Finally, **Genre** is the type of interaction, such as informal (native) or formal, private or public and the form in which it occurs; such as: poem, myth, tale, oration, lecture, etc. (Hymes, 1972).

Hymes's SPEAKING framework (1974) presents an etic (outsider) approach that allows for an abstraction of emic (insider) descriptions. In other words, it uses specific cultural elements embedded and interactions from which a generalized, yet contextualized pattern can be extracted. Hymes' (1972) claims that a focus on sociolinguistic value is necessary since what people do with language is what creates social meaning. Observations using Hyme's framework allow for an understanding of speech communities and the connection between culture and language (communication),

rather than just looking at language without the individuals who use it and create its symbolism (Hymes, 1972).

The SPEAKING framework in conjunction with a SCT approach has been applied to a variety of contexts and has been useful for not only generating codes that guide members in daily interactions, but in revealing ways particular group members use verbal and non-verbal codes to achieve a particular outcome. The use of this framework, theory, and methodology aided in answering the research questions guiding this study and identifying sets of rules pertaining to communicative conduct.

Small Group Communication

It would be difficult for individuals to make a list of all the groups they have been a part of in their lives, whether temporary groups lasting from a few minutes to a few months or extended groups lasting for years to a lifetime. Groups are formed in school, work, organizations, and in our personal lives to accomplish a goal or purpose and/or to fulfill a need. However, whether the group is private, public, informal, or formal, they are a necessary and natural part of discourse and this makes their study worthy of scholarly attention.

Historically, research on small group communication has centered on groups formed in public and formal settings such as school, work, and organizations: groups whose purpose is to accomplish a goal, task, or solve a problem. Much less attention has been devoted to groups formed in the private and personal sphere, whose purpose is primary need fulfillment such as inclusion, affection, love, belonging, support, etc. (Gross, 1954).

This neglect can be attributed to the difficulty of studying primary need fulfillment groups (Gross, 1954) and methods and theory through which group research has been typically been conducted. Methodologically, small group research has consisted of groups that are usually fabricated by the researcher(s) with a purpose or task assigned. These groups are constructed in laboratory-like settings and members typically do not have prior history with other members (Putnam & Stohl, 1990; Frey, 1994b;) making their generalizability and validity to real-world situations questionable and ambiguous (Frey, 1994b). Theoretically, groups have been viewed as a “container in a fixed place” (Putnam, 1994, p. 100) and multi-group membership has been neglected (Putnam & Stohl, 1990; Putnam, 1994). This traditional approach to small group communication is problematic in that it fails to capture dynamic and complex group experiences (Putnam & Stohl, 1990).

Scholars and researchers who study small group communication have realized this flaw and attempted to circumvent it by focusing on naturally occurring groups. As the name suggests, naturally occurring groups are formed naturally, meaning they have not been fabricated or constructed by a researcher (McGraph, 1986) and are studied in the context in which they reside (Putnam & Stohl, 1990; Frey, 1994b). This has led to the development of naturally occurring group theory, which views groups as families or having a supportive function (Frey, 1994). The focus is on how groups provide social support, develop high-quality interpersonal relationships, make decisions, and how members create and sustain group identity (Frey, 1994b)

While naturally occurring group theory is a valid new direction for small group communication research, there is still a gap in the field that needs to be filled. The

following section focuses on an alternative lens in which to view small group communication and through which to conduct research: bona fide group perspective (BFGP). BFGP calls for a new direction and a revitalization in the field (Putnam, 1994) by shifting the focus of study in the group and addressing methodological concerns in order to account for ecological reliability and generalizability (Putnam & Stohl, 1990). In the following subsections, the elements of BFGP and its nuances are presented, discussed, and related to the current study at hand: mobile devices.

Bona Fide Group Perspective

BFGP was originally created by Putnam and Stohl (1990) and called for revitalization in small group communication research, both in theory and method. It posited a new direction in the field, stating that researcher's conceptualization of groups as “three or more people meeting together face-to-face to address task and/or social needs” (Stohl & Walker, 2002, p. 238) needed to be shifted. Groups are not fixed containers (Putnam & Stohl, 1990) and are more dynamic and nuanced than previous theories credited them for. Additionally, with the rise of technologies, groups are now being comprised of virtual, non-physically present members that are redefining and redrawing the boundaries of groups (Stohl & Walker, 2002). In order to effectively study small groups, BFGP stressed that research needed to shift from a fabricated laboratory setting to contexts where groups could be studied in situ (Frey, 1994b). Guiding BFGP is two main components: 1) groups have stable, yet permeable, boundaries and 2) groups are interdependent with the contexts (Putnam & Stohl, 1990; Stohl & Walker, 2002). These two components are discussed in-order below.

Stable, Yet Permeable, Boundaries

Key to bone fide group perspective (BFGP) is the notion that groups have stable, yet permeable, boundaries that allow for movement in and out of the group by members (Stohl & Walker, 2002). “Permeability refers to the fluid and dynamic nature of individual membership in groups” (Stohl & Putname, 1990, p. 286). That is, boundaries that form the basis of the group's identity are influenced by individual member's affiliations with other groups. These group membership(s) and the boundaries that separate a group from another group often seem ambiguous because they are constantly in flux (Stohl & Putnam, 1994).

This flux is necessary for the survival of the group as long as it does not reach an extreme, as boundaries “are simultaneously the life sustaining element and a potential factor in the groups demise” (Stohl & Putnam, 1990, p. 6). In other words, if boundaries are porous, then group identity and dynamics are affected and group cohesiveness dwindles (Stohl & Putnam, 1990). If boundaries are watertight, then group members may face anxiety and be unable to adapt to environmental factors and change (Stohl & Putnam, 1990).

Group survival is contingent upon a balance in permeability of boundaries. This balance is achieved through and across: a) multiple group membership and conflicting role identities, b) representative roles, c) fluctuations in membership, and d) group identity formation (Stohl & Putnam, 1990; Putnam, 1994). The first, *multiple memberships*, takes into consideration an individual member's attitudes, opinion and unique life experiences. The second, *representative roles*, refers to how members “represent, balance and legitimate their constituent interests” (Putnam, 1994, p. 101).

The third, *fluctuations in membership*, pertains to individual members other group affiliations, as well as the introduction of new members into the group. The last component, *group identity formation*, involves the extent to which “members enact a sense of belongingness, loyalty, or commitment to various groups” (Putnam & Stohl, 1996, p. 151) and the allegiances of group members (Stohl & Putnam, 1990; Putnam, 1994).

In summation, BFGP stresses that group boundaries are not static and that members belong to more than one group. Boundaries are not physically present; rather, they are socially constructed and contested intersubjectively by both insiders and outsiders of the group (Putnam, 1990; Stohl & Putnam, 1994). Importance is placed on an individual's membership in various groups because this influences group salience and can lead to multiple group commitments and divided loyalties. Other group affiliations, in combination with in-group membership fluctuations, have the ability to affect the group's dynamics and identity. In order for a group to attain cohesiveness and longevity, it needs to maintain a balance by having permeable, yet stable, boundaries.

Interdependence with Immediate Context

While natural group studies only suggested that external factors might influence internal dynamics (Frey, 2003), a key element of BFGP is the immediate context of the group. BFGP posits that groups and context share a reciprocal relationship, each affecting and contributing to the other (Putnam & Stohl, 1996) as “contexts influence what occurs within a group and what occurs within a group influences those contexts” (Frey, 2003, p. 5). This context includes:

the historical context within which a group is created and develops, the geophysical context within which it is located, the economic context within which it is funded, and the cultural context that establishes appropriate norms and values for how it should operate. (Frey, 2003, p. 5)

Groups face the problem of managing internal dynamics and the external environment simultaneously. A group's interdependence with its relevant contexts are influenced by: a) intergroup communication, b) coordinated actions among groups, c) negotiating jurisdiction of autonomy, and d) interpretations or frames for making sense of intergroup relationships (Putnam & Stohl, 1996).

The first, *intergroup communication*, continues to stress an overarching theme of BFGP: that group members belong to more than one group and thus they interact with other groups and their members (Frey, 2003). The other three features pertain to the group's internal dynamics. *Coordinated actions among groups* recognizes that groups often face problems, tasks or have goals that requires the group to coordinate their actions. *Negotiating jurisdiction of autonomy* pertains to groups boundaries as created, maintained, and contested through interactions. Finally, *interpretations or frames for making sense of intergroup relationships*, focuses on the sense-making processes of those in the group. That is, groups have interpretive frames they use to make sense of other groups and their groups relationship(s) with those other groups.

In summation, the second characteristic of BFGP recognizes that group members share a symbiotic relationship with the environment and that each influences the other. Neither the external nor internal is valued above the other. Similar to how groups must

achieve a balance of permeable boundaries, groups also must balance internal and external dynamics.

Technology and BFGP

As stated above, BFGP stresses that individuals hold memberships and allegiances to multiple groups. Since mobile devices allow people to connect and facilitate communication with those not physically present, this holds implications for group membership(s), both within a group and with other groups.

Within a group, mobile devices could allow for group members who are not able to be physically present to virtually be a part of a group interaction. Mobile devices can serve to help coordinate actions of a group and allow members to be in contact, despite contextual constraints. Additionally, since “boundaries and intergroup connectedness are salient characteristics that are socially constructed inside the group and through connections among groups” (Putnam & Stohl, 1996, p. 154), mobile devices offer a way for group members to be in contact with other groups.

However, contact with other groups may pose a threat, as porous boundaries can have negatives effects. Mobile devices allow members to communicate with other groups they belong to which could lead to divided attention while in their present group. Divided attention of group members would not only affect the immediate internal group dynamics, but over a period of time could affect group cohesiveness and groups interpretive and sense making frameworks. The use of mobile devices by members shape in-group norms and rules. Of importance is how group members accept or deal with the intrusion of these devices, according to member’s unique individual perceptions of mobile device usage and how these perceptions influence the overall group. Knowledge that group members

may be in contact with others (either in the group or outside of the group) may affect group cohesiveness and perceptions of the group's cohesiveness. Due to the potential influence of mobile devices on a group's internal dynamics, it is important to study mobile device usage in small groups. Identifying sets of social rules guiding communicative behavior enables exploration as to how mobile devices are (re)shaping internal dynamics, member's perceptions, and sense-making frameworks.

SCT and BFGP

Scholars note that the field of small group communication needs to be transformed and revitalized (Putnam & Stohl, 1990). The study of small groups needs to be shifted from problem solving and task performing functions to study issues of cohesion, conformity, support, and identity. As stated by Putnam and Stohl (1990), "Making decisions is only one thing groups do. They also socialize new members, create and manage identities, provide support, coordinate work and initiate social change" (p. 7). Variables that have faded from group research studies such as norms, roles, conformity, and group identity need to be refocused on (Putnam & Stohl, 1990). Speech codes offer a way to study some of these variables.

Key notions held in BFGP are compatible with those in speech codes theory: both place importance on context in interactions and both realize the dynamism of interactions. Looking at interactions through a contextual lens allows for this fluidity of interactions and new behaviors resulting from mobile device use to be explored in-depth. Additionally, the two theories are compatible in that BFGP states that interdependence with context is developed from "a referencing system of interlocking behaviors, message patterns, and interpretive frames within and between groups" (Putnam & Stohl, 1990, p.

8) and SCT provides a way to identify perceptions and interpretive frames via the extractions of sets of rules in operation during interactions in a particular context. Perceptions and the framework(s) utilized to make sense of interactions present themselves through behaviors exhibited by the members.

Finally, SCT offers a way to study groups using methods that BFGP stresses: field methods and groups studied in situ. In other works, the use of ethnographic methods such as observations in the location the group resides. Utilizing these methodologies and BFGP in conjunction with SCT will allow for the abstraction of social rules developed, maintained, and contested as a result of mobile device use in small group interactions.

Summary

This review of the literature covered the three major facets that make up this study, mobile device technology, speech codes theory, and small groups. Because of the uniqueness and duality of mobile devices, it can be a difficult technology to study; however, utilizing speech codes theory as both a theory and methodology will enable exploration of the research questions. SCT offers a cultural lens to study a cultural phenomena and norms surrounding mobile device use in interactions. BFGP compliments SCT by stressing the importance of studying interactions in the immediate context in which they occur. The context in which mobile devices are being used is key to this study and influences the sets of rules surrounding their (mobile device) use.

CHAPTER 3: Methods

I have worked in restaurants and bars for over ten years and in the course of a decade I've witnessed many interesting events with regard to how humans communicate with each other. However, there is a recent phenomenon that has truly struck me as needing to be explored: mobile device use during interactions. This is of interest for me because I have witnessed first-hand a shift in the nature of communicative interactions and nuances surrounding the use of this technology. Mobile device use has shifted from being in the background of interactions, to being the interaction. That is, instead of interacting with those physically present, individuals are instead focusing their attention on their mobile devices.

Enabling the exploration of this phenomenon in-depth, the following section outlines the conceptual framework and methodological perspectives in this study, selection of site, collection of data including observations and interviewing protocol, selection of participants, reliability and validity, data coding, and analysis. I conclude with an explanation of my role as the researcher before presenting my findings and discussion of the study.

Conceptual Framework and Methodological Perspective

To conduct this study I relied on Briggs (1984; 1986), Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995), Hymes (1972), Lindloff and Taylor (2011), Philipsen, Coutu & Covarrubias (2005), Putnam & Stohl (1990), and Strauss & Corbin (1990) as guides for my research. I conducted an ethnography of communication (Hymes, 1972) and employed speech codes theory (Philipsen, Coutu & Covarrubias, 2005) because it offers both a theory and method for collecting, examining, and interpreting communicative interactions. SCT

focuses on what is referred to as a speech or communication community as a unit of observation. A speech community is comprised of a group of individuals who share a culture and use that culture as a tool for communicative interactions. The shared perceptions and understandings of a speech community allow its members to effectively communicate. Without a shared understanding, communication would not be meaningful. In order to reveal sets of social rules and norms in a particular speech community, an emic approach is taken with importance being placed on interlocutors and members. This is accomplished by observing and analyzing interactions through a culturally and contextualized lens. Culture is regarded as being necessary for communication to occur and the context that interaction occurs in is key to understanding the interaction. The assumption that communication, culture, and context are interwoven and dependent align with my own personal assumptions, which made SCT an ideal theory and method for me to utilize.

Although SCT was the main theory guiding this study, bone fide group perspective (BFGP) also guided my understanding of small group communication and interactions. I found BFGP to compliment SCT as it places importance on the context of interactions. Other key components of BFGP, such as a belief in fluidity and dynamicism, also align with SCT. Additionally, BFGP stresses the same methods for conducting research as SCT: fieldwork consisting of ethnographic observation conducted in situ, or at the site of the group resides.

These theories and approach allowed me, as a scholar and researcher, to observe small groups in a speech community at a local college bar in order to reveal sets of rules as well as groups enabled and mediated by mobile device technology.

Qualitative methods were implemented to uncover social rules guiding communicative interactions. Qualitative methods refer to a system of data collection, specifically, ethnographic methods consisting of fieldwork and interviews (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). In ethnographic research, data are collected in context, and context plays a major role in data analysis. The researcher is rendered an ethnographer and “...the ethnographer 'inscribes' social discourse: he [sic] writes it down. In so doing, he [sic] turns it from a passing event, which exists only in its own moment of occurrence, into an account, which exists in its inscription and can be reconsulted” (Geertz, 1972, p. 19). Events are ephemeral; by recording interactions, they can be reviewed and analyzed.

Ethnography stems from the belief that “behavior must be attended to, and with some exactness, because it is through the flow of behavior, or, more precisely, social action- that cultural forms find articulation” (Geertz, 1972, p. 17). Culture is not an external force, rather “culture [is located] in the minds and hearts of men [sic]” (Goodenough in Geertz, 1972, p.11). Meaning, culture is in empirically observable practices (Covarrubias, 2002) and these are discernible in and through the examination of communicative actions and interactions.

Following the EOC tradition, this study employed ethnographic methods to abstract the communication rules informing how particular bar patrons use mobile device technology to shape particular types of small groups. This was accomplished by using the following research questions as guides:

RQ1 What are the sets of rules surrounding mobile device use in small groups at MVF during late afternoons and evenings?

RQ2 What are meaning(s) users and other group members attribute to the use of mobile devices at MVF during late afternoons and evenings?

RQ3 What particular type of small group does the use of mobile device technology enable and mediate?

Selection of Site

Bars are a rich location for social interactions and allow for observations of groups of various sizes. Historically, bars are not only places to go for drinks, but also places to go to meet up with friends, coworkers, acquaintances, ect. and socialize. However, due to the rise and saturation of mobile devices, interpersonal interactions within bar contexts are changing. This made a bar an ideal location to observe the phenomenon under study and identify salient sets of rules surrounding mobile device use during social interaction. The bar used for this study was MVF, a college bar located close to the University of New Mexico in Nob Hill.

MVF is comprised of a downstairs restaurant and an upstairs bar in a historic building that was once a fire station; thus, the presence of an old fire pole extending from floor to ceiling. The stairs that lead to the second story bar entrance wrap around this pole. The downstairs portion of the site can be classified as a fine dining restaurant that is open for lunch and dinner. While both the downstairs and upstairs operate under the same staff and offer the same menu, the latter has a distinctly different feel and clientele. The upstairs bar walls are a greenish-grey color and dusty, bare windows line the south and west walls while two french-style doors on the north lead to an outdoor patio. The patio is enclosed and has a small wood-burning fireplace in the northwest corner. The outdoor area is usually the most popular, as it allows smoking. Inside, a wrap-around bar that sits

on the east corner is lined with bar stools and two computer systems for the servers to place drink orders and print tab checks. The bar itself offers a variety of seating from booths to tables of different heights and televisions that are usually turned to sport channels are located throughout. Despite the windows and overhead lights, the bar is dim and accompanied by the lingering smell of alcohol, smoke, and trash. The bar is not particularly clean and tables are often sticky from spilled drinks. The atmosphere is laid back and unpretentious.

The layout and atmosphere give a clue to the type of people the environment attracts (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011) which can vary, depending on the night of the week. The upstairs bar area of MVF is unique and attracts individuals, dyads, small and large groups. The openness, lack of structure, and bare décor all signal an informality that is appealing to a variety of groups. The absence of cleanliness in combination with the overall ambiance alludes to an unassuming and down-to-earth kind of establishment. Both this layout and atmosphere facilitate the various types of interactions within.

Collection of Data

In order to abstract social rules operating in a given speech community and their underlying meanings, I employed ethnographic methods (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011; Geertz; Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). At the heart of ethnography lies the notion that research should be conducted within the natural context the phenomenon under observation is occurring, or rather, with “people as they go about their everyday lives” (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995).

Observations, ethnographic (also referred to as informal) interviews, and formal interviews were conducted to answer the above research questions and to extract rules

surrounding mobile device mediated groups. All collected data was stored in a locked file cabinet in my office located in the Communication and Journalism building at the University of New Mexico. Only the responsible faculty member, Internal Review Board (IRB), and myself (the principle investigator) had access to the collected data. I did the transcription and coding of all interviews and electronic copies of the transcriptions were stored on a password-protected computer, also located in my office in Communication and Journalism building at UNM. To ensure confidentiality, no identifying markers were used for those observed or interviewed and pseudonyms were provided for informants. Additionally, no compensation was provided to participants.

Observations

Observations were conducted on site, at MVF, for a total of 67 hours.

Observations occurred on various days of the week, in the late afternoon and evenings, over a two-month period. Observations were important because they allowed me to create familiarity with the environment and 'get-close' to individuals within it (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). This immersion was beneficial, not only in that it allowed me to pick up on subtle nuances and obtain insider-information, but also in that it allowed me to 'grasp' the meaning that individuals under observation attributed to discursive experiences (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). Additionally, familiarity with the context and interlocutors in this speech community allowed for the obtainment of specific knowledge that was necessary and essential (Briggs, 1984) to conduct appropriate interviews with patrons (discussed in the following sub-section).

An important and interconnected aspect of observations is that they are recorded into fieldnotes, which offers a written record of what is witnessed and experienced

(Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). Fieldnotes are important to observations because they provide detailed descriptions and evidence of observations. Without fieldnotes, the researcher would not have anything to examine. In order to have accurate fieldnotes, Lindlof and Taylor (2011) stress and place importance on recording experiences immediately after the observations so that events are fresh in the researcher's mind. As such, notes were recorded on site and later expanded. All observations were recorded into fieldnotes and structured according to Hyme's (1972) SPEAKING framework: situation, participants, end, act, key, instrumentality, norms, and genre. Using this framework allowed me to investigate who speaks to whom, when, where, and for what purposes in the speaking situation. Consistently applying this framework across observations allowed for the extraction of sets of rules.

Interview Protocol

Insider knowledge was essential for achieving the research objectives and answering the research questions. However, while ethnographers may rely on interviews to supplement observations, it is a challenging process that has been problematized (Briggs, 1984; Briggs, 1986). The challenge extends beyond knowing what to ask and how to ask, to the nature and assumptions surrounding the interviewing process. The process of “interviewing is an accepted speech event in our own native speech communities, we take for granted that we know what it is and what it produces” (Briggs, 1986, p. 2). That is, interviewing is regarded as a valid way to produce rich insider information. However, it is a complicated process that is fraught with power as the researcher examines transcriptions of the interview to produce their version of what they think the insider/ interviewee sees as the truth (Briggs, 1986). Briggs problematizes

interviews not only because researchers, or interviewers, are likely to misinterpret answers, but also because interviewees are likely to misinterpret questions (1986). Due to power dynamics inherent within interviews (the interviewer is usually more educated and in control of the process), answers may be shaped towards what the interviewee thinks the interviewer expects to hear. Additionally, the interpretation of the interview itself, while reviewing transcripts, is one that is based on assumptions (Briggs, 1984; Briggs, 1986), both those of the researcher and those that the researcher is under the impression they have gleaned. To circumvent these assumptions, interviewing should contain self-reflexivity on the part of the researcher and be regarded as a process, between the interviewer and interviewee, where an interpretation is 'produced,' not revealed (Briggs, 1986).

The nature of an interview is problematic in that it is not a natural communicative occurrence (Briggs, 1986) and relies heavily on already having insider knowledge and a deep understanding of the speech community and interlocutors. It is unlikely that problems can be completely eradicated; however, steps were taken to minimize problems inherent in the interviewing process. For example, formal interviews were conducted after sufficient time and immersion in the field. This was necessary to allow for a working understanding of the norms present in the speech community.

Ethnographic interviews were conducted on-site with twenty-three volunteers and employees who gave verbal consent. The value of the ethnographic, or informal, interview is that they are spontaneous and occur on the scene (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011; Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). Ethnographic interviews were different from formal interviews in that they were brief (under 10 minutes in length), were not audio recorded,

did not require verbal consent, and were usually conducted in direct relation to an observed interaction. The ethnographic interviews allowed for integration of explanation and a deep understanding of interactions being witnessed (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw 1995).

In addition to ethnographic interviews, formal interviews were conducted with 10 volunteers in order to obtain in-depth explanations for phenomenon observed. Interviews occurred on site, but separate from their social group and were audio recorded. While this was not ideal in that some members were intoxicated, it was necessary to procure data. In-depth, formal interviews employed a semi-structured format consisting of open-ended questions (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011) from an interview guide (Appendix A). Probes and follow-up questions were asked depending on the informant's responses and to clarify and/or explore specific points mentioned by the respondents. Interviews lasted approximately twenty minutes to forty minutes. Informants were given an overview of the study and asked to give verbal consent before the interview began.

In an effort to further reduce problems that occur during the interviewing process, interview transcriptions were examined in detail. This was an important task because transcripts must be studied as a whole, but also with attention to individual questions in order to ascertain “what each question and reply meant to the interviewer and interviewee, and what the research can glean from these data” (Briggs, 1986). Doing so revealed points at which the interviewer and interviewee may have misunderstood or misinterpreted each other, since often this is not apparent during the actual interview (Briggs, 1986). Additionally, closely reviewing the interview transcripts was essential to identify misunderstanding as participants were under the influence of alcohol.

Selection of Participants

Participant observation research is often characterized by the use of multiple sampling techniques used over the course of data collection (Geertz, 1972). Coinciding with this, both criterion and convenience sampling (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011) were applied to the participants in this study. Those under observation consisted of individuals using mobile devices in small groups (three or more people) at the site of observation. The purpose of the first criterion was due to the phenomena, mobile device use, under observation. The second, regarding the quantity of people, was also due to another key component of the study: small groups. Exclusion criteria were applied to individuals that were not engaged with others and in dyads. For observations, the age range consisted of individuals over 21 (as individuals must be over this age to access this site) who were of various genders and ethnicity.

Interviews employed convenience sampling and consisted of participants on site. Twenty-three ethnographic interviews and ten formal interviews were conducted on site with volunteers. Demographics of the ten informants can be found in Appendix B.

Reliability and Validity

A challenging, but necessary component of ethnography and qualitative methodologies is the insurance of reliability and validity. This can be difficult in qualitative studies due to “the nature of the data and research process” (Lecompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 35). However, there are steps that can be taken and criteria that can be applied to ethnographic research to account for reliability and validity.

There are two types of reliability, internal and external. These two types are defined by Lecompte and Goetz (1982) who state:

External reliability addresses the issues of whether independent researchers would discover the same phenomena or generate the same constructs in the same or similar settings. Internal reliability refers to the degree to which other research, given a set of previously generated constructs, would match them with the data in the same way as did the original researcher. (p. 32)

Essentially, reliability consists of the replicability of research and findings.

Validity pertains to the accuracy of findings. As with reliability, there are two types: internal and external. Once again defined by Lecompte and Goetz (1982):

Internal validity refers to the extent to which scientific observations and measurements are authentic representations of some reality. External validity addresses the degree to which such representations may be compared legitimately across groups. (p. 32)

In order to address the above facets pertaining to reliability and validity, Tracy's eight criteria for excellent qualitative research were applied. These consist of: worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethical, and meaningful coherence.

These eight criteria are unique in that they can serve as “universal hallmarks for high quality qualitative methods across paradigms” (Tracy, 2010, p. 2). They are outlined in the table below to facilitate understanding and comprehension.

Criteria for quality (end goal)	Various means, practices, and methods through which to achieve
Worthy topic	The topic of the research is: - Relevant; Timely; Significant; Interesting

Rich rigor	The study uses a sufficient, abundant, appropriate and complex: - Set of theoretical constructs; Data and time in the field; Sample(s); Context(s); Data collection and analysis processes
Sincerity	The study is characterized by: - Self-reflexivity about subjective values; biases; and inclinations of the researcher(s); Transparency about the methods and challenges
Credibility	The research is marked by: - Thick description; concrete detail; explication of tacit (nontextual) knowledge; and showing rather than telling, Triangulation or crystallization; Multivocality; Member reflections
Resonance	The research influences, affects, or moves particular readers or a variety of audiences through: - Aesthetic, evocative representations; Naturalistic generalizations; Transferable findings
Significant contribution	The research provides a significant contribution: - Conceptually/theoretically; Practically; Morally; Methodologically, Heuristically
Ethical	The research considers: - Procedural ethics (such as human subjects); Situational and culturally specific ethics; Relational ethics; Exiting ethics (leaving the scene and sharing the research)
Meaningful coherence	The study: - Achieves what it purports to be about; Uses methods and procedures that fit its stated goals; Meaningfully interconnects literature, research questions/foci, findings, and interpretations with each other

Printed in Tracy, 2011, p. 4

Additionally, three types of data collection were utilized: participant observation, ethnographic interviews, and formal interviews. This is ideal because it coincides with the notion of triangulation, which places importance on the use multiple methods for collecting data in order to account for reliability (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

Analysis

“Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of 'construct a reading of') a manuscript- foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and

tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behavior” (Geertz, 1973, p. 10). Analysis is similar in that you are trying to make sense out of data to construct an in-depth explanation and understanding. In order to accomplish this, techniques must be applied to make the research discernible and understandable. The research obtained in this study, fieldnotes and transcriptions of interviews, were analyzed using a coding scheme.

“Codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56). The coding focused on identifying themes and patterns and classifying these (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Field notes and interviews were closely reviewed for the emergence of themes and sub themes that were coded according to guidelines set for in Strauss and Corbin (1990). Results and discussion are presented in the following two chapters.

The Role of Researcher

As a researcher, I situate myself as both an insider and an outsider in the speech community under investigation. I align myself as an insider in two ways: 1) I used to work at MVF and thus have familiarity, knowledge, and access to the site, staff, and patrons that others might not be able to obtain. As such, my presence is usually unquestioned and I am able to utilize my 'connections' (with staff and patrons) to aid in data collection. 2) I identify myself as a user of mobile devices in group interactions and likewise associate with others who are users.

However, I also position myself as an outsider. Despite being an active mobile device user, I find I am, to an extent, a hypocrite and biased towards others who I feel excessively, obsessively, and inappropriately use their devices during interactions. Also, I

am an outsider because I am present in the speech community to observe, document, and analyze; rather than to socialize and enjoy libations.

CHAPTER 4: Findings, Analysis, and Discussion

This chapter presents my findings, identifying communication rules informing how particular bar patrons use mobile device technology to shape particular types of small groups. To remind the reader, the present ethnographic inquiry looks at mobile device usage across a particular speech community, MVF, to answer the following research questions. Again, a speech community here is defined as a group of people who share at least one code or system of rules for enacting and interpreting their own and other's communicative conduct (Hymes, 1972).

RQ1 What are the sets of rules surrounding mobile device use in small groups at MVF during late afternoons and evenings?

RQ2 What are meaning(s) users and other group members attribute to the use of mobile devices at MVF during late afternoons and evenings?

RQ3 What particular types of small group does the use of mobile device technology enable and mediate?

The above research questions were answered by conducting ethnographic observations, ethnographic interviews, and formal interviews. Ethnographic observations were structured following Hymes (1972) SPEAKING framework. This particular framework allowed for an understanding of communication at MVF and provided a way to use specific communicative behaviors and interactions to form a generalized, yet contextualized pattern. These patterns, in conjunction with interview data, were coded (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), revealing three types of virtual groups that are enabled by mobile device technology; I label these “suspended groups”, “procured groups”, and “transitory groups.” To facilitate comprehension, I have organized the findings section

into a presentation, analysis, and discussion of the three identified groups. Using the collected ethnographic data for support, I identify sets of interactional rules guiding communicative interaction in each group. Interview excerpts best describing the characteristics of the category are utilized and data were chosen based on respondents ability to articulate responses to interview questions in a manner that facilitates reader comprehension.

Suspended Group

The first group that I label and define is the “suspended group.” Suspended groups occur when a mobile device user temporarily puts his or her physical group on hold in order to interact with another individual not geographically present, or to interact with a mobile device application such as a game, Facebook, e-mail, etc. With this type of group, people in the physically present group are not canceled out completely; rather, they are ‘suspended’ as the mobile device user’s attention is temporarily diverted to matters outside the physically present interaction(s). Once the interaction(s) with the mobile device is completed, the user rejoins the physically present group, at least until the next suspension.

The following data supports the category of a “suspended group.” Moreover, I identify the key characteristics of a suspended group, namely, 1) mobile device use is frequent and consistent and 2) mobile device use diverts the user’s attention away from the current interaction. This diverted attention influences the suspension of the physically present group.

The deferment of physically present individuals in favor of virtual interaction is a common phenomenon at the MVF and one that I consistently witnessed in ethnographic

observations. The following excerpt from my fieldnotes describes a group of four females and one male, whose members temporarily “suspend” each other to interact with their mobile devices.

A group of five people enter the bar and head over to the bartop. The four females (who I will call Aria, Hanna, Spencer, and Emily) and the one male (Toby) are in their early twenties. Aria and Hanna put their purses on the bartop, and the entire group proceeds to order various alcoholic drinks ranging from beer to hard liquor. Aria, Hanna, Spencer, and Emily appear excited and are conversing loudly as Toby sits quietly beside them. Initially, there are not phones out, but this changes after several minutes. Almost like a contagion, as soon as Hanna brings out her phone the others soon follow, including Toby. Aria makes a comment to Spencer about Hanna checking her text messages. “No, she’s on Facebook,” responds Spencer and more laughs are heard. Spencer then asks the bartender if there is WiFi at the establishment while Hanna’s attention continues to focus on her phone. Hannah is typing on her keyboard and appears to be texting. Spencer picks up her phone, types on it, and then rejoins conversing with Aria. Meanwhile, Hanna is now talking to the rest of the group (while holding her phone in one hand). Hanna talks for a couple seconds before bringing her attention back to her phone, typing a quick response to whoever (or whatever) is on the other end and then rejoins the conversation at hand. Meanwhile, Emily is to the far left of the bar staring at her phone, which is clasped between both hands, and Toby is to her left. He is on his phone as well, staring intently while scrolling with one finger on the screen. After about a minute of doing this, he hands his phone to Emily, who

looks at and makes a comment before handing it back to him and refocusing her attention towards her own device. Aria, Spencer, and Hanna are laughing and talking as Emily and Toby continue to focus their attention on their phones. Aria casually pulls her phone out of her purse, looks at it for several seconds, and then re-deposits it in her purse. Spencer has hers in front of her and leans towards it on the bartop, no longer engaging in conversation with Aria and Hanna who are now talking to Emily and Toby.

Throughout this observation, group members intersperse physical interactions with each other and mobile devices. Suspension of the current group is typically short, but frequent as in the case of Aria, Spencer, and Hannah, and individuals constantly switch attention from mobile device to group members. Other group members, such as Emily and Toby, spend longer periods of time absorbed in a mediated world and only occasionally seem to focus on the physically present group. Still, all members, at least once during this observation, negotiate between their mobile devices and the physical group interaction, “suspending” the present group and then rejoining it.

Across my ethnographic observations, I routinely noticed group members concurrently interacting with mobile devices and physically present individuals. In order to explore this phenomenon further, I inquired about the role of mobile devices in group interactions during in-depth interviews, asking participants to explain how mobile devices fit into group interactions. One particular informant, Blair, explained:

Well my friends and I are always using them [mobile devices] even when we're hanging out. Doesn't matter if it's at the bar or at each other's homes, phones are always around. And people are always texting or something. So they're always

present. So I guess in that way they are part of the group. Just like when we hang out there's usually alcohol. So really, maybe not a part, but an aspect of the situation when we're hanging out. It's normal and stuff. Like, I'll be texting my boyfriend silly things or letting him know what I'm doing. Or I may be texting my family members to see what they're up to.

In the above example, Blair attests to the 'normalcy' of device use describing them as "always around." In this way, she views mobile devices as a characteristic of the group interaction, the way that alcohol, or some other feature would be present. She also explains how mobile devices fit into the interaction in that members, such as herself, use devices to communicate with non-physically present individuals, such as her boyfriend.

The assertion that mobile devices are a constant presence and thus normal in interactions is one that is likewise affirmed by Serena, in response to the question, "Are cell phones a part of your group interaction?"

I would have to say that they are. You can't get through an evening of hanging out with a group of people without having a minimum of two cell phones sitting on the table throughout most of the night. They are a constant presence because one or more people include phones in the interaction. Being on your cell phone is so expected and accepted that I don't think people really notice it anymore."

Serena believes mobile devices to be a part of group interactions stating they are a "constant presence." It is this frequency of use that has prompted members to see them as a 'normal' part of the group interaction. Additionally, because members routinely engage in virtual interactions, as in the case of Blair, these interactions are so common that the devices are unnoticeable and unnoticed.

However, despite the normalcy, expectancy, and acceptance of mobile device use, group members are well aware that interactions with mobile devices diverts attention away from the group and likewise will divert another's attention away from them. Chuck, a male in his mid-20's, discusses this aspect, citing another's mobile device interaction as equivalent to him/her talking to another physically-present individual.

There's no use in talking to that person right now, whatever the case may be. It's almost as if there's a live person next to you. Like a friend. Let's say we were talking and all the sudden they're talking to you and if I was trying to talk to you, you wouldn't be really listening to what I was saying or hear me. You might get a general context of what I'm trying to say, peripherally, but you wouldn't really be engaged with me.

In this excerpt, Chuck is comparing a user's interaction with his or her device to another person being physically present. However, this virtual individual is not one with whom Chuck can interact and whose conversation he may not be privy to. Chuck is being excluded as the device user's attention is diverted to a virtual world. Furthermore, Chuck is aware the other individual is not fully engaged with him.

The concept of device use spurring diverted attention is corroborated in an interview with Blair. In the following, Blair responds to the question, "Does using your phone in a group of friends divert your attention away from them?"

It depends what I'm doing on it and for how long, and who I'm talking to, and what I'm talking to them about. So, for instance, if I was fighting with my bf [sic] (abbreviation for boyfriend) and we were texting back and forth, then I wouldn't

be paying as much attention to my friends because I would be upset or concerned about whatever we were fighting about. So, but, if I was just talking to him to see what time we were meeting later that night or the next day then its brief and wouldn't require much attention or mental energy. Or, if I was just checking my Facebook or e-mail then it wouldn't divert my attention too much. But, like, also if I couldn't check my Facebook or messages I also wouldn't be paying attention, or as much attention, because I would be wondering in the back of my mind if anyone else was texting me or calling me and worrying about whether or not I was missing something.

This excerpt is insightful, as Blair explains subtle nuances in device use: amount of time on device, type of interaction, and content of interaction. Device usage is imbued with complexity, contradiction, and emotional currency. There are a bevy of emotions involved as indicated by the terms Blair uses: "upset," "concerned," and "worrying." Her mobile device enables her to have emotionally charged communication in a virtual space and likewise elicits emotion if access to the virtual world is limited. Minimal time using device and type of device use, such as Facebooking, is believed to be a low-emotional involvement where as intense phone conversations and long device usage are seen as high-involvement and, thus, would distract the user from the current interaction. Her statement, "I wouldn't be paying as much attention to my friend," indicates that she realizes her full attention is not on the current interaction if she is using her mobile device. Ironically, the presence of the device also diverts attention because if she is not using her device she worries that she is missing a text, call, email, etc.

Because diverted attention and suspension of the physical group is a by-product of constant mobile device use, I asked informants to share how these attributes made them feel. Nate, explains:

I would be ok with that, because I understand that like it's complicated now-a-days. So like a lot of people communicate through their phones, so like text and Internet, like Facebook. Facebook is the big thing and like Twitter. So, I understand if you're on your phone posting hey like "---" [unintelligible]. Exactly. That they might be posting something about the convo [conversation].

Nate is sensitive to mobile device saturation across contexts and is aware that individuals use devices for communication with other individuals, as well as for other social networking activities, like Facebook and Twitter. He asserts understanding and provides an interpretation of device usage as relevant to the physical interaction in that other present individuals could be sharing parts of the conversation, via Facebook.

However, despite this acceptance by interlocutors, there are nuances in the rules informing device usage, especially those pertaining to the length of communication and the type of communication, as described by Serena.

Like if they keep doing it the whole time and I'm trying to talk to them I'll prolly [probably] just focus my attention on another group member. If they are only doing it once in awhile and they are texting their bf [boyfriend] or another member to let them know where we are then that's ok. But amount of time really matters. If it's the whole time I'll feel like they are ignoring me and then I usually just talk to someone else or text someone.

Serena goes on to explain her feelings with regards to other's device usage:

I understand. As I said, if they do it all the time I might not hang out with them as much. But, it's usually only once in a while because they have something else going on. Or if I have something going on and I'm on my phone a lot I think they understand, too. I mean, I don't care if, you know, someone checks their phone briefly a couple times every hour or so, but looking at it for minutes on end is rude.

Serena's statement highlights that mobile device usage diverts attention from the current interaction. While she is accepting of usage, stating that she engages in similar activity, she does explain that the length of time is a variable in her perception and that extended use can lead to a negative perception. Jack, an informant who usually carries two cell phones (one for work and one for personal matters) also expresses this idea in the following:

No. If it's that quickly then no. If it's something a little bit more serious and you were like I have to take this. Then yes, no, and we're talking for a little while and then 'Bye.' But if it were really personal, like if it were like, 'Oh my God, really!?' That's where I would start to feel a little bit uncomfortable and the length of time that that's taking. You know what I'm saying? Or if you were like 'Hey, baby, I miss you so much I love you.' Then I would be like 'Ok, I get it.' But, the length of communication and the style of communication have a lot to do with whether or not I would get offended. Like if it were something really short and quick then I would not get offended even if it were something a little bit more lengthy and serious I probably wouldn't get offended. But, if you didn't

excuse yourself in a particular degree and you started talking about some personal things then I would probably get offended.

Jack's statement is similar to Serena's in that it reveals subtle nuances surrounding mobile device use: length of time and quality (content). These influence the non-user's perception of the device user and interaction, as well as the intention the user is conveying with device usage. Adding to this complexity, usage can be accepted depending on if the user prefaces or apologizes for his or her usage, or what Jack describes as, "didn't excuse yourself in a particular degree." Jack later explains this could be as simple as saying, "Oh, I have to take this, I'll be right back," so as to not appear impolite or offend the other individual(s).

Suspended Group Summary

In summation, diverted attention resulting from mobile device interaction is regarded as a common and accepted occurrence in small groups at MVF. Interlocutors are sensitive to and aware that mobile device use diverts attention, almost as if another individual were physically present. This leads to the current interaction with the physically co-present group member(s) to become 'suspended.' Suspended group members do not have access to virtual individuals or activity, do not participate in the interaction occurring with the mobile device, and are aware that the virtual interaction is priority. This is not problematic to members, who state acceptance and engage in similar activities themselves. However, the virtual interactions are nuanced and depend on contextual features such as frequency, length, and content of interaction.

From the data presented, I extracted the following rules of what is considered accepted and acceptable behavior mediated by mobile device technology in this particular speech community.

Rule 1: It is acceptable to use your mobile device while engaged in interaction(s) with physically present individuals if use is infrequent.

Rule 2: It is acceptable to use a mobile device while engaged in interaction(s) with physically present individuals if length of usage is brief (under 30 seconds).

Rule 3: It is acceptable to use a mobile device while engaged in interaction(s) with physically present individuals if use is for work matters or emergencies.

Rule 4: It is acceptable to use a mobile device while engaged in interaction(s) with physically present individuals if content of communication is considered by those present to be casual.

Rule 5: It is acceptable to use a mobile device for long periods of time or for serious conversations if usage is prefaced, explained, excused, and/or apologized.

Procured Groups

The second group that I label and define is the “procured group.” Procured groups occur when a mobile device is used to engage non-physically present people and make them part of the group and/or current physical interaction. Mobile device features such as text messaging allow non-physically present and physically present members to send and receive information. This instantaneous exchange of information creates a link, enabling non-physically present and physically present individuals to be a group. I choose this label because it describes the process by which this type of group comes into being, that is, the mobile device user actively acquires members of their social network.

In the following, I identify key characteristics of procured groups, namely, 1) a mobile device allows individuals to access their social network anytime, anyplace and, 2) a mobile device can enlarge a physically present group by allowing non-physically present group members to join the interaction. The data for this section comes from interviews as they allow individuals to explain with whom they interact and for what purpose.

I begin by addressing the first category, a mobile device enables an individual to access their social network anytime, anywhere. The constant accessibility created by mobile devices allows others to be brought virtually into a context. Because these devices enable immediate and ongoing communication, albeit virtually, a group can be ‘procured’ and enlarged, without other individuals being geographically present. This notion is supported by the data, as evidenced in the following interview with Jenny:

Well, there’s a lot of times when I’m meeting up with friends, but, uh, they’re late or whatever, and I hate sitting there alone because sometimes these dumb guys will try to talk to me and I’m not interested in talking to them because they’re usually drunk and acting all stupid or whatever, so I pull out my phone and will be texting on it and stuff.

Researcher: And by having your phone out and by texting...?

Then they should know not to talk to me, because I’m busy.

Researcher: So you’re using it as a way to block unwanted attention?

Exactly. To let them know they shouldn’t come talk to me because I’m doing something.

Above, Jenny describes how being alone may attract unwanted male attention; however, she is able to reach other individuals via her mobile device and ‘procure’ a virtual group. This procured group affords her a type of protection from other interlocutors, as it is understood that she is engaged and should not be approached. Her procured group acts as a ‘virtual hedge’ because it signals she is not alone, even though she is physically alone.

Mobile devices are able to provide individuals with a means through which to obtain a virtual group and thus act as a protectant because they enable communication anytime, anywhere. This is an idea seen in informant interviews, such as that with Serena:

My cell phone allows me to be in contact with anyone, at any time. It’s not just calling or texting, it’s Facebook and email, too. Like when something really good happens, I can send a mass text to a group of people who I know actually care.

Serena cites that mobile devices enable her with the ability to share information “with anyone, at any time.” Despite geographic and/or temporal constraints, she is able to utilize a variety of functions on her mobile device to communicate with group members, or as she describes, “a group of people who I know actually care.”

This phenomenon of obtaining group members and using a mobile device to stay in contact with other members is not exclusive to individuals who are alone, but also applies to groups with multiple physically present members who desire to stay connected with members not physically present. The following excerpt with Blair discusses how mobile devices are changing the definition of a physically present group.

Friends who can't be there for whatever reason, well, we can still talk to them or let them know what's going on. And if something's happening they can text us and let us know. Like say they're hanging out with a boy, they can tell us and we'll talk about it. So in a way they are still there even though they aren't.

Blair explains that her mobile device allows her to be apprised of activities of other group members engaged elsewhere. In this way, her device enables a connection to that non-physically present member as revealed when she said, "So in that way they are still there, even though they aren't." Virtual presence is on par with physical presence in this regard as instant and continuous information can be disclosed and exchanged with group members.

This virtual exchange of information is important in a busy world filled with multiple obligations and text messaging is an accepted form of communication in place of physical contact. A virtual exchange via a mobile device has become the norm (not the exception) for exchanging information and maintaining connections, as corroborated by Blair:

All of my friends and I, we use text to talk to each other and find out what's going on in each other's lives. Especially since we're all really busy with school and jobs. We don't get to hang out in person as much as we used to, so we text each other a lot. So I guess this helps us to stay a group and be connected to each other and informed even though we can't always talk in person.

Blair describes how non-social obligations, such as school and work, fill time that was previously spent with friends. Functions such as text messaging now take the place of physical interactions and meetings. Mobile device features, such as texting, are an

acceptable way of communicating and allow them to sustain their group, connection, and friendships. When Blair states that her mobile device “helps us stay a group and be connected to each other” she is revealing how her mobile device is used as a tool for achieving groupness, or being part of a group. Her mobile device provides communication and contact with group members despite physical, geographic, and temporal constraints; and in doing so provide them with the means to remain a group.

However, social functions of procured groups extend beyond enabling individuals access to others not physically present. Social functions work bi-directionally by allowing those not physically present to feel as if they belong a group that is separated geographically. In other words, if a group of friends are meeting up at a particular venue and a member cannot be there, that member can participate in the interaction via a mobile device. Serena explains:

Group members that are absent still have a presence if they are, like, texting or calling or Facebook-ing one of the people present. Your cell phone provides that link that gives you instant access to a group.

The above highlights that mobile devices act as a tool to enable communication despite geographical constraints and in doing so provide a virtual presence. Additionally, this virtual presence is one that physically present group members acknowledge. By allowing non-physically present members to be involved in the group, group membership is solidified. This idea is corroborated by Georgina, in response to the question, “How does your cell phone help you see yourself as part of a group?”

It [her mobile device] helps me feel like I have a place in a group when I’m included in what is obviously a mass text to a specific group of people. It also

makes me feel connected when a few people that I know are hanging out and one of them texts me to say 'Hi' on behalf of multiple people. Even though only one member of the group is contacting me, multiple people are a part of the communication.

In the above example, Georgina is not physically present during a group interaction, but is being contacted by a physically present member. This makes her feel connected to her group, despite being physically apart. This is because other group members are actively reaching out to her through mobile device technology, allowing a virtual connection and presence to be maintained. This works to solidify group membership and foster a sense of belongingness (to that group), as Georgina explains:

My cell phone gives me the option of staying in the group, even though it would be awkward to like Skype or call into a group hang out. I feel included when I text with one or more people at an event that I'm not attending, but otherwise I feel that the link cell phones provide is more symbolic than actual. It's like just knowing that I could be a part of the event makes me ok about missing it.

Georgina feels that other device features, such as Skype or talking physically, are "awkward" and "obtrusive." However, despite being physically absent, text messaging through a mobile device represents a group connection and co-presence, albeit not a physical co-presence. Her mobile device solidifies feelings of group belongingness and enables her to cope with not being physically present, because she is virtually linked, included, and present. This virtual presence is important as it provides an ongoing sense of and perception of group connectedness. It is mobile device technology that has enabled

this connection as mobile devices allow members to actively procure other members and to likewise be procured.

Procured Group Summary

In summation, geographic constraints are no longer a problem as groups can be procured. A procured group serves two functions, one being individuals and groups can procure members not physically present. Doing so allows individuals to have their social network at their fingertips, literally and figuratively. Mobile device features such as text messaging and calling provide access to those not geographically present. Despite the non-physicality of this presence, other interlocutors still feel their presence. Interlocutors recognize that a person interacting on their device is not really alone, because they are interacting in a virtual world with a virtual group.

Additionally, small groups can bring in non-physically present members, enlarging the current group. Mobile device features enable a non-physically present group member to share and receive information with those physically present, allowing them to be part of the group, virtually. This enlargement and procuring of additional group members provides these absentee members with a sense of group belongingness, in that they are still included and connected.

From the data presented, I extracted the following rules of what is considered accepted and acceptable behavior mediated by mobile device technology in this particular speech community.

Rule 1: It is acceptable for a physically present group to contact a non-physically present member, anytime, anyplace.

Rule 2: It is acceptable to use a mobile device to include a non-physically present group member into the group's current interaction and conversation.

Rule 3: If group members are meeting and an individual cannot physically be present, they can contact their group via a mobile device to keep apprised of the interaction.

Rule 4: If an individual is physically alone but engaged with a mobile device, they should not be approached.

Transitory Group

The third and final group that I label and define is the “transitory group.” A transitory group refers to the creation of sub-groups within a larger group. These sub-groups are composed of physically present members communicating virtually with other physically present members, but not the entire group. Transitory groups share commonalities with suspended groups, such as temporary deferment; however, a transitory group consists of only physically present group members communicating with other physically present group members through their mobile device. This is different from suspended and procured groups, which consist of physically present members communicating with non-physically present members through a mobile device. In transitory groups, a mobile device is a tool through which private communication, such as text messaging, takes place between those physically present, in place of uttered communication, whispering, and/or note passing. Mobile devices are needed as a method for physically present group members to privately communicate because relationships between members are often unique and nuanced. Members of a larger group may hold allegiances with certain members, but not the group as a whole. For example, a group of

co-workers who go out for drinks may be comprised of members who are more intimately acquainted and who wish to co-ordinate an activity or disclose information exclusive to the larger group. Or, a regular group of friends may have brought along individuals with whom other members have only recently met, have a complicated relationship with, or dislike. Transitory groups are complex, because there are numerous possible configurations among group members and various levels of content being privately disclosed, from inside jokes to intimate asides.

However, despite the complexities of transitory groups, they exhibit common characteristics, namely, 1) private communication occurs between physically present group members that does not include the entire group, and 2) mobile devices enable this communication to occur inconspicuously, so as not to negatively influence group dynamics.

The need for private communication between individuals, but exclusive of the entire physically present group, is expressed in data collected during in-depth interviews. The following excerpt with Blair, is in response to the question, “When in a group, do you use your cell phone to talk to other group members who are present?”

Yeah, all the time. It kind of takes the place of whispering so other friends don't know what you're saying. Because, like, there are some I'm closer with in the group than others, or they might have brought their bfs [boyfriend] or another friend I don't know. So I don't feel comfortable sharing something aloud.

Although sometimes we'll just be at a bar or club and it will be too noisy to talk to each other, so I'll text them. Or if there's something secret I wanna [sic] say for

whatever reason. Or, maybe if they're talking to a guy and I want to make a comment but obviously not in front of him then I'll text 'em [sic], too.

Blair describes contexts where she does not feel comfortable disclosing certain information aloud, because of those present. As previously mentioned, groups may contain unfamiliar individuals; this changes the dynamics of the conversation, limiting topics.

This concept of particular individuals affecting spoken communication and mobile devices enabling discreet interactions between individuals was present across interviews. The following excerpt with Serena describes contexts she deems necessary to have private asides with other members.

When in a group, I frequently use my phone to communicate with people who are present. It depends on the relationships I have with the other people as to the function of this mobile device use. I tend to text a specific person an inside joke that pertains to the topic that the group is discussing. This keeps the joke between us and doesn't make it seem like I'm trying to exclude everyone else from 'being in the know.' A lot of times, though, texting is used to keep specific people out of the loop. For example, a year ago I was with a group of friends from work; one of the women was planning on introducing me to a friend of hers, blind date-ish. An ex-boyfriend, who is a group member, showed up and completely monopolized the guy's attention and wouldn't let me into the conversation. Two female friends, including the one who wanted to introduce me to the guy, started texting me and complaining about how my ex was "cock blocking" me. In this case, the texting

served as an appropriate way of talking about a sensitive, frustrating topic without drawing the attention from the rest of the table.

In the above, Serena describes her mobile device use while in groups as “frequent” and explains reasons for usage. For Serena, it is a way to communicate with select individuals without alienating the whole group, as in the case of an inside joke. It also serves as a method for discussing more ‘sensitive’ topics, as evidenced in the example given involving tensions surrounding current and previous romantic interests. In the latter example, mobile devices allowed for private information to be shared, via text messaging, between Serena and two other group members, while not detracting from or affecting the overall group. This use of a transitory group to disclose other types of information, such as comments that would be offensive to those present, is likewise found in other informant interviews, such as that with Blair:

As I said it takes place of whispering and there are always things you want to say about the situation at hand, but you can’t say them aloud because it would hurt that person’s feelings. Like I know it kind of sounds bitchy [sic] but let’s say I’m hanging out with a group of friends and one of my guy friends brings a girl he’s into but she’s like ugly or obnoxious or dumb or something. Well, I’m not going to say that aloud in front of her. But, me and other friends who are there might text each other some comments about her back and forth.

Blair explains that her mobile device acts as a tool for communicating sensitive and offensive information about another individual present. Normally, she would not make these comments aloud, as they would hurt another’s feeling. Texting replaces whispering, and acts as a communicative method for sharing this information privately

with other physically present members. This private communication with physically present members is necessary so as not to offend others present, which would probably happen if she were to express these opinions aloud. Transitory groups help maintain privacy of such comments, as Serena explains:

I mainly see texting people who are physically present as a method for keeping things between me and them. Although my motive is sometimes to exclude others from the communication, childish as it sounds, the primary function is maintaining privacy. After all, the person I'm texting could be receiving texts from any number of other people, but if I walk up to them and start whispering, then everyone knows I'm talking to that person about something private.

Serena regards text messaging as a way to exchange confidential information with only certain individuals. She compares it to whispering, just as Blair, preferring text messaging because it keeps the interaction inconspicuous. This stems from feelings that excluding others could be construed as 'childish.' However, she also points out others are receiving text messages, potentially from present members. Serena's acknowledgment and awareness that other members engage in private communication demonstrates the need, understanding, and acceptance of the phenomena while in groups.

Transitory Group Summary

The type of communication that occurs in small groups is contextually dependent. At times, information or topics may be considered sensitive, private, or irrelevant to certain group members. Often, groups consist of a variety of individuals and situations arise where individuals present may influence the group's dynamic and likewise spoken communication. Because spoken communication varies across contexts, mobile devices

allow individuals to bypass contextual nuances by permitting discrete communication between individuals. Mobile devices enable the creation of virtual sub-groups that include certain individuals while likewise excluding others. However, a mobile device allows for this to occur inconspicuously so as not to disrupt group dynamics. These groups are transitory in that they are formed virtually for a brief time, to exchange information, and then disabled as members interact with the larger group.

From the data presented, I extracted the following rules of what is considered accepted and acceptable behavior mediated by mobile device technology in this particular speech community.

Rule 1: It is acceptable to use mobile devices in place of asides and/or whispering.

Rule 2: Private and/or sensitive information meant only for certain individuals can and should be communicated via mobile devices.

Rule 3: It is acceptable to exclude physically present members from an interaction if the interaction is conducted through a mobile device.

Rule 4: If sub-groups exist independent from the group, and these subgroups want to communicate information or coordinate activities irrelevant to the group, then a mobile device can and should be utilized for this communication.

Discussion

This chapter presented three new types of groups at MVF that have emerged because of mobile device technology in small group interactions: suspended groups, procured groups, and transitory groups. A suspended group occurs when an individual temporarily defers interactions with the physically present group in favor of interacting with an individual or functions via his or her mobile device. A procured group results

from an individual using a mobile device to bring non-geographically present members into the physical context. Finally, transitory groups appear when physically present members communicate through their mobile device, discreetly and without the larger group being privy to the interaction(s). These groups are unique because they are supported by mobile device technology. That is, without this technology, these groups would not exist.

Mobile devices play an important role in the speech community I studied at MVF, as evidenced by these three groups and their corresponding set of interactional rules. By conducting an ethnography of communication and using Hymes's SPEAKING framework (1972), I was able to identify groups and sets of rules that guide communicative conduct surrounding mobile device use. Key to the SPEAKING mnemonic is Instrumentality, or the channels through which communication occurs (Hymes, 1972). In this particular speech community, a significant channel through which communication occurs is a mobile device. This channel, this instrument, has in turn shaped sets of rules for usage. While the EOC and SCT were essential in identifying user perceptions surrounding device usage and rules, the concepts presented in this study also coincide with ideas found in mobile device and small group research. These ideas, in conjunction with those in the EOC, are explored below.

The first group I discuss, a "suspended group," could be facilitated by what has been deemed by Turkle (2011) as 'perpetual contact.' Perpetual contact refers to the overwhelming and inescapable presence of technology in discourse (Turkle, 2011). Mobile device technology has allowed for constant contact, enabling users to communicate anytime, anyplace. The notion of perpetual contact is evidenced in

informant excerpts, such as that with Blair who states, “Phones are always around. And people are always texting or something.” Perpetual contact influences how individuals manage their relationships. Across personal and professional contexts, society expects individuals to always be reachable and responsive. “Suspended groups” are a byproduct of this constant connectivity. Even while socializing with physically present individuals, these non-present virtual entities draw away attention, causing the current group to be temporarily placed on hold. Liccoppe (2003) explains that face-to-face interactions, physical interactions, no longer hold the same value as they once did. Instead, physically present are being placed ‘on hold’ in favor of a “technologically mediated world elsewhere” (Gergen, 2002, p. 227). This has resulted in what is at the core of a suspended group, diverted attention, or what Fortunatti (2002) explains as being “present and absent at the same time” (p. 518). Indeed this notion aligns with those extracted from fieldnotes and interviews such as that with Chuck who feels that an individual interacting with their mobile device “wouldn’t really be engaged with me.” Device users negotiate attention between physically present entities and virtual entities, frequently switching between the two.

Mobile device usage is a behavior that has been normalized into the speech community at MVF, as noted by Serena: “being on your cell phone is so expected and accepted that I don’t think people really notice it anymore.” This expectance and acceptance of mobile device use can be explained by the importance placed on time and multitasking (Turkle, 2011). Time is viewed as commodity, a resource, and needs to be managed. By interspersing physical interactions with virtual interactions, interlocutors can layer communication and thus more effectively manage time.

The layering of communication with various individuals and groups also helps maintain stable, yet permeable, boundaries. BFGP stresses that stable, yet permeable, boundaries are essential to the longevity and health of a small group, as boundaries need to be both porous and cohesive (Stohl & Putnam, 1990). Mobile devices enable suspended groups, which support balanced boundaries in that members can concurrently communicate with physically present group members and non-physically present individuals, as revealed by Blair who virtually interacts with her boyfriend while out with groups of friends.

The second group I discuss, a “procured group,” may have arisen because it fulfills a communicative need, specifically, those related to interpersonal relationships and socializing. Adolescents and young adults view mobile devices as social capital (Nafus & Tracey, 200) and one that is key for socializing and perceptions of the self (Katz, 2003). Mobile device functions, such as text messaging, are an integral part of how this generation manages relationships with both peers and family members (Licoppe, 2003). Humans are artful and skilled users of technology and have appropriated mobile devices to communicate regardless of contextual limitations. This is corroborated by informants, such as Blair who explained that obligations often prevent her social circle from being physically together; instead they keep apprised of each other’s activities through their mobile devices. Blair believes doing so allows her group “to stay a group and be connected to each other and informed, even though we can’t always talk in person.” A mobile device enables access to anyone, anytime, anywhere and the ‘procured group’ reflects the desire and importance of connection.

The importance of connection is likewise found in BFGP and mobile devices allow for group members to be informed, connected, and symbolically present regardless of physicality. This indicates that groups are composed of more than just physically present members, which changes and redefines previous definitions of what it means to be a group, who is in a group, and who is not.

Additionally, mobile devices provide individuals access and being accessed by others is tied into perceptions of group belongingness. These concepts are highlighted by Georgina's statement, "it helps me feel like I have a place in a group when I'm included in what is obviously a mass text to a specific group of people. It also makes me feel connected when a few people that I know are hanging out and one of them texts me to say 'Hi' on behalf of multiple people." The importance placed on being procured holds not only vast implications for group membership, but personhood.

The final group I will discuss is a "transitory group," whose existence coincides with ideas found mobile device research. Researchers posit that mobile devices are tools that allow users to control interactions, regulate access to others, and ourselves (Katz & Aakhus, 2002). The social world is unpredictable and likewise so is our information on others (Fortunatti, 2002). A transitory group allows interlocutors to manage and control whom they communicate to, as well the content of the communication. Additionally, a transitory group provides individuals with discreet communication, which interlocutors such as Blair feel is needed so that "other friends don't know what you're saying." This exemplifies control in that individuals can include or exclude others through their mobile device, and do so inconspicuously.

Transitory groups also coincide with an important element of the EOC: context influences communicative interactions. This notion of context shaping the communication occurring within it is highlighted by Blair's statement, "There are some I'm closer with in the group than others, or they might have brought their bfs [boyfriends] or another friend I don't know. So I don't feel comfortable sharing something aloud." To circumvent these contextual constraints and nuances, transitory groups are utilized.

While each of these groups, suspended, procured, and transitory align with various notions found with mobile device research, small group research and the EOC, the formation of these three groups can also be attributed to one of the biggest binaries surrounding mobile device use: the simultaneous existence of public and private spheres (Campbell, 2007). Spaces that were once considered public are now subject to reclassification because of the mobile devices (Katz, 2003). Mobile device users appropriate space to suit their own purposes (Fortunati, 2002) and these include the need for private communication while in public places. All three groups reflect the disintegration of the line between public and private as intimate conversation can occur in public places. This is seen in informant interviews, such as that with Blair who describes having fights with her boyfriends via her mobile device while interacting with a physical group of friends. Through the use of these virtual groups, the same space is simultaneously rendered public and private.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented three types of social groups, "suspended," "procured," and "transitory," that are enabled and mediated by mobile device technology; as well as corresponding sets of interactional rules. These three groups can and do transcend

geography, enabling multiple types of communication with individuals who may or may not be physically present. In doing so, these groups hold implications in a variety of areas, both theoretical and methodological. The implications and importance of this study is addressed in the proceeding and final chapter of this study.

CHAPTER 5: Conclusion

This study explored the communication rules informing how particular bar patrons use mobile device technology to shape particular types of small groups. The previous chapter presented three types of groups that mobile device technology enable and mediate at MVF, specifically, “suspended groups,” “procured groups,” and “transitory groups.”

This final chapter revisits my research questions and explores the study’s contributions, limitations, and future research directions. First, the research questions guiding this study are presented and discussed. Next, I address both the theoretical and methodological contributions of this study to ethnography of communication and speech codes theory, small group studies, and technology. I conclude by discussing this study’s limitations and exploring new directions for future research.

Findings

This study set out to better understand the role of mobile device usage in small group interactions. In order to answer the research questions guiding this study, over 67 hours of observations, 23 ethnographic interviews, and 10 formal interviews were conducted. These protocols allowed me to investigate the research questions guiding this study, which are presented and discussed below.

RQ1 What are the sets of rules surrounding mobile device use in small groups at MVF during late afternoons and evenings?

Behavior(s) surrounding “suspended,” “procured,” and “transitory” groups have been naturalized into the speech community. Each of these groups have their own corresponding sets of social rules (Philipsen, 1992) that pertain to their creation,

utilization, and dissemination. The rules are as follows:

Rule 1: It is acceptable to use your mobile device while engaged in interaction(s) with physically present individuals if use is infrequent.

Rule 2: It is acceptable to use a mobile device while engaged in interaction(s) with physically present individuals if length of usage is brief (under 30 seconds).

Rule 3: It is acceptable to use a mobile device while engaged in interaction(s) with physically present individuals if use is for work matters or emergencies.

Rule 4: It is acceptable to use a mobile device while engaged in interaction(s) with physically present individuals if content of communication is considered by those present to be casual.

Rule 5: It is acceptable to use a mobile device for long periods of time or for serious conversations if usage is prefaced, explained, excused, and/or apologized.

Rule 6: It is acceptable for a physically present group to contact a non-physically present member, anytime, anyplace.

Rule 7: It is acceptable to use a mobile device to include a non-physically present group member into the group's current interaction and conversation.

Rule 8: If group members are meeting and an individual cannot physically be present, they can contact their group via a mobile device to keep apprised of the interaction.

Rule 9: If an individual is physically alone but engaged with a mobile device, they should not be approached.

Rule 10: It is acceptable to use mobile devices in place of asides and/or whispering.

Rule 11: Private and/or sensitive information meant only for certain individuals can and should be communicated via mobile devices.

Rule 12: It is acceptable to exclude physically present members from an interaction if the interaction is conducted through a mobile device.

Rule 13: If sub-groups exist independent from the group, and these subgroups want to communicate information or coordinate activities irrelevant to the group, then a mobile device can and should be utilized for this communication.

These rules are important because they guide communicative behavior surrounding mobile device usage a MVF and are used by interlocutors to interpret the behavior of others. The interpretation of behavior and the meanings attributed to device usage are addressed in the following research question:

RQ2 What are meaning(s) users and other group members attribute to the use of mobile devices at MVF during late afternoons and evenings?

When asked about mobile device usage while in groups, the majority of participants considered interactions with a device to be ‘normal.’ This response reveals the extent to which mobile device usage has been naturalized into present-day conversations. At MVF, consistent mobile device use is classified as normal because it is an accepted, and even expected, behavior. That is, if an individual did not use their mobile device at least once during their duration at MVF, it would be considered abnormal behavior. This is supported by the data as Serena stated,

“Cell phone usage basically fits into all physical group interactions; basically, ALL group interactions include cell phones. I have yet to experience any group

interactions where someone honestly wanted someone or everyone to cease using their phones.”

This statement reveals that mobile device usage does not violate behavioral rules or norms in this particular speech community and indicates an expectancy of device usage. Interlocutors perceive mobile device usage to be a common and familiar, or normal, behavior. However, the interpretations and meanings surrounding this behavior vary from meanings attributed to self-usage and usage of other interlocutors. This is best highlighted by transitory groups, which are briefly formed to share private information. Individuals taking part in this type of group may attribute their usage as polite or considerate because it does not cause other individuals to feel excluded, such as would be the case if information were whispered. However, other members who are not participating in the virtual conversation may construe usage as not being interested in the present interaction, sharing the present interaction with other non-physically present members, or communicating with members or individuals who do not belong to that group.

The above are just several meanings that can be attributed to device use in this particular speech community. Overall, it can be concluded that meanings surrounding device use, both self-usage and that of other interlocutors, are highly contextual and nuanced at MVF, as evidenced by the aforementioned social rules.

The final research question addresses the types of groups that are enabled by mobile device technology:

RQ3 What particular type of small group does the use of mobile device technology enable and mediate?

Mobile devices were found to shape small group interactions in this speech community in significant ways. I identified three new types of group whose interactions surround mobile device usage: suspended groups, procured groups, and transitory groups. A suspended group was shown to affect the immediate group by temporarily putting members on hold in favor of a mobile device interaction. A procured group shapes interactions by bringing non-physically present members into the immediate group interaction. Finally, a transitory group enables communication to occur between certain individuals within the group, allowing for private and/or sensitive information to be shared inconspicuously.

Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to the literature of the ethnography of communication (EOC), speech codes theory (SCT), small groups, and technology. These contributions are discussed in-order below.

I begin by discussing the contributions to the EOC and SCT in conjunction since they are comprised of similar elements. The EOC and SCT use of a cultural and contextual lens to view human communicative interactions (Hymes, 1974; Philipsen, Coutu & Covarrubias, 2005) and examine patterns in particular speech communities to extract social rules. (Philipsen, Coutu & Covarrubias, 2005). The present study supports the EOC and SCT in that utilizing this lens allowed for the extractions of sets rules surrounding mobile device use in small groups. Additionally, this study strengthens the SCT by demonstrating how it can be paired with other communication theories to allow for more in-depth and comprehensive research to occur. Doing so enabled research to

move beyond sets of interactional rules, to the discovery of three types of small group mediated by mobile device technology.

The three groups discovered advance research in small groups, particularly, bona fide group perspective (BFGP). BFGP stresses that groups need to maintain stable, yet permeable, boundaries (Putnam & Stohl, 1990). Suspended groups, procured groups, and transitory groups align with this notion in that they are created concurrently to the physical group. This highlights the permeability of boundaries as virtual groups are created, utilized, and dissembled while the physically present group remains stable and interacts.

BFGP also stresses that contextual features play a key role in small group communication. Context and groups share a reciprocal relationship (Putnam & Stohl, 1990) and the present study supports this as context was found to directly influence the formations of virtual groups, such as transitory groups, which are used to share private information when certain individuals are present.

This study holds implications for BFGP, most notably the area of intergroup and intragroup communication, as group members belong to more than one group (Putnam & Stohl, 1990). Mobile devices help facilitate interaction(s), as well as keep communication between different groups (and group members in the current physical group) discrete and private while maintaining overall group dynamics. Virtual groups support this aspect of BFGP and showcase how individuals utilize technology to enable multi-group communication.

For group research in general, this study holds implications for the definition of a group. It highlights that groups are not always comprised of physically present

individuals and geographic location is not a necessity. Mobile devices change what it means to be in a group, who is in a group, and how to be part of a group.

Finally, this study contributes to the literature and research surrounding mobile devices and technology. It affirms the idea of perpetual contact (Katz, 2002) and holds implications for the effects of mobile device technology on personhood and humanity (Katz, 2003; Okmans & Pirjo, 2003; Turkle, 2011). Additionally, this study is important in that mobile device users are not passively influenced by technology, rather they actively appropriate technology to suit individual needs for communication, specifically, to circumvent constraints caused by geographic location (Aakhus, 2002; Caporael & Xie, 2003; Licoppe, 2003). In doing so, users can interact with and include non-physically present group members, always have a social network at their fingertips, and/or share private information without disrupting overall group dynamics. However, these interactions do hold implications for personhood as individuals can be included or excluded.

Methodological Contributions

This study affirms the EOC and attests to the value of using Hyme's SPEAKING (1972) to conduct a study in situ. Both SCT and BFGP are proponents of this particular methodology and the data gleaned from these methods supports and highlights the importance of its use. Utilizing ethnographic methodologies consisting of observations, ethnographic interviews, and formal interviews allowed for research to focus on interlocutors and reveal mobile device mediated groups and sets of rules. Without the use of these methodologies, data revealing groups and social rules may have not been procured.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although this study identified three groups mediated by mobile device technology in the speech community, it had limitations. Most notably, this study utilized convenience sampling and collected data in only one particular speech community at MVF. Due to this, only a certain faction of this speech community is represented. Even within this particular speech community, there are a variety of patrons dependent on time of day and day of the week. For example, Tuesday night is infamous for attracting a younger, party-oriented college crowd whereas Friday and Saturday night attract older patrons. These aforementioned limitations are problematic in that they restrict generalization of this study.

In order to circumvent these limitations future research could include multiple speech communities. Additionally, opportunity for expansion is vast as this research encompassed EOC, SCT, BFGP and technology. Research could evolve in any of these areas, a combination, or even be paired with new theories.

From the above theories, this study holds tremendous potential in small group research, as data revealed three groups mediated by mobile device technology. Groups found need to be thoroughly investigated in regards to their implications for BFGP; particularly, intergroup communication and group boundaries. Other notable directions for small group research include the effects of mobile devices on the definition of a group; specifically, what it means to be in a group, how to be a part of a group, and who is in a group. Finally, further research is needed to explore the effects of these groups and mobile device technology on notions of personhood on interlocutors who are suspended, excluded and/or included.

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Title: VIRTUALLY PRESENT: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF COMMUNICATION
LOOK AT THE SHAPING OF SOCIAL RULES IN SMALL GROUP
INTERACTIONS MEDIATED BY MOBILE DEVICES

Researcher: Pamela Gerber

Thank you for participating in this study and for volunteering your time for this interview. This research is being conducted by a graduate student in the Communication and Journalism department at the University of New Mexico. This research is being conducted by a graduate student in the Communication and Journalism department at the University of New Mexico. The purpose of this study is to examine mobile device use during interpersonal interactions. By participating in this interview, you will be providing valuable information that will aid in this study. Your role is confidential and no identifying markers will be linked to you. Data collected will be stored in a locked file cabinet and on a password protected computer in the researcher's office. All collected data will be destroyed after a period of three years. Minimal risks are anticipated as a result of you participating in this study. You will receive no compensation for participating in this interview. You can choose not to answer any questions and you may choose to terminate the interview at any time. You will be given the researcher's contact information should you choose to later decide not to participate or if you have any other additional questions concerning the study. If you desire, you will be provided with a copy of the study. By giving verbal consent you are agreeing to participate in this study. Do you agree to participate in this study?

Interview Fact Sheet

(To be filled out by participants of the in-depth interviews)

Gender:

Age:

Occupation:

Type(s) of mobile devices used:

Features available on mobile devices:

Features used most often:

Amount of hours per week spent on mobile device (estimate):

Questions:

- What do you consider normal mobile device use (while in public, during interactions, etc) in public? At MVF?
- In what kind of settings or interactions would you consider it to be inappropriate to use your mobile device?
- Why do you feel it is inappropriate to use them in such situations?

- How do you respond when others are using their mobile device while engaged in an interaction with you?
- How do you feel when you are engaged in an interaction and the other person is using their mobile device?
- Are there certain situations in which you conceal the use of your mobile device from those present? If, so, when/where?
- What features of your mobile device are you using when engaged in interactions with others?
- Why do you use these features while engaged in interactions with others?
- Do you think this bothers the other member(s) of your interactions? (why or why not?)
- How do mobile devices help you to be part of a group?
- How does your mobile device help you to see yourself as part of a group?
- How and where do mobile devices fit into physical group interactions?
- What is your definition of group?
- Do you think mobile devices change this definition?
- Does being on your mobile device divert your attention away from your group?
- How do you feel when other group members are on their mobile devices while hanging out?

Appendix B: Informant's Demographic Information

PSYDONYM:	AGE:	GENDER:	OCCUPATION:
Serena	21-25	F	Student
Blair	25-30	F	Student
Georgina	21-25	F	Unknown
Jenny	21-25	F	Student
Chuck	30-35	M	Government
Jack	25-30	M	Student
Nate	30-35	M	Research Technician
Dan	25-20	M	Student/ Bartender
Bart	30-35	M	Unknown
Rufus	30-35	M	Unknown

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