Mobile Identity: Youth, Identity, and Mobile Communication Media

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Parents usually don't know how important a tool the mobile has become in young people's lives. They only think about the communicative function, not the social meaning.[1]
(sixteen-year-old girl)

The girl who is quoted above expresses an immediate understanding of the mobile phone's dual, but interdependent qualities for young people. One quality is the communicative function, which is facilitated by the technological device: it is about the mobile as a tool and a channel for the exchange of information. The other quality is the social meaning, which develops from the communication. Rich Ling describes the mobile phone as being doubly articulated, that is, it is a physical device but it is also a medium through which we communicate and through which we maintain social contact.[2] In short, the meaning of the mobile goes beyond its practical function. The quote also indicates the young girl's perception of the mobile as holding a specific meaning for young people as compared to adults: that is, the value of the mobile depends on contextual uses and experiences.

The focus of this article is on the meaning of the mobile in young people's lives, specifically in relation to questions of identity. In the crossover between this volume's three key themes—youth, learning, and identity—other issues might well have been included, for example the use of mobile platforms in education and formal learning,[3] or organized projects on how to explore and exploit mobile digital platforms for creative and innovative purposes. My aim, however, is to take a closer look at the mundane and everyday uses of this medium by young people in relation to identity and learning. Because of the always there, always on status of the mobile and the pace of exchange of information, and because the mobile is the key personal communication device for so many young people, it becomes important in establishing social norms and rules and in testing one's own position in relation to the peer group.

My title, "Mobile Identity," has a double meaning. On the one hand, supported by the subtitle, it includes the idea that young people's identity is influenced by their use of media, in particular personal communication media such as the mobile phone. On the other hand, it also implies a view of adolescent identity as mobile, changing and developing moment by moment and over time, as very sensitive to changes in the relations between friends and families, and to the emotional and intellectual challenges experienced and mediated through the use of the mobile phone (among other factors). The notion of mobile identity suggests that identity is fluid and that adolescents are constantly negotiating who they are, how they are that identity, and with whom they are that identity. The mobile phone

facilitates this mobility of identity, as it is ubiquitous in youth cultural contexts as a medium for constant updating, coordination, information access, and documentation. At the same time, the mobile is an important medium for social networking, the enhancing of groups and group identity, and for the exchange between friends which is needed in the reflexive process of identity construction. The mobile has become the ideal tool to deal with the pace of information exchange, the management of countless loose, close or intimate relations, the coordination of ever-changing daily activities,[4] and the insecurity of everyday life. Hence the mobile becomes a learning tool for dealing with living conditions in modern society for young people, while at the same time it adds to the conditions they are trying to deal with.

This chapter addresses four broad themes. The first theme is *availability*—the fact that the mobile is always on, which makes the users always available with no or few communication- and information-free moments. The second theme is the experience of *presence* during mobile communication, that is, the experience of social presence in public space being invaded by ongoing mobile communication. The third theme is the importance of the mobile as a *personal log* for activities, networks, and the documentation of experiences, a role that has implications both for relations between the individual and the group and for emotional experience. These discussions lead to analysis of the mobile as a tool for *learning social norms*. Before I proceed with the discussion of these themes, however, I offer a short discussion of the concept of mobile media and a broader account of the role of the mobile phone in the context of contemporary youth culture.

The main empirical basis for my analysis is quantitative and qualitative findings from a series of studies of fifteen- to twenty-four-year-old Danes and their mobile phone use.[5] These studies, which were conducted in 2004 and 2006, included questionnaire surveys, individual interviews, observations, and (in one case) high school essays on "My Mobile and Me." As even younger groups of children have their own mobiles, the fifteen- to twenty-four-year-olds cannot necessarily be seen as representative of young Danish mobile phone users in general. However, other studies and surveys[6] indicate that the general findings from these studies also reflect some of the main uses and meanings of younger children's mobile phone use, as well as experiences in other national and cultural settings.

The Mobile Phone and Mobility

The most obvious characteristic of the mobile phone is precisely that it is mobile, that it can be transported. Compared to the first transportable phones, which were huge machines, then very heavy telephones, both built into cars, and then heavy but portable telephones,[7] mobile phones today are so small, flat and light that they can fit into a pocket and effectively disappear in the hand and at the ear. Especially when connected with a light headset, the mobile seems to be part of the user's body—which may remind the reader of McLuhan's discussions of media as the "extensions of man," but which also points to the fact that it is so easy to take the mobile everywhere and to have it near and ready to hand that the user hardly notices it, until it isn't there, when it doesn't alert the user with a new message or call.

But what are the specific potentials of mobiles? How are they different from landline phones? And how does the use of mobiles differ from PCs and traditional Internet? The German sociologist Hans Geser states that "Seen in this very broad evolutionary perspective, the significance of the mobile phone lies in empowering people to engage in communication, which is at the same time free from the constraints of physical proximity and spatial immobility."[8] This general and yet simple notion is expanded by Rich Ling, who describes

the social changes resulting from the adoption of the mobile in everyday life: "The mobile telephone shifts ideas about where and when we can travel, how we organize our daily life, what constitutes public talk, and how we keep track of our social world. In addition, our use, or refusal to use, says something about us as individuals."[9] But even this is not quite enough to describe the duality of function and meaning of the mobile. Within a decade, the typical mobile available on the popular market has developed from being a portable telephone to being a handheld computer with enough data and speed capacity to facilitate mobile Internet access, MP3 music, photography, video, graphically advanced games, and tools such as a calculator, diary, notebook, alarm, clock, GPS, and more. These multiple functions change the role of the mobile from being only a medium for interpersonal communication to incorporate multiple forms of information exchange at a user level as well as at a technological level: peer (mobile) to peer (mobile/Internet/Messenger), citizen to institution and vice versa, mobile to PC/Internet and vice versa, employer to workplace and vice versa. These expanded technological potentials facilitate a much more extensive range of uses and hence of meanings. However, the mobile largely remains a "personal, portable, and pedestrian"[10] medium that is primarily used for interpersonal communication via calls or text messages.

Mobility and Young People

Young people in many parts of the world are on the move in their local context, and some are on the move in a global context when they travel. They are on the move within and between physical locations but also in virtual spaces, in well-known (as well as foreign) areas. They are processing, digesting, and exchanging information, deliberating what to do, what to choose, what to think. The portability of the mobile phone makes it possible for the user to access and exchange information independent of place, of physical location, while being on the move. We are mobile, the device is mobile with us, but above all information is mobile, meaning that it is available independent of time and space, accessible from wherever you are with your mobile transmitter and receiver.

However, the Swedish scholar Alexandra Weilenmann states that even if we use the mobile to carry our social and personal life with us as we move, mobile technologies have not made people independent of place. According to her, "place" and "the local" are still important in the mobile world[11] because we are constantly negotiating our mutual understanding of the situation in which we find ourselves. We usually regard mobile technology as being private and personal; but the act of sharing mobile content and communication in public spaces and in shared social situations, voluntarily or not, must be included in our understanding of the nature of the mobile and of mobility. This shall be explored further in the following sections of this chapter.

In the same way, we should consider the meaning of "mobile" as going beyond movement in physical space. The additional meaning of "mobility" is about being ready for change, ready to go in new directions. One of the sixteen-year-old participants who wrote high school essays about *My Mobile and Me* as part of our research combines these two levels of understanding. She had been considering the ontological meaning of "mobile" and looked it up in her mother's dictionary (which was published in 1968). She found that it said: "Movable, agile, able to be moved or transported easily and fast; ready to march, ready for battle." She was somewhat surprised by the last two translations of "mobile," and concluded that in fact that is exactly what she is with her mobile at hand: "I am easily accessed and I am movable; I am agile and transport myself easily and quite fast; I am always ready to receive a message or a call; but best of all I am ready to march, ready for battle! So, if 'mobile' means the same today

as it did in 1968, then I am mobile, mobile I am." This girl interprets mobile as more than a matter of physical movement between locations, she thinks of herself as physically on the move, supported by her mobile, but at the same time she applies the military terminology to her own situation and her interest in moving forward in life and battling for herself in more than physical terms. The mobile facilitates her social mobility and readiness to communicate. Exchange between friends is an important part of the development of identity, because it supports the testing of cultural, social, and individual codes and makes ongoing, mutual reciprocity possible. In this context, being movable, agile and ready to march means being ready to move as a person, too.

The Mobile Phone in Contemporary Youth Culture

I think it is nice.[12] It is such an easy way to communicate. "They" made it so easy for us. (Dea, seventeen-year-old-girl)

The question is if it has deprived us of the possibility of being "offline"? (Boy, sixteen years old)

There have been numerous studies of mobile phone users, and adolescent users in particular. As Taylor and Harper point out, these studies almost all deal with the same issues and problems and reach the same conclusions: "With mobile devices, we are told, we will be always available to those who love us or need us; we will always be capable of accessing the information we need and desire whether it be work related or to do with our personal affairs; we will be able to work wherever we want since information will be accessible anywhere; and though we may be apart from colleagues and friends, the mobile network will keep us in touch."[13] There are, as Taylor and Harper point out, many other interesting aspects of mobile phone use, such as the use of the mobile in face-to-face settings, for example, "giving" each other photos and text messages from the personal mobile phone. (See also Weber's and Mitchell's discussion of the meaning of photo sharing in their chapter in this volume.) Research also raises questions about risk and trust, and about the use of the mobile as a new tool for citizenship. When it comes to young people in particular, however, there is an important difference in the fact that young users unanimously discuss the importance and meaning of the mobile in a social context. Within the time that has passed since the mobile phone first became visible in Danish youth cultures, it has developed from being a rare and exciting object for the privileged few to becoming one of the most important popular and obvious tools for communication, information, and entertainment. As the quotes from young users shall demonstrate, the mobile is a ubiquitous, pervasive communication device which young people find it difficult to be without, whether they like it or hate it, or feel something in between.

   Adolescents in Denmark, who are generally very well equipped with digital media such as PCs and Internet, DVD players, MP3–players, and mobile phones,[14] cannot imagine not being able to get in touch with friends and family around the clock, or not being able to choose between multiple entertainment programs, games, music recordings, and news programs on the platform which best suits their needs at that moment.[15] Stories about the media biographies of their parents seem to be referring to a different era. Some of the oldest informants in our research do remember when they had only landline telephones, but just like the younger informants they cannot imagine not having their mobiles, not being constantly in contact, contactable, and informed. Seventeen-year-old Thorbjørn says: "The mobile makes everyday life a little easier I think. Well, they managed all right before

the mobile but it kind of belongs to the times we live in. It is as if you can hardly walk out into everyday life without your mobile." "They" refers to everyone who, unlike Thorbjørn and people younger than him, has not grown up with the mobile but has had to find other channels for communication and personal networking, for coordinating everyday life, and for the exchange of emotional, intimate content.[16] (See also Susannah Stern's chapter in this volume for a discussion of the meaning of intimacy in exchanges on personal websites.)

The Importance of The Mobile

Thorbjørn's phrase "walk out into everyday life" is a typical yet illuminating example of young people's perception of the uses of media in everyday life. It has a double meaning: you need to bring your mobile when you leave home and your PC/Messenger, and in order to manage life in general in this historical era, the mobile is indispensable or at least close to it.

Our survey[17] showed that seven out of ten young people rated the importance of the mobile between eight and ten on a scale from zero to ten. Only around 4 percent did not find the mobile very important, giving it a rating of three or below. The mobile seemed to be rated as more important among the older than among the younger informants. The oldest have moved away from home and very few have a landline telephone, which makes the mobile and the Internet the only available channels for fast communication. Another explanation we found from interviews is that the mobile becomes increasingly important for coordination not just of social relationships, but also of work/study-related appointments, communication with institutions (bank, library, etc.) and as the lifeline to family and lovers. (Shelley Goldman et al. in their chapter include examples of the use of mobiles for coordination of personal activities as well as political meetings.) Another interesting finding is that more female than male users rate the mobile at ten, although the differences are small. One vivid example of how important the mobile is considered to be in modern society comes from a sixteen-year-old high school boy, who claimed that he would feel half-naked without it—you need to have your mobile with you, just like you need to wear pants.

These statistics give us an impression of the importance of the mobile among young Danes, but they obviously don't reveal what lies behind the numbers. Why is it considered important or why is it not? And why do many of the young users evaluate the mobile as very important, yet at the same time express concerns about the impact of this? We do know, of course, from previous research what the main uses and meanings of the mobile are. The interviews, however, put the attitudes toward the importance of the mobile into young people's own words, albeit more or less enthusiastically expressed. The following quote from twenty-two-year-old Freja is brief, but clearly demonstrates why the mobile is important to so many: "I can't believe how much there is in such a small thing like this, right. If I throw this away it is simply the contact to everything—all and everyone—I am throwing away. It is damned scary."

It seems that there are two main arguments for the importance of the mobile. First, there is its immediate and ubiquitous use for social coordination and updating. Secondly, and related to this, the mobile—combined in some cases with the laptop—is a personal medium which liberates the user from the constraints of physical proximity and spatial immobility. Twenty-year-old Danny says: "It is incredibly good to be mobile—when I put my mobile in my pocket and my laptop under my arm I have my office, my life, my work and my education with me—I carry everything I need with me, and the flexibility of that is totally fantastic." Danny has started his own small firm and mobility and flexibility are the key words to him

because he needs to be available not only socially, but also professionally, and in relation to his continuing education. Danny's story is somewhat extreme compared to those of average young mobile users in Denmark. Even so, he is a relevant example of a young person whose self-identity is closely related to his professional activity and the appearance he gives of the young professional who is always on the move. His use of various digital communication and information media in combination reflects the state of flux that exists between different spheres of modern life, between working time and leisure time, between private space and public space, and between physical and virtual grounding that is independent of time and space.

Use and Adaptation

The common mobile is a kind of Swiss Army knife, which holds a number of useful tools—even if people almost always tend to use the same ones. The use of the mobile can be seen as either practical (instrumental) or related to content (expressive).[18] Aspects of the meaning of content are discussed in some of the following sections: my immediate focus here is on the range of different uses.

Young Danes use the mobile mainly for communication—it is primarily still a telephone with text messaging and additional services. However, the practical facilities such as the alarm clock, notebook, and diary are also used by many. Internet, MMS, games, and music/radio are the least-used services, even if increasing numbers of adolescents have advanced mobiles with the software and subscriptions that facilitate these more advanced uses. The usual arguments for not using one of these services are that the price is too high and the quality too low, but for example when it comes to radio and music (MP3) this is no longer the case, and we do see a significant increase in interest in these uses between our 2004 and 2006 surveys. The young users like to take photos with their mobiles, but rather than sending them, they show them to one another on the physical devices or save them on their computer via infrared or Bluetooth and share them via email, Messenger or chat rooms. Games and the mobile Internet are not popular possibilities among the young people we studied—the most common argument being that the mobile phone user has a much better computer a few minutes away at home, at work, at school or college. In this context the mobile must be seen as one of a broader ensemble of media.[19]

Another explanation for the generally mundane and nonadvanced uses of mobile technologies is the low levels of technological literacy, which themselves reflect low levels of interest in the potential of mobile technologies and software. Many do think that the advanced services would be smart, fun, and helpful, but they haven't bothered to check out how to set them up and use them. Due to their potential access to other kinds of digital media, the inclination to explore these potential uses and make them work is not strong enough. Young people may also prefer a larger screen, a better keyboard, and faster connection speeds than the mobile provides at present. Some find it too complicated to set up the software and to use the advanced services. However, many of those who claim to be technological illiterates turn out during the interviews to demonstrate quite substantial knowledge about potential services, functions, solutions, and the qualities of desirable or unwanted content. More young people in 2006 than in 2004 said that they used Bluetooth, infrared, and usb ports to transfer data (photos, videos, music) from their mobile to the PC and vice versa. It is likely that the mobile Internet will become more popular when prices fall, the speed and quality increase, and the interest in services such as email, Messenger, news, and

entertainment on the mobile matures. As this implies, the mobile is increasingly the focus of a convergence of technologies, media formats, and content which have previously been available through other platforms; and mobiles are in turn much more easily combined with other media through different forms of wireless and wired connections.

The long-term impact of these possibilities is not easily predicted, as the same technologies seem to be adapted and integrated in different ways and with different meanings in different countries. Across the globe, we can identify a number of basic uses and meanings of the mobile (with communication and information as the lowest common denominator). However, several sets of conditions affect the adaptation rate and the common as well as unexpected uses in different national and cultural contexts: these include cultural factors (traditions, norms, trends), social aspects (legislation/regulation, needs, norms), and practical constraints (access, economy, infrastructure, work/study/home distance). Some of the best examples of the similarities and differences here are represented in Katz and Aakhus's edited book *Perpetual Contact,*[20] which analyzes mobile phone uses in ten countries from different parts of the world, or in the five volumes edited by Kristof Nyiri, based on international conferences on mobile media research from 2001 to 2005.[21] Examples of studies which combine national approaches with general analysis are Rich Ling's *The Mobile Connection,*[22] Ito et al.'s *Personal, Portable, Pedestrian: Mobile Phones in Japanese Life,*[23] and the outcomes from the research project *Mobile Media, Mobile Youth*[24] on which this chapter is based.

The variety of uses and forms of adaptation is not simply determined by usability, functionality, and needs. The choice of the mobile and use of services also indicate the mobility and fleeting inconsistency of trends[25] in youth cultures. Is it trendy to display the smartest phone or is it trendy to be extremely discreet, while owning the hottest brand and new services and while being an intensive user, or is it more trendy to be laid-back or to prefer a primitive "retro" model?[26] Young people in this age group seem to be divided into two large categories, but internally for quite different reasons. Our studies show that many of the participants have quite advanced mobiles, but still, few claim to be interested in the most advanced and expensive devices. Others do in fact like to have the newest technologies, although, according to some of the boys, this is less about functions than about showing off, flashing the new device, maybe also demonstrating the functions as part of the show. As Jacob puts it, "You know, among friends, you show off the new gear you bought. You do that when you're a boy: 'Hey, take at a look at this, I guarantee it's better than yours.' Two weeks later he has bought a new one and then he says: 'Take a look at this!' Jacob claims that boys grow out of this inclination to show off when they grow older, although some might see that as an open question.

To some of the young users, the quality of the mobile is also important. It is seldom, though, that having a "wrong" or somehow untrendy mobile leads to such drastic solutions as chosen by the sixteen-year-old girl who in a satirical way talks about the childhood traumas she suffered due to her huge brick-like mobile with only call and text-message services: "That's why I got rid of it again and decided to go into 'mobile-celibacy,' I simply boycotted mobiles for years." At the time of the interview, however, she did have a new, advanced mobile and could not imagine life without it.

Some informants claim they do not care much about the look of the mobile as long is it works, while others say that they like to have a mobile with a good design. Some of the girls decorate their mobile with various covers, holsters from Gucci and other designers, or with fun stickers. They modify the set up, the screen picture, and the ringtone, partly according to the image of themselves they like to display, but primarily according to the perception

of the mobile as a kind of "shell" which encloses their social life and networks, emotional experiences, personal information and so forth. The metaphorical meaning of "shell" is a protecting case or layer, in this context, the physical device which contains and represents the sensitive, personal content relating to personal identity.

However, a small group of adolescents simply do not prioritize the mobile, as something completely indispensable. During our empirical work we didn't meet anyone who didn't have a mobile, although there were a few who had very old, simple models and who very rarely made calls and exchanged very few text-messages. They simply didn't care and didn't mind not being part of the intense hyperactive social communication pattern which is the reality for the majority of girls as well as boys.

Another group of young boys also demonstrated a laid-back attitude, but did so quite consciously. They sometimes left the phone at home and openly cultivated the attitude of not being dependent on it. Even so, compared to the first group of laid-back users they still had a rather intensive and extensive pattern of use, and combined the use of the mobile with Messenger and other digital services. They could not risk being completely "out of sync," because mobile communication is primarily carried on with people whom you see often or every day. This laid-back attitude does not necessarily express resistance to peer-group culture, even if it may arise from a wish to distinguish oneself from the group.[27] Part of the attitude is about demonstrating that you are in control, that you are cool about youth culture, including media use, and not part of the visibly hectic text-message culture. These different attitudes and to some degree diverse patterns of use reflect the fact that personal needs and interests do contribute to the social shaping of mobile phones, even if common patterns of social use and meaning can be distinguished, the social networks, individual interests, contextual factors (background, access, norms in family and peer group), and attitudes all have an effect on how the technology is adopted and defined.

Interestingly, most of the students who wrote high school essays about *My Mobile and Me* and the participants in the two qualitative studies discussed the dichotomy between actual and ideal uses of the mobile. Again and again, they discussed on the one hand their almost uncontrollable use of the mobile, their fear of being without it, and of being disconnected from their social network, and on the other hand, their experience of being unable to control the information flow and their need for face-to-face social exchange and for periods of free time. The majority of users were divided between experiencing the instant need for communication and updating, and a more distanced reflection upon the pace, stress and greater or lesser dependency on the mobile as a social tool. In conclusion, however, almost all agreed that the mobile, both in itself and combined with other communication media, is extremely useful, necessary, and good for maintaining all kinds of relationships. (Susan Herring in her chapter also comments on the schism between ideal and actual uses, reminding us that youth also participate in "moral panics" about media effects.)

Having discussed the range of ways in which mobile communication is perceived and used within contemporary youth culture, I want now to move on and consider four broad themes that relate more specifically to the question of identity: availability, presence, the personal log, and social learning.

Availability

With the mobile you don't miss much. You have your friends right at your hand and you do more spontaneous things. (Marie, twenty years)

One essential aspect of mobile phone use is the fact that the phone, and following this, the personal user, is always on. Our 2006 survey showed that 80 percent of the informants never turned off their mobile phone and that 20 percent turned it off for between four and twelve hours. The qualitative data indicate that the mobile in these latter cases was turned off at night to allow undisturbed sleep, at work when required, and in cinemas. Adolescents very seldom completely turn off their mobiles, even at school, in restaurants, silent compartments on trains, at the dinner table, and so forth—they simply put the phone on "mute" and are able to check the display for incoming messages when the mobile vibrates.

This means that users—in particular the adolescents who never turn their phone off—are always available for communication, information, entertainment, or, in short, for other people. One nineteen-year-old girl says that even if she sometimes turns off her mobile when she really needs to relax, it isn't for long—"I can't be without it for too long. What if I miss something? [laughs]." "Missing something" refers to the constant updating of the social network, while the laugh indicates her self-conscious collusion with this practice. On the one hand, the girl openly tells about the reality of her life with the mobile and how she depends on it. Yet on the other hand, she takes a more reflexive, distanced—even ironic—stance toward such extensive uses, needs, and attitudes.

Time off or mobile-free zones are a luxury,[28] which only the few who are so secure in their position in their social network can dare to enjoy. Such users like to demonstrate that they are in control by leaving the mobile at home or turning it off every now and then. However, the absence of the mobile—either by choice or as a result of lack of money or stolen or broken devices—is a threat to the important updating of the social network, and hence also to one's own position, one's ability to take part in social activities, and ultimately to one's self-perception or identity.

Several of our informants said that they would keep the mobile on at night and even have it next to their head on the pillow, not only because the mobile functioned as an alarm clock,[29] but also because they did not want to miss any messages or calls. Some stated that it may be important to your friends that you are available around the clock, if they need support, comfort, someone to talk to, or laugh with. In that case, sleep is less important. One example is twenty-year-old Marie who says: "It is next to the pillow so you can hear it if someone calls at night, because you wouldn't like to miss a call. . . . If someone is sad or drunk or has had some bad experiences and needs to talk to me I would feel terribly bad if they couldn't get hold of me." In these cases the mobile is a line to instant friendly support and emotional presence. Nineteen-year-old Jacob says the same: "Your true friends—those with the label 'real good friends' in the address book—they're the ones you call or text at 2 a.m. and say: 'Hey, I'm in trouble. You've got to help me!'" Being always on and available expresses confirmation of trust which is fundamental for true relationships.[30] The unwanted calls of all kinds which are a consequence of this are the inevitable price to pay for constant availability in one's intimate social relationships. (These examples of the importance of the mobile have an equivalent in the case of the British immigrant girl, Walia, in Sandra Weber and Claudia Mitchell's chapter in this volume. Just like the participants in the Danish study, Walia cannot imagine being without her mobile, not least because of its role as a mediator or link between social and personal identity.)

Phatic Communication
Many young users send messages to one another that ask "Hey, what are you doing?" or calls with the same intention: to be in contact means being correctly "tuned in," or "in

phase."[31] A reply to these phatic messages is not expected quite as fast as it usually is to other messages, but not answering a message like this at some point still amounts to a rejection of the relationship.

A phenomenon that is not known as such among Danish youth is *pilaris*, which is familiar, for example, in Finland and Italy. *Pilaris* is a kind of "no-call," where you ring once and then hang up just to indicate that you are thinking of the receiver.[32] Mathilde, 19, has met this phenomenon during a stay in Italy and compares it to text-message-use in Denmark: "Well, I think it is really nice to receive messages. . . . It may just be the fact that someone is thinking of me and just writes me something. In Italy I had a somewhat different experience . . . that is, if you think of someone you call just once and hang up . . . and then, suddenly you have a lot of unanswered calls." It appears that Mathilde prefers to receive a message with some kind of content, no matter how void of apparent meaning it is. As the meaning of phatic communication is created by the context of the message, it ought not to make any difference how the message looks, but there may be some cultural aspects that influence how such messages are understood. In Finland, it appears that the unanswered calls may be of a more informative kind, understood only through the codes the group agrees upon, for example, a call may mean "goodnight" in the evening or "I'm ready to go" in the morning (Kasesniemi 2003). A similar phenomenon is beeping, described by Jonathan Donner based on his studies of mobile phone culture in Rwanda.[33] He divides beeping into beeps for the receiver to call the caller, relational ("hey, I am here") and prenegotiated (based on a shared code) calls. Even if young Danes seldom use pilaris or beeping just as a form of greeting, a number of the "hello, where are you?" calls or text messages have similar intentions. Fifteen-year-old Salem explains how it works: "Well, if I haven't got anything to do, right, then I ask all my friends: 'What are you doing?' right? That's how a conversation starts. You send 'what are you doing?' and then they begin to send: Playing a computer game, playing soccer, playing basketball. . . . I just want them to know what I am doing." A negative variation of void calls or messages is "bombing," that is, calling or texting someone either endlessly or at odd times to get them in trouble or to harass them. The mobile can be an effective tool for mobbing and harassment, although it has not been not frequently mentioned in this way in our studies.

Learning the codes, the unwritten rules for meaning, language, and normative behavior[34] is essential in order to make the communication meaningful, at the level of actual content and at the level of phatic communication, when the meaning must be interpreted by the contextual situation of the exchange. Therefore a beep may mean something different in Denmark, or Finland or Rwanda, but also between much more locally rooted groups. Signe Bloch identifies maintaining social contact as a superior motive for phatic mobile communication along with other general uses. The superior motive can be seen as the glue between other motives for maintaining contact: belonging to a group, confirmation, status, presence, entertainment.[35] These motives are closely related to the importance of being able to mirror, reflect, and test one's own personal identity in relation to the group identity.

No Free Moments   Another relevant aspect here is that with the phone (along with Messenger, email, and chat) always on there are no free moments, no time off except in very rare situations.[36] The ideal is to be in control of life in general, symbolized by the ambition of being able to control the use of the mobile phone: "It is nice that you have a small rubber button which simply has to be pushed down for a few seconds, and then you are ok again." However, the reality of the immense amount of work and effort it would take to exist without the mobile phone, not to mention the "sacrifices" in the form of loss of social interaction, is

illustrated by the sentence which recurred in different forms throughout our interviews: "I guess I could choose to turn it off . . . but I can't."

Young users in particular therefore have constant reminders of the presence of others, either through the mechanical expressions of the mobile—sounds, vibrations, visual effects— or through meaningful content,[37] both from their own and from other mobiles. The qualitative data indicate that many adolescents are in fact constantly being interrupted—in their private situations and in public spaces—by one or more digital media like the phone, Messenger, Internet, email, or other people's mobile phone use. And in addition to this comes the ordinary use of television, Internet, music, and games. This raises significant questions about the cognitive abilities that are needed to focus, concentrate, multitask, and deal with large amounts of information of all kinds, although these are beyond the scope of this article.

Stress Even if young users almost unanimously agree that it is de facto not possible to manage without the mobile, critical reflections are aired. Stress—used in its popular sense— is a repeated topic in our studies as well as in other research: how is it possible to deal with the pace and pervasiveness of information and the built-in expectations of rapid replies and the constant negotiation of context and meaning that are required by mobile communication?[38]

For example, one sixteen-year-old girl writes: "I believe that in order to have a healthy mobile phone culture we need to find out how we can avoid the demand of being publicly present around the clock. To have some clear restrictions when people have time to turn off their mobile, the computer, and log off completely—to prevent stress from being a national disease." This opinion was more or less shared by several of our informants, and it exemplifies the gap that often seems to arise between practice and reflection. It is, however, remarkable that the absence of the mobile also causes symptoms of stress. It is worrying not to be in contact, not to be updated on one's social networks. Marie, twenty years old, lost her phone for a few hours and thought: "'Oh no, everybody is trying to reach me and I can't reach anyone and now I have lost all these phone numbers and how can I get them back?' The friends whom I don't talk to often would simply disappear from my life, I thought. Well, I found the mobile again and since then I have never left it anywhere. I really don't know what I would do without it." Likewise, another sixteen-year-old girl says: "What if you don't get to answer the phone in time? Then you aren't there around the clock and then at least I would have broken many promises to friends; I have more than once said: 'You can always call me!' or 'I'll always be here for you.' You can't just withdraw from these promises of eternal loyalty."

Sometimes it becomes quite obvious that this experience of confusion, pressure, and stress is not always strictly connected to mobile phone use but is a more general condition of being young in modern society. In this sense, the mobile can be seen merely to reinforce tendencies that already exist. Nevertheless, the mobile can become the catalyst for broader frustrations: "It is also a stress factor that your friends can always reach you. This means that you constantly have to consider a lot of things. For example what you are going to do on Friday and so forth. . . . " Thinking about social activities on Friday shouldn't be too difficult to think about for a teenage girl; here the statement is a good example of how remarks about the mobile express more general frustrations. Adolescents are dealing with the constant coordination of everyday activities, and the fact that time has become flexible[39] and that all arrangements can be negotiated or changed on the run. This makes the microcoordination of everyday life fluid and constantly open to question. In principle, the liberation from very fixed times and appointments should lessen the stress of needing to be on time for

everything. But some adolescents become frustrated, and feel that they waste time waiting, and this in turn is seen to reflect back on the quality of relationships themselves, which are also seen to be constantly in flux.

Presence   The second theme to be discussed here is the question of presence. Presence in this context relates to three mutually related understandings: the perception of presence in a shared space, whether physical or virtual (or indeed psychological); the potential for being simultaneously present in more than one space; and the potential disturbance caused by the mobile in social situations.

It seems that modern people, in particular young people, are often potentially somewhere else mentally than in their present physical location. This can be due to the MP3 device, which makes it possible to shut off the surroundings and establish a private space where one's psychological presence is transferred to another symbolic place of experience. It can be due to the mobile, which is always nearby and potentially disrupting the full experience of presence in the situation, or it can be due to the mobile's ability to add to the users' experience of being in a shared, virtual space. Even if young people also tend to develop ideals of normative behavior regarding mobile talking or texting, for example, when they are with friends or family, it is more common than not that the mobile phone "takes away" the people you are with in a social situation because they have to check their mobile or reply to a call. It simply is not possible to be equally present in two places at the same time.

The Perception of Presence in a Shared Space

Biocca et al. make a useful distinction here between physical presence and social presence. Their point is that social presence is a state "that varies with medium, knowledge of the other, content of the communication, environment, and social context."[40] This means that the experience of presence in the same shared space depends on what information you get, whom you are talking to, what you are talking about, and what distractions you may experience in the physical location. Lombard and Ditton[41] define presence as the perceptual illusion of nonmediation. That is, if we perceive ourselves to be in another space than the physical space, the mediated situation is experienced as real. The feeling of presence is not as such bound to a specific medium. Lombard and Ditton talk about high presence and low presence media and suggest (along with other theorists like Biocca et al.) that the more modalities a medium uses (for example, images and sounds), the more senses are activated and the more effective is the feeling of presence.

Young people who are growing up with digital communication media are in a position to explore the potentials—and limitations—of different media for various personal communication purposes, and this often entails developing a strong notion of usefulness that is practical as well as social. Most have rather strong feelings about what can be said or written on the phone, and what must necessarily be communicated face-to-face. Most young users, however, are able to establish intimate spaces for shared presence when they talk on the phone or have a text-message conversation. The physical space is shut out, no matter if it is the bus, the crowded street, or the bedroom.

The experience of presence is important in most interpersonal communication situations in order to establish a feeling of trust and social bonding. The experience of presence may, however, vary a lot, especially depending on knowledge of the other people and the content, the characteristics of the situation, and the intentions of the communication. Very good

friends or lovers may be able to have intimate conversations with a strong feeling of mutual presence via text messaging, while a telephone call to a teacher or a trainer or a less-close peer may appear distanced and formal. In short, the use of the mobile may add to the creation of a feeling of copresence, nearness, intimacy, or it may be perceived as an alienating medium, depending on the context of the communication.

Phatic communication of the kind described above may also include strong feelings of presence, because of the psychological experience of being close, or caring. For example, Marie, aged twenty-two, refers to the way in which monkeys socialize when they pick lice from one another: "That is just one way to keep in contact, to tap each other's shoulder and say that you are still here. Like monkeys picking lice from each other, you send text-messages just because it is cosy and to demonstrate that you are still here. So, I guess I pick lice from my friends. Yes. (Laughs)." Ling describes these "grooming" messages as rituals[42] that are important to sustaining relationships,[43] while Geser also compares this use of phatic calls with face-to-face "grooming talk"[44] and concludes that there is a close similarity between grooming communication offline and online. Beyond the "simple" maintaining of relations, grooming may also—as it does among grooming monkeys—express codes of dominance, levels of interconnectedness, types of relationship, and so on. It can serve as an important means of mutual social confirmation and expressing trust in each other. Thus, a sixteen-year-old girl talks about "grooming" over time, the experience of being constantly connected: "Even the experts tell us that we become lonelier by being present 24/7. But I don't see it that way—at least not in my case. I feel closer to all my friends when I can just call or write a message. It makes it easier to have the same contact in places where you can't see your friends."

Communication about intimate or deep issues is, therefore, possible on the mobile with good friends. But our young users agree that in order to deal with serious problems you need to be present in the same physical space. A fifteen-year-old girl says: "If I am at home lying down alone in my bedroom, well, then I can talk about anything [on the phone]. But not problems. Then you have to be face-to-face. It is too easy to misunderstand something if you can't read the body language and the faces—a single word can easily be misunderstood." Text messaging is too noncommittal, and over the phone you can simply hang up. Text messaging about important or problematic issues is an easy way out. Almost all the respondents in our research agreed, although their perceptions of text messaging and phone talk varied. However, others said that they found text messages easier to use, for example, if they were feeling sad; by contrast, the direct connection and the sensual use of voice in a call may create an intimacy that makes it difficult to open up and to keep control. As Dea, seventeen years old, says: "Well, I think . . . when you text you say things you wouldn't say on the phone. You know . . . you don't gibber along and if you meet again it isn't completely embarrassing. If it is your close friend and something about her irritates you it is difficult to say it directly. Or with a text-message you can write and simply say 'Listen, I am sad about this or that.' Because then you have that distance and still talk it out but without being completely hysterical and girlish."

However, the general perception is that serious topics must be dealt with face-to-face, with the visual information provided by facial expressions and body language to support what is said and to reveal one's emotional responses. Even so, none of the participants like video calls very much. Some do use webcams when they communicate with close friends on Messenger or various chat channels. But—at least thus far—most young users think that video calls are disturbing. A shared feeling of intimacy and trust can be better established through talk on the phone or even through a text-message conversation between friends. Young people are generally such skilled mobile phone users that they learn how to read meanings, moods and

emotions "between the lines" of what is said. Interestingly some of the young informants mentioned that they have photos of those with whom they communicate most, and when a text message is received or a call is answered, the information on the screen is supplemented with a still photo of the person calling. As twenty-one-year-old Jacob says about talking to his girlfriend: "Then you can look at her photo while you're talking."

Being Simultaneously Present in Several Spaces

Erving Goffman describes the human ability to divide one's attention while interacting between main and side activities.[45] The main activity completely engages the individual's attention and it clearly determines action at a given time, although a side activity can often be maintained simultaneously without disturbing it. However, a sixteen-year-old girl complains that it is not possible to be present in two communicative situations at the same time: "When we were together and tried to have a conversation, she wasn't present at all. We weren't two friends talking but a third one was present: her mobile and whoever it represented at the given time. This created a distance in our friendship when we were together but on the other hand you felt close as soon as you were the one writing or calling with her. Fundamentally a mobile represents a person you are in contact with without being at the same location." In this situation, the partner in the physical location is excluded and becomes the audience to an interpersonal exchange. Gergen makes a useful distinction here between the inside conversation, among those who are talking, and the outside conversation, among those who are present but prevented from participating, because they aren't "invited" to the inside conversation.[46] For those in the outside position, this may provoke a strong feeling of being excluded from a community. On the other hand, the situation may also cause frustration for those in the inside position. Thus, twenty-four-year-old Anna expresses her experience of the opposite situation, where she is the one who communicates, as equally frustrating: "It can be very disturbing that you can be in *one* room and communicate with someone who is in another room at the same time. Then you can't be present in the company or the room you are in."

   Gergen describes this phenomenon of being physically present in one space and mentally present in another as "absent presence."[47] Twenty-one-year-old Benjamin, for example, uses the mobile as a helper in social situations when he feels excluded or at least not part of the community, for instance, at a party with people with whom he has nothing in common: "Well, if you are at a party and you are bored or don't find anyone to talk to then obviously you become a little restless, and then of course you bring out your mobile and maybe you text someone who is coming downtown later." By using his mobile in this way, he demonstrates that he—apparently—has nothing in common with the people present but also that he doesn't need to have, since he is connected to someone out there, in another place. The mobile becomes the practical social savior and face saver in one. It is not good—in some youth terminologies it may be labeled "slack"—to be visibly excluded from a fun, intensive, social situation. Another boy says that he sometimes catches himself looking through his mobile address book or reading text messages in order not to look as if he isn't having a great time. This demonstrative use parallels the way girls in particular use the mobile to demonstrate that they are connected, that is, not alone and just a second from potentially alerting someone, when they are moving in unfriendly or lonely places. The presence of the mobile phone may not actually prevent something bad from happening, but it does create some feeling of nearness and safety in the situation.[48] Hans Geser describes this use of the mobile as a "symbolic bodyguard,"[49] whereby the user fends off threats to their minimal

private space by monitoring the mobile's screen, signalling that even if they are alone in the local, physical setting, they are virtually somewhere else in the company of others.[50]

The Mobile as Personal Log

All my stuff is on my mobile, I mean my diary and like everything is simply on my mobile. My entire phone numbers, everything. Nothing could be worse. Because all my things are on my mobile, really. (Girl, nineteen years)

The third theme I discuss here is the function of mobile phones as personal mobile logs—that is, as a kind of life diary that saves experiences, memories, thoughts, or moments in a visual and textual form. The sim card in your phone could be seen to contain the story of your life (at least at the present time): not just text messages, photos and videos, but also chosen or given tokens such as icons, ring tones, music lists; and the diary, address book, alarm clock all save and display the experiences and activities of the user as they have been mediated and captured by the mobile. As one of the sixteen-year-old boys says: "Actually I would ten times rather lose my mobile than my sim card because that is where you have all the important stuff."

Moblogging is not so far very popular in its developed form, but all kinds of representations in (or on) the mobile phone function as a private moblog which may be shared with friends, and sharing can itself be seen as a means of exposing your personal life to a more public gaze.[51] The mobile phone documents your immediate story, as logs have to be erased with a frequency, depending on the extent of use and limitations of data capacity. Alternatively, you may choose to save parts of your story by uploading it to your PC. Users can also transfer these compressed stories when they change mobile phones. Generally, however, the capacity of smart mobiles in combination with the possibility of transferring data to the PC, the mobile memory, and "life log" seems to be sufficient for what is important to save at the moment.

The documentation of personal experiences in sound, photo or video proves that the mobile user himself or herself has been on the location when something happened, which may include special occasions, accidents, criminal activities, funny or interesting happenings. Not many people carry their digital camera with them, but as the mobile is always there it becomes the key tool for capturing moments, storing information, and documenting experiences. Even if the mobile camera and video recorder do play a role as potential tools for the citizen reporter and for capturing remarkable content for the scrapbook of one's life, the mobile is used primarily to document more everyday happenings and experiences. Twenty-three-year-old Freja says: "You usually just have photos from special occasions, right. And the pictures that really mean the most are everyday pictures, those you remember in your head right? Sound memories would be fun. That thing about documenting life, that's what I am thinking of."

Jacob, 19, has taken photos of his dog growing up from when it was a puppy and shows the photos to his colleagues in the army where he is serving for four months. He also sends his mother MMSes of himself from the army, for example saying: "Look mom, I am green in the face." Like many other young people in our research, Jacob primarily documents everyday situations and sorts them through over time. He saves the funniest pictures on his computer, and likes to look at "old" photos of things he did with friends some time ago—festivals, parties, and activities with friends and family. Fifteen-year-old Clara prefers to photograph unusual, funny, atypical situations and to relive the situation when she edits the photos and

videos on her laptop. In this context, documentation is also used to include others within one's private sphere; sharing insights into everyday little events, moods, emotions is much more intimate and personal than sharing photos of sensations experienced in the street, of a rock star at a concert, or collectively distributed jokes or icons. It reveals something about the "owner's" self-perception, and the adequate reception of this insight is important to the "owner" as it confirms his or her personal identity. The mobile or digital log may not be fundamentally different from traditional photo albums or other kinds of personal storytelling. However, the data in the digital log are always ready, it is easy to edit, and it is personal, which means it can only be shared by invitation from the owner. Friends look through the picture galleries together and comment on them, either reliving shared past experiences or getting insight into one another's personal lives and experiences. The images trigger collective memories or provide insights into each other's personal histories.

Not only photos and videos, but also text messages are memorable, however, and not all of this documentation is necessarily shared. Marie, aged 20, uses the phone to have happy thoughts at night: "Before I go to sleep and if I am alone I lie there reading old, happy messages." This use is similar to the exchange of text messages between friends or lovers before going to sleep, although reading old messages also exploits the bittersweet sentimentality of memory by reviving the moods and sentiments of earlier experiences.

The Mobile as the Data Double

The mobile is a kind of digital diary which is gladly shared with friends, but it may also be perceived as a "data double," a mobile extension of the body and mind, even a kind of "additional self." As I have noted, the mobile is always close at hand, ear, or eye: it represents a lifeline to self-perception, a means of documenting of social life, expressing preferences, creating networks, and sharing experiences. To this extent, one could argue that the mobile user is becoming a kind of cyborg. The young users in our research do not use the term "data double," but it seems that they experience a kind of symbiosis with their mobiles, in which the physical devices come to be understood as a representation of personal meanings and identities.

One example is the young woman who puts her phone on her pillow beside her at night. She doesn't do it just in order to be able to monitor activities, even if that is considered to be important around the clock, but also because she doesn't have the heart to put it on the table or floor, as it represents her social life, her intimate experiences, and her social network.[52] But even if the mobile at one level is the physical, immediate representation of the user, it is also simply a representation and a useful tool. To the users, the shell, the device itself, holds no or little affective value—it may be exchanged for a newer model. It is primarily the content and the representations it contains which establish the meaning of the mobile. Even if the mobile phone is regarded as a *personal* device, it is simply a *device*. The devices in themselves do not appear to be substitutes so much as conduits for affective and social bonds between people.

The user identification with the mobile at some level extends to the mobile phone number as such. The mobile phone number is very important to the young users—almost all informants in the two studies say that they would definitely keep their old number when they exchange the old mobile for a newer model, even if it would be easier to buy a new phone with a new license and number. Telephone numbers are the codes for social and intimate relations, the code to access social networks. Twenty-year-old Marie, for example, suggests that "it gives you a kind of safe and good feeling that people you haven't talked to for a long time and someone you probably shall never talk to again anyway have your number." Danny, aged twenty, considers the meaning of the phone number as an alias that facilitates

the transcendence between the physical and the represented "you." Danes are already digitized as citizens through a civil registration number, but to him the mobile phone number is the code that gives access to his world and makes possible interaction and communication across time, space, and physical borders.

Social Learning

My fourth and last theme is social learning. This may be understood in two ways: as learning through social interaction and, related to this, learning about social norms.[53] The first of these has been indirectly discussed throughout the article, so the focus here is on the latter, learning about social norms.

Our research clearly shows that the rules and norms for social behavior with the mobile phone are constantly tested and modified by young people.[54] The modification takes place as the patterns of use and the meaning of the mobile in everyday life change and develop. This means that norms are constantly changing and also that they are not the same for all social groups. Most of the informants we have talked to reflect on issues of normative behavior, disturbance in public places, and the interruption of interpersonal situations. Their observations in the study do not, however, necessarily correspond to their own behavior at all times. Furthermore, it is important to note that the adolescents we have talked to represent a broad average of young Danes but are not in any way radical, subcultural, marginal, or provocative. If we had sought out angry young boys and girls in the southern suburbs of Copenhagen or frustrated rich kids to the north, we may have found a somewhat different picture of the mobile as an identity marker and a means of social provocation, and different perceptions of normative behavior with the mobile.

One of the key questions for the informants in our research is about mobile phone use in the company of others, which is closely related to the themes discussed in the two previous sections of this chapter. As we have seen, the mobile is often perceived as a potential disturbance or rival intrusion in situations of face-to-face communication. Our young users were particularly disturbed by talk and texting in cinemas,[55] a little less in restaurants and cafes, and on public transportation and least of all in the streets. Even the use of headsets in public places is disturbing to many, particularly when the music in the headset is very loud and yet not audible, and when others talk too loud into the tiny mic on their headset while glancing absentmindedly toward the horizon. Another quite significant disturbance of public space caused by mobile phone use is the ways in which personal, sometimes intimate content, is presented in excessively loud voices, particularly in public spaces. The young informants complain about not being able to avoid eavesdropping unless you turn up your iPod to the threshold of pain. The young users are on the one hand used to communicating and being visible in public space, especially when they are in a group. Yet on the other hand, they do not want to be included in other people's intimate exchanges without having the choice. This is perhaps a typically Danish attitude: in some cultures it is not acceptable to be loud and visible in public spaces, while this is not a problem in other cultures.

It may seem to adults of older generations that young people do not moderate their behavior with their mobiles in public places. But two significant points must be made here: whether we believe it or not, young people's social norms largely mirror the norms for social behavior they were brought up with, both personally and institutionally. Secondly there is a lot of moderation and teaching each other "good behavior" going on in young people's social networks. Every communicative exchange involves negotiating social norms and hence group identities. This is not usually a result of conscious reflection and interaction,

although sometimes the behavior of a person or a group provokes a reaction or formulation of an attitude. For example, seventeen-year-old Dea gets really irritated when her friend talks continuously at the dinner table in Dea's home, where the norm is that there should be no mobiles at the table: "I think it is very annoying when someone talks on the mobile in my home. My friend does that a lot. I find it extremely rude—rrr, I get quite angry." Another example is twenty-year-old Marie who is usually with two or three very close friends who may answer their phones, although as they know each other well, they will ask "do you mind?" if it becomes too much. Others say that if you are with friends at a cafe you simply don't answer your phone because that would signal lack of respect and interest, and make deep or intimate or fun conversation impossible. Another example is the five friends who share a flat and who have decided that mobiles are not allowed during shared meals. They may have copied rules they know from other contexts, but it is remarkable that they agree on a mobile-free zone at an age when the mobile is widely perceived as indispensable at all times. Self-regulation is necessary and expected, although norms vary between groups and individual behavior mirrors the collective norms in a particular setting: personal behavior may change depending on whom you are with. Here again, behavior with the mobile is a signal of collective and individual identity.

Fifteen-year-old Salem underlines how seldom his mobile is turned off by saying: "I turn off my mobile for just about half an hour during the Ramadan, when we eat, that's the only time, then we must have peace, one has to respect that. I once received a text-message in such a situation and I told him off, that's over the limit." This may say more about Salem's self-identity as a Muslim, as he is otherwise quite loud and visible, and very fond of his mobile. By telling this story he demonstrates how important this culture is to him, even compared to the mobile and social networking. Still, he likes to relate that he has had to tell someone else off in order to make him behave according to the proper norms.

This mutual negotiation of social norms is a basic quality of group identity. In order to be included in the community, one must behave according to the normative codes. But the collective codes are also formed by individuals who test and mirror their individual identities in the group and vice versa, and so this is an ongoing process. This is certainly apparent in the use of mobile phones. The development from the portable telephone to the personal, handheld computer and the ubiquitous integration of the mobile has taken place within just a decade. The pace of the resulting changes in behavior, attitudes, and meanings, and their implications for identify formation, have potentially been enormous. Yet even if there is a gap between what young people say about their use of mobiles and what they actually do, they are increasingly reflexive about their uses of this technology. This may be a result of public debate and/or parental and institutional constraints. But it does seem that the extensive use, meaning, and impact of the mobile for young people have led to a considerable degree of spontaneous reflection and debate about broader social norms and values.

Conclusion

You never feel alone when you have your mobile, do you? (Grit, seventeen-year-old girl)

The four themes I have discussed in this article illustrate just some of the potential implica-tions of new mobile communication devices for the formation of young people's identities in the contemporary world. The mobile has an immediate symbolic value to young users, not least through the technological possibilities and through the appearance of the device itself. Through its basic appearance, the decorative adaptations, the choice of ringtones and other

alerts, and through the screen background, the mobile itself provides signals about the user's identity or at least their self-presentation. The use of language, spelling, their actual way of interacting in dialogues, and the use of additional communicative elements and services also reveal things about the user's "personal settings."

In the context of this article, however, I have focused primarily on the social meanings of the mobile. As we have seen, the mobile supports and enhances the maintenance of social groups and the feeling of belonging to a group. Young people live in a period of time—historically as well as in terms of age—which is characterized by a collectively and personally perceived sense of fragmentation and uncertainty. Many social theorists have argued that traditional resources for identity formation are no longer so easily available, and that the realization of personal expectations for "the good life" may seem increasingly difficult. Young people also have to deal with the sometimes conflicting expectations of parents, school, and friends. Social networks—the strong ties as well as the weak, ephemeral relations—offer possibilities for testing oneself in the light of shared values, norms and codes, for negotiating collective and personal identity, and for establishing a sense of belonging. The mobile is the glue that holds together various nodes in these social networks: it serves as the predominant personal tool for the coordination of everyday life, for updating oneself on social relations, and for the collective sharing of experiences. It is therefore the mediator of meanings and emotions that may be extremely important in the ongoing formation of young people's identities.

The need to learn how to manage and to develop personal identity and the importance of social networks in this process are strongly facilitated by mobiles; and this makes it possible to talk about "mobile identity." The constant negotiation of values and representations and the need to identify with others result in a fluidity of identity which goes beyond the ongoing process of identity formation, to encompass the constant negotiation of norms and values and the processes of reflection that are characteristic of contemporary social life. The constant availability and presence associated with the mobile demonstrate how important it has become in all these arenas, even to those who use it only moderately. The mobile enforces an increasingly intense pace of communication and of intellectual and emotional experience. It, therefore, becomes both the cause and the potential solution to the frustrations of young people regarding the potential management of everyday life. The mobile is an important tool that allows one to be in control—which is an essential ability for adolescents in general—but simultaneously it is becoming more and more important to be able to control the mobile.

Notes

1. The quotes in the article are from the qualitative parts of the research project *Mobile Media, Mobile Youth*, 2004 and 2006 (see note 5). Quotes that refer to age and gender are from school essays, while quotes that refer to age and name (pseudonym) are from qualitative, individual interviews.

2. Rich Ling, *The Mobile Connection: The Cell Phone's Impact on Society* (San Francisco: Morgan Kaufmann Publishers, 2004).

3. See, for example, Kristof Nyiri, ed., *Mobile Learning: Essays on Philosophy, Psychology and Learning* (Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 2003); or James Katz, Mobile Phones in Educational Settings, in *A Sense of Place: The Global and the Local in Mobile Communication*, ed. Kristof Nyiri (Vienna, Austria: Passagen Verlag, 2005).

4. Social coordination and the coordination of everyday life is analyzed in a very useful way in Rich Ling (2004).

5. The analysis in this article builds on two studies of young Danes' uses of and attitudes toward the mobile, undertaken in a research and development project, *Mobile Media, Mobile Youth*, in fall 2004 and spring 2006 among fifteen- to twenty-four-year-old Danes. The 2004 study included a survey of 343 participants and individual, qualitative interviews with forty-eight in the age groups fifteen to seventeen, eighteen to twenty, and twenty-one to twenty-four. The 2006 study included a survey of 629 participants; twenty individual interviews divided between re-interviews of 2004 participants and new participants; observation studies of behavior with the mobile in public and semi-public places; and forty-three high school essays on *My Mobile and Me*. The quantitative data used in the article refers to the 2006 survey, while the qualitative data from both studies are used. The article is also informed by five re-interviews of informants from the 2004 study undertaken in spring 2005; by a previous study (2000) on young Danes' media uses; and by public statistics on media use in Denmark.

6. See e.g., Sonia Livingstone, *Young People and New Media: Childhood and the Changing Media Environment* (London: Sage, 2002) and Lin Prøitz, Intimacy Fiction: Intimate Discourses in Mobile Telephone Communication amongst Norwegian Youth, in *A Sense of Place: The Global and the Local in Mobile Communication*, ed. Kristof Nyiri (Vienna, Austria: Passagen Verlag, 2005).

7. See for example, Rich Ling (2004) and http://www.belllabs.com/history/75/gallery.html (accessed January 9, 2007).

8. Hans Geser, *Towards a Sociological Theory of the Mobile Phone*, Release 3.0. http://socio.ch/mobile/t_geser1.pdf (accessed December 12, 2006).

9. Rich Ling, 2004.

10. With reference to Mizuko Ito, Daisuke Okabe, and Misa Matsuda, *Personal, Portable, Pedestrian: Mobile Phones in Japanese Life* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).

11. Alexandra Weilenmann, *Doing Mobility* (Gothenburg: Gothenburg Studies in Informatics, 2003).

12. The English mode "nice" is used by young Danes in sentences in Danish. It enforces the meaning of "good" and adds to the level of "niceness" compared to use in English.

13. See Alex Taylor and Richard Harper, The Gift of the *Gab?*: A Design Oriented Sociology of Young People's Use of Mobiles. *Computer Supported Cooperative Work* 12 (2003): 267–296.

14. For example, almost 100 percent in the age group fifteen to twenty-four years old have their own mobile, 38 percent have their own laptops and 96 percent have Internet access, most of these in their home/bedroom. The data does not count ownership of PCs but other data indicates that almost 100 percent have either a laptop, a desktop PC or both. The mobile is cheap enough to make it the most accessible personal communication medium to everyone except a small group of very economically impoverished families.

15. See also the chapter by Sandra Weber and Claudia Mitchell in this volume for a short discussion of access to digital media on a global scale.

16. For a deeper analysis of the intimate and emotional meaning of the mobile see Leopoldina Fortunati, Italy: Stereotype, True and False, in *Perpetual Contact: Mobile Communication, Private Talk, Public Performance,* eds. James E. Katz and Mark A. Aakhus (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

17. See note 5.

18. The concepts of instrumental and expressive uses are discussed in Signe Skovgaard and Anne Skov, Presence—følelsen af tilstedeværelse, in Gitte Stald: *Mobile Medier, Mobile Unge* (Report, University of Copenhagen, 2005). The distinction comes from U.S. social behavior theory in the early 1950s, but it has been transformed and used, for example by Rich Ling and Birgitte Yttri, Hypercoordination via Mobile Phones in Norway, in Katz and Aakhus (2002), op.cit.

19. All young Danes have access to computers and Internet, and many have their own laptop according to the 2006 survey: 50 percent of the fifteen- to seventeen-year-olds, 40 percent of the eighteen- to twenty-one-year-olds, 25 percent of the twenty-two to twenty-four-year-olds. Fully 80 percent across age bands have their own iPod or MP3 player—but 10 percent of these use their mobile instead.

20. James E. Katz and Mark A. Aakhus, eds., *Perpetual Contact: Mobile Communication, Private Talk, Public Performance* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

21. See for example Kristof Nyiri, 2005.

22. Rich Ling, 2004.

23. Mimi Ito et al., 2005.

24. For example Stald, 2007. Also the *Mobile Media and Cultural Seminar* at University of Copenhagen September 2006, with participation of Rich Ling, Norway; Shin Mizukoshi, Japan; Dafna Lemish, Israel; Rasmus Helles and Gitte Stald, Denmark.

25. "Trends" should be understood as the direction or tendency a phenomenon takes at a given time. There is a built-in necessity in cultures, including youth cultural groups, to constantly challenge and redirect the practical, aesthetic, and social uses and meanings of products, phenomena or attitudes. Advanced group members explore the potentials, which are then collectively adapted, formed and popularized. This is an ongoing process, closely related to the ways in which social and personal identity is constructed. Everett Rogers presents a theory of integration processes in *Diffusion of Innovation* (5th Edition, Free Press, 2003 [1962]), which frequently inspires discussions of adoption of digital media and meaning hereof in relation to trends and social identity—as for example in Sonia Livingstone and Moira Bovill, *Children and Their Changing Media Environment: A European Comparative Study* (London: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001).

26. For further analysis of this based on the two studies, see e.g., Gitte Stald, Mobile Monitoring: Aspects of Risk and Surveillance and Questions of Democratic Perspectives in Young People's Uses of Mobile Phones, in *Young Citizens and New Media: Learning Democratic Engagement,* ed. Peter Dahlgren (London: Routledge, 2007).

27. See David Buckingham's discussion of identity politics in his Introduction to this volume, particularly in relation to the tension between separatism and integration.

28. Very interestingly discussed by Thomas Hylland Eriksen, in *Tyrannny of the Moment: Fast and Slow Time in the Information Age* (London: Pluto Press, 2001).

29. Even though most mobiles can do the alarm call when switched off—although many users do not seem to realize this.

30. With a reference to Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991).

31. A term that usually describes when a radio transmitter and receiver are tuned in correctly so there is a clear signal.

32. Eija-Liisa Kasesniemi, *Mobile Messages: Young People and a New Communication Culture* (Tampere, Finland: Tampere University Press, 2003).

33. See Jonathan Donner, What Can Be Said with a Missed Call? in *Seeing, Understanding, Learning in the Mobile Age*, ed. Kristof Nyiri, Vienna, Austria: Passagen Verlag, 2005.

34. See Rich Ling, 2004.

35. Signe Bloch, Postkort fra mobilen (Postcards from the mobile), *Mobile Media, Mobile Youth* (University of Copenhagen, Film & Media Studies, 2005).

36. Even in the cinema, at school or at work, the mobile is not turned off, just on "silent."

37. This distinction comes from Shannon and Weaver: "semantic noise and engineering noise," for example presented in John Fiske, *Introduction to Communication Studies* (London: Routledge, 1990).

38. A rather dystopian perspective on the consequences of information overload, pace of time and modernity is discussed by Zygmunt Baumann, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2000); Zygmunt Baumann, *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2003); Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2001) also discusses consequences of pace of time and management of time in relation to media use. Rich Ling (2004) and Leslie Haddon (2005) both describe the meaning of time in relation to digital media (mobiles) in a social context.

39. See for example Leslie Haddon (2000, 2005), "Social Consequences of Mobile Telephony," and *Media in Everyday Life*, plus Rich Ling (2004).

40. Frank Biocca, Chad Harms, and Judee Burgoon, Towards a More Robust Theory and Measure of Social Presence: Review and Suggested Criteria, *Presence* 12, no. 5 (2003): 456–480.

41. Matthew Lombard and Theresa Ditton, At the Heart of it All: The Concept of Presence, *Journal of Mediated Communication* 3, no. 2 (1997).

42. See Rich Ling, 2004.

43. Rich Ling, 2004.

44. Hans Geser, 2004.

45. Erving Goffman, *Behaviour in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gathering* (New York: Free Press/Macmillan, 1963).

46. Kenneth J. Gergen, The Challenge of the Absent Presence, in *Perpetual Contact: Mobile Communication, Private Talk, Public Performance,* eds. James E. Katz and Mark A. Aakhus (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

47. Kenneth J. Gergen, 2002.

48. See e.g. Rich Ling (2004) and Gitte Stald (2007).

49. Hans Geser, among others, describes this use of the mobile as a "symbolic bodyguard."

50. Hans Geser, 2004.

51. See Susannah Stern (this volume): Producing Sites, Exploring Identities: Youth Online Authorship and danah boyd, Why Youth ♥ Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life (this volume) for a discussion of young people's uses of blogs.

52. Jane Vincent and Richard Harper, The Social Shaping of UMTS: Preparing the 3G Customer. Report, University of Surrey Digital World Research Centre. http://www.dwrc.surrey.ac.uk/portals/0/SocialShaping.pdf (accessed May 31, 2007).

53. In their paper "Reconsideration of Media Literacy with Mobile Media" Shin Mizukoshi et al. (2005) discuss the clash between the idea that correct normative behavior (with the mobile) copies existing ideals while the mobile itself "undermines and reconstitutes such cultural norms." That is, mobile behavior mirrors and challenges existing norms at the same time. http://www.mode-prj.org/document/HongKong2005_1.pdf (accessed May 31, 2007).

54. See David Buckingham's reference to Erving Goffman's theory of front-stage and back-stage behavior in the Introduction to this volume.

55. The cinema is one of the last resorts for young people for immersive experience, undisturbed by incoming alerts.

Mobile Identity: Youth, Identity, and Mobile Communication Media Gitte Stald IT University of Copenhagen, Department of Innovative Communication Parents usually don't know how important a tool the mobile has become in young people's lives. They only think about the communicative function, not the social meaning. 1 (sixteen-year-old girl) The girl who is quoted above expresses an immediate understanding of the mobile phone's dual, but interdependent qualities for young people. One quality is the communicative function, which is facilitated by the technological device: it is about the mobile as Mobile identity is a development of online authentication and digital signatures, where the SIM card of one's mobile phone works as an identity tool. Mobile identity enables legally binding authentication and transaction signing for online banking, payment confirmation, corporate services, and consuming online content. The user's certificates are maintained on the telecom operator's SIM card and in order to use them, the user has to enter a personal, secret PIN code. When using mobile identity, no Youth and mobile phones: something more than a fashion. Santiago Lorente Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. Â Mobile telephone, then, takes up the role of communication mediator, and hence its high social meaning and importance. Jasper once said that "being is to communicate", and communication is precisely what makes the difference between non-living and living matter. Â Identity need is further accomplished by youth by way of "personalizing" the mobile device, and this is a feature that can be found all over the countries analysed as well. Young people find extremely attractive and fitting their deepest drives of identity the fact of choosing the various forms of covers, colours, icons, ringing tones, decoration, shape and size of their mobile phones. This addresses the consequences of digital media use for young people's individual and social identities. The contributors explore how young people use digital media to share ideas and creativity and to participate in networks that are small and large, local and global, intimate and anonymous. Â They discuss such topics as "girl power" online, the generational digital divide, young people and mobile communication, and the appeal of the "digital publics" of MySpace, considering whether these media offer young people genuinely new forms of engagement, interaction, and communication. Contributors Angela Booker, danah boyd, Kirsten Drotner, Shelley Goldman, Susan C. Herring, Meghan McDermott, Claudia Mitchell, Gitte Stald, Susannah Stern, Sandra Weber, Rebekah Willett.