

Mobile Phone Usage and Behavioral Science

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Our identities may be largely determined by our social relationships with people in our environment. In the mobile phone (and smart phone) era, the mobile phone is indispensable for building and maintaining social relationships. That is, our identities considerably depend on mobile phone usage. A better understanding regarding mobile phone usage provides a better insight into our own existence. There is need for further research on mobile phone usage.

Our daily lives can be transformed through the spread of new technologies. If a new technology threatened the conventions and/or the security of our daily lives, it would generate intensive debate and give rise to many socially problematic issues. Then, the scope of research about the technology would be widened; however, in many cases such a growth will be temporary.

The outcomes of such research would be rapidly applied and numerous problems would be resolved through considerable efforts. Finally, with the minimization of issues resulting from this new technology, people would gradually forget their concerns and the pace of research would stagnate. According to such a 'research story' about new technologies, research on the mobile phone would not be exceptional. Ling [1] noted that the "mobile phone is increasingly a vital part of our being social" and "it is disappearing into 'taken for grantedness.'" Although Ling's statement is accurate, it would not be appropriate to reduce the scale of research in this area. There should be numerous aspects to be considered and analyzed with respect to mobile phone usage. Such research should be continued in many areas. Behavioral science is one method to conduct research into mobile phone usage.

My interest is the nonverbal behavior/communication involved in mobile phone usage, which should be discussed from the perspective of behavioral science. Goffman claimed that if people are physically "co-present" in a space, some information will be mutually sent and received regardless of their intentions [2]. The human body exhibits and emits various types of signals, such as height, gender, race, look, line of sight, hair, clothing, footwear, belongings, voice, tone, language, loudness, scent, and body action, and "co-present" people receive such signals even if they do not intend to receive voluntarily. Goffman [2] referred to such continual and unavoidable communication "face-to-face interaction." Although face-to-face interaction involves verbal communication, the human body perpetually emits nonverbal signals. From the perspective of face-to-face interaction, mobile

phone usage, including the action of looking at a mobile phone display, sends signals despite the user's lack of intent. This means that the action can be considered to be nonverbal behavior/communication and thus be amenable to scientific research.

Nakamura [3-4] studied the function and the meaning of the action of looking at a mobile phone display. According to Goffman, public spaces can be considered a common ground for communicating with nonverbal signals, the majority of which are silently exchanged [2]. In the mobile phone era, texting or operating a device in public spaces plays something of a nonverbal role in the resolution of difficult situations [5]. Mobile phone usage in public spaces should be discussed with reference to this "public" role, which has spread worldwide. Above all, it should be emphasized that this function of the mobile phone is not physically installed into the device. People generate this attitude and provide meaning to it through their infinite body actions. The accelerated adoption of this practice suggests the existence of a long-standing requirement among people.

There has been a recent trend in which people look frequently at a mobile phone display even while in the company of intimate friends and relatives. This may imply different meanings. In one case, nonverbal signals caused by bodily actions may be sent without users' intention, as for instance in the case of the user merely confirming the current time; in another case, nonverbal signals may express (or conceal) a person's feelings of discomfort [4]. Such nonverbal exchanges seem to be common among individuals. However, the interpretation of such actions depends considerably on the subjective relationships between the actors and the observers: judgments are accordingly diverse [6].

Moreover, Nakamura and Oe [7] indicated that many users perform the action of showing their own mobile phone displays to others, as a type of nonverbal behavior. The action of showing could be interpreted by the observers as the user sending the message

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that the user trusts the observers. Many users understand such an interpretation by observers according to their own experience; sometimes, the action of showing is intentionally utilized to prove friendships and to construct or maintain a social relationship with the observers. Thus, mobile phone usage strongly influences our intimate spheres and/or social relationships.

A new subject related to mobile phone usage should be introduced. As many researchers have indicated, self-construal, the maintenance of social relationships, and the recognition of oneself depend on one's own culture [8-10]. It may therefore be expected that the exchange of nonverbal signals with regard to mobile phones will reflect the users' culture. It should be emphasized that such nonverbal behavior/communication can be objectively observed and compared between different cultures.

Behavioral science can contribute to the comprehension of mobile phone usage, social relationships and culture.

Of course perpetual and pervasive communication has changed human behaviors in daily life and there are so many subjects such as psychological anxiety, addiction, proximity, social networks, emotional support, sharing, generation/gender gap, public/private balance, geography pursuant to network communication, and so on. Technologically advanced communication devices with a crowd service have also generated new behaviors, just like as "selfie syndrome". Behavioral science will identify many such factors stemming from mobile phone usage. It can be expected to provide us with a rich understanding of our own existence in the mobile phone era.

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