

Mobile Fantasies on Film: Gathering Metaphoric Evidence of Mobile Symbiosis and the Mobile Imaginary

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ABSTRACT

Mobile communication studies are often limited in their ability to capture the entire domain of a mobile phone call. These limitations often require that researchers separately study what is going on between the caller, the recipient of the call and those with whom they are face-to-face. Two scenes from two different American films were used as a means to document the ways in which users imagine mobile phone use. The scenes were coded for evidence of contextual seams, interpersonal seams, mobile symbiosis and the mobile imaginary. Mobile communication provides new opportunities for sharing experiences and tasks that could not exist without the mobile aspects of the phone. Understanding how mobile phones serve as a medium onto which we project our deeper psychological needs provides a glimpse into the fantasies and fears around mobile phone use.

Keywords: *Mobile phones, mobile communication, social consequences of mobile communication, co-presence.*

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1. Introduction

To date, research on mobile phone use has been limited to the direct observation and reporting of the actual use of mobile communication devices. Researchers have also studied how the use of mobile phones in public has impacted observers of that use (Cumiskey, 2005a). They have focused on how users have integrated their phones into the coordination of daily activities as well as how people “wear” their phones (Arminen & Leinonen, 2006; Katz & Sugiyama, 2005; Ling & Pedersen, 2005). While there is the acknowledgement of a particular choreography that occurs as the presence and use of the mobile phone causes the users (callers) and observers to adjust to what is known

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and unknown about the social interactions taking place (Katz, 2006) as well as the sense of carrying remote others with you via the mobile phone, as in the Japanese *keitai* (Ito, Okabe, & Matsuda, 2005), these studies have not yet addressed sufficiently, imaginary, virtual dimension that exist during the course of mobile mediated communication. Only few researchers have scrutinized imaginary aspects, for an exception (Ito, & al., 2005). These limitations often require that researchers empirically study what is going on between the caller and the recipient of the call and between the mobile phone users and those with whom they are in close physical proximity, separately. What is lost in that is the ability to fully comprehend the connected and bounded mobile realm that is created between the two people on the phone, who are at the same time untethered by this form of communication and often freely move about, interact with others, and continue to accomplish tasks beyond the conversation being had on the phone. Analysis of storytelling, fiction writing, and film is an important means through which we can capture at once the mobile user, the caller, and the outside observer as well as the virtual and actual contexts of a single mobile communication.

1.1 Mining for Schemas of Mobile Phone Use in Popular Films

Since the dawn of the motion-picture age, there has been great debate over the extent to which motion pictures are representative of reality (Barry, 1945; Dale, 1932). Each film begins with a story and in order for the film to be a success, the story must resonate with the audience. While what is on the screen is ultimately a work of the writer's imagination and a product of a socially constructed 'reality', there are aspects of popular films that ring true for most audiences. The presence of mobile phones in popular films, whether it be a tool of product placement or not, could, at the very least, be an indicator of the saturation of mobile phone use (Katz & Sugiyama, 2005). The presence of mobile phones in popular films can also highlight the provocative space mentioned above that has not yet been truly captured by social science: 'the mobile imaginary'. This paper will incorporate what is known about how mobile phone use facilitates social interaction and attempt to provide a multidimensional analysis of the use of mobile phones through cultural representations of mobile communication via two scenes from two different American films. While the author acknowledges that one cannot readily expect that what is on the screen represents true reality, films are often studied as a means to document representations of cultural phenomena, to provide an understanding of the deeper psychological meanings that those images foster

(Forrester, 2002; Steinke, 2005). Depictions of mobile phone use in films may also indicate the ways in which users imagine the uses for the phone to extend beyond what is actually possible.

2. Method and Textual Analysis

This paper is an extension of the author's current research and was inspired by scenes from two movies released in the United States: *Elizabethtown* (2005) and *Broken Flowers* (2005). Scenes were chosen from these films because they illustrated significant aspects of mobile communication involved in a typical social interaction.

In *Elizabethtown* (2005), Claire befriends Drew and gives him her mobile phone number. This scene focuses on an extended mobile phone conversation between the two. The conversation lasts all night long. During the conversation, Claire and Drew share their views on life, and in the process get to know each other better. While talking, Claire and Drew continue to participate in activities in their separate physical realms. Some of these activities go on beyond the awareness of the other. Despite this separateness, Claire and Drew work to foster a sense of "co-presence" by creating simultaneous experiences over the phone (i.e. sharing music with each other, having a "beer" over the phone). (To view scene, click: <http://us.video.aol.com/snag/?pmmsid=1406784&autoplay=1> ; Clip length: 10 minutes and 7 seconds).

In *Broken Flowers* (2005), Winston, a home-bound father of five and an aspiring private investigator, tries to convince a reluctant Don, a retired 'over the hill' *Don Juan*, to pursue the writer of an anonymous letter. Winston instructs Don to list the potential writers of the letter he has received. This scene focuses on a phone conversation between the two, where Winston picks up the list from Don while they are talking to each other on the phone. As Don is talking to Winston on his mobile phone, he sees him cross his front lawn. Winston enters Don's house, never pausing in the conversation over the phone until he is face-to-face with Don. Once they are face-to-face, Winston pauses and excuses himself from the phone conversation with Don to commence with a face-to-face conversation with him. After examining the list, Winston turns away from Don and resumes his phone conversation with him (To view this clip click: <http://us.video.aol.com/snag/?pmmsid=1365781&autoplay=1>; Clip length: 1 minute and 9 seconds).

Scenes from both of these films were analyzed using qualitative research methods. Each scene was transcribed and time stamped. The transcription of the scenes included details surrounding the verbal and non-verbal communication occurring between the characters involved in the scene. Each scene was evaluated from the perspective of the actors. The audience perspective was not included since neither scene involved audience participation. The textual analysis was based on guidelines established by Miles and Huberman (1994). The transcriptions were coded for three major themes: contextual seams, mobile symbiosis, and interpersonal seams. These codes and themes were selected based on previous research done on the impact of mobile communication on social interaction (Rudström, Höök, & Svensson, 2005; Ling, 1997; Gergen, 2002; Ling, 2002; Döring, 2006; Humphreys, 2005; Rheingold, 2002; Colbert, 2005; Boden & Molotch, 1994; Koskinen, 2005; Ling & Julsrud, 2005; Cumiskey, 2005a; Zhao, 2005; Suler, 2004).

2.1 Contextual Seams

Contextual seams are the seams between actual and virtual space. These seams were indicated by instances when the characters engaged in behaviours beyond the awareness of the person they were on the phone with. These seams were also indicated by times when the characters made gestures intended for the caller but that could not be seen by the caller and the times when the mobile phone conversation was interrupted by co-present actor(s) in the users' physical context.

In *Elizabethtown* (2005), there were 44 instances during the 10 minute clip where the contextual seams were revealed. In *Broken Flowers* (2005), there were 5 instances during the 1 minute clip.

2.2 Mobile Symbiosis/the Mobile Imaginary

Symbiosis is the close association between two organisms. Metaphorically, symbiosis is a joining, a sharing of experiences and a sense of mutuality. This experience of joining is characteristic of the illusive notion of the mobile imaginary because much of this cannot truly exist in the real world, as will be explained in the following section. This theme was coded in both films through instances of conversational joining – when both sides of the conversation can be heard, when one caller narrated for the other what they were doing, and when they shared a mutual experience over the mobile phone.

In *Elizabethtown* (2005), there were 77 instances during the 10-minute clip when mobile symbiosis or the joining of the two people on the phone was depicted. In *Broken Flowers* (2005), there were 6 instances during the 1 minute clip.

2.3 Interpersonal Seams

Interpersonal seams are the seams between people. If mobile symbiosis is an indicator of the loss of separation between users, interpersonal seams are moments when the differentiation and separation between people is marked. These seams were indicated by instances when the characters appeared to be talking about two different things on the phone and/or only one side of the conversation was focused on. This seam was also indicated by user initiated silence or by simply ending the call. Another way that interpersonal seams are experienced is through the interruption of the mobile phone call by other people who are physically present in the caller's immediate surroundings. The demands of face-to-face interaction highlight the limitation of the mobile connection and cause the caller to feel separated from the person they are talking to on their mobile phone. The recurring themes identified for each code are discussed in the presentation of the results of the textual analysis in the next section.

In *Elizabethtown* (2005), there were 21 instances during the 10-minute clip when moments of differentiation and separation between the two people on the phone were depicted. In *Broken Flowers* (2005), there were 2 instances during the 1 minute clip.

Figures 1 & 2 depict the distribution of the instances of the three major coding categories across the two film clips. These figures serve as a guide to what is going on during the clips. It highlights the peaks and valleys of the seams explained in the previous section. The x-axis is the timestamps used for the coding and analysis. The y-axis indicates the number of instances for each major coding category. What follows is an in-depth discussion and analysis of the findings of the textual analysis.

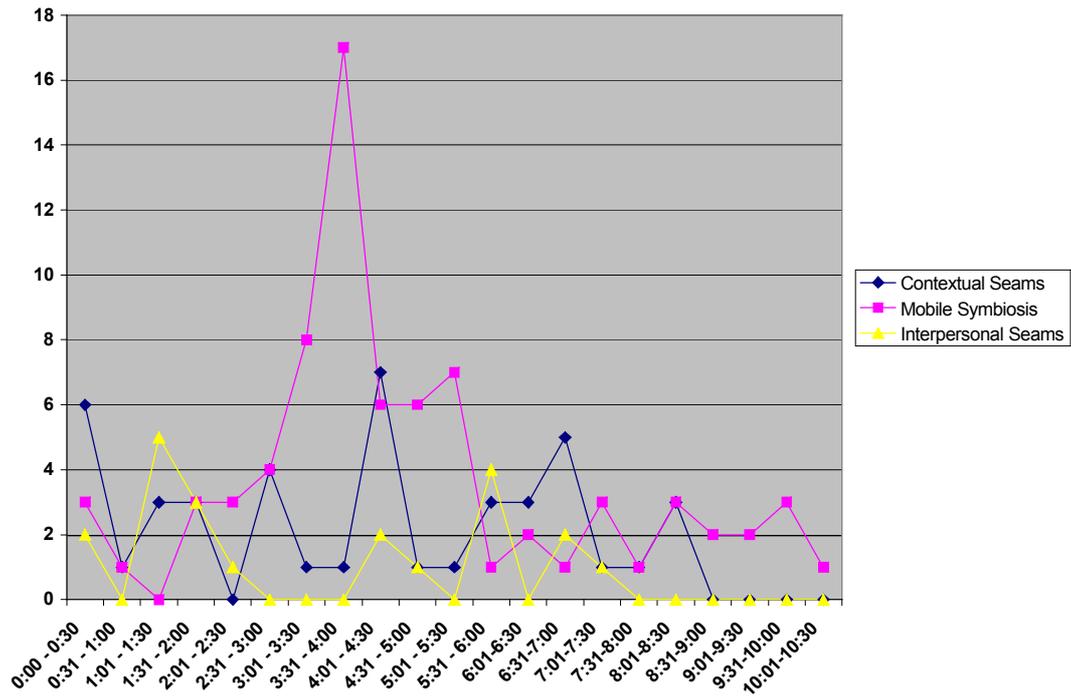


Figure 1. Distribution of Instances of Codes for Film Clip from *Elizabethtown* (2005)

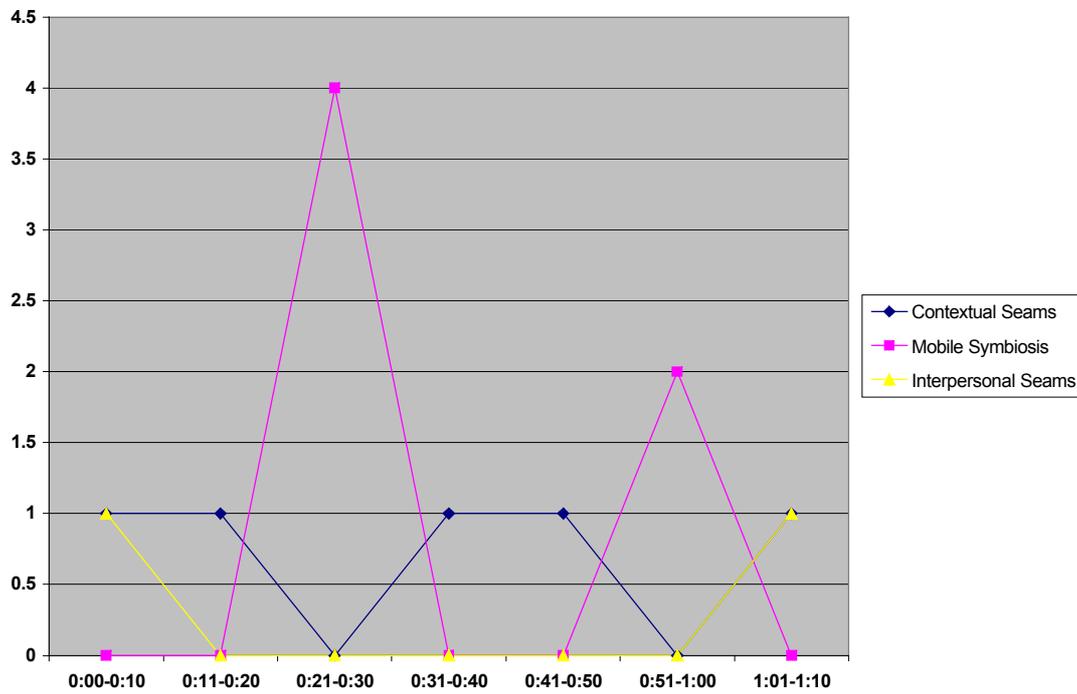


Figure 2. Distribution of Instances of Codes for Film Clip from *Broken Flowers* (2005)

3. Discussion

3.1 Playing with Contextual Seams -- Widening then Closing the Gap between Actual and Virtual Space

Through the use of mobile technology, users have the power to widen and also to close the gap between actual and virtual space, by adapting their behaviours to make integration of this technology into everyday activities possible (Rudström, Höök, & Svensson, 2005). Frequently, what is going on in the actual physical context of the mobile phone conversation is kept purposefully *secret* or just happens to be going on beyond the awareness of the caller. Users often engage in physical behaviours that they would not want or need the caller to witness. The user's ability to censor what the caller knows about what is actually occurring in the physical context of the call can be viewed as an example of how the seams between the actual realms and the virtual realms keep them separate.

In *Elizabethtown* (2005), there are 22 instances where either Claire or Drew has been scripted to be doing some activity beyond the awareness of the other. Claire opens her gate, drags her luggage up her front steps, gets her mail, makes dinner, cleans the kitty litter, paints her toenails, washes her undergarments in her sink and takes a bath. Drew takes off his pants, urinates in the toilet, holds the phone outside the door of the bathroom to shield the flush from Claire, washes his socks in his sink and plugs his phone charger in.

In *Broken Flowers*, when Winston asks Don about the list that he is creating, Don replies, 'What list?' even though the list is sitting on the table in front of him. This power to conceal or to deny (or to digitally *enhance* – see: [SounderCover](#)) what is actually going on in the physical context of the call is something that most users engage in with confidence. However, these seams that separate virtual space and actual space may not be as impermeable as most users might fantasize that they are.

The increasing ease and frequency with which users can now engage in phone conversations, along with the expectation that most of this communication is purposeful, places an enormous emphasis on verbal communication. As Ling (1997) points out:

“In face to face conversation quite nuanced body language has several functions. Through our use of nods, glances, small sounds and other gestures we indicate attention, the desire to speak, the desire to retain the floor and indicate pauses. We also use these devices to impart meaning and emphasis. All of these

gestures are changed in a normal telephone conversation. Visual gestures are replaced by intonation and linguistic structure in “grounding” the conversation.”
(p. 10)

It should be noted, however, that despite the aforementioned limitation of mediated communication, people still nod, glance, and engage in other physical behaviours while on their mobile phone. This tendency was also represented in the film clips (where it may also serve artistic and narrative purposes).

In the beginning of the scene from *Elizabethtown*, when Drew tells Claire that his father is dead, Claire stops walking, switches the phone from one ear to the other and closes her eyes. She appears to do this to emphasize the importance of what Drew has said to her even though Drew cannot see her.

Users often ‘get caught’ making gestures that emphasize points or sentiments in actual space while on the phone, even though the caller cannot see them. Observing this gesturing may be an indicator that the user has rendered the absent caller psychologically present (Gergen, 2002). A user may pause in their activity, literally stop in their tracks, in order to give the caller their full attention. This pause may be necessary in that the demands of the mobile communication may restrict the user’s ability to do anything else. However, as with the scene in the movie, *Elizabethtown*, a pause in activity may also be a gesture intended for the caller, despite the fact that the caller cannot see it, and often to the chagrin of others present. By pausing physical activity, the user may believe, or at least desire, that the caller’s *presence* dominates their awareness.

This could be taken as evidence of the virtual space leaking into the actual space. In the *Elizabethtown* clip there are 10 instances where either Claire or Drew are scripted to perform some gesture that was the result of the conversation being had on the phone.

3.2 “Do You Wanna Have a Beer over the Phone?” – Mobile Symbiosis and the Mobile Imaginary

Mobile communication provides new opportunities for sharing experiences and tasks that could not exist without the mobile aspects of the phone. Many mobile phone conversations occur as a means through which the callers share what is actually going on in their current context. The ability to share experiences virtually is enhanced through multimedia devices. The addition of cameras and video to most mobile phones boosts the user’s ability to convey affective and functional aspects of an

experience shared via the mobile phone (Koskinen, 2005; Ling & Julsrud, 2005). This use is represented in research through the analysis of static text messages or mobile phone photo/video artefacts. However, in real, simultaneous mobile phone use, action is the key. The mobile nature of the use of the mobile phone is emphasized when both parties are on their mobiles at the same time. Face-to-face interaction requires either both parties to be stationary or both parties to be moving in the same direction; either way less gets accomplished. It should be noted however, that often the receiver of this shared information is not a complacent recipient. Receivers often ‘talk-back’, get involved, exchange information about their own current context and influence the behaviour of the user.

A sense of camaraderie and mutuality develops between user and caller when they are engaged in a mobile phone conversation. It appears as though this sense of mobile symbiosis has the potential to lead one into taking more risks than one might do on one’s own. In Figure 1, the highest degree of behaviours that depict mobile symbiosis in *Elizabethtown*, occur during the part of the clip where Drew “steals Chuck and Cindy’s wedding beer” (3:30). Could it be that the more joined users feel, the more likely they are to engage in risk-taking behaviours?

In *Elizabethtown*, Claire asks Drew if he would like to have a beer over the phone. In order to do this, Drew ventures out of his room, into the hall of his hotel (in his robe) to *steal* 2 beers from his next door neighbour, Chuck. Chuck is getting married to Cindy and they are having a party in the hotel, with beers readily available in their tub filled with ice. Drew discovers ‘Chuck and Cindy’s beer’ and proceeds to put a beer bottle in each of his robe pockets. He does all this while narrating his entire experience to Claire over the phone. Drew is caught by Chuck, just as he is leaving Chuck’s room with the beers. Drew remains on the phone with Claire so that she may witness the interaction. The adventure of capturing and sharing a beer over the phone is experienced by Claire via Drew’s phone while she is home in bed.

This fictional representation of mobile symbiosis is enhanced by the fact that, in this scene, Claire’s presence is recognized by all parties in the interaction. Drew first lies to Chuck and tells him that he is a friend of the groom. Chuck then says that he *is* the groom, so Drew comes clean about the fact that he is not in the hotel for Chuck’s wedding. He explains that his dad has died and that he is there for his funeral. Chuck reacts to this news with emotion and takes the phone from Drew to tell Claire how sorry he is for her loss. With this gesture, he has recognized Claire as a participant in this interaction and has thereby rendered her present. This is a work of mobile fantasy in

that it is highly unlikely that a stranger would take the phone out of the user's hand. However, it has been shown, that acceptable mobile phone use in the presence of others is phone use that includes the user, the caller and those with whom the user and/or caller are face-to-face (Cumiskey, 2005a; Döring, 2006; Humphreys, 2004).

The psychological sense of always having someone with you (via the mobile phone in pocket) is very powerful. The fact that any user can immediately call someone, fire off an email or text message, means they have constant access to a witness who can share an experience. The sense of having a constant sidekick, or a partner in crime, may lead the user to do daring things that they might never have considered before or at least not alone in the presence of strangers.

In *Broken Flowers*, Winston is the only person that Don speaks with over the phone. Despite making his fortune in the technology industry, Don is behind the times. He does not have a mobile phone, Winston does. He does not have a computer or Internet access, Winston does. Winston's insistence on making Don pursue the writer of the anonymous letter appears to be a consequence of his faith in the seemingly limitless access to information that the Internet affords. Between Don and Winston there appears to be a mutual desire to live symbiotically through the life of the other. Winston utilizes online travel services and MapQuest to schedule and map the entire route of Don's pursuit. Despite Don's lack of a mobile phone, Winston uses his phone like a cattle prod to push Don along on his half-hearted quest. Don's lack of a mobile phone becomes more and more disconcerting as the movie progresses. Since Winston knows that his only contact with Don will be via hotel room phones, he makes his presence known in other ways that do not quite measure up to having mobile phone contact.

3.3 Better on the Phone – Enhanced Intimacy via the Mobile Phone

The presence of mobile technology provides a medium through which people can project meaning onto the use of these devices. There is no instructional booklet on how to conduct a mobile phone conversation. While it is true that the device itself shapes behaviour in terms of what features are available on each phone, those features then take on psychological significance through how the user uses them. For example, people who observe other people on their phones in public often interpret that use as rude (Cumiskey, 2005b). The scene from *Elizabethtown* is almost completely a work of mobile fiction: the never-ending battery charge (Drew plugs the phone in mid-conversation, but only for a short time), never losing a signal, never

getting lost, never losing that sense of connectedness to those with whom we feel close.

What happens during face-to-face communication can be completely different from what happens when one is engaged in mobile-mediated communication (Zhao, 2005). The flow and energy of mobile-enhanced communication may produce different results than face-to-face interaction. In *Elizabethtown*, a soundtrack accompanies a montage of scenes that switch between Drew and Claire to indicate the ways in which being physically apart from each other can actually work to make them feel closer to each other via the mobile phone. The peaks and valleys of the overall tone of the conversation work to indicate an intimacy that is shared between the couple; something that might not exist if they were face-to-face. Being face-to-face would inhibit their movement throughout the scene, which would then limit how much they share with each other. At the end of the scene, Claire and Drew decide to meet up during the course of their mobile phone conversation. They realize, once they are face-to-face, that they peaked on the phone.

Hearing a soft voice in one's head, whispers directly into one's ear, creates a sense of closeness, of unfettered intimacy, of sharing secrets to the exclusion of all others. This "focused attention" of long romantic conversations may create the same amount of intimacy whether they are happening over the phone or face-to-face (Goffman, 1961). Mobile-mediated communication presents venues, not unlike being online, that allow for the users to feel disinhibited and feel as though they have an ability to disassociate from social reality. The ability to share experiences virtually through enhanced multimedia devices creates something that may not be able to be experienced without the assistance of mobile technology. It generates a sense that what occurs between the two individuals on the phone is something that does not exist anywhere else. As Suler (2004) explains, in terms of personalities and relationships created online:

"Consciously or unconsciously people may feel that the imaginary characters they 'created' exist in a different space, that one's online persona along with the online others live in a make believe dimension, separate and apart from the demands and responsibilities of the real world."

(p. 323)

There is a significant difference between relationships that commence online and those that are created or maintained via the use of mobile technology. However, the use of mobile technology, especially with text messages, photos, and video, may

create an online feel to the communication which may then trigger some of the same dimensions around disinhibition and the disassociation from social reality (Em & Lo, 2006). The lack of a true separation between the actual and the virtual leads to the creation of hybrid personalities --- who we are on the mobile combined with who we are when engaged in face to face conversations, a creature of social reality and a creature of fiction (Haraway, 1991; Pertierra, 2005)! Perhaps there is a different self that is created over the phone that leads Claire to raise the point in *Elizabethtown*: 'I am just wondering if this whole thing is just better on the phone? We're so much better on the phone. Maybe we should never face each other again'.

Towards what seems to be the end of their conversation, Drew asks Claire, "doesn't your ear hurt?" Claire interprets this to mean that Drew may be done with the conversation. As a result, Claire says, with a tone of cynicism, "I'll let you go". When Drew responds with, 'Wait! When will you be back?' Claire grins and appears to be overjoyed that she has had her intended impact on Drew. This ability to pick up on the slightest of hints indicates that some of the same mechanisms of 'reading' the other are in place via mobile phone communication as in actual co-present communication.

Often the uninterrupted, intimate, symbiotic sphere created between the user and the caller cannot exist in the real world. When one's mind is brought back to reality, the user has reminded the caller that this is unreal. As a result, the caller may test the bounds of the intimacy of the relationship. Ostracism and rejection can be felt via this technology (Smith & Williams, 2004). As a result, a mixture of fantasy and reality underlie a significant amount of mobile phone use. It used to be that these intimate spaces remained within the private space of our homes. Being able to carry our phones with us now gives us the opportunity of infusing the mundane and real with the disassociative unreality of mobile-mediated communication (Em & Lo, 2006).

3.4 Interpersonal Seams, Ego-centric Communication, and the Demands of Face-to-face Interaction

As observers to mobile phone conversations in public, we are often only privy to one side of the conversation. The divulgence of personal details of one's life is quite ego-centric. In *Elizabethtown*, there was a segment of the scene where it is quite noticeable that, by being able to hear both sides of the conversation, Claire and Drew appear to be having two different conversations with each other simultaneously (i. e. Claire: "To have never taken a solitary road-trip"; Drew: "And I have never seen a dead body before.")). This scripted disconnect functions as metaphoric evidence to support

how ego-centric mobile communication may be. It may be difficult for us to disengage from our current practices and train of thought in order to join in conversation with our caller. With the personalization of most mobile devices (i.e. ring tones, wallpaper, “skins”), what we do with our phones is ego-driven. When we are contacted during the course of our day we may be inclined to share with our caller what is on our minds at that point in time. Highly personalized modes of communication make us distinctive from others and highlight the separation and difference between ourselves and others. It may be difficult for us to disengage from our current practices and train of thought in order to join in conversation with our caller. This could be especially true for people who are just getting to know each other.

The English idiom, ‘hold on’, means to wait for someone. People utilize this phrase to suspend the flow of the actions taking place. Telling someone to, ‘hold on’, whether they are the caller or someone observing the phone call, indicates a separation, either between the user and the caller or between the user and someone else present (Döring, 2006; Humphreys, 2005). Initiating a break in the presumably seamless flow of mobile communication then creates a liminal space, a disjuncture, and highlights the interpersonal seam between the two people on the phone.

At times, as depicted in *Broken Flowers*, this break often occurs out of courtesy toward those with whom the user is face-to-face. When one is face to face with another it is viewed as rude not to attend to the face of the person in front of you. In *Elizabethtown*, when Drew and Chuck are interacting, Drew removes the phone from his ear (while he does not hang up) so that he can give Chuck his full attention. In fact, after Chuck talks to Claire, and hands Drew back the phone, Chuck puts both hands on Drew’s shoulders, to have a “bro” moment. In this shot, the phone is not visible, and while Drew never “hangs up” on Claire, she is not rendered “visible” again until Drew walks away from Chuck, after two hugs, and then turns towards Chuck as he puts the phone back up to his ear. The demands of Chuck’s presence forces Drew to not attend to Claire for about thirty seconds of the clip. This part of the clip highlights how mobile phone users have to negotiate the social expectations of their immediate surroundings alongside the interpersonal expectations of the person they are talking to on their mobile phone. Suspending communication may be how users compensate for the many demands on their attention and their need to break away from the exhausting work of mobile-mediated communication.

Because one can move while on the mobile phone, and the technology itself is mobile, the realms of the virtual and the actual can meet and cross over. There is

evidence of the power of this in the literature on Smart Mobs and rendezvousing (Rheingold, 2002; Colbert, 2005). When the user and the caller meet, the current inclination is to cease mobile communication and to communicate directly. There is an assumption that face-to-face communication is preferred, that physical contact and the compulsion of proximity precludes the integration of the virtual and the actual (Boden & Molotch, 1994). In *Elizabethtown*, when Claire and Drew meet each other face-to-face while still on the phone, they decide to simultaneously hang up. There is a slight indication that to continue to use their mobiles while face-to-face would be ridiculous. In *Broken Flowers*, when Don and Winston come face-to-face while on the phone with each other, Winston's break with Don on the phone happens so that he can respectfully talk to Don face-to-face. It is not that actual co-presence, as suggested by Boden and Molotch (1994), is then substituted by more impersonal forms of communication. Even though the face-to-face communication ceases, the two parties remain *in each other's phones*, so that physical separation may no longer be represented as disconnecting or parting company, but instead, merely being out of face contact, which is then compensated for by the ways in which the multimedia enhanced mobile phone is used! The prevailing anxiety of being disconnected, of letting the interpersonal seams show, may become an artefact not so readily experienced anymore. Being in someone's phone may serve as protection from the negative psychological consequences of interpersonal seams and alleviate the fear of being forgotten, abandoned or left alone.

4. Conclusion: Peaking on the Phone

The goal of this paper was to illustrate the need to develop new ways of gathering evidence to elucidate aspects of mobile communication that appear to be beyond the reach of directly observing actual mobile communication. The kind of analyses performed for this paper would be very difficult to do in the real world. Trying to devise data collection schemes to approximate the amount of access that these film clips provide to the intimacy of mobile symbiosis would be near impossible. In addition, there is a benefit to studying mobile communication beyond the context of actual use and into the mobile imaginary. What mobile communication means to people and their ability to incorporate mobile devices into their daily interactions with others can provide researchers with a glimpse into the fantasies and fears of mobile phone use.

Claire and Drew realizing, once they are face-to-face, that they peaked on the phone and prior to that Claire's fear that perhaps they are better on the phone metaphorically represents both the angst and the ecstasy around building intimate relationships with others. As with Japanese youth, and their *keitai*, mobile phones serve as a medium onto which we project our deeper psychological needs. Does our desire for seamlessness, our penchant to be "perpetually connected", and our incessant chasing of peaks of mobile symbiosis mean that we have discovered a new nirvana – a means to escape the bounds of reality – the mobile imaginary?

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