The Influence of Mobile Phones on Individuals in Jamaica Ages 18 to 30

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Mobile telephony is one of the fastest growing technologies in the world today. Information and communication technology, otherwise known as ICT, has become the leading and most rapidly expanding service sector, surpassing the economic power of other industries such as health, education, and housing to become the leading household expenditure between 1995 and 2005 (Katz 2008). By January of 2006, there were 2.17 billion cell phones on the planet, more than one phone for every third person. The 2009 ICT Development Index states, "In the developing world, mobile phones have revolutionized telecommunication and have reached an estimated average 49.5 per cent penetration rate at the end of 2008 – from close to zero only ten years ago" (Dunn 2009).

Despite relatively high poverty and illiteracy levels,[1] Jamaica has not been immune to this rise in new technology, which is inevitably reshaping social relations. The liberalization and expansion of the mobile telephony market in Jamaica in 2001 and the subsequent democratization for Jamaicans to access and purchase mobile phones has had dramatic consequences (Dunn 2009). Within one month of Digicel's introduction to the Jamaican market in 2001, the company had 100,000 subscribers, surpassing Cable & Wireless[2] as the island's No. 1 provider of mobile telephony services within its first year of service (Cauley 2006).

Mobile phones have created new opportunities for people worldwide in many ways, including the expansion of global communication. Review of the 2009 ICT Development Index reveals that for residents of Jamaica, mobile cellular service is significantly cheaper than fixed telephone service,[3] allowing residents of Jamaica to contact friends and family "in foreign"[4] using mobile phones with rates that are cheaper than fixed landline rates, strengthening the ties of transnational families and social networks. Mobile phones can serve as a platform for individuals to pursue small business opportunities, as well as providing an affordable alternative to computers for Jamaicans to engage in social networking applications previously available only on the internet, such as Facebook and Twitter.

Jamaica is saturated with mobile phone providers and users,[5] and this research aims to garner a deeper understanding of the social and cultural implications of mobile phones in Jamaican society by examining how mobile phones are used by individuals in Jamaica ages 18 to 30. Why do individuals ages 18 to 30 in Jamaica use mobile phones, and for what purposes? What are some of the ways in which mobile network providers and mobile phones are influencing culture and society in Jamaica? This qualitative research study, conducted in Kingston, Jamaica in March 2011 will explore how mobile phones influence Jamaican culture and society and how individuals in Jamaica ages 18 to 30 perceive mobile phones in relation to their own lives, as well as Jamaican society at large.

Literature Review

Since the advent of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and mobile phones, many studies have been conducted to explore the root causes of the rapid growth and expansion of the global ICT market as well as the social, cultural, and economic implications these technologies have had on users worldwide. The pervasiveness of increased telecommunications has allowed people from all realms of life to begin to have equal access to sources of communication which enables the faster spread of knowledge and technology and results in the increased growth of economic markets in developing countries such as Jamaica.

In terms of ICT development, Jamaica is a prime example of a developing country that is directly impacted by today's technological advances, since devices such as the mobile phone "function as intermediary or bridging technology to higher levels of interactive broadband usage and e-commerce applications among the poor," (Dunn, 2009). Thus mobile phones have become a necessity for societies in developing nations since they allow users from every class to interact, promoting informa-

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[1] Jamaica's household poverty rate was reported at 10.3% in 2007, GDP per capita was reported at $4,200USD in 2005, and in 2008 literacy levels were reported at 79.9% (Dunn 2008, 9).

[2] Cable and wireless mobile phone service is marketed to subscribers in Jamaica as "LIME."

[3] Jamaica is ranked 68th on the mobile telephone sub-basket list for 2008 and 93rd on the fixed telephone sub-basket list for 2008. For more information on how the ICT price sub-baskets are calculated, please refer to pg. 58 of the 2009 ICT Development Index.

[4] Overseas – not in Jamaica.

[5] In 2007, 93.8% of adult Jamaicans surveyed by DIRSI reported using a mobile phone at least once in the past three months to make or receive calls (Dunn 2008, 12).

tion empowerment, the cross-flow of new ideas, and a increased chances or means at opportunity. This literature review will focus mainly on ICTs and mobile phones in pertinence to Jamaican culture and society, as well as the importance of ICTs and mobile phones in developing nations. In relation to my study, the following sources provide a solid quantitative background in the realms of social networking and opportunity and how these advances have caused a significant change in developing nations such as Jamaica.

Measuring the Information Society, the 2009 ICT Development Index, was compiled by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to assess global access to ICTs, ICT market penetration, and ICT growth in world markets with a focus in developing countries. The ICT Development Index ranks access to the cost of ICTS such as mobile phones and internet to monitor the "global digital divide" between residents of developed and developing nations (1). The report notes that:

> In the developing world, mobile phones . . . have reached an estimated average 49.5 per cent penetration rate at the end of 2008 – from close to zero only ten years ago. This is not only faster than any other technology in the past, but the mobile phone is also the single most widespread ICT today. (1)

Hence, more people are using mobile devices on a global scale because of its cost-efficiency, and practicality. By the end of 2008, the number of users continued to rise (four billion mobile phone subscriptions worldwide) with three times as many mobile users than landlines. Landlines have proven to be ineffective in developing countries such as Jamaica since rural demographics prevent their installment and usage (3). The ability to have access to mobile devices that function as both phone and internet source is vital to people inhabiting rural areas since demographics no longer become a factor in determining how or why people cannot have access to modern forms of communication. Mobile phones thus become an integral part of the way people in developing countries communicate since they represent a cost effective solution to a crucial problem. As a result, the mobile phone is deemed as a symbol of change especially in rural areas of Jamaica since because it has enabled people to have basic connections to the outside world and a new sense of interconnected global awareness.

Mary Chayko explores the idea of global social networking and the "portability of social connectedness" in *Portable Communities: The Social Dynamics of Online and Mobile Connectedness* by studying the ways in which mobile phones help strengthen social bonds and groupings (4). One of the implications of participating in "portable communities" is constant availability to others, and Chayko explores the ways in which constant availability through various communication channels strengthens social networks and bonds, even when individuals are by themselves (114). This concept of social networking and interpersonal connectedness is particularly important to Jamaica as well as other developing countries since immediate social access or availability provides people with opportunity or hope in places that do not even have running water. Connectedness provides people, particularly Jamaicans, with a new means of survival especially people who are prisoners of a fixed location with literal or imagined mobility. It eases everyday tasks and provides relief for various levels of stressful situations; whether it is an infirmed neighbor in need of a ride to church, or a child who lives in a rural area and needs to contact emergency services to report victims of a natural disaster (mudslides). Whatever the case, the mobile phone has increased the interconnectedness amongst the Jamaican people by allowing them to be free of any restrictions concerning communicative mobility or demographic factors that once prevented large scale social networking. People, places, and interactions are now portable.

Portability and change are concepts also supported by Jarice Hanson's *24/7: How Cell Phones and the Internet Change the Way We Live, Work, and Play*. Hanson studies many of the same issues of Chayko's and Horst and Miller's works in that mobile technologies such as BlackBerrys, can make a person present anytime, anywhere. Hanson explores the social implications of what it means to be constantly available and how this change is shaping social interactions in real-time.

Since mobile phones increase the rate and occurrence of social interactions, their impact on the lives of the Jamaican people has allowed communicative freedoms that are no longer restricted to a local or national border. Transnational communication is a result of today's ICTs or "cellular culture." Jamaicans have had a particularly unique social imprint as a result of transnational communication. In Heather Horst's "The Blessings and Burdens of Communication: Cell Phones in Jamaican Transnational Social Fields," Heather Horst and Daniel Miller's "From Kinship to Link-up: Cell Phones and Social Networking in Jamaica, "And Tanya Batson-Savage's "'Hol' Awn Mek a Answer mi Cellular:' Sex, Sexuality and the Cellular Phone in Urban Jamaica."

In "The Blessings and Burdens of Communication: Cell Phones in Jamaican Transnational Social Fields," Horst explores how mobile phones have reshaped transnational social connections between Jamaicans and their friends and relatives abroad. Her research provides insight into the "dynamics of the communication in Jamaican transnational social field(s)," by exploring how mobile technologies have also altered the perception of mobility amongst rural Jamaicans by allowing them to connect with others whom they might not otherwise have the opportunity to do so due to economic constraints (144). Horst explains how the introduction of the mobile phone has lessened these constraints, and how transnational communication has expanded

the Jamaican people's access to the global world. This concept of universal mobile telephony access in Jamaica is explored by Horst through her account of the shift from unreliable shared public "phone boxes" which were often unavailable to low-income and rural residents of Jamaica, to near-universal mobile network coverage in even the most rural parts of Jamaica. The availability of these personal, private phones controlled by prepaid credit limits has changed communications in Jamaica. As with all change and innovative technology, there are also consequences as a result of social dynamics associated with mobile phone usage and expanded communicative capabilities in Jamaica

Similar to the aspirations of this study's intent, Heather Horst and Daniel Miller attempt to evaluate the consequences of the cell phone for low-income Jamaicans in an ethnographic study titled, *The Cell Phone: An Anthropology of Communication* (4). Horst and Miller analyze how mobile phones have come to take on deeper social and cultural understandings within Jamaican culture. Mobile phones and their cultural significance are not to be understood at face value or solely deemed as mechanisms of innovative communication. The authors examine concepts relating to mobile phones such as possession, which explores how mobile phone ownership enhances the personal identity of an individual, and ownership, which explores the social significance of owning a phone and the types of capital bestowed mobile phone owners. Horst and Miller suggest that ownership allows Jamaicans to construct social identities around mobile phones and social networking sub-cultures, since these groups reflect popular cultures around the world. The ability to access, communicate and relate to these cultures has allowed Jamaicans to feel connected to modern technology and its global meanings. Thus, ownership or possession of a phone "becomes a necessity, because mobile phones are accorded with an elevated social status and respect" (99). Members of poorer Jamaican populations use mobile phones as testimony to their identity and worth and as a means of providing powerful motivation for success. The type of phone you own can thus represent a person's measure of success and meaning attributed to ownership. By "linking-up" (89), Jamaicans can use their mobile phones to facilitate social networking through extending relationships domestically or transnationally. Thus, an increased flow of both domestic and transnational knowledge enables Jamaicans to construct individual identities that are culturally unique yet globally distinct.

Methodology

The purpose of this research was to examine the influence of cell phones on individuals in Jamaica ages 18 to 30 and their attitudes towards these new technologies through utilizing original qualitative data collected in Kingston, Jamaica. I visited Kingston in February of 2011 to network, identify potential informants, and conduct preliminary research and informal interviews for this study, and collected the primary data for this study between 27 March 2011 and 1 April 2011.

I conducted 16 interviews with informants ranging in time from five minutes to four hours. The majority of the research samples were Jamaican nationals; however, some informants were citizens CARICOM[6] nations or other countries residing in Jamaica in Spring 2011. I attempted to create a research sample from the available population that would be representative of Jamaican society based off my review of literature on the topic of mobile phones in Jamaican society, and so this study includes the responses of inner-city Kingston youth as well as university students. I believe that despite the small sample size, the research sample selected for this study is representative of Jamaican society, as the mobile phone saturation rate in Jamaica is nearing 100%, and non-Jamaican nationals were deliberately included to show the universal influence of cell phones on all individuals ages 18 to 30 residing in Jamaica. I originally intended to employ the purposive sampling technique for the process of selecting subjects, as I felt that deliberately selecting certain individuals for my research sample based on their knowledge of mobile phones in Jamaica would be more effective than other qualitative sampling techniques; however, this study also made use of available subjects due to time constraints and the necessity of a research sample reflective of individuals in Jamaica ages 18 to 30.

Fifteen of the interviews collected were gathered from a sample of individuals living in Jamaica who were between the ages of 18 and 28, and one interview was conducted with Dr. Hopeton Dunn.[7] Interviews conducted with informants were found to be the richest source of data for this study, although additional literature, advertising and quantitative statistics were reviewed. Quantitative data reports on mobile telephony access in the Caribbean, as well as the 2009 ICT Development Index were utilized to provide an idea prior research conducted on the subject area and the population being studied. These quantitative sources provided survey data previously conducted in the region and comparative data for mobile telephony access and usage in other developing markets.

This study also utilized non-participant observation conducted in Kingston, Jamaica through the form of field notes and photographs in order to assess the ways in which Digicel and other mobile network providers use symbols of the Jamaican cultural industry to market their products in Jamaica. Literature and advertisements were collected in Kingston, Jamaica from

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[6] CARICOM is an abbreviation for "Caribbean Community and Common Market" (Dunn 2007, 7).

[7] Dr. Dunn serves as Chairman of the Broadcasting Commission of Jamaica and the Director of the Caribbean Programme in Telecommunications Policy and Technology Management (TPM) at the Mona School of Business, University of the West Indies.

mobile network providers and their affiliates, as well as from websites and online, for content analysis of the marketing campaigns and advertising of mobile network providers in Jamaica.

In my initial visit to Jamaica in February of 2011, I gained research access to an inner-city community in Kingston. In Jamaica, there is a general suspicion of the government and bureaucracy due to widespread corruption, and I knew that gaining signatures for the informed consent letters for this study would be a potential obstacle in this community. To ensure rapport with my informants and confirm that their anonymity would be preserved to the highest degree, the consent letter distributed to participants in this study informed subjects that their participation served as their consent as well as proof that they were over 18 years of age. I did not ask any of my subjects their names or prompt them for further personal data unrelated to the research topic.

All interviews conducted were either typed or manually transcribed without the assistance of a recording device to maintain trust and rapport with my informants, many of whom I did not share the same culture and language, with in the hopes of eliciting more reliable responses. Although not using a recording device was effective in not breaking rapport with informants in the duration of my fieldwork, my lack of audio recordings was an obstacle both transcribing and interpreting the interviews. My lack of fluency in Jamaican Patwa, which varies from American English in grammar and orthography, was a detriment to conducting this study as my interviews often required clarification between both parties due to my lack of fluency in Patwa and my inability to sufficiently design clearly worded interview questions, despite my attempts during research design to construct a culturally appropriate interview. In addition to grammar and orthography, Jamaican Patwa varies contextually from American English, and the dearth of its linguistic richness in the text of this paper is a methodological flaw that aches for correction through further research attempts on this topic.

Data

Several themes emerged through review and analysis of the original interviews collected for this research study. Informants discussed the necessity of mobile phones for social networking and "link-up," the pervasive influence of mobile phones in Jamaican society, concerns about security and crime, the economic benefits and opportunities of mobile phones, and the influence of mobile network providers in Jamaican society.

The mean number of years respondents reported mobile phone use was 6.3 years; however, due to the small size of the sample (15 participants) and the wide disparity of income range of participants, the actual number of years in which informants had used cell phones varied from two to 10 years. Analysis of data shows that interview question number five, "how long have you been using a mobile phone?" was insufficient in its purpose for gathering data, as it does not clarify whether the respondent is literate with cellular technology or possesses (owns) a personal cellular device.

Social Networking and "Link-up"

In every interview, each informant stressed the necessity of their mobile phone for social networking and "link-up." Horst and Miller define "link-up" as a practice through which low-income Jamaicans establish networks based on social connections for personal and economic survival that are maintained through cell phones (2005, 2007). However, I believe that link-up has a broader meaning than Horst and Miller's kinship-based definition. The term link-up was used frequently by my informants when in response to the question "what is the primary purpose of your cell phone usage?" Regardless of nationality, all 15 interviewees used the term at least once during the course of my interviews with them, showing the prevalence of the term in Jamaican society. Frequent use of the term link-up strongly suggests the importance of creating and maintaining social networks for coping and survival purposes (Horst and Miller 2005, 755). An American informant replied, "I need my phone for links . . . you need a phone to get in touch with anyone to do anything. I need ubiquitous links. Quotidian links, while another informant of mine apologized to me that he was unable to link-up with me before for our scheduled interview because the battery for his phone had died." The casual use of the term link-up by my informants to refer to individuals outside kin groups leads me to a more general definition of link-up than Horst and Miller: social networking through connecting with others through mobile communication or meeting face-to-face.

24/7

Review of quantitative statistics (Dunn 2008), non-participant observation, and qualitative interviews reveals the ubiquitous presence of mobile phones in Jamaica. Researching mobile phones in a country with a general mobile saturation rate of around 94% was interesting as well as frustrating. Mobile phones were relatively easy to study in Jamaica due to the sheer number of individuals who own and use mobile phones. Mobile phones can often be observed in use by individuals in public spaces, allowing for ethical non-participant observation. When study respondents were asked during interviews, "how often do you use your mobile phone?" more than one individual used the term "24/7" as part of their response. The phenomenon of

"always being there, 24/7" as facilitated by mobile phones was expressed through the responses of informants during interviews as well as through my observations. (Hanson)

I found that the objects of my research, mobile phones, often served as an ironic distraction in my formally scheduled interviews with informants. Only one of my 16 subjects did not touch or look at her phone during the course of our brief interview. One of my closest informants, a subject with whom I spent hours discussing mobile phones and Jamaican society, explained to me at length his deep sense of attachment to his BlackBerry in a scheduled interview that lasted over four hours:

> [How often do I use] my phone? All the time (laughs). You see, it's rude, I'm on an interview . . . and I'm on the phone. My battery is constantly dying. That's why I couldn't link-up with you before. . . . The thing is, if I don't have BB[8] service on my phone, that is what kill me. I might as well not have a phone. [But] I think it takes me away from myself. . . . I have to walk around the house with my phone in my hand, and I had to put it in my pocket [tonight] when I was cooking, and it made me upset, it's not that important, I had everything I needed to survive.

Throughout my interview with this informant, he demonstrated his attachment to his mobile phone by keeping his BB within arm's reach at all times, playing with his phone, texting and BBMing[9] contacts, and simply holding the phone in his hand as object of comfort. He was frequently apologetic to me during our interview for his attentiveness to his BB, stating, " . . . every minute I'm with you, I'm still on the phone. The disrespect it [mobile phones] brings, it makes people rude."

One young woman, a national of the United States residing in Jamaica, emphasized the importance of her cell phone as a necessity in her daily life, stating:

> It [my phone] never leaves my hand. My phone is my most significant piece of technological equipment in Jamaica for me. . . . I can function without a car, but not my phone. I use it from the moment I wake up until the moment I go to bed – all day long.

The constant availability afforded to owners and users of mobile devices was not viewed favorably by all respondents as a positive development in Jamaican society. Hanson discusses changing behaviors and attitudes regarding mobile phone usage, noting that the concept of mobile phone use in "inappropriate places" is still extant (2007, 12).When asked to describe the negative aspects of cell phones in Jamaica, one young man described how he believed the prevalence of mobile phones correlated with the erosion of manners in Jamaican society, stating, "People have lost respect for certain public places . . . we are losing our dignity, manners, and integrity as a people . . . [with mobile phones] people don't care these days, it's like rules don't exist. Cell phones are a contributing factors to this."

Security and Crime

During my interviews with informants, one major concern raised by respondents about the prevalence of mobile phones in Jamaican society was the aspect of personal safety and security, as one of the most evident negative aspects of mobile phones in Jamaica is their association with crime and criminal activities. The main security concern regarding mobile phones expressed by informants was being mugged or robbed for their phone. Ling posits the idea of the mobile telephone as a contribution to society, noting, "safety and security are among the most basic reasons to own a mobile telephone" (2004, 37). Although Ling's analysis and interpretation was gained from a survey of European mobile phone users, I found that many mobile phone users in Jamaica also appreciated the safety and security afforded to them by their mobile devices despite the potential safety risks of owning a mobile phone in Jamaica, a sentiment expressed by 10 of the 16 informants in this study. One male informant stated that owning a phone "let mi know if mi in trouble," while five informants, all female, responded that having a phone was useful to them in an emergency.

Both male and female informants discussed the security risk of owning a mobile phone, particularly a "hot phone," a term used to describe BlackBerrys and other desirable smartphones. One interviewee, a non-Jamaican CARICOM national, discussed the desirability and risk of owning a hot phone, which he felt was one of the negative aspects to the presence of mobile phones in Jamaica, stating:

> In the Caribbean, it's a material thing, style thing, people get robbed of and what they get robbed of is their mobile phones . . . people die because they get robbed and if they don't have money or if their phone isn't

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[8] BB is a colloquialism in Jamaica used to refer to BlackBerry smartphones. In addition to being considered highly stylish, or "flossy," BlackBerrys are the most widely available smartphone with a prepaid data plan in Jamaica.

[9] BlackBerry Messenger, an instant messaging platform limited to BlackBerry phones.

nice enough to get enough money to sell, they get stabbed to dead of for their phone. . . . I know very serious fights over cell phones.

One young woman expressed to me her desire for a BlackBerry, but explained to me that she decided against purchasing a hot phone because:

> People will use their lunch money or their life's worth to get the phone that's in at the moment . . . they choose their wants over their needs . . . and that's why I'm not rushing to get no fancy phone . . . in the end it's not worth it. You can lose your life.

The use of mobile phones to collaborate and coordinate criminal activities in Jamaica and abroad was mentioned by several informants, and several informants explicitly mentioned or alluded to their personal involvement in criminal activities involving mobile phones. However, as one informant stated, "A lot of people use phones to carry out criminal activities, but it depends on what you perceive to be criminal activities." In my interview with Dr. Hopeton Dunn, he discussed the option of legal tele-work becoming a viable economic opportunity for low-income Jamaicans as an alternative to criminal telework.

Economic Opportunities

Although this study found that the primary purpose for mobile phone use amongst the majority of its respondents was for link-up and social networking, most informants also discussed the various ways in which mobile phones provide microeconomic and macroeconomic opportunities to individuals. In Jamaica, mobile phones can provide a source of supplemental income for individuals by providing a means to contact co-workers and business associates, in addition to providing individuals from low-income backgrounds with residential anonymity in order to secure a steady, legitimate source of income (Dunn 2008). In an interview, Dr. Hopeton Dunn was particularly vocal about the future economic potential that cell phones provide as a "sunrise" industry in the days of agricultural "sunset" industries, such as bananas and sugarcane, in the Caribbean, especially in the field of teleworking.

Microeconomic Opportunities

In addition to providing a conduit for personal communication for business affairs, mobile phones themselves have also created a sub-micro industry, through the repair and sale of used or stolen mobile phones, mobile phone accessories, and pre-paid cards with credit for mobile providers.

Figure 1.
"Doctor Miracle Blackberry City" is an example of how mobile phones have provided microeconomic opportunities for small business owners and entrepreneurs. While in Kingston, I visited Doctor Miracle's shop several times, so one of my informants could get her phone repaired.

Observation of the street environment in Kingston, Jamaica in February and March 2011 proved that cell phones in Jamaica provided a significant or supplementary source of income for many individuals, an observation also noted by Dunn (2008, 34-5), Horst and Miller (2005, 118-21). This postulate is based on observation of street vendors on the intersection of every major boulevard, walking in between cars stopped in traffic to sell cards for Digicel or other mobile providers. One of my interviewees discussed this phenomenon in our interview, stating:

> You see people who sit out for months on the street selling phone credit, and they do it for months, so they must be surviving somehow, selling phone credit on a daily basis on the street. I think that alone in itself, all the time we spend talking and wasting credit, that people waste hours and hours on the phone, and people can live off of selling pre-paid cell phone credit, like a hot-dog vendor. . . . 'Cause you look at the product, and people look at it like you don't need it, like you're going to talk, like what are poor people talking about? But you have to look at it for what it is. People surviving on it.

Macroeconomic Opportunities

At the macroeconomic level, Dr. Hopeton Dunn noted that mobile telephony and mobile phones were beneficial for Jamaica for several reasons, including the attraction of multinational corporations to Jamaica and the economic benefits associated with such partnerships (such as taxes), the creation of legal employment for Jamaicans in the public sector, and expanding or extending links with friends and family through personal communication at an affordable cost. In the era of mobile telephony, for a Jamaican living in Kingston who has extensive networks of friends and family "in foreign," a family member living in Saint Catherine parish[10] is theoretically as far away as a family member living "in foreign." One informant noted how cell phone companies have managed to make their services essential for individuals to function in everyday society, claiming:

> Social networking has now become essential, and a phone is essential in how it helps you operate. You understand? If you got notice that the world was going to end tomorrow, everyone would probably run out to buy credit. So Digicel would still be making money, you understand? They've made something expendable a necessity.

One young Jamaican man stated that he believed that employment offered by mobile network providers to Jamaicans and taxes paid by those multinational corporations to Jamaica, as well as the facilitation of personal communication and national development by the expansion of mobile telephony were positive aspects of having mobile phones in Jamaica.

Other Applications for Mobile Phones

Mobile telephony is a transitional or bridging technology in that it is "facilitating mobility to higher levels of communication technology usage" (Dunn 2009, 103). In my personal interview with Dr. Dunn, he discussed the uses of mobile phones as a transitional technology, citing their potential use as a platform for banking (m-banking), or other low-level internet services that can be used for business purposes.

Dr. Dunn also discussed the potential uses of mobile phones as an educational tool through methods such as audio lectures and podcasts, but noted the limitations of the devices in areas such as keyboard size and the inability of their operating systems to process large amounts of data (Dunn 2009, 95). A student interviewed during the course of this research mentioned the use of mobile phones, specifically BlackBerrys, as academic tools at the University of the West Indies campus in Mona, Jamaica, where they are used to record lectures and take pictures of lab reports. In addition to this student's use of his BlackBerry as an academic tool, many informants reported using their phones for academic purposes or for contacting classmates or professors.

Mobile Network Providers in Jamaica

At the time of my field research in Kingston, Jamaica had three mobile network providers (Claro, Digicel, and LIME) attempting to gain and keep the business of nearly three million people.

This study will focus on examining the influence of Digicel, Jamaica's No. 1 mobile network provider, on Jamaican society. In an interview with Dr. Hopeton Dunn in April 2011, he explained his opinion on Digicel's marketing tactics in Jamaica:

> Digicel has managed to master the interface between culture and telecommunications better than any other company . . . there is a certain commonality between Ireland[12] and Jamaica, a joie de vivre, an outward-going

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[10] The city of Kingston occupies two parishes, Kingston and Saint Andrew. Saint Catherine parish abuts Saint Andrew parish.

Figure 2.
This kiosk at the front of a grocery shopping warehouse in New Kingston, Jamaica, extends the influence of Jamaica's three[11] mobile network providers on their consumers.I provide this picture, taken in March 2011, as an exhibit of how mobile market providers manage to saturate their market with advertising as well as access to mobile goods and services.

spirit, and Digicel managed to arouse that certain affinity, as well as capitalizing on pent-up resentment towards its old incumbent [LIME]. Digicel pushes their marketing out in the direction of young people, and youth form a major part of their marketing strategy.

Digicel's success has been attributed in part to its attractive and inescapable marketing campaigns, which have saturated the visual landscape of Jamaica with the Digicel logo from the backpacks of schoolchildren to the roofs of bus stops. These campaigns often feature icons of the Jamaican cultural industry, such as prominent athletes and musicians, as well other symbolic cultural trademarks of Jamaica, such as Rasta or "roots" colors[13] (Horst and Miller 2005, 756). Digicel has smartly capitalized on Jamaica's strong identification with the African Diaspora in many of its marketing campaigns through its use of this color scheme, combined with Jamaican cultural icons and symbols in their advertising campaigns.

Most of the individuals interviewed as part of the research sample recognized Digicel's marketing finesse and their role as mobile phone users comprising part of Digicel's target demographic. One informant, a young woman studying in Jamaica, interpreted Digicel's marketing strategy as such:

> Digicel came to Jamaica and basically recognized that the way to get the public was using dancehall.[14] Before Digicel came to Jamaica, everyone had LIME, but Digicel also started offering all these deals and plans. Digicel knew what the youth wanted, like free gimmicks that were cool and made you want to buy more, which LIME didn't do, it just ate up your credit, which is also what Digicel does. . . . That's my thoughts, [Digicel] is pawning the youth of the ghetto and it's fucking sick.

Promotions and special offers provided by Digicel were one of the reasons cited by respondents for choosing Digicel as their mobile network provider, but I found it surprising that a third of participants reported that "peer pressure" influenced their choice of Digicel as a mobile network provider. Digicel was the mobile network provider used by 12 of this study's 15 informants, and all but three of this study's total respondents had a generally favorable perception of the company. One Rastafari informant shared his ambivalent perceptions of Digicel with me:

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[11] During the period of my field research, pending the Digicel and Claro merger.

[12] Digicel's CEO, Denis O'Brien, is Irish, and despite the multinational company's international headquarters in Kingston, Jamaica, Digicel is widely considered an Irish company in Jamaica (Cauley 2006).

[13] Black, gold, red, and green.

[14] Donna P. Hope's Inna di Dancehall: Popular Culture and the Politics of Identity in Jamaica provides an in-depth analysis of the cultural impact and significance of dancehall music and dancehalls in Jamaica, a topic too complex to include sufficient analysis of in this text.

Without Digicel, who would have sponsored Bob Marley's thing?[15] Because that's so important on so many levels, as a Jamaican, as reggae music is a Jamaican art form and cultural representation. Reggae music is a cultural expression of Jamaica, it's important for Rastafari for religious and cultural reasons to celebrate Bob Marley in some fashion and if Digicel assists, it shows that Digicel can do a lot with just that one event. And the tourists see something done by Digicel. With regards to infrastructure, a lot of companies do it, but you see benches painted with Digicel ads. Anyone can do it, but what I'm saying is the phone companies are doing it; they're taking advantage of these things. They do contribute very much. They help in every aspect they can, but at the root of it all, it's only at their disposal and for their gain.

Figure 3.
Bus stop on the side of Trafalgar Road, New Kingston, Jamaica. 1 April 2011.

Figure 3 depicts a Digicel-branded bus stop on the side of Trafalgar Road in New Kingston, Jamaica, and is included as an example of the informant's observation about the marriage of mobile branding and public works projects as well providing another example of the popular "My Digicel Matters to Me!" advertising campaign[16] which uses local Jamaicans as models in addition to Jamaican celebrities. Digicel continues to fund public works projects such as these in Jamaica in a demonstration of the company's commitment to improving the public infrastructure of Jamaica through advertising.

Discussion

Field research is noted for its high degree[17] of face validity; therefore I believe this original study on the influence of mobile phones in Jamaica provides a worthy contribution to the fields of anthropology and communication studies. Conducting primary research and interviews in Kingston, Jamaica, facilitating me with a more holistic viewpoint on the role of mobile phones in Jamaican culture and society and allowed me to experience first-hand the influence of mobile phones on my research sample and target population. The collection of data for this study during the period of 27 March 2011 to 1 April 2011, reflects the Jamaican mobile network market prior to the effective services merger of Digicel and Claro, a business merger viewed with suspicion[18] by several informants.

Despite its high face validity, qualitative field research has been noted for its flawed reliability to the high degree that the researcher's biases and judgments, approach to methodology, and interactions with her or his subjects affects the eventual outcome of the research (Babbie, 344). The reliability of this qualitative field study can be questioned in regard to my own biases,

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[15] Digicel sponsored a free "Birthday Celebration" for Bob Marley on 7 February 2011. My informant was referring to the fact that the Jamaican government has not yet recognized Bob Marley as a Jamaican National Hero and did not fund any events in honor of his birthday in 2011.

[16] Figure 2 is also an example of an advertisement from this same campaign.

[17] Babbie 2004, 343.

[18] During the time of my research, despite Digicel and Claro's recent merger, Jamaica had three mobile network providers. Informants critical of the merger, including Dr. Hopeton Dunn, the Commissioner of Public Broadcasting in Jamaica, objected to Digicel's acquisition of Claro on the basis of antitrust concerns.

the selection and application of research methodology, and my personal interactions and relationships with informants, all factors I considered during my research design and data collection period. The selection of individuals for this study's research sample was greatly influenced by my personal relationships with my informants in Jamaica, who assisted me in this research through the facilitation of my access to an inner-city community tacitly considered off-limits to tourists. Were this study to be repeated using the same methodology and interview schedule, the researcher would be unlikely to interact with the research sample and interpret the data through the same methods of analysis I applied to this original data.

One of the most educational aspects to me about conducting this research was the obstacles and difficulties I encountered conducting field research. Unforeseen methodological flaws became obvious as I conducted my field research, including issues with inconsistency in interview responses. I responded this problem by using skilled neutral prompts to elicit answers that would help me collect the data necessary to complete this thesis. A question I pondered before conducting any formal interviews was "am I asking the questions I need to be asking?" and during the course of my field research, after my research instrument had passed IRB approval, I realized the question I should have asked myself is "what questions should I be asking?" Scripted interview questions and unscripted interview prompts are obviously intended to guide research in the direction that the researcher believes it should go, and I realized there were so many more questions to ask and topics to explore in order to provide the most ecumenical examination of the influence of mobile phones on individuals ages 18 to 30 in Jamaica.

At the start of my one week qualitative data collection period, I recognized that more time was required for me to learn how to ask the necessary questions to get the information I was seeking regarding the influence of mobile phones pertaining to link-up, social networking, economic opportunities and development, and the influence of mobile network providers on Jamaican culture and society. Although my interview schedule was purposively designed with several quantitative questions, such as age and gender, some informants required clarification regarding inquiries such as "what kind of mobile phone do you own?" suggesting that face-to-face interviews, though time-consuming, were the best method of collecting data to ensure the accuracy of responses and prompt more further information from informants if necessary.

Designing and conducting this research study on mobile phones in Jamaica has forced me to examine my own perception of the influence of mobile phones on an increasingly globalized society, particularly in the United States. My interest in conducting qualitative field research with the purpose of gathering data about on mobile phones and culture did not terminate at the conclusion of my data collection period, and I continue to find myself talking to individuals regardless of age, gender, or nationality about their perceptions of mobile phones, mobile network providers, and their mobile phone usage patterns, in an informal attempt to compare this uncollected data with the formal data that comprises this study.

Initial research on the regional usage of mobile phones suggested a wide range of local patterns of usage, a suggestion supported through my interviews with citizens of other CARICOM nations, therefore this study does not aim to contrast or compare its findings with research regarding mobile phones outside of Jamaica.

Conclusion

Primary field research conducted in Kingston, Jamaica, in Spring 2011 strongly suggests that the high mobile phone penetration rate in Jamaica has had a pervasive influence on individuals ages 18 to 30 in Jamaican society. This finding is consistent with other literature on the topic of mobile phones in Jamaica, including the 2007 DIRSI report on mobile telephony in Jamaica, which concluded that mobile phones constituted a widespread and constant feature in the lives of a large majority of Jamaicans, regardless of socioeconomic status. Although this study does not include primary data from respondents over the age of 28, informal conversations with Jamaicans as well as analysis of data collected in leads me to the conclusion that mobile phones have become a material object with universal social and cultural influence in Jamaican society.

Mobile phones, a relatively affordable handheld portable technology, appear to be perceived as an indispensible commodity in Jamaican society for the imagined and literal mobility they facilitate for their owners and users. Research participants were generally excited about the opportunities and possibilities that their mobile phones offered them, although informants readily acknowledged what they perceived to be the negative aspects of mobile phones in Jamaican society such as crime, threats to personal security, and the degradation of manners.

Every individual I conversed with formally or informally regarding my research topic expressed enthusiasm about the benefits and possibilities of universal mobile telephony access for Jamaica, particularly regarding the social implications of this goal. One student I interviewed displayed visible pride in Jamaica's great strides in ICT market in the last 10 years, stating, "A country without mobile phones is not advanced. Even without development, communication is at an advanced stage in Jamaica."

Social networking or link-up was the most important motivation for mobile phone usage cited by research participants, all of whom reported that they primarily or frequently used their mobile phones for connecting with friends and family. This finding contributes to the arguments supporting the idea that mobile telephony assists in the maintenance of both domestic and

transnational social connections in the digital age. My own participation in this study resulted in the creation of new personal and professional links with individuals in Jamaica that I continue to maintain "in foreign," often via the conduit of mobile telephony.[19]

Digicel's skillful co-optation of Jamaican cultural icons and populist symbolism for its marketing campaigns, as well as its generous financial commitment to a wide range of projects in Jamaica including public works projects, the sponsorship of national sports teams, and concerts featuring popular Jamaican musicians, suggests that this Irish company is laying the groundwork to become a Jamaican cultural icon and fixture in its own right.

The relationship between mobile phones and the micro and macro economies in Jamaica is evidenced in Kingston through the various primary and secondary industries facilitated by the nearly-universal presence and acceptance of mobile telephony in Jamaican society. Street vending of prepaid phone credit and mobile phone accessories provides microeconomic opportunities for individuals; while Digicel's international headquarters basis in Jamaica and its desire to maintain its primary market share of mobile subscribers in that country has resulted in the creation of skilled jobs in the private sector for Jamaicans in addition to other financial and developmental contributions to Jamaican society funded by Digicel.

This paper on the influence of mobile phones in Jamaican society is not a comprehensive evaluation of the topic. Some original data collected in Kingston was not included in this paper in order to focus on the aspects of mobile telephony I considered most significant on individuals ages 18 to 30 in Jamaican society. The constant observable presence of mobile phones in Jamaican society suggests the necessity for further research on this aspect of the influence of mobile telephony, especially due to the perception that new social values and codes of etiquette are correlated with the widespread prevalence of mobile phones and their usage. Further examination on the topic of mobile phones in Jamaica should also address gender-based usage of mobile telephones, such as in the studies of Dunn and Dunn (2011) and Batson-Savage (2007).

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