

Chapter 6

The Center for Mobile Communication Studies

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ABSTRACT

The Center for Mobile Communication Studies at Rutgers University is the world's first academic unit to focus solely on social aspects of mobile communication. Since 2004, it has become an international focal point for research, teaching, and service on the social, psychological, and organizational consequences of the burgeoning mobile communication revolution. The founder and director of the Center, James Katz, is one of the leading scholars in social consequences of new communication technology, especially mobile communication technology.

INTRODUCTION

The Center for Mobile Communication Studies is the world's first academic unit to focus solely on social aspects of mobile communication. Established in June 2004 at Rutgers University's School of Communication and Information, the Center has become an international focal point for research, teaching and service on the social, psychological and organizational consequences of the burgeoning mobile communication revolution.

The founder and director of the Center is James Katz. He has defined that mobile communication technologies not only refer to the mobile phone, but also to music, video, and game players (Katz, 2007). With the third generation (3G) and the fourth generation (4G) wireless systems, mobile communication technologies can now check e-mail, check and update social networking status, listen to music, play games, send or receive text messaging, watch video, and seek and receive information from the Internet.

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The Center research associates' research interests include mobile phone studies, mobile music technology studies, and mobile social networking studies. The Center has also conducted several international workshops and published research reports. The international workshops have provided opportunities for leading scholars in mobile communication research to meet and discuss common interests and the latest research findings on this major change. Some workshops have resulted in edited books or academic journals. More details are included in this entry under "the Center's impacts on mobile communication discipline" section. The Center's website (<http://cmcs.rutgers.edu>) is the place where mobile communication researchers around the world can stay informed and connected with the Center and share research interests.

OVERVIEW

Mobile communication technologies are the fastest adopted information and communication technologies to date (Castells, Fernandez-Ardevol, Qiu, & Sey, 2006; Green & Haddon, 2009). Compared with the well-developed Internet studies, studies on mobile communication technology impacts have received less scholarly attention in 1990s (Katz & Aahkus, 2002; Green & Haddon, 2009). Two of the earliest studies on social aspects of mobile communication technologies were done by Jarratt and Coates (1990) and Rakow and Navarro (1993) in the U.S. In the mid-1990s, a few European researchers (e.g., Hans Geser in Switzerland, de Gournay in France; Leslie Haddon in U.K.; Tmo Kopomaa in Finland, Rich Ling in Norway) began to research on how and why the mobile phone was used by different age groups. Bull (2000), Kopomaa (2000), Brown, Green and Harper (2001), Kasesniemi (2003), Ling (2004),

Glottz, Bertschi, and Locke (2005), Hamill and Lasen (2005), Haper, Palen, and Taylor, (2005), and Ling and Pedersen (2005) have published their books on social aspects of mobile communication research in the early 2000s.

James Katz (2007) commented that mobile communication research has been gradually developed in the mid-2000s. Green and Haddon (2009) argued because of the increasing number of international mobile communication workshops and conferences, communication technology scholars have developed the visibility of the field and research agendas of mobile communication. Research reported that mobile communication technologies impact on intra-personal (e.g., Bull, 2007; William, 2007), interpersonal (Ling, 2008; Ling & Donner, 2009), small group (Ling & Yttri, 2002; Taylor & Harper, 2003), family (e.g., Chen & Katz, 2009; Palen & Hughes, 2007), organizational, and mass communications. Mobile communication technologies also used to change human interactions (e.g., Gergen, 2002; Humphreys, 2005), to do business (e.g., Peters, Amato, & Hollenbeck, 2007; Varnali & Toker, 2010), to organize civil participations (e.g., Nyiri, 2003; Rheingold, 2002), and to use for development (e.g., Donner, 2008; Mechael, 2008). Researchers also found that mobile communication technologies have influenced on culture (e.g., Hjorth, 2008; Katz & Sugiyama, 2006), human relationships (e.g., Ling, 2008; Matsuda, 2005), languages (e.g., Baron, 2008; Haper, Palen, & Taylor, 2005), governments (e.g., Kushchu, 2007; Trimi & Sheng, 2008), religion (e.g., Campbell & La Pastina, 2010; Ellwood-Clayton, 2005), space (e.g., Cooper, 2002; Schejter & Cohen, 2002) and time (e.g., Ito, 2005; Ling & Campbell, 2009). Mobile communication technology research has showed that the technologies have affected almost every aspect of human personal and professional lives.

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