

THE RITUALIZATION OF COMMUNICATION  
DEVELOPMENTS: INSTITUTIONS AND  
MCDONALDIZED COMMUNICATION OF  
EVERYDAY LIFE

By

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Society is always changing, either in minor or major ways, with the introduction of new knowledge and technology. Some of these changes such as the train or automobile have obvious far reaching consequences in how people live and how society is organized. It's been argued that necessity is the mother of invention, which may be accurate as people create and invent things to deal with the problems and situations around them. In today's society, at least in the United States, it seems as if we moved beyond inventing and creating for absolute need or survival to creating new products to fill wants or to make life more convenient. Mobile communication devices, internet and social media fall under the umbrella of communicative advancements that may not be a need but people want and have changed their routines and practices to incorporate.

Cell phones, internet and social media have their good and bad points, which can be seen from a Mertonian perspective in terms of manifest and latent functions and dysfunctions within society (Mongardini and Tabboni 1998). All three developments are amazing forms of communication, which bring information to and connect millions of people all around the world. Life is made up of communication to get needed materials and services or social interaction, of which all three of these forms of communication can contribute to in many great ways. Cell phones allow instant connection in increasingly

almost any location. The internet provides an amazingly vast amount of information, connection to others and entertainment to millions of people around the world almost instantly, which any user knows can be extremely useful. Social media provides a forum for people to share really anything with each other over the internet and reaches many people at once. As the recent social movement and successful political shift in Egypt shows (Al-Atrush 2011, Daily Mail Reporter 2011) cell phones, internet and social media can play many roles for people, including organization, perpetuating interests and presentation of self. While these manifest functions are great contributions and increasingly important to social life, there are also some potential latent functions and dysfunctions of these three communication forms that are heavily impacting people daily.

David Altheide (1991, 1997) and Gill Branston (1984) suggests that media, in particular television, could form a wall-less institution that shapes how people live their lives by shaping their routine and day around the media events that they wanted to take part in; the media reacting in ways to reinforce ratings and keep consumers coming back; and media representations reinforcing, creating and recreating social norms, meanings and the logic applied to exchanging information. Along with possible changes in social practices comes the consumption of the information presented; this could possibly give those with the power to decide what messages will be presented and ideas supported the potential to influence what and how others think. If media does influence how people use, spread and express information, then examining how the use of mobile communication devices and social media play into this is extremely important.

**The following paragraph summarizes the research issues and aim of this**

**project:** Through regularly using cell phones – or more particularly smartphones,

which are cell phones that function beyond the basic phone features to incorporate aspects of a computer (Wikipedia.org 2011b) –, internet, and social media, especially the forerunner Facebook, some people have ritualized the use of these developments, often out of convenience. This ritualization has led to a point that the consequences, including manifest and latent functions and dysfunctions, such as changes in communication patterns and practices, distraction and dependency caused by these new communication forms need to be considered. These developing technologies are helping to shape how people interact and spread information which is comparable to “Total Institutions” as proposed by Irving Goffman (1962) and to the “McDonaldization of Society” as theorized by George Ritzer (2008a), taking shape through the process of “Structural Ritualization” (Knottnerus 2011). Ritualization of these communication developments is most noticeable and impactful when combined in the ritualistic use of a smartphone for all three (Figure 1 in Appendix B represents this pictorially).

The categories of cell phone and social media are so broad that these terms will be clarified for use in this paper. Cell phones will be used as a broad term to encompass both basic mobile devices with standard features such as phone calls, text messaging, alarm clock, calendar, etc, and smartphones with internet and more advanced computing capabilities. The term smartphone will be used when the function being discussed requires more advanced capabilities such as internet. Social media will be used to refer to social media in general in certain instances, but can be understood to be applied to Facebook in particular. The term internet is too broad to be broken down and will just refer to the mass of information and content that is available from any place with a

connection, which is getting larger due to the increasing advancement of wireless technology (Horrigan 2009).

There are many reasons to get a cell phone: to call people, to be reachable, for employment purposes, for safety or any of the many other features of a cell phone. People get cell phones because they feel the pressure to be able to communicate with others to fit in, i.e. via text message, or younger people may acquire a cell phone from their parents as a form of connection for supervision purposes. Individuals join social media such as Facebook for the same reasons, as it is being utilized in many ways, including in university courses, to keep up or reunite with family and friends, to know what is going on in other people's lives or simply as a convenient way to present one's self to the world. Like the internet, use of these developments is generally seen as harmless and voluntary.

Different sites and functions on the internet are also used for the reasons listed above but are also used for other things such as information gathering for educational purposes or news, entertainment such as games or intriguing websites, or simply looking up recipes for cooking, etc. The possibilities of the information retrieved are almost endless, from chemistry and bomb construction to philosophy and gardening. All three of these communication developments will be shown to be used for many purposes, but ultimately convenience is a major driving factor behind their ritualization, institutionalization and McDonaldization.

As individuals begin using this technology, its use becomes ritualized. Structural Ritualization Theory (SRT) gives us the tools needed to examine how rituals are created, sustained, change and can impact our lives (Knottnerus 2011). By ritualizing the use of



cell phones, internet and social media people are interacting and communicating in new ways which are affecting their behavior in many different situations. This process is most intense and impactful with the adoption of smartphones, as it combines features of a cell phone with internet and the capability to get on social media such as Facebook in increasingly almost any location. While ritualistically owning and using a smartphone is the current individual culmination of changing interaction patterns based on these technological changes, it is important to distinguish how cell phones, internet and social media are ritualized individually to see how combining them can lead to major consequences for individuals and society. While these technological communication developments have implications for social systems and society at large, the focus of this paper will be at a more micro level.

First previous literature on cell phones, internet and social media will be explored to build a foundation for the many functions and changes involved in these developments. Then the methodology and research for this project will be discussed. Next relevant theories will be discussed, including Structural Ritualization Theory, Total Institutions and the McDonaldization of Society and applied to these three communication forms to give a theoretical lens to view these technological developments from. Ritualization, institutionalization and McDonaldization of cell phones, internet and social media will be broken down to show how they have become embedded in some individuals' lives, with manifest and latent functions and dysfunctions. This process leads to a situation for some smartphone users comparable to a wall-less total institution involving possible social influence, distraction, dependency, the McDonaldization of communication, and walking around with a gadget that potentially has a lot of personal information on it, is their "link"

to society, may possibly cause cancer, and contains a GPS tracking system, camera and microphone in their pocket “voluntarily” at almost all times.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Cell phones, internet and social media have gained a lot of attention lately in both popular culture and the academic world. In pop culture cell phones and smartphones are used and presented as they are used and seen in everyday life for many, but are also used to make jokes or seen as a way to make connections to others. Cell phones and Facebook have been topics for discussion and ridicule from CNN to Saturday Night Live. At this point in time it seems that cell phones, internet and social media have gained enough users and supporters to continue to be a part of society well into the future, as use is increasing around the world (Lenhart et al. 2010a, 2010b; Smith 2010).

Individually cell phones, internet and social media could be seen as institutions affecting people. Cell phones and internet involve setting up infrastructure so people can get connection/signal; an industry to design and build cell phones, computers, and necessary equipment; and business fronts for people to acquire service and assistance, though soon the business fronts may not be necessary with the development of online shopping. The statistics on the internet about cell phones and their use are really high, though probably not very accurate. One website claims “70% of the world’s population now have a mobile phone, that’s over 5 billion mobile subscribers, and in places like the US, it’s 9 in 10 people. With children now more likely to own a mobile phone than a

book, with 85% of kids owning a phone as to 73% having books!” (Digitalbuzzblog.com 2010). This information is said to come from a company called Sybase (Sybase.org 2011): “Sybase delivers mission-critical enterprise software to manage, analyze and mobilize information” to improve the working of a business or organization. These numbers are surely high due to things like people with more than one cell phone increasing penetration rates, and exaggerated reading of statistics in the interest of business.

Another website (Itech-buzz.com 2010) presents information from Cellphone.org which is equally impressive. They claim 61% of the 6.7 billion people in the world have a cell phone and that two hundred trillion text messages are received in America every day, while the average teen sends 3,339 texts a month with 42% of teens claiming to be able to text blindfolded (Cellphone.org 2010; I-tech-buzz.com 2010). This research also claims that 32% of men and 23% of women claim they cannot live without their phone, with 15% of Americans having interrupted sex to answer their cell. This research goes on to say that 30% of teens have received “pornographic” text messages or videos of one of their friends, and it shows the huge environmental impact the manufacturing, replacing and disposing of cell phones is having (Cellphone.org 2010; Itech-buzz.com 2010).

Clearly cell phone use is increasing and affecting behavior according to these statistics or estimates, but internet use is on the rise as well, including internet use through cell phones. There are over two billion internet users worldwide (Internetworldstats.com 2011), with 74% of adults in the United States using the internet and 55% of adults connecting to the internet wirelessly (Rainie 2010). Many people now use their smartphone to connect to the internet wirelessly, 27% according to one source,

but this seems to be a growing trend (Itech-buzz.com 2010; Cellphone.org 2010).

Connecting to social media via smartphone also seems to be a growing trend.

All social media may be arguably creating an institution, but Facebook could be argued to be the most rapidly growing social institution. Facebook started in 2004, but already has over 750 million users, with 70% of those outside of the United States and 50% of users logging on daily (Facebook.com 2011). “People spend over 700 billion minutes per month on Facebook”, while “Entrepreneurs and developers from more than 190 countries build with Facebook Platform” (Facebook.com 2011). The average user “is connected to 80 community pages, groups and events” and “creates 90 pieces of content each month”. Facebook has “More than 70 translations available on the site” and “Every month, more than 250 million people engage with Facebook on external websites” (Facebook.com 2011). “Since social plugins launched in April 2010, an average of 10,000 new websites integrate with Facebook every day” and “More than 2.5 million websites have integrated with Facebook, including over 80 of comScore's U.S. Top 100 websites and over half of comScore's Global Top 100 websites” (Facebook.com 2011). Clearly Facebook is a growing institution.

Recently the World Health Organization declared cell phones may cause cancer and classified them as a carcinogen, along with lead and car exhaust (Dellorto 2011), but I have yet to observe any reaction by cell phone users or even awareness of this development. How this information affects cell phone/smartphone use will be interesting, especially if a stronger link between cell phones and cancer is proven. It is interesting that cell phone companies tend to claim their phones do not cause cancer but

still advise users to hold them at least fractions of an inch away from their body during use just in case (Dellorto 2011).

In the academic world cell phones, internet and social media are being examined as to the changes they are causing, the possible repercussions they will have and how they fit into the overall social world.

### **Cell Phones**

In “Towards a Sociological Theory of the Mobile Phone” Hans Geser (2004) combines and elaborates on much of the previous research on cell phones. Geser begins by examining how telephones and cell phones relate to human populations and the evolution of their integration into society, arguing they are a very useful tool for people to maintain contacts through space. Landline telephones are useful for people on the move to contact stationary others, while cell phones are useful for being reachable and able to contact others during actual movement. Geser uses space as a major aspect of cell phones as they allow connections for different reasons; i.e. maintaining contact with significant others not present (constantly), helping deal with being in crowded or unsecure spaces, issues with social control, etc.

It is argued that since cell phones allow people to maintain contact with their most intimate relationships, cell phones promote a closed circle of friends or community, discouraging the mixing of cultures and the increasing of the size of one’s social circle (Geser 2004: 10). Cox and Leonard (1990) argue in the opposite direction, that cell phones increase social networks by allowing or increasing communication, especially communication and interaction that was not possible before. According to Puro (2002) “mobile phones amplify pre-existing differences in social participation and integration,

rather than attenuating them” (Cited in Geser 2004: 8). Through experience and research, cell phones, internet or social media could have either of these functions depending on use and context. Individual users could use their cell phone to branch out or limit their social interactions.

Some people may use their cell phone to better deal with crowds; by focusing on their cell phone, they mentally leave the place through “virtual emigration” (Geser 2004: 9). Virtual emigration can be described as using one’s cell phone to buffer a situation or mentally leave a current situation. People can escape into their phone to find familiar and comforting information and connections while in an awkward, new or unknown situations. Consequently, people may also be avoiding the stimulation of new situations and interactions, or learning from experience (Geser 2004).

Along these same lines it is important to remember that a cell phone is an actual object that is carried with a person and so can be used in many ways. Beyond being a handy flashlight when one drops their keys, people can use their phone as a signal to be left alone by others. By actually using or pretending to use one’s phone, either talking or texting, one can send signals to others to be left alone (Geser 2004).

Geser (2004) argues that people use cell phones as a social barrier or insulator from uncomfortable or unwanted social situations, such as wanting to be left alone on the bus or a security blanket in threatening situations; but notes how this may be a more disturbing or irritating way to signal to be left alone, as one’s conversation or use could annoy others. This relates to Goffman’s term “civil inattention”, which is said to have to increase to try to ignore and give privacy to people using cell phones (Geser 2004: 9). In a way people are requesting civil inattention by escaping through their phone. Escaping

or avoiding others through using a cell phone could be considered a latent function of cell phones; while losing the experiences of dealing with people, new situations or crowds may be a latent dysfunction.

Cell phones are proposed to be keeping people from interpreting new experiences for themselves and also make traumatic experiences easier to handle, due to their ability to maintain strong ties to significant others and thus rely on others' interpretations and support (Geser 2004); which now could include internet and social media as well. "As a consequence, individuals may well become less prone to develop certain "social competencies": e.g. to react adaptively to unpredictable encounters, to participate in conversations with unforeseen topics [outcomes], to form a quick impression and judgment about newly met people, or to learn quickly how to behave conformably in new colloquial gatherings and groups...unlearn[ing] to rely upon their own judgment, memory and reflection" (Geser 2004: 12).

Cell phones, as well as internet and social media, may also use up time people once had for self-reflection or to look around the world to appreciate and understand it (Geser 2004: 13). Some would see cell phones distracting people from observing or connecting with their environment as a latent dysfunction, possibly detracting from quality of life or social consciousness.

Geser (2004) argues that since cell phones are becoming cheaper and used by everyone, due to their simplicity, it is putting everyone on equal ground despite gender, age or income. This is debatable. Some see a growing technology gap between the rich and the poor (Volti 2006). Equality of access to cell phones could cause the family, and other institutions, to be "weakened on a normative as well as cognitive level", as people



come to spend more time on and increasingly depend on their cell phones (Geser 2004: 26). These trends could become more intense as the adoption and evolving use of smartphones and social media amplify use. Having independent cell phones causes less 'normative influences' on communication due to separate interactions for each cell phone, thus eliminating third party influence, i.e. from parents, which could be positive or negative (Geser 2004: 26). Similarly a private social media profile is shielded from normative influence except by those privileged to be granted access to it.

Geser (2004) argues that cell phones cannot be seen as building up collective actions as each phone call is a personal interaction, but goes on to say cell phones can spread information that could lead to collective action. This includes the 'Martini benefit', in that people are able to spread information and gossip at anytime from anywhere (Fox 2001, cited in Geser 2004: 11).

"Many recently emerging technologies are "empowering" in the sense that they increase the range of alternative actions available to individuals or social groups. But in all cases, such gains in freedom and autonomy go along with countervailing increases in social responsibility and social control, because individuals face more social pressures to make active use of these new options, and more demands for legitimizing and justifying what they do or omit" as people with cell phones are assumed to be reachable at almost all the time (Geser 2004: 15). Overbearing parents controlling a child over the phone or women using phones, to depend on men, for security and protection in uncomfortable or potentially dangerous situations are two forms and examples of social control (Geser 2004). This research would argue that being dependent on cell phones, internet and

social media for connection, information and entertainment is an emerging form of social control.

Cell phones function in many ways to influence interactions between individuals. “In two highly different ways, cell phones help individuals to reduce role strains and role fragmentation... by providing the opportunity for flexible role switching without changing location...” facilitating “the harmonization of different role duties” (Geser 2004: 14). An example of this would be a working mom being able to go to work and still communicate with and take care of her children. This would be a positive function of cell phones, but this could lead to a blurring of roles, thus bringing the worlds of work and home together, possibly causing overload or frustration from always feeling like one is, or actually being, on call all the time (Geser 2004). This would be another possible latent dysfunction of cell phones, as well as cell phones’ potential to reduce feelings of separation from others, therefore reducing the specialness of occasions when people do actually come into contact (Geser 2004).

Interactions can be seen as often, and increasingly, shaped by the communication, not the place it is happening (Geser 2004). There are many social consequences to this immediate communication and interaction made possible by the cell phone. Immediate communication capabilities may give people the resources needed to respond or contact one another when time should be taken to assess the situation, so care can be taken to avoid mistakes and trouble, such as in a heated argument or rushed project (Geser 2004). Cell phones can cause decentralization of information, as everyone with a cell phone can directly contact each other instead a central authority, which could lead to lack of information for the central authority figure; and subcultures could emerge leading to

possible deviance, due to the private contact of individuals shielded from others' opinions and sanctions (Geser 2004). Immediate communication and the creation of subcultures could be functional and dysfunctional, while decentralization of information could be seen as a latent dysfunction.

Cell phones allow people working in the field to be able to always contact an outside source to make sure they are doing things correctly, possibly reducing mistakes from a lack of knowledge, and possibly decreasing the need for specific, laid-out procedures and training (Geser 2004). Cell phones can save resources within organizations by allowing last minute plans and ordering of materials, and in the home by allowing efficient coordination of activity such as stopping at the store on the way home due to a phone call (Geser 2004). Cell phones have made pre-planning social gatherings or events less important, as things can be easily rearranged or changed at the last minute, but this also means that people may be attracted away more easily, by more seemingly enjoyable experiences presented to them via cell phone at any time (Geser 2004).

Geser (2004: 20) claims "social systems" transform "from the 'solid' state of rigid scheduling to a 'liquid' state" of constant changes. This new flexibility in organization and planning could be functional if it saves one trouble or benefits them, but could be dysfunctional if one feels always on call or their party is left by the cool kid who got a text about other things going on. Cell phones involve "functional capacities to facilitate or inhibit various modes of social behavior, interactions and relationships, and to create new environmental conditions under which conventional social systems have to operate" (Geser 2004: 7).

There are many direct social consequences for face-to-face interaction as well. Answering and using a phone in the presence of others may send a signal to those present that they are of lower importance or priority status than those on the phone or the phone itself, which may be a latent dysfunction for some (Geser 2004). This type of process creates a new role and actions for those involved in the face-to-face interaction not answering the phone, that of “hanging bystander” and how they cope with not being included in the new interaction (Geser 2004: 24). “Gergen (2002: 238) notes that a mobile phone conversation ‘typically establishes an “inside space” (“we who are conversing”) vs. an “outside space” constituted by those within earshot but prevented from participating”’ (cited in Rettie 2009: 427).

Cell phone calls during face-to-face interactions also create two front stages, the original face-to-face front stage and the dual audible front stage created by talking on the phone with a third party; which may have conflicting demands or roles making impression management difficult, and the roles one is playing visible to others (Geser 2004). Meyrowitz (1985) agrees that phone calls can create a situation where one’s “back stage” is presented to the people around (cited in Rettie 2004).

Geser list three reasons cell phone calls can have a “negative, destabilizing influence on ongoing face-to-face interactions”: the unpredictability of calls, norms that phones should be answered when they ring, and the other party is [often] not involved in the new interaction (2004: 22). The three responses to a call, flight or moving to a secluded area, suspension or having the physically present person wait, and persistence or continuing the interaction while talking on the phone, create a situation of disruption and “normlessness and insecurity” as there is no formal protocol to handle the situation

(Geser 2004: 22). Thus norms around cell phone use are still emerging. Cox and Leonard (1990) argue just the ringing of a phone could make people feel more connected to others, while that same ring and the desire to answer it is distracting to the current face-to-face interaction for both the recipient and any present parties (cited in Geser 2004: 8).

“While Erving Goffman could still maintain that the major allegiances of human beings ‘belong to collocal gatherings and encounters’, electronic communication tends to shift this center of social life to the level of translocal communication” (Geser 2004: 23). “The ambiguous dimension of presence/absence in space also means the restricting of the sense of belonging to place...It is actually transformed into the sense of belonging to one’s communicative network. Those elements that are lost in the relation of space are transferred to a social level, that is loyalty, the sense of identification, familiarity, stability, security, and so on (Fortunati 2000, cited in Geser 2004: 23). “Individuals live in this phonespace they can never let it go, because it is their primary link to the temporally, spatially fragmented network of friends and colleagues they have constructed for themselves” (Townsend 2000, cited in Geser 2004: 20).

“Under such new circumstances, centralized institutional control of system boundaries is more difficult to maintain, because it is no longer achieved as a simple correlate of physical walls or spatial distances, but has to be actively upheld by constant controlling procedures (e.g. by preventing employees (etc.) from using PC’s and mobile phones for private purposes)” (Geser 2004: 33).

“Homes, churches or school buildings will of course continue to symbolize the unity of families, parishes or schools as organizations and institutions, but they may

become 'empty shells' without much determinative influence on what is "really going on" on the level of social communication and cooperation" (Geser 2004: 34).

"Institutions lacking sufficient authority and controls will easily be destabilized by such waves of role diversion and informalization, so that members can no longer be supposed to be focusing their full attention on formal role duties during the whole time of their physical presence in the institution" (Geser 2004: 38).

"The impact of cell phone use on environments is very much reduced when text-based messages (SMS) instead of audio calls are used. A major advantage of SMS lies in the fact that messages can be sent and received in a highly unobtrusive way, even when bystanders are quite close" (Geser 2004: 38). SMS is less distracting so therefore less "disruptive on the ongoing interaction", but while text messaging is less intrusive and distracting it is still intrusive and distracting to users and bystanders (Rettie 2009: 433). Now there is social media, which could be seen as promoting longer or continuous texting interactions.

Text messages are more private and have been shown to sometimes be used by those who, for many reasons, may be hesitant to show emotions or want to avoid embarrassment (Plant 2000, cited in Geser 2004: 19). Cell phones, internet and social media could contribute to people not needing to get over their feelings of embarrassment in social situations by providing a continuous non-face-to-face outlet for interaction. Providing a social interaction outlet for shy or disable people is definitely a positive latent function of cell phones, internet and social media; but some may see these developments being over used or used as a crutch as a latent dysfunction.

Text messages or Short Message Services (SMS) allow communication with delayed responses, which allows greater impression management, but also allows cell phone use to get into other institutions less noticed, such as schools and prisons (Geser, 2004; Rettie 2009). Many prisoners have been able to get cell phones inside of prison, and at least one prisoner was even caught posting to Facebook (Sullivan 2006; Myfoxmemphis.com 2011).

“Cell phones tend to weaken the control of all formal institutions over their members’ behavior, because they open up the opportunity for all members to reduce or interrupt their formal role involvements by engaging in alternative role behavior and completely private interactions anywhere and anytime: e.g. during office hours, school lessons or military duties and when driving a car or piloting a plane” (Geser 2004: 38).

“To summarize, the mobile phone empowers individuals to decide on their own about the modalities of segregation or permeability between different institutional settings, social systems, inter-individual relationships and individual roles. As a consequence, such boundaries are likely to become much more fluid, modifiable and unpredictable than in the past and, especially, much more a matter of intentional decisions, which risk being controversial (and therefore have to be justified and legitimated) among the different individual actors” (Geser 2004: 35). “Deregulation of system boundaries is most vividly manifested in the new uneasy relationship between private, semi-private and public spaces, which is caused by the hardly controllable intrusiveness of mobile phone ringing and conversation” (Geser 2004: 35), which now increasingly includes text messaging and using social media.

According to Geser, “Western culture is rather disposed to cell phone usage, insofar as social norms do not forbid people to display private behavior in public. For instance, couples are not discouraged to kiss each other in public places” (2004: 37). Norms around cell phone use may develop over time and has certainly already begun. Cell phone use was found to be less acceptable in more formal restaurants, based on informal not formal rules of conduct (Geser 2004). Rettie (2009) found text diverted attention less and therefore was found to be more appropriate in restaurants.

“Analytically, the borders between institutional spheres (e.g. work and home) are likely to change in three ways by becoming (1) more permeable, insofar as components of one sphere can more easily enter the other, (2) more flexible to the degree that the extension of different spheres can be varied according to current situations and needs; and (3) more interpenetrating (or “blending”), insofar as role activities may expand and belong to different domains at the same time” (Geisler et. al. 2001, cited in Geser 2004: 35).

Geser (2004) breaks down cell phone use into usage intensity (using the cell phone for any purpose), usage breadth (how many different entities are contacted), and usage variety (what different functions a cell phone is used for). It is argued that cell phone use is normally adopted with few functional needs in mind, but use expands or evolves to cover many different uses (Palen, Salzman and Youngs 2001, cited in Geser 2004: 7). In a sense cell phones go from “extraordinary” devices to “mundane” with increased use, to include uses such as contacting people just to maintain relationships, or “grooming calls (ref)” (Ling and Yttri 1999, cited in Geser 2004: 7). This could be contributing to the disenchantment of the world as discussed by Ritzer (2008a).



“Given the ubiquitous availability of cell phones for sending and receiving calls, it can be expected that its impact will make phone conversation more similar to offline face-to-face communication, where highly expressive gestures and “grooming talks” are very common: communication not primarily aiming at conveying specific information or inducing recipients to specific actions, but just for the purposes of expressing affection and confirming that the relationships exists and will continue in the future” (Geser 2004: 8). Text messaging and social media seem to have increased digital connections, but may be based on “shallower connections” or just to keep in contact.

“[I]t can well be argued that cell phones have a certain "subversive" capacity to shift the weights from dominant to the less powerful individuals and from formal institutions to informal social systems: 1) While it has been argued that cell phones will enlarge the sphere of employer authority by allowing him to reach employees at leisure hours, studies show that to the contrary, they have the effect of invading the workplace with privacy (Harper 2001; Taylor and Harper 2001). 2) While it was predicted that cell phones work as an instrument for parents to tighten their control over kids, it has been found that they help children to evade parental control (Green 2001; Taylor and Harper 2001)). 3) Contrary to expectations, females have been found to be keener in adopting the new mobile technology: by using it for a wider range of everyday purposes (Ling 2001; Taylor and Harper 2001)” (Quotation and citations from Geser 2004: 40).

“In a very general way, mobile phones undermine traditional mechanisms, which have secured the segregation of social system levels from the level of individual members, as well as the segregation between different social systems. Instead, each individual now is burdened with the task of maintaining a difference between personal

behavior and social roles, and with regulating the boundaries between different social relationships, groupings, organizations or institutions. Therefore, the demand for social control will rise because, in a world where social differentiation can no longer be based on spatial segregation, it has to be increasingly secured by controlling individual behavior” (Geser 2004: 40).

Social control of cell phone use “can be realized in three forms: 1. *intraindividual self-controls* (e.g. in the case of users avoiding or shortening incoming calls in order to concentrate on ongoing collocal interactions), 2. *informal interindividual group controls*: e.g. in the case of collocal partners showing impatience when cell phone calls go on for longer than expected, 3. *formal institutional controls*: e.g. in the form of regulations prohibiting cell phone calls during school or working hours. For instance: the institutional differentiation between school and family is no longer guaranteed by physically segregated school buildings and closed classroom doors, but by actively preventing pupils from receiving and answering mobile phone calls and SMS during the courses” (Geser 2004: 40-41)

“On the other hand, its functionality to complement or even substitute traditional no-tech communications will be limited by the basic fact that this same evolution has created deeply anchored needs for basing social interaction on spatial proximity at stable locations (e.g. physiological needs of having sex with "zero-distance" partners, or psychological needs to socialize with others at informal face-to-face gatherings)” ... “while behavior in low-tech environments is predominantly shaped by “hard” physical factors (e.g. apartment walls, loudness of voice, spatial proximities and distances, physical means of transportation), behavior in high-tech settings will be more determined

by “soft” factors like subjective preferences and motivations, informal or formalized role expectations, cultural customs and habits or purely functional needs” (Geser 2004: 41)”.

Ruth Rettie (2009) claims little attention has been given to mediated forms of interaction, such as telephone use, or now mobile phones, at the micro sociological level. Mediated interaction is interaction involving some medium, and would also include internet and social media use. Rettie (2009) proposes that mediated interaction can often be perceived as ‘coherent’ because people feel as if they share space or time even though they are separated, by giving focused attention to the interaction; based on Goffman’s definition of an encounter as based on shared focus. Goffman saw face-to-face interactions as most important because subjects can see each other and respond to each other’s cues, verbal and non-verbal, to create and work within the situation. “The social self is presented, therefore formed, in the situation” (Rettie 2009: 424).

“For Goffman, a frame is not merely an informational context, but an integral part of the shared experience of interaction, and consequently an essential analytical tool if we want to understand interaction” (Rettie 2009: 425). “A phone call affords a degree of mutual monitoring, warrants focused attention and facilitates the ‘sustained, intimate, coordination of action’ typical of a verbal conversation” (Goffman 1983: 3 cited in Rettie 2009: 425). This applies to synchronous media such as calls but not to asynchronous media like mail and to a lesser extent text messages and social media. “Garfinkel’s account shows how shared time, rather than physical copresence, is relevant to the experience of an occurrence as a shared event” (Rettie 2009: 426). Cell phones, internet and social media can be seen as involving encounters and shared events depending on the context of use; though shared focus, experience or time is never guaranteed.

Rettie (2009) found people felt like the other person was more ‘there’ with phone calls than text messages, and that text messages were seen as being able to be put off more easily. Respondents said they do get satisfaction from text messages, but maybe not as much as from a phone call (Rettie 2009). “Perception of a medium as synchronous depends on framing expectations of immediate feedback and sustained focused attention”, such as in comparing voice calls to text messages or instant messaging on the computer (Rettie 2009: 435). Phone calls were found to give more cues about people, such as mood and intention, than text messages (Rettie 2009). This is because people felt like there were more “expression(s) given off” to use Goffman’s term (Rettie 2009: 433).

“[M]obile calls can interrupt any social occasion, reducing interactional coherence and shared context, because they change the structure of the gathering, creating asymmetries in performance management” (Rettie 2009: 428). “With the rapid development and uptake of mediated communication technologies, individuals are increasingly involved in concurrent face-to-face and mediated interactions. This highlights the need for interactional analysis that encompasses both mediated and unmediated interaction. Applying Goffman’s concepts of the encounter, of the gathering and of front/back stages, to both mediated and face-to-face interaction facilitates analysis of the complex interactional dynamics and participative frameworks created by new media” (Rettie 2009: 436). “This study shows how the experience of mediated interaction is shaped both by temporal characteristics of the medium and by normative framing expectations” (Rettie 2009: 436).

Clearly cell phones have many functions and implications for individual actors and society. Especially as cell phones’ functions and uses increase and evolve, like text

messaging or avoiding people, helping change communication and social organization practices and patterns. Norms about appropriate use can be influenced by societal norms but choices are made at the individual level during use and are often influenced by convenience and personal feelings about acceptable use and timely responses.

### **Internet**

The internet has been explored from many angles: as a form of social connection that creates community between people from a Durkheimian perspective (Hornsby 2008), as an arena for business (Hoffman 2000), etc. The internet is a communication system that allows people to get almost any desired information, make connections with others for endless reasons, and find entertainment and meaning. The treatment of the internet in this paper will focus on how it functions as a part of mobile devices and social media. While ritualized use of the internet is key to this discussion, the particular function performed while repeatedly using the internet is not of particular importance. People increasingly use the internet for many reasons and currently over 2 billion people are estimated to be internet users worldwide (InternetWorldStats.com 2011), causing basic use of the internet to become normalized and ritualized.

The internet is used every day by an estimated 272 million plus people in North America alone (InternetWorldStats.com 2011), for many different reasons. It can be used to get information about almost any topic, shop, check the weather, connect with other people from instant messaging to phone calls and games, etc. All of these functions are incorporated into newer smartphones that are almost always connected to the internet or these days can actually give off their own internet signal to power other internet capable devices (Sprint's cell phone 'The Android').

There is an obvious increase in information availability due to the internet, e.g., there are 35 hours of video uploaded to Youtube.com every minute (YouTube.com 2011). However, for this paper it is not what people are doing on the internet that is of major importance, though it is in real life because the internet is used to support social causes and spread information about everything from health tips to food warnings. It is the actual repeated use of internet by individuals, including Facebooking on cell phones and computers, and the changes in communication, rituals, routines, habits, social practices, self presentation, and entertainment that result that are of interest. Use of the internet could potentially change any of these by presenting certain information or allowing the presentation of certain information.

Numerous studies have been done concerning the internet, as evidenced by Wellman and Haythornthwaite's book "The Internet in Everyday Life" (2002). Authors cover topics ranging from seeing the internet as part of life and not as a different kind of life, social research on the internet, shopping behavior on the internet, social support on the internet, internet use at school to internet use's impact on social capital. Another relevant study, "Understanding and Developing Internet Ethics", examines how the internet could be used to facilitate the transfer of many goods and services, but for this to take place people must be able to trust others on the internet (Kumar and Melton 2006). Kumar and Melton go on to examine the current state of ethics on the internet and offer suggestions to improve future online transactions and trust.

Paul DiMaggio et al. (2001) have explored research trends on the internet, examining what has been most focused on. Past and current research tends to focus on inequality, community and social capital, political participation, organization and other

economic institutions, and cultural participation and cultural diversity. DiMaggio et al. (2001) suggest that research supports the assumption that internet use tends to complement, rather than replace, existing social practices and patterns, but that research concerning the future direction of the internet should take into consideration economic, legal and policy decision factors beyond current trends and practices. Internet use involves the spreading of information, which can be functional if used correctly or dysfunctional if people use information in a way that harms others.

### **Social Media**

“Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, which allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content"” (Wikipedia.org 2011c). Users of social media join these websites so that they can view content added by others, including organizations and individuals, and share any information or pictures that they feel the desire to. Facebook is basically a social networking site where people can share with friends, family or anyone else and can make connections to other people around the world for pleasure or business.

Social media, such as Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)) and YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)), are also helping to contribute to the creation of new communication patterns. Acting as systems (computer programming and interconnections with other websites and organizations; access and connections to member users; inter-promotional offers and shared technology) and organizations (basically in a business like fashion with goals and objectives) social media are helping to create a more connected media environment. Much of this environment is created and sustained by users sharing

information, pictures and ideas with each other, but this sharing does take place within an environment created and controlled by some entity or organization which would like to keep or expand their business.

The use of social media and its interconnections to other organizations and media are advancing quite rapidly. Many businesses and organizations use business profiles or memberships on social media such as Facebook and MySpace ([www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com)) to help attract business or promote advertising and special offers. News websites such as MSN.com, among many of thousand other websites, promote links to Facebook, Twitter (Twitter.com) and related content.

While Facebook's size and connection to other organizations was laid out above, YouTube is also impressively expanding. YouTube has "signed over 10,000 partners to date, including Disney, Turner, Univision and Channel 4 and Channel 5" (YouTube.com 2011). "Millions of subscriptions happen each day. Subscriptions allow you to connect with someone you're interested in—whether it's a friend, or the NBA—and keep up on their activity on the site" (YouTube.com 2011). "More video is uploaded to YouTube in 60 days than the 3 major US networks created in 60 years" and "YouTube is localized in 25 countries across 43 languages" (YouTube.com 2011). "YouTube is monetizing over 2 billion video views per week globally" and their demographic base is 18-54 years of age (YouTube.com 2011). Clearly social media is growing.

Smartphones are now starting to automatically synchronize with Facebook to update content and contact information on the user's phones. Many websites include videos either linked to YouTube or presented in a YouTube style (programs and software). This synergistic connection between social media, cell phones and other



organizations, from tax agents to Wal-Mart, is contributing to the increased use of social media and connecting many media forms together. People use the internet, on a computer or cell phone, to access social media, or other websites that may be linked to social media, thus reinforcing rituals behind the materials used and websites visited.

Social media has been examined for many different uses. Sarah Lewis, Roy Pea and Joseph Rosen (2010) have examined how social media can be used to co-create meaning and how this can be applied to using social media websites for educational purposes. Elizabeth Wright et al. (2010) have examined the potential strengths of advertising on social media, such as building advertisement relationships and directly reaching target markets, as consumer have become more resistant to traditional advertising strategies. Clearly social media is a growing institution with many applications. The social connection and information sharing of social media can be seen as manifest functions, but social media does have latent dysfunctions as well, such as gossip, poor impression management, cyber-bullying, “Facebook stalkers” and possibly being a distraction from doing other things.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The research conducted for this project was performed using a qualitative, Grounded Theory approach (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2004), utilizing semi-structured interviews (Babbie 2007). This research initially aimed to explore and describe how the use of smartphones and social media compares to a Total Institution through the process of ritualization as seen through SRT; but the theory section has since been expanded to include relevant theories and ideas, especially about the McDonaldization of society, as the data was analyzed.

Semi-structured interviews using an interview guide was determined to be the best method for gaining the insight and data needed for this project (Babbie 2007). This method was chosen because it was best suited to “explore” this topic with subjects in an in-depth manner, to try to understand their perceptions and behaviors involved. By using semi-structured interviews the research subjects were potentially able to discuss anything they found relevant to cell phones and social media, possibly leading to a deeper understanding of use and meanings associated with these developments. The interviews took forty-five to ninety minutes and were based on seven pages of questions which the PI used to guide the interview and make sure all relevant topics were discussed (Interview questions included in Appendix A).

The sample population chosen for this study were college students eighteen years of age or over from a Midwestern university, that own a smartphone and use social media, specifically finding Facebook users. This population was chosen out of convenience and access, and subjects were found through a convenience, snowball sampling procedure (Babbie 2007). Subjects were either known in advance or contacted through friends and colleagues that knew and recommended people who use a smartphone and social media often. Interviews took place in the most convenient and comfortable place for the respondents; i.e. their home, the PI's home, and a coffee shop. Interviews were audio recorded and informed consent forms were used.

There are a couple independent variables that will affect this study. For one, the sample population examined should be divided evenly demographically, such as race, gender and SES, so that the results found can be generalized to a larger population. The time allowed for this study did not allow for a huge sample selection to be divided evenly amongst these variables. In total the research data collected for this project includes interviews with twelve college students, personal observations and conversations, and data collected from the internet. The interviews for this research project include six males and six females, but were predominately Caucasian and from lower middle class to upper middle class backgrounds.

Other independent variables include the level of use, or amount of time and/or different functions used, of smartphones, internet and social media that could impact the affect use is having on subjects. Usage level is about the only quantitative variable that may be important for this research, but usage is rather hard to measure without getting subjects to carry around a log to record every time they even look at their cell phone or

come in contact with the internet or social media. This variable is hard to clarify because use could be defined as anything from checking updates, playing games or having full conversations on Facebook, checking the time or using the alarm clock function on one's smartphone up to making phone calls, surfing the net and sending texts. With all these different possible dimensions and use of smartphones, internet and social media, this research relied on the subjects' personal classification of high or low use of their phone or social media accounts.

Though the generalizability and validity of this study may be lacking due to the size and scope of the research project this may not be a major issue according to some scholars. Lincoln and Guba propose that qualitative research is more about getting trustworthy information about individuals to explore the social world than it is about making concrete generalizations about the world in general (Lincoln and Guba 1985)

The original dependent variables looked at in this research included dependency on a smartphone or social media, changes in interaction caused by smartphone and social media use and themes that relate to the twelve factors of a Total institution as laid out by David Knottnerus and co-authors (1999, 2002). Dependency was examined as to how people depend on their smartphones or social media for different functions, and the possible consequences. This ranges from depending on a smartphone for traveling directions, weather updates, event notification, an alarm clock, to feel more comfortable in certain situations, to avoid or escape situations or staying in contact with people, etc. Changes in interaction relates to how people perceive their old routines, action or interactions to be supplemented or replaced by routines, actions and interactions that involve a smartphone or social media. Changes in interaction overlap many of the same

areas of interest as the dependency variable. Other variables or themes and patterns emerged during research, but these were the variables the research started with.

Questions asked of respondents covered many topics, to try to get a broad range of answers regarding relevant uses, meanings and functions subjects associated with smartphones and Facebook. Subjects were asked questions such as: how often they used their smartphone or Facebook, and why or for what functions; if checking their phone or Facebook account were important rituals they felt they had to do; if they liked using their smartphone and Facebook and why; how often their smartphone is and is not around them; why they have a cell phone and use Facebook, such as peer pressure and parental supervision; how much they see their smartphone and Facebook use as priorities in life; how they use and see others use of smartphones and social media while in other institutions such as school or on a date; how they felt about relationships mediated by smartphones and Facebook in both verbal and text based formats; how they feel smartphones and Facebook have changed their identity, self, social interactions and routines; how they feel dependent or distracted by their smartphone and Facebook use; if they feel their participation in smartphone and Facebook use is voluntary; how they felt smartphones and Facebook increased or decreased social distance; how they felt about sharing space and time over smartphones and Facebook; if they used their smartphone for virtual emigration and how; if they could name any parts of their life that their smartphone and Facebook use were not affecting; how smartphones and Facebook are affecting the roles they play or the impression one strives to put forward; if smartphone and Facebook use increase the need to justify what subjects were doing with their time or life in general; how they feel and what they do when others are on a smartphone; how

smartphones and Facebook contribute to gossip and keeping up socially; how subjects saw impression management working through smartphones and Facebook; when they are most likely to use their phone; how they see cell phone and Facebook etiquette and norms developing; if they feel smartphones and Facebook are barriers to the outside world or not; what kind of surveillance they see associated with smartphones and Facebook; how smartphones and Facebook affect social mobility; what the goals of smartphone and Facebook users and providers are; how they see these media forms used to spread dominant views; what they compare smartphone and Facebook use to; how much social connection or gratification they get from smartphones and Facebook use; how private they feel interactions involving smartphones and Facebook are; and to discuss any problems, concerns or benefits of smartphones and Facebook they have encountered. At the end of the interviews subjects were given the definition of a total institution (given on page 44), with some elaboration on how the self and routines are changed to meet the rules and formats of an institution, to see if they felt smartphones and Facebook could be affecting individuals in a way comparable to a total institution. These questions led to broad discussions of how smartphones and Facebook work and their scope of impact on research subjects, along with the resulting feelings or impressions of smartphones and Facebook on an individual basis and within society in general.

During the analysis portion of this research project word for word transcriptions were typed out by the principal investigator for all interviews. Basic Microsoft Word and an Olympus transcribing program were used. After all the interviews were transcribed, line by line coding was performed to look for patterns, themes and codes within the data. An 'open coding' strategy along with writing memos and notes was used (Hesse-Biber

and Leavy 2010, 308). The data was coded and sorted several times to explore and find relevant ideas and points (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2010).

Information gathered from this project was handled carefully in regards to confidentiality and anonymity of research subjects. Results are discussed in aggregate, though specific quotes of respondents are used to make certain points more clearly and concretely. Transcripts and audio files of interviews will be kept in password protected computers at the principal investigator's home and office. Other sensitive data, which is not a computer file such as interview notes, are kept in locked filing cabinets at the principal investigators home and office as well. Signed informed consent forms are kept in a locked filing cabinet in the principal investigator's office, stored separately from all other data. Transcriptions and audio recordings will be disposed of after the completion of the project.

Now that the methodology has been laid out, how cell phones, internet and social media are ritualized, institutionalized and McDonaldized to culminate in the form of smartphones will be explored.

## CHAPTER IV

### THEORY

#### **Structural Ritualization Theory**

Rituals have a long history of being a topic of interest and research in Sociology, going back as far as Emile Durkheim. Durkheim (1926) shows how religious rituals connected people and shaped how people viewed different events, objects or ideas as ‘sacred’ or ‘profane’ as a result of these rituals. It is in this idea of how and what an individual or social group finds to be important, or sacred, that is of importance to this research. By repeating rituals, different aspects of a culture, objects or actions involved in these rituals become an important part of society and individuals’ perspectives.

Durkheim found that rituals played an important role in defining what was meaningful to people and integrating people into society. By taking part in rituals around “sacred” objects, these sacred objects became meaningful to people in their interpretations of reality and helped bond them to the group through shared meaning. How one defines reality is important, for it shapes how they interpret and react to the world around them.

This research works on the assumption that social life is made up of rituals that shape what people do and the symbolic meanings they work with. This leads to a need to develop a better understanding of how rituals structure what is seen as “sacred” or of high importance.



Knottnerus (1997) has elaborated on the importance of rituals with his conceptualization of Structural Ritualization Theory. He has expanded on rituals to line out key concepts and aspects of rituals, examining how they affect the social world (Knottnerus 2011). Rituals can play different important roles in our lives, as illustrated by their application to various different social environments and events, such as concentration camps, slave plantations, Native American dances and French boarding schools of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Knottnerus 1999, Knottnerus 2002, Knottnerus 2011).

There are many key concepts and terms within SRT. To begin with, SRT focuses on “‘embedded groups’ or groups that are nested within a more encompassing collectivity” (Knottnerus 2011: 15). Cell phone, internet and social media users would be embedded groups within society in general, while smartphone users would be an embedded group within cell phone users and could involve use of all three communication forms. Cell phone, internet and social media users are embedded in basically all other institutions, such as work, school and family as they compose parts of these groups. Phone use, or cell phone use, has developed to become a normal, taken-for-granted aspect of some societies, like the United States, but the rituals that developed using normal phones (landlines) and cell phones impact the rituals that are developing around cell phones/smartphones. The same could be said about rituals around information sharing and social relationships for internet and social media.

There is a reproduction of rituals from the wider society that (re)develop within these embedded groups (Knottnerus 2011). A key point is, that “to produce something new requires something old”, so as cell phones, internet and social media evolve in their use it is based on previous functions and aspects of phones, communication and society

(Knottnerus 2011: 17). Different groups develop different norms and rules, therefore cell phone, internet and social media users are developing their own norms and patterns of use within their groups, which are embedded within society.

Rituals can and do become “socially standardized,” or a normative social practices (Knottnerus 2011). Socially standardized practices are important for “action repertoires,” or a “set of socially standardized practices”, and “schemas,” which are cognitive structures dealing with symbolic meanings for different actions, events, etc. (Knottnerus 2011: 18-19). Combining these concepts we get “schema-driven action repertoires,” that are composed of socially standard practices actors have given meaning to. “Ritualized symbolic practices (RSP) refer to the ubiquitous form of social behavior in which people engage in repetitious and regularized actions which are grounded in individuals’ cognitive maps or... symbolic frameworks” (Knottnerus 2011: 19). RSPs involve “conceptual representations of reality,” which may require “little conscious attention,” while SRT “assumes that RSPs shape actors’ schemas in embedded groups” (Knottnerus 2011: 19 & 24). Important rituals for actors help shape the meaning they give to actions, objects, events, etc. which may be given little attention when performed.

People’s action repertoires are shaped by their schemas, which are shaped by the environment and groups in which they are located causing the spread and changing of rituals actors engage in (Knottnerus 2011: 24). As people use cell phones, internet and social media they may become attached to them and give them meaning through repetitive use and social constructions of what that use means to them individually and as a part of society.

RSPs take place in “domains of interaction” or a “bounded social arena which contains two or more actors” (Knottnerus 2011: 19). Domains of interaction are where rituals take place and may influence the likelihood of a RSP being performed, depending on how difficult or convenient the domain is to access and engage with. There are many domains of interaction, and one could be involved with or exposed to several at once or the domains could influence each other by transmitting rituals between them (Knottnerus 2011: 20). This is important, as the use of cell phones, internet and social media are fairly easy to access and are affecting many domains of interaction, including the family, work, education, each other and any other institutions people that use these technologies take part in.

SRT and this research both perceive ritual and structural transmission and change caused through processes involving both agency and social structure (Knottnerus 2011: 17). Structural stability and dynamics affect agency stability and dynamics and vice versa. In the case of this research: actors rituals of communication, using landline phones, internet, social networks, etc. as a part of other institutions, i.e. work, education, information gathering, consuming, family life, etc., led to the creation of cell phones as the next step in communication and interaction, which has affects on social organization. The social structure around communicating with others, such as telecommunication companies that have goals which they pursue and norms communication agents use, help shape the rituals people form in using communication technology; while at the same time the repeated ritualistic use of these technologies helps shape how and why they are used thus helping reshape the social structure around them. Increased RSPs around cell

phones, internet and social media help solidify them within society, thus (re)shaping the social structure that then helps (re)shape the RSPs involved.

SRT stresses that the “social relationship is the fundamental unit of analysis (referring to levels of social structure), because it affects all other levels of analysis (i.e., networks, intraorganizational relations, interorganizational relations, societal stratification, and the world system) and “pressures and constraints imposed on a level from levels more distant in space and time are experienced, interpreted and managed through social relationships” (p. 29). “The social relationship, then, is the point where “agency” and “structure” converge” (p. 30). Cell phones, internet and social media are technological developments that affect social relationships. Cell phones are now many people’s “connection” to the world, family and friends. Social media is based on creating social relationships over the internet, while on its own the internet has an enormous amount of ways to make, sustain, learn about or change social relationships through the presentation of information.

“Social rituals can operate at different levels of the social order (i.e., micro to increasingly macro levels of analysis) and ritualized behaviors operating in a particular setting can influence the rituals that develop in different contexts or levels” (Knottnerus 2011: 28). At a global level cell phones, internet and social media are spreading (like clothing or popular media) to the rest of the world (Knottnerus 2011: 35). These communication developments are impacting all levels of social life for users and non-users alike because they are impacting social relationships for many people, businesses and organizations in the world with repercussions that affect the people involved, which at this point is basically everyone, except remote or anti-technological environments.

Even anti-technology sentiments are affected by these developments as these sentiments are in response to them. Cell phones, internet and social media allow the spread of information throughout the world, and therefore are affecting all levels of analysis.

Rituals can be spread in many ways, by powerful groups with interests, by celebrities setting an example, changes in social structure, etc., and for different reasons such as entertainment, fashion or social causes like environmental movements (Knottnerus 2011: 34-37). Organizations, large or small, can promote rituals, so it is important to consider the “factors which influence the channels of communication that exist between an organization and the wider society and the simple fact that the more people that can be directly reached in the wider society, the more likely and easily RSPs spread” (Knottnerus 2011: 38). This relates directly to cell phones, internet and social media as they are tools for spreading information, and are channels through which a vast, easily segmented audience can be directly reached; which has implications for marketing, social control and organization. Cell phones, internet and social media impact people based on the way these tools are used and the content they contain.

The four key components of RSPs are: salience, repetitiveness, homologousness and resources (Knottnerus 2011). Salience refers “to the extent to which an RSP within a domain of interaction is conspicuous, prominent or noticeable” (Knottnerus 2011: 20). A major increase in cell phone use is evident to anyone paying attention to the media or just walking down the street. Cell phones are obviously involved in all aspects of life for some people, as they use it all the time; some even use it to “check-in” on social media websites when they reach every place they visit during the day. While increases in internet and social media use are less evident to the naked eye, statistics and

conversations with people reveal that their use is up, prominent and consequential.

Internet, Facebook and YouTube use is obviously up from the discussions above. People also often talk about things they encountered or interacted with on the internet or social media.

Repetitiveness is how often an RSP is performed and cell phone, internet and social media use is rising, especially amongst ritualized users (Knottnerus 2011: 21). Cell phones are used for calls, texting, a clock, an alarm, a navigation device, a radio, a camera, an internet connection, a social media connection, as a way to avoid other people, to maintain contacts, etc. Many people frequently use the internet to look up information for school, work, entertainment, to check their email, to shop, to visit intriguing websites, to gain information on and experience with future foreseen situations, etc. Social media is repetitively used by some to check in with family and friends, to gossip, to spread news, to play games, to look up other people either to contact or gain information on them, to chat about hobbies and interests, etc. This is especially prominent amongst younger generations (Lenhart et al. 2010a, 2010b). Social media like Facebook continuously adds applications and functions, not to mention user added content, to keep users coming back.

Homologousness “refers to the degree of perceived similarity among different RSPs” (Knottnerus 2011: 21). All three of these developing communication forms are similar to each other, as well as other communication forms such as mail, talking, passing notes, etc., in that they promote the exchange of information out of need or want. Checking Facebook is similar to checking email which shares characteristics with checking post mail. Cell phones and internet are used for many rituals that are possible

without them, such as shopping, information exchange, entertainment, checking the weather, etc. that can be seen as RSPs that use these tools that are similar to RSPs involving these same actions without these tools. Using social media to keep in contact reflects old modes and topics of communication.

Resources are the things needed to engage in RSPs (Knottnerus 2011: 22). Cell phones, internet and social media use is spreading as cell phones get cheaper and become more common; internet access becomes more widespread and cheaper; and computers are more widespread throughout society. In general, as salience, repetitiveness, homologousness and resources increase, the “rank,” or importance and meaning, of the RSP also rises (Knottnerus 2011: 23-24). Therefore it seems as if the rank of cell phone, internet and social media use is going up for many people within society as the salience, repetitive use, homologousness and available resources of these communication forms are increasing. This is especially the case for ritual smartphone users.

As the rank of a ritual rises so does “structural isomorphism.” Structural isomorphism “refers to a situation in which social relationships and structure in an embedded group are similar to the social relations and pattern of organization in a larger social environment” (Knottnerus 2011: 24). As the groups using cell phones, internet and social media grow and spread their high ranking RSPs the more society in general will share or be a part of these RSPs. The higher the rank of a ritual the more likely it is to be utilized in reproducing rituals or as a framework for creating new rituals, combining “dominant” RSPs (Knottnerus 2011: 27). Cell phones, internet and social media use has obviously risen in rank for many users and within many institutions, which is causing its use to become normalized and a part of larger society, increasing structural isomorphism

for this embedded group while changing interaction patterns, rituals and routines across the globe.

Clearly cell phones, internet and social media have been ritualized by some users, and as RSPs develop and increase around them they are going to impact society and individuals. Rituals of cell phone, internet and social media use can also spread to other rituals, as these rituals are presented in the media people come in contact with. While larger societal, global or even community implications of these developments are important and warrant further study, this research is focused on the impact on behavior and implications for individual users. The ritualistic use of cell phones, internet and social media is comparable to a type of total institution for some with many consequences, while contributing to the McDonaldization, or increased rationality, efficiency, calculability, predictability and control, of communication in a few ways.

### **Total Institutions**

“A total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life. Prisons serve as a clear example providing we appreciate that what is prison-like about prisons is found in institutions whose members have broken no laws” (Goffman 1962: xiii). It is the intention of this paper to show that use of modern communication forms such as cell phones, combined with the internet and social media, can be viewed as a wall-less institution comparable to a total institution.

Goffman (1962) utilized the concept “total institutions,” in his work *Asylums*, to examine how social structures such as prisons or mental hospitals affect the people



admitted to them. He examined how people are constrained and shaped by the working and structure of the institution. One's identity is changed to fit what is available or considered appropriate by the institution, actions within the institution are defined by and interpreted through institutional rules, formats and personnel, and everyone within the institution is bound to it in a patterned, well-defined life cycle. Through this process the self that was brought into the institution is changed to fit, or not fit, within the rules and formats of the institution; to the point that the self and behavioral or interaction patterns created and negotiated within the institution continue to affect the person through life, even if let out of the institution. In short, people become institutionalized.

Within these institutions there are rules and patterns of conduct and reactions to them, both positive and negative; that can be both functional and appropriate or dysfunctional and inappropriate. If one enjoys or can tolerate their position and pattern of life within the institution they are likely to conform to the rules and format of the institution; if one does not like their position within the institution they may rebel in many ways. An inmate in an institution may wipe feces on the wall as a form of protest because any other form of resistance has been taken away from him. This form of protest may affect the protester so deeply that it impacts his interactions from then on. They may be affected within the institution and out, as they deal with it cognitively himself and may be treated by others, such as institution personnel, friends, family and other inmates, how one who wipes feces on the wall is treated (Goffman 1962).

An inmate in an institution may also adjust her/his behavior or ideas to match the rules and formats of the institution. Even conforming to the institution changes the self one brought into the institution resulting in changes in current and future interactions

(Goffman 1962). Once inside the institution there is no guarantee how things are going to work as the inmate and system react to each other, but the system is more likely to change the inmate rather than vice versa, due to the size and strength of a system composed of many individuals.

Just from this brief description of total institutions cell phones, internet and social media can be compared to a total institution in that the people using these communication developments are conforming to the rules and formats of their use; in effect changing how they interact with others through these communication forms and causing changes in the self, such as habits, i.e. text messaging or surfing the web, they perform as a result. Many people are now also basically constantly connected through cell phones, internet and social media, and thus share many events, information, etc. through the same channels and formats.

Knottnerus and co-authors (1999, 2002) have expanded and refined the concept of total institutions, discussing twelve characterizing factors. The twelve factors are as follows: (1) organizational scope – how strongly does the institution act as a barrier to the outside world, (2) voluntariness of membership – if participation in the institution is voluntary or not, (3) hierarchical authority structure – referring to differences in power of positions to define rules, formats, actions etc. of lower positions, (4) unrestricted/restricted social mobility – the ability to move up or down in an institution, (5) organizational goals – the objectives of the institution, (6) staff consensus – sharing of goals and practices within the institution, (7) social distance – is their “equality” and “spontaneous” interaction among actors or not, which can be further broken down in to formal or informal patterns of social distance, (8) organizationally sponsored

surveillance – amount of surveillance by the institution, (9) size – of the institution, (10) mortification process – techniques to influence behaviors and experiences of lower members, (11) social characteristics – of those involved in the institution, and (12) extra-organizational factors – structural and cultural arrangements, such as laws, that affect the institution and its functioning.

Cell phones, internet and social media will be shown to display these characteristics through different functions, uses and structural/cultural dimensions of these communication developments and the equipment involved; especially when combined within a ritualistically used smartphone. Often several characteristics of total institutions are associated with or exemplified by certain aspects of these communication developments.

Cell phones, internet and social media all have a rather large organizational scope. Cell phones can be seen as a “link” or “connection” to the world at large, while at the same time seen as a possible tool of dependency that involves distraction and social filtering. Cell phones, internet and social media can connect people in many different ways and for many different reasons, but these developments can also act as barriers to the outside world. These communication forms can be used to restrict interactions to those that one feels most comfortable with, or can be entertaining distractions in general that consume energy and attention. Internet and social media also have a broad organizational scope in the information that they handle, i.e. about other people, places, experiences, etc.

Total institutions such as mental institutions and prisons are not usually entered into voluntarily by inmates, and there is no real choice to comply with the rules and

formats of the institution. Cell phone, internet and social media use are usually approached or viewed as voluntary actions, but when explored more deeply can often be seen as socially coerced.

Cell phones, internet and social media all have hierarchical authority structures that can be compared to a total institution. Access to all three is controlled by organizations and businesses with goals, objectives, and hierarchical authority structures of positions and employees. They all involve different levels of administrators and gatekeepers that monitor and often limit use, and may charge for different functions.

Cell phones, internet and social media are all related to social mobility. Cell phones can be a tool for social mobility or a symbol of it. Internet could be a tool used for social mobility as well as it can be used to sell goods, services or ideas; having or getting internet access could also be a sign of social mobility. Social media can be used for social mobility as well; by making connections with others or presenting one's self or products to the world.

Providers of cell phones and mobile service, internet and social media are organizations that have goals. All of them want to increase the number of users they have and the amount each user actually uses their products. The explicit goals of these organizations are to gain members and thus revenue by increasing the functionality and convenience of their information delivery system. There is generally organizational and consumer consensus of these goals.

Social distance can be seen to be both increased and decreased by cell phones, internet and social media. The social distance and equality in interaction involved with these communication developments depends on the users and the context of the situation.

Most organizations have some form of organizationally sponsored surveillance, if for nothing else to keep track of business records, revenues and trends in their market. Cell phones, internet and social media are no exception. Internet may contain the least organizationally sponsored surveillance, as they may monitor peoples' use to tailor advertisements or offers to them, but this is usually not done in connection with a certain individual but rather a certain instance/session of internet use or popularity of a website. Cell phones and social media offer exceptional forms of organizationally sponsored surveillance.

The size of all three of these developing communication forms is growing as users are added every day. The social characteristics of users run the gamut of different types, given the ability to use and afford the technology and equipment involved. There is a technological gap between the rich and the poor, the young and the old, and the literate and illiterate; one must be able to read and basically operate these developments to be of use (Volti 2006). Hopefully the spread of text based communications can also promote increased literacy around the world; this would be a major latent function of these communication forms. Some pose the technological gap as a growing difference between the haves and have nots, or the affluent and engaged vs. the poor and silent.

There are many mortification processes involved with cell phones, internet and social media. All three communication forms restrict and limit the type of communication options available through their formats and service plans. Cell phones shape how people interact by allowing text messaging, frequently being present during social interaction and the fact that people can be doing basically anything anywhere when they call each other; these dimensions have many consequences such as enabling last

minute planning or allowing people to potentially lie about where they are or what is going on. Internet and social media also exhibit mortification processes in the way they shape how users receive, use and share information.

There are several extra-legal factors that support the development of cell phones, internet and social media, but since the focus of this paper is at the micro level and extra-legal factors are more macro related few examples will be given and elaborated on in the findings.

Cell phones, internet and social media spread information, thus consideration of how and with what consequences needs to be discussed, as the process can be shown to have characteristics comparable to a total institution. There are a few sociological pieces already comparing media to a total institution; this paper will focus on those with the most relevance, and provide evidence that media has an impact on people's social worlds through the spread of information. In "The Mass Media as a Total Institution" David Altheide (1991) compares mass media to a total institution, taking a more postmodern approach borrowing from mass communication research. Altheide, focusing on potential control capabilities of mass media, especially television, uses "Goffman's construct of total institutions (as) a metaphor for the study of pervasive control, as well as a point of departure for further analysis of social control in the modern age" (Altheide 1991: 70).

Altheide's four main points are: (1) "structure of control goes beyond mere walls, bars and physical force, and includes procedures and logics to define behavior according to time, place and manner; (2) control is communicated through formats, or the rules and logic for the organization, presentation and interpretation of information; (3) the scope of institutional control is the extent to which its procedures and logics of control influence

meanings, definitions and actions of other institutional realms; (4) the mass media, and particularly television, have few specific institutional boundaries and pervade and influence activities often associated with other social institutions” (Altheide 1991: 63).

Altheide would “suggest that the organization of communication and “...information is central in determining what the organization is”, and that total institutions and the mass media reflect a common foundation in the communication of control. One result of this form of control is the creation of a shared symbolic environment that is increasingly taken for granted and may sustain and legitimate organizational and institutional ideology and interests (cf. Beniger 1980; Cerulo 1984; Giddens 1984). Indeed, the pervasive nature of data banks has led some investigators to postulate that we exist in an “institution prison” (cf. Solomon 1985).” (Cited in Altheide 1991: 63-4).

Altheide uses the concept “format” for “focusing our attention on the way control is communicated” (1991: 64). Formats are “meta-communication statements” or “the rules for the recognition, organization, and presentation of information and experience. Formats provide symbolic parameters for definitions and expectations of experience” (Altheide 1991: 64). It is through the expression, and resulting expectations, of formats that media helps determine the social construction of reality for cell phone, internet and social media users and those connected to users.

While Altheide’s work is very useful for framing mass media, especially TV, as an institution or total institution, there are some problems with his account, especially as time has progressed. This article was published almost twenty years ago, and the advances in telecommunications since then have been tremendous with the spread of

internet, cell phones and infrastructure, such as wireless capabilities. Altheide focused on how the structuring and organization of television and its programs influenced and shaped people's actions by structuring their day to see the programs they wanted to, and these programs were controlled by those producing and distributing them. With cell phones, internet and social media the possible influence of media, on personal routines, rituals, definitions of reality, and information use and consumption is still present, but people are free to engage the media wherever and whenever they want or need to in many ways.

This freedom to engage media on one's own terms, by carrying around a cell phone or being close to an internet connection, is helping to change and shape people's rituals, behavior and routines to incorporate these developing technologies within everyday life and interaction. It is also important to remember that some people may always react to a notification of activity on their cell phone and thus may always have "obligations" come up.

In "Media Participation in Everyday Life," Altheide (1997) more deeply examines media influence, especially television. He argues that information technology's influence is far reaching and increasing, bridging many aspects of life. "Information technology joins serious worlds of work with unserious worlds of play; all are dependent on popular culture for the language, images, and projects of an effective environment increasingly engulfed by media" (Altheide 1997: 17). Altheide argues that mass media, electronics, TV, etc., affects cultural changes and so impacts "perspectives and routines," creating an "ecology of communication," in which information technology works through communication formats to influence, destroy, or create numerous social activities"



(Altheide 1997: 17). Altheide argues, that both the media and its audience apply “media logic” (understandings produced by and shaped through media) to shape interpretations and understandings, and that “forums, language, emotions and activities are electronically mediated (by the media)” (Altheide 1997: 18 & 19). When applied to cell phones, internet and social media this influence is very direct, potentially strong and repetitive.

Altheide goes on to examine how the media is promoting synergy, or the practice of combining different aspects for marketability and appeal, such as combining food with entertainment or all sorts of events with the media (Altheide 1997: 20). Combining different elements to attract attention or consumers, or increase appeal causes reinforcement of the symbolic meanings, and possible rituals, involved.

Altheide points out that media leads to users gaining experience from exposure, and they tend to use media representations as a measure of quality due to experience (Altheide 1997: 22). “What is technologically possible soon becomes familiar, and then it becomes incorporated into the everyday life symbolic realms of routine, familiarity, acceptance, and even fun” (Altheide 1997: 27). “The most important point is that our effective environment is largely shaped by media content, media formats, and information technology” (Altheide 1997: 28-9). Again this influence can be constant with cell phones and very prominent with internet and social media.

In “Electronic Media and State Control: The Case of Azscam,” Altheide (1993) discusses how the impact of media has changed and the implications for social control and power. “If the essence of power is the ability of one person to define the situation for others, then the capacity to communicate that definition becomes paramount” (Altheide 1993: 54); which is reinforced by ideas from SRT in that the more a ritual can be

communicated or transmitted the more likely it is to spread and rise in rank. Altheide shows how the media is able to present certain messages to the public and perpetuate viewpoints, such as the guilt of people accused of a crime. Government officials were videotaped accepting bribes and these images were released to the media; the resulting resignation by several government officials shows the power of media to promote opinion (Altheide 1993). If the power of the media to shape meanings and people's definition of reality is based on their potential to reach people then the constant connection of cell phones and ritualistic use of internet and social media are ideal for influencing people and perhaps society as use of these communication developments continue to spread.

“Social order is communicated order. As media logic is incorporated as a feature of everyday life of citizens and social institutions the social worlds we experience will reflexively show this logic. The challenge for the student of social life is to understand how media logic can no longer be seen merely as content, or as an “independent” or “dependent” variable, but is a feature of discourse and meaning in our age” (Altheide 1993: 68).

In “Psychotropia: Medicine, Media and the Virtual Asylum” Lawrence C. Rubin (2006) examines how the media is acting in a manner like that of total institutions in the way that it promotes the use of psychotropic drugs. Rubin claims that the success of psychotropic drugs is due to advertising in the media, including movies, TV, etc., combined with the success of defining more “health” issues as requiring medication, blurring the line between who is considered mentally ill and who is not, perpetuated by more of a focus on health in culture in general, at least in the United States (Rubin 2006: 262). “The self [in this sense] is not a property of the person to whom it is attributed, but

dwells in the pattern of social control that is exerted in connection with the person by himself and those around him” (Rubin 2006: 268). Like Goffman, Rubin stresses that the effects of the institution, the media in this case, are carried out of the institution to continue to affect life (Rubin 2006: 261). Once again the constant connection of cell phones or the ritualistic use of internet and social media could strengthen or increase the pace of a development like this.

In “TV as Institution” Gill Branston (1984) focuses on how to teach and frame TV as an institution. TV is proposed to reflect and reinforce social practices and interpretations, and offers a channel for possible change of social practices and interpretations (Branston 1984); now cell phones, internet and social media could be added to this. Branston focuses on why TV takes the form it does and how this relates to power, emphasizing its historical development: “the material arrangement of TV”, “approaches established within TV” (power) and “established approaches to TV by a whole critical apparatus which prepares us to read its products in certain ways” (Branston 1984: 87). He is emphasizing the importance of understanding the context within which TV, media through cell phones and internet for this research, is influential and perpetuates power, the acceptance of information and definitions of reality.

Historically, Branston notes that the norms of TV are shaped and prearranged by previous norms including media forms, such as radio and movies, thus newer communication developments are based on previous ones. This reinforces SRT in that new rituals are influenced by old rituals and social practices, including technological and media consumption and use.

Branston connects “pleasure, economics, technology and industry” together and to media (1984: 88). Looking at TV as an institution requires questions about “circulation, industry and audience”; these aspects are important in “showing how institutions do emerge... not only around potentially profitable technologies and existing powers... but also through other struggles and indeterminacies” (Branston 1984: 90).

TV is proposed to frame interpretations and understandings in social contexts, and reaches a massive audience affecting their views, “contradicting” as well as “confirming” social understandings (Branston 1984: 91). Like Altheide, Branston proposes TV, or the visual format, “drives journalists into working assumptions inherited almost unquestioned from a range of other established practices and institutions. These assumptions in turn are prime determinants on what gets classified as ‘news’” (Branston 1984: 92). This leads to the importance of questioning formats, ideologies and messages within the mass media and the public’s access to, use, acceptance and control of the media.

Branston points out how we should examine how the media frames things, such as the representations of science and scientists, which are often looked down on as not really “cool” (Branston 1984: 93). TV having some control over definitions of reality shows why examining possible hegemony within the media is important (Branston 1984: 94). “However, in attempting to raise questions around ‘institution’, a problem arises... the term has acquired a deadly inertia, with a very heavy emphasis on the nightmare weight and persistence of human institutions, and on their near total institutionalizing powers, and very little on agency, or on the institutional change and contradiction which inheres in different practices” (Branston 1984: 86). While it is important to see that the “systems” or “institutions” of cell phones, internet and social media are affecting people

and society in many ways it is paramount that agents use of them be given considerable weight; as consumers and interested parties use these things in as many different ways as there are consumers, which may result in many different type of rituals spreading. Again, the social systems and expectations around cell phones, internet and social media affect people, but people's actions also influence and are influenced by the system.

This discussion shows that cell phones, internet and social media can be considered institutions with many characteristics comparable to total institutions with possible media influence on rituals, routines, definitions of reality, etc. which will be elaborated on in the findings. Ritualization and institutionalization of these media forms has many consequences, one of which is the McDonaldization of some forms of communication and self-presentation.

### **McDonaldization of Society**

George Ritzer's work on the McDonaldization of Society (2008a, 2008b) theorizes that an emphasis on efficiency, calculability, predictability and control has arisen in society, which can lead to irrationalities in a system that is set up to be rational. Aspects of the McDonaldization of society can easily be seen with cell phones, internet and social media.

Ritzer uses Max Weber's theory of rationalization and ideas about bureaucracy to examine contemporary society as undergoing a further process of rationalization. For Weber the bureaucracy was the strongest form of rationalization, consisting of rules, positions, obligations, etc., leading us into an iron cage of rationalization, where choices and decisions are made based on rational calculations and impersonal rules (Ritzer 2008b). Interaction based on rules and formats relates to total institutions and media

influence, as actions within institutions are based on the institutional rules and formats, and rules and formats are based on interpretations in part influenced by representations circulated in the media. Cell phones, internet and social media may be leading us closer to Weber's iron cage as the world becomes more interconnected and thus possibly more rationalized in the same ways.

Ritzer (2008a, 2008b) expanded Weber's ideas and postulates that rational business strategies, best exemplified by McDonalds, based on efficiency, calculability, predictability and replacing people with nonhuman technologies (formerly discussed as control) are the current dominant form of rationalization in society. This does not just apply to fast-food restaurants but to all aspects of life, including market places, the home, school, family, etc. This McDonaldization of society is theorized to lead to the further disenchantment of society as everything becomes predictable, routine, mundane and lower in quality. Examples of this are things like the microwave, TV dinners, retold stories in the media, shorter and more action packed stories for ratings, use of computers in education and life in general, prepackaged vacations, chains of the same recreation and entertainment outlets, etc. As society and interaction become more efficient, calculable, predictable and controlled it may also become less exciting and fulfilling and possibly more redundant, routine and homogenized (Ritzer 2008a, 2008b).

Part of McDonaldizing a system or business is efficiency, and with increasing efficiency quality is likely to suffer and products become standardized, taking personalization away from many experiences (Ritzer 2008b). Also, businesses get customers to perform duties originally handled by staff such as cleaning up after one's self, pumping their own gas or dealing with automated operating systems.

Calculability refers to emphasizing the ability to count and quantify everything involved in a process (Ritzer 2008b). Goods for sale are counted, portions or services are measured and gauged by size and amount, and quantity replaces quality as a sign of value. Cell phones, internet and social media have many features based on calculability.

“In a rational society, people want to know what to expect in all settings and times,” causing many people, organizations and systems to strive for predictability (Ritzer 2008b: 50). This can cause a homogenization of products and services offered and experiences expected. Cell phones, internet and social media are all used by people to predict what is going to happen.

The last factor of McDonaldisation, replacing people with nonhuman technologies (i.e. for control) relates to how organizations and systems are using machines and computers to replace humans in many instances, from ATMs, self-checkouts and automatic drink machines at restaurants to “factory farms” (Ritzer 2008a, 2008b). This allows for greater control of the process and thus more efficiency, calculability and predictability. Cell phones, internet and social media replace or supplement many social actions of individuals.

Whether the positive consequences of this rationalization outweigh the negative ones is up for debate, but Ritzer believes that increased rationality in any system leads to certain losses of efficiency, calculability, predictability and control as a rational systems become “unreasonable systems” (2008b: 56) due to the strict following of rules and formulas that do not take quality, pleasure, context and circumstances into account. Services, products and jobs become depersonalized and dehumanizing. A rational business plan may not take health and boring, repetitive, unfulfilling positions into

account. Regardless if the outcomes of this process are more positive or negative it can be seen with cell phones, internet and social media.

While there are many benefits of being connected to other people and information, i.e. knowledge, integration and solidarity are important to society; there are still some irrational consequences, or manifest and latent dysfunctions, that come from recent rational communication developments.

The process of the McDonaldization of cell phone, internet and social media use is in part a result of ritualization and institutionalization of cell phones, internet and social media, but also contributes to the further ritualization and institutionalization as users adopt and increase use of these communication channels due to the convenience, simplicity, functionality, efficiency, calculability, predictability and control these developments offer. This is seen most clearly when all three are combined and ritualistically used via smartphone.



## CHAPTER V

### FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The research conducted for this study found that heavy smartphone and Facebook users exhibit the signs of being influenced by a media institution revolving around their phone. These subjects showed signs of changing social interaction patterns such as virtual emigration, issues of dependency such as needing a phone for organization and/or to feel complete, issues of distraction such as using a smartphone in class or while driving, and McDonaldised forms of communication

Communication patterns for cell phones, internet and social media are based on old norms and rituals of information sharing, such as post mail, libraries, Morse code, etc. These communication forms expanded on and made more convenient the older modes of communication while adding new functions and tools. With this expansion and evolution of communication technology came the ritualization of their use by some users. This ritualization has led to heavy use of cell phones, internet and social media. It is important to note that cell phones have been ritualized as a piece of equipment that people carry around with them and use for many functions beyond calling and texting people, and as a tool to contact other people.

Cell phones, internet and social media have been shown to be ritualized through SRT above, which will be shown to be done through many different functions and uses of

cell phones, internet and social media. First, how cell phones affect these subjects will be discussed, and then ritualized internet and social media use will be added to show that this new ritualized technological institution composed of all three is very influential. Next cell phones, internet and social media will more fully be applied to the twelve factors of a total institution explored earlier, media's influence on the spread and use of information, and the McDonaldization of these communication forms.

To begin with, people have ritualized always having their phone around them. Only two subjects said they regularly forgot their phones and would not make a special trip to go collect it. The majority of subjects said if they realized they forgot their phone they would have to go back to get it. For many their phone was always around, and a few even used it during showers to play music. Only one subject turned his phone off at night, while all the others said it was always on them or within earshot unless engaged in some activity in which they cannot or are not supposed to be using their phone. One subject commented "we're always together. When I'm at work is probably the most it's not around me; it's still just right there in that drawer if I need to check on it and make sure it's okay." She did frequently check on it even though it was well known to be against the rules.

All subjects agreed that checking their phone was important to them, many agreeing that it is a ritual for them. The vast majority of subjects reported checking their phone at least once an hour even if no activity had taken place, and all but one subject said the first thing they did in the morning was check their phone. Two subjects admitted they would even check their phones during church service. The majority of subjects said

that their cell phone was an important part of them, although two qualified it as important only as it relates to carrying out their day or routine.

Three subjects mentioned how they have to have their cell phone around them at basically all times due to the fear that something could happen that they would not be aware of and they would not be available to help. One subject described this as her own complex of being worried about family members, but several subjects exhibited signs of feeling unconnected to the world or unreachable. A couple subjects even noted needing Facebook to feel connected and reachable. Parents worrying when their children do not answer their cell phone was an issue for several of the subjects, to the point that a couple subjects had to answer or their parents would go out looking for them, or start calling their friends. These are just a couple ritualized functions of having a cell phone around.

Several subjects said that when others are on their cell phone in front of them, and there is nothing else to focus on, they will pull out their cell phone. In effect, one person using their phone reinforces another person to use their phone during face-to-face interaction. People may whip out their phone in response to not feeling as important in the interaction anymore or just as something to pass the time. This dynamic is especially interesting during dates. Several subjects noted that pulling out your cell phone during a date is a bad move and sends a signal of disinterest; thus if one half of a date pulls out their phone the other half may do so as well. Two subjects noted that this can happen as a way to send a signal back to the first person that started using their phone that they also have other things going on and are in demand.

Even during the interviews, checking of the phone was prominent. Less than half of the interviews involved cell phone interruption, but half the subjects either checked

something on their phone as part of answering a question or attempted to. Two subjects actually used their phones during the interview to send text based messages. After the interviews all of the subjects and the interviewer were all observed to check their phone right away if not immediately after concluding.

Ten of twelve subjects did not pay for their own cell phone bill, but those who did all agreed that they would give up most other luxuries, such as going out to eat and entertainment, before they would give up their cell phone to save money. Cell phones were very much seen by subjects as a necessity of life, either to stay in contact with people or for work related reasons, even though they all knew that ultimately life could be lived without them. All but one subject said they enjoyed having a cell phone, most indicating that they really enjoyed it due to the convenience and simplicity they see it bringing to their lives.

Several subjects said that without their cell phone they would feel “naked”, incomplete and/or unorganized, while at the same time several subjects said they need their phone to be organized, because it contains notes, appointments and alarms they need; not to mention all the subjects used their cell phone as a clock/watch. Two subjects mentioned using their cell phone when they could not sleep, acting as a sleep aide in a way. Over half the subjects used their cell phone to wake up in the morning. Just the ritualistic use of a cell phone as a watch and alarm clock brings RSPs involved with the cell phone to the forefront through salience and repetition of checking one’s phone. To this can be added ritualistically using one’s cell phone as a radio, camera, calculator, address book, etc. All subjects mentioned using their smartphone in ways that they previously used their computer, such as checking email, weather, etc., but two subjects

said that their phones had replaced their computers for everything except typing school assignments.

All subjects said they used cell phones for virtual emigration or avoiding people in some way. Several subjects noted using their phone to avoid others they did not want to talk to in person by giving off the appearance of being busy. A couple subjects described how they may fake getting a phone call or text message as an excuse to leave their current situation, like during class. Some subjects discussed using their phone in awkward or new social situations when they did not have anyone to talk to for a feeling of comfort and possibly safety. Two men discussed their phone being used for safety, but this was in terms of emergencies like their cars breaking down. On the other hand all the females mentioned use of a cell phone for a feeling of safety in situations where they felt unsafe, such as keeping their phone in their hand while they walk across their college campus at night.

These feelings of needing a cell phone to be complete as it contains needed functions and information or needing a cell phone to feel safe are ways people have ritualized having a phone on them all the time, which directly impacts how often people use their phone and how much influence it can have on them. If one is trying to send a message to one or many it can be easily achieved if it can conveniently be sent directly to them via cell phone. Potential direct and mass messaging functions applies for users, organizations, advertisers, politicians or anyone that has a message or idea that they want to have spread directly and efficiently. The rituals of having and using a cell phone for non-communication functions increases the chances of messages getting spread to these people as well. It seems that some have ritualized the presence of the cell phone and the

functionality it provides beyond communication functions. Subjects showed signs of how these functions possibly create dependency out of the convenience a cell phone provides.

Use of cell phones has been ritualized through use for communication as well. Younger generations are found to send more text messages and use Facebook on their phone more often than older generations. This held true for the subjects of this project. All the subjects said they text messaged people more often than they called people, with the most common responses indicating that they made around five short phone calls each day (five to ten minutes in duration) but sent from 20-70 text messages a day. At the extreme, two subjects send and receive as many as 8,000 text messages a month. One subject said they probably spent four to six hours a day just using their phone, and they could text basically perfectly without even looking at their phone. Several subjects noted how they've witnessed younger generations getting cell phones at earlier ages and using them constantly; one subject's niece got an iPhone at eight years old and quickly learned to use it better than most the family.

As noted, texting is more discreet and thus enters other institutions more easily such as classes, restaurants, eating with family members, etc. Every instance in which a new interaction with the phone is initiated causes the user to look at their phone, leading to possibly receiving messages they were not aware of or seeing and using the other functions of the phone, such as checking the time, weather or getting on Facebook.

This constant checking and using of cell phones leads to distraction and dependency. All the subjects interviewed used their phones during class, though a couple did so rarely. The majority of subjects said they used their phone in almost every class

and that often they did so in full sight of the instructor with no repercussions. Several subjects said that most instructors did not care and that unless they had specifically mentioned not using cell phones in the syllabus and at the beginning of the semester that most students used their phone in these classes, often to surf the web, get on Facebook or send text messages.

Interviewed subjects made it seem as common, if not more common, to be able to blatantly use your phone in class without repercussion than not being allowed to use your phone. A majority of subjects said that it seemed as if instructors did not care about cell phone use in class, which may be a future social trend as instructors negotiate their usage during class; but as noted before this includes actually being able to stop all students from using a device that is on them at almost all times, is their connection to the world and other institutions, and which use has been deeply ritualized for some.

Using a cell phone during class is obviously distracting to the user but can also distract those around them, in turn possibly weakening the learning environment of many classes. Two subjects mentioned how people do not even turn their ringers off or down during class, and when it goes off it is just accepted, i.e. the student sees no repercussions. Using a cell phone while driving, especially texting, has been found to be a distraction with deadly consequences (Brody 2011; Bunkley 2009; Copeland 2010). Deaths from texting and driving have gotten bad enough that Oprah raised awareness about this issue and started a website where people pledge to not use a cell phone while driving (Oprah 2010), while others say that it is worse than drinking and driving (LeBeau 2009).

It is clear that cell phones have been ritualized by some users, to the point that the self they brought into this situation, or institution, is being changed to fit with the formats and rules of cell phone use. A couple examples show how people's behavior is changing. When talking with an intoxicated fifty plus year old man outside of a restaurant, I realized he had stopped interacting because he was trying to text. Two seconds before this man was being loud and passionate about what he was saying, and then as soon as it was no longer his turn to talk he turned to his phone and stopped paying attention. This shows that changes of interaction are taking place for many age groups.

Another man who is in his fifties told a story about how his girlfriend texts her son to get up in the morning, and that the son will text back that he does not want to get up, etc. This mother and son will text back and forth many times before either attempts to get up. Ritualized cell phone use has obviously entered the family, schools and anywhere else cell phone users go. While the consequences of ritualistically using a cell phone all the time will not become clear until it has been around and studied for some time, especially as use changes and evolves, these issues of dependency on a phone for different forms of connection, communication and entertainment, and distraction, such as in school, driving or even walking down the road, may have major social implications beyond what is now known.

Ritualized cell phone use becomes even more obvious when involving a ritual internet or Facebook user and a smartphone. Internet and Facebook use were shown to be ritualized by some users above. Facebook has some good statistics that show how all three are being combined to be used more: "There are more than 250 million active users currently accessing Facebook through their mobile devices"; "People that use Facebook



on their mobile devices are twice as active on Facebook than non-mobile users”; and “There are more than 200 mobile operators in 60 countries working to deploy and promote Facebook mobile products” (Facebook.com 2001). Since Facebook use requires the internet, it goes hand in hand with this as well.

People surf the web for many reasons. Just among the twelve subjects I interviewed using the internet on the phone included checking weather, sports, eBay, shopping, ordering pizza, looking up many kinds information, and not to mention Facebooking. By using one’s cell phone to get on the internet for school, work, personal email, entertainment, etc. ritualized use of the cell phone is strengthened and the rank of cell phone use goes up. This is true with social media use through a cell phone as well, and many subjects checked Facebook almost as much as they checked their phones. About half of the subjects for this research indicated that they checked Facebook about every hour to see what is going on or if they need to reply to something.

Subjects used Facebook for many reasons, including presenting themselves to the world, to check out others and to keep up with distant friends and family. Facebook is full of applications and functions that keep a user coming back. Subjects noted that there is always a new post, picture, someone else logging on, etc. that can attract one’s attention, especially if notified of the post via cell phone, and could cause one to always check or continually be on Facebook and/or their smartphone. Facebook includes continual updates about friends and whatever news sources one has decided to add to their profile. This creates a network of communication that one can possibly never stop using and having something to do if so desired. If new posts or people to talk to run out, users can play games, or simply browse around their friends’ old posts and pictures, etc.

Creeping was described in a way comparable to being entertained by reality TV programs.

Clearly someone who ritualistically uses the internet to gather information or to socialize, uses Facebook to keep up or for entertainment, and uses their cell phone for many functions beyond communicating with people are going to exhibit signs of high ritualization and changes in interactions and routines as they use a smartphone for all these functions. A few subjects mentioned how their routine had been changed to incorporate using their cell phone and Facebook, by making sure they had access when they needed or wanted to; which includes making sure one's cell phone battery is charged. Two subjects specifically mentioned how use of cell phones goes up when one acquires a smartphone, as opposed to a less functional phone; one subject discussed how people seem more addicted or distracted as use becomes irritatingly high with more functional phones.

This process of ritualizing cell phones, internet and social media affects and can easily be applied to the twelve factors of a total institution. First of all the organizational scope of cell phones, internet and social media is rather large. Subjects saw cell phones as their link to the world and often family members, etc. but cell phones, internet and social media act as barriers in a few ways, including social filtering (virtual emigration) and distraction.

Cell phones can be used to avoid people in several ways. Beyond caller ID, cell phones can be used as a filter to communicate with people without face-to-face contact via phone call, or even without verbally talking through text based formats. A group of young ladies outside an eatery discussed how they will not answer their cell phone if they

know their parents are angry, and then they will text their parents back to avoid being yelled at.

Virtual emigration can be used to avoid people or situations that people are confronted with. One subject used his phone to avoid solicitors, while another used her phone to avoid a past romantic partner, in person and over the phone. Cell phones give the capability to avoid many situations if desired, but as noted before could also be distraction from the ongoing face-to-face social interactions or from observing the world in general if used often or ritualistically. One study found that many college students busy using a cell phone did not notice the presence of a clown on a unicycle in their vicinity (Bryner 2011).

Cell phones may inadvertently distract people, as one can go out and observe or as one subject noted, it is not uncommon now to see a group of people at a restaurant or bar not even talking to each other but rather all doing something on their phone. Several subjects noted how they use their phone to filter out the interactions they want to have for the day, by not answering some communications and contacting certain other people they did want to talk to.

Though internet and social media use are typically seen as connections to the outside world, as channels to large amounts of information and social connections, they can be seen as barriers to some forms of social interaction as well. Ritualistically using the internet for any purpose that is not work or task related can be a distraction as it may take up a lot of time and energy. Internet use could also be used as a substitute for face-to-face interactions, i.e. chat rooms, internet forums, consumer websites, etc. Social media is used to network and connect with other people, but as the majority of subjects

noted social media, like text messaging, can be used to replace face-to-face, and telephone, interactions. This is sometimes seen as taking the personalization and bond out of the communication due to the convenience, ease and efficiency of contacting and updating others, possibly hundreds at once, through a text based website or cell phone message. One subject noted “Yeah, I wish I, I don’t know. It puts a damper, you lose that, even like me and my best friend and I, we don’t really, we use to hang out a bunch, but now we just talk through the phone, that’s all, text.” This subject very much felt that text based messages could replace or substitute meaningful face-to-face communication, which took away from the quality of social interactions.

The voluntariness with which one gets or uses a cell phone, internet or social media can be seen as socially coerced in many ways. Some people are forced to get cell phones by their family, i.e. parents, or work, others feel peer pressure to be contactable, but most get a cell phone with the belief that they choose to get one. All subjects felt that cell phone use was voluntary, though one said they would not have one if not pressured by family to get one.

A study by MIT in 2004 found that almost 1/3 (30%) of people said they hated their cell phone but could not live without it (Web.mit.edu 2004). The current research project found similar sentiments amongst subjects. When subjects for this research were asked if they could live without their cell phone a little over half said yes but they would not want to and the other subjects said no. The reasons given were convenience, functionality and the need, or pressure, to stay in contact with others. One subject even said that they would not be able to live without Facebook. Those who said they could give up their phone also noted that other people in their lives, such as friends and family,

would not be happy with them and would pressure them into getting another or keeping their phone. The same thing was noted about Facebook. Though the majority of subjects said they could give up Facebook they said they would probably eventually go back due to pressure from others to keep in contact, out of boredom or for convenience of communication.

One subject interviewed for this project quit Facebook for Lent, but went back before the forty days were up, even though he claimed to not enjoy using it. He mentioned feeling pressure from people to stay on Facebook; “After giving up people were just like you’re just gonna fall off the face of the earth and people aren’t going to remember you. Like, oh great.” Internet use is also not always voluntary, as people have to use it for school, work, email, etc., and therefore is often compelled, as is having an internet connection in the home at times.

Cell phones and Facebook were compared by subjects to clothing, a drug addiction and candy. Is use voluntary if it is just habitual, i.e. not thought about, or seen as something that is just part of life? One subject said their cell phone was like a piece of clothing, something they put on or took with them every day as a part of their routine to get ready to face the world. Facebook was seen as candy by one subject, and several other subjects agreed; the basic idea was if it is there and you are bored you are going to use it because it is enjoyable, like eating candy.

Cell phones were compared to a drug in the sense that people were seen to be so addicted to them, i.e. constantly checking them or using them and always having to have it on them. Several subjects could see the comparison between social media and drugs as

well. One subject noted that with Facebook, “it’s not getting off that’s hard. I get bored quick. It’s the urge to get on there that gets you”.

One subject quoted a friend in saying that her cell phone was “like breathing or eating”, like it is just a normal part of life that one does to function or survive. One subject even compared future cell phone and Facebook use to like growing up with electricity, in that life will not be known without it in the future. Time will tell if cell phones will be seen as common as electricity.

Cell phones, internet and social media all involve hierarchical authority structures. While social media, like Facebook, are typically free they are run by people with different positions and responsibilities as it relates to the running and maintenance of the network, often funded by advertising revenue. Cell phones and internet connections are directly run by companies that are made up of different positions and divisions that, like social media organizations, make decisions that affect the people using these services; such as limiting communication by time, size of the information being transmitted or functionality of the communication connection or equipment.

Beyond the actual organizations and businesses in the cell phone, internet and social media fields having a hierarchical authority structure, there are other aspects of these communication forms that reflect hierarchical authority. There is a hierarchical difference between providers and user, in that users have to format and conform to the rules and procedures put forth by providers; such as not viewing restricted content, paying for service, and properly using equipment and different functions.

Social mobility was tightly coupled with cell phones, and somewhat internet and social media by respondents in this study. Many subjects saw cell phones as necessary to

get a higher paying job or make the connections needed to make money. Cell phones are also symbols of social mobility for some as well, with those with more expensive phones having more prestige. Symbolic social mobility with cell phones was said by the majority of subjects to not matter as much anymore as there are so many different kinds of phones and reasons to have different ones.

Social media is also an avenue for social mobility as subjects noted the ability to “brag” or show off what one has or does on social media. Bragging or showing of what one has or does was said to be a big part of Facebook by several subjects. “People definitely like to show off what they got on Facebook”. Social media can also be used to network towards a better position, job and/or upward social mobility. One subject even noted selling artwork over social media. “I definitely profited from using Facebook to sell art”.

According to these research subjects, the main goals of cell phone, internet and social media providers is to make a profit and get people to use their equipment and services as much as possible. Three subjects mentioned social media’s and different internet sites’ goal of data mining and selling information for advertisement and marketing purposes. Users of cell phones, internet and social media typically share the goal of receiving information for a price, while providers give service and equipment for a fee. Generally, both providers and users of these communication developments share the same goals. Though there are surely deviant or poor employees, as well as customers, who do not share the organizations goals, most employees and customers of these organizations are striving towards these goals, i.e. staff consensus.

Social distance is a complicated issue with cell phones, internet and social media, as they can both increase and decrease social distance. The majority of subjects said that cell phones and social media decrease the social distance between themselves and many people due to the connections they provide. On the other hand subjects were also keeping in contact with some people mainly due to the convenience of keeping in touch through impersonal, quick text based formats and/or short phone calls. Subjects noted that even though they were in contact with more people, that many of these interactions or relationships were basically “shallow”, “false” or “not as real” as some of their relationships because they were maintained more out of ease instead of desire. Thus social distance was seen to be increased; though it is important to note that without these communication channels a lot of these people would probably not be kept up with at all.

These three communication developments do decrease social distance for subjects in allowing them and their friends to more easily keep up with happenings with friends and family, reunite with people from the past, and find a social connection when a face-to-face option is not available. Several subjects mentioned feeling dependent on Facebook to be in “the loop”, or know what is going on in the world. Two girls in particular mentioned if you are not checking Facebook then it is already like you are behind when you start talking face-to-face with someone; “oh, you didn’t see that?!”. This could be seen as a form of dependency. One subject said people can be more open on Facebook; “I think a lot of people are a lot more open through social media than they are in person, you know what I mean. Like they’ll say a lot more through Facebook rather than face-to-face with somebody.”



Cell phones and social media involve the possibility for equal and spontaneous interaction between users, but also allow avoidance with caller id, privacy settings and the ability to say anything from an unknown location. Many subjects noted the ease and lack of consequences when sending a “snide”, “rude” or even false comment over text message or Facebook. “You can say almost anything through a text message, it doesn’t take much courage to type something out and send it away... So, I would say in person it is a lot harder and that distance definitely becomes shorter for a lot of people.”

Overall social distance can be increased or decreased depending on the use and desire of the users; real relationships can develop, people can be kept at bay, or shallow relationships can be maintained.

Surveillance could become a big issue with cell phones, internet and social media. First of all cell phones and Facebook both involve “digital interactions”, which most subjects noted could be saved, and most subjects believed are saved, on some sort of data storage system. Phone calls were not seen as easily monitored and saved, but subjects still saw cell phone companies and the government as being capable of doing so. Text messages and anything posted to Facebook were seen by subjects as definitely recorded and saved by organizations or the government.

Most cell phones, but especially smartphones, have a microphone, camera and GPS capability, which allow anyone with the knowhow to monitor someone carrying a cell phone. There are illegal programs available to the public that can allow one to use another’s cell phone as a spying device by listening through their microphone, viewing through their camera, using their GPS capability to see where they are, and receiving all of their phone calls and texts on their own phone (Cellspynow.com 2011). If the public

can access this type of program, cell phone companies and the government must have the same thing if not better. Cell phone companies are also tracking people's movements in a way; by just regularly recording the latitude and longitude coordinates of phones and thus users (Cohen 2011).

Users on Facebook are also monitoring each other in the sense that when they look at each others' profiles and updates, including pictures, they are judging them and have the ability to make comments, tell others or take what they consider appropriate action/reaction towards the posts.

Most subjects were sensitive to social media monitoring in two forms: advertisements tailored to their "likes" on Facebook and the fact that anything put on Facebook is never deleted. The advertisements on people's Facebook page is based on the different things people say they like or do, such as music, movies, exercise habits, relationship status, etc. on the website. Most subjects were also very aware that one cannot ever truly delete their Facebook profile, but could only deactivate it. It was treated as common knowledge to know that anything put on Facebook is stored somewhere forever and could potentially come back up if the situation arises; "nothing is ever deleted once it is digitized". Many subjects noted hearing about people that got into trouble and had past text messages or Facebook posts brought to court as evidence. A few subjects also mentioned the caution needed to be taken when deciding what content one sends to whom, because now they have that message/content/data/picture, basically forever, and one does not know what they are going to do with it.

Subjects also noted that potential employers or schools sometimes use peoples' Facebook profiles to make judgments about their character or fit into their area. A couple

subjects even knew people who lost jobs or did not get jobs because of their Facebook content. Several subjects saw monitoring on Facebook by parents, family, friends, employers, fellow church members, etc. as a form of surveillance as to which they must be sensitive to not offend anyone or have anyone misinterpret what they mean by a particular post or what they are doing in a particular picture. One subject noted they had to block a lot of content from their family on Facebook due to misunderstandings: “if you don’t know me well enough to know what I mean, then you’re blocked”. One misinterpretation by this subjects’ family lead to fear that the subject was suicidal due to the negative content of their social media posts, due to the bad day they were having.

Surveillance, gossip and impression management on Facebook reaches another level when discussing the fact that other people can post any kind of comments they want and pictures of anyone else, which could include their name in the description and be linked to their profile; causing some people to have things heard and incidents seen that they would rather have kept private. People often get into trouble when their significant others see and hear things that one would have rather kept secret.

All subjects noted how cell phones, internet and social media are spreading, thus the size of these institutions is growing, quite rapidly based on the statistics presented above. This growth in use is also broadening the scope of users of cell phones, internet and social media as younger and older individuals, and the less affluent are increasingly adopting these technologies (Geser 2004; Lenhart et al. 2010a, 2010b). Several subjects noted how their family members where getting cell phones at younger ages and that their grandparents were also adopting cell phone, internet and social media use.

Research subjects mentioned and exhibited signs of many mortification processes as a result of cell phone, internet and social media use. For one, text messaging was seen as allowing more consideration of what is sent to others as it does not have to be an immediate response like during a phone call or face-to-face interaction. However, written words and messages are subject to individual interpretations by the recipients and thus prone to cause misunderstandings in some cases.

Subjects were about half and half over whether impression management could be better controlled over phone calls or text messages. Phone calls were seen as more personal and contained more cues given off about the situation, such as tone of voice. Many subjects noted the futility of having a serious conversation over text message as people are likely to not have the same interpretations leading to problems. At the same time some subjects said text messages allowed for more distance and thus they could talk about potentially sensitive, hurtful, or as one subject put it “real” topics without as serious of consequences, or making someone mad in person or over the phone.

Virtual emigration could also be seen as a mortification process, especially as people become dependent on their cell phone in awkward or unpleasant situations. Smartphones’ ability to get on the internet for whatever reason, i.e. look up some information, get on Facebook or to play games, is helping shape what people do during waiting periods, such as on the bus or at the doctor.

Internet influences the behaviors and experiences of users by having access to, and learning from, almost any desired information. Some people have become accustomed to being able to get on the internet to look up needed or desired information, to email people, or to be entertained by various websites. Heavy internet users may have rituals of

checking bank statements each night, rituals that deal with sexual desires involving pornographic websites or any of the endless possibilities and functions on the internet in which they regularly engage in. The internet can also shape users behavior and experiences by giving users access to pictures, videos and information, thus shaping their expectations and experiences with things involved in this information. This could perpetuate the disenchantment of society, as many experiences and ideas become routine, mundane or colored by expectations.

Social media also has a unique effect on the behaviors and experiences of users. Users present themselves and look at what others have posted on social media like Facebook. Just the pressure to present a good, or desired, image could affect how people use social media. This presentation of self can lead to, as subjects said happens, people feeling the need to live up to what they presented on Facebook, such as being a partier or an academic. People can also try to recreate themselves or make them self look better on Facebook. A couple subjects told a story about guys in high school making a fake girl on Facebook and flirting with guys. They got one guy to wait at a restaurant for her to show up and another guy thought he was going to the prom with her.

The format of Facebook, with its different privacy settings, communication forums and channels, categories of interest and like/dislikes, etc. shapes how users interact and share with each other. What is seen as expected behavior or sharing on Facebook is going to have an effect on some people, such as a favorite books category. By viewing others Facebook profiles' users may use others that are not even close to them, physically, emotionally, psychologically, etc. as a reference group due to their perception of a desired trend or lifestyle (Siegel and Siegel, 1957). Users can also look at

others' profiles to try to get to know them, before or after meeting them, or even stalk them in serious instances. People can post things to Facebook to try to present themselves in a particular manner or get a desired response out of others. One subject noted how Facebook could be used as a journal to keep track of one's life through post and pictures. At the same time so many users utilizing Facebook in the same ways really takes away from the uniqueness of individual use and makes users somewhat interchangeable, in that they use Facebook in the same ways and for the same functions, thus homogenizing their experiences and expressions of them.

Social media can also just be used to go out and people watch in a way, by looking at what different people do and like and dislike. Many subjects noted that going on Facebook to basically see what others are doing is a form of entertainment for them, called "creeping". In their explanations this use almost seemed like entertainment in the form of reality television, except one is more likely to know the people involved. One subject noted it was extremely entertaining when "somebody gets drunk and blows up their whole life on Facebook. They just broke up with their girlfriend or whatever, and they talk about why they hate them and the world sucks. It's just fun, funny, entertaining". One subject said they sometimes got on Facebook to compare them self to others that were not doing as well as a form of reassurance and self-gratification. Self-gratification was discussed by a few subjects as reachable by seeing what others are doing and being able to post things about yourself that you want to share with others.

Cell phones and Facebook are also strongly tied to changing interactions in romantic relationships. Several subjects noted that Facebook was just like a big dating site that people go on to check out potential mates. Some people also do not consider

others to really be dating until they are “FBO” or Facebook Official, meaning their relationship status has been updated to show who they are dating. Text messaging was seen by some subjects as a more discreet or less stressful way to get to know people, especially people of the opposite sex. Two subjects mentioned how social media and text messages made talking to the opposite sex easier. Frequent texting back and forth in new relationships was mentioned by several subjects and the resulting feelings of possibly over texting or being not responded to promptly.

Sexting, or sending sexually explicit or exciting text messages or pictures via cell phone was described as a growing trend; as noted earlier one source claims 30% of teens have received sexually explicit content from someone they know. Cell phones and Facebook were also noted as being able to send messages to several people at once. A person looking for someone to hang out with, help them move, an exercise partner or a potential romantic partner can send out a text message or Facebook post to several people at once, thus making processes such as these easier, more efficient and convenient.

There are several extra-legal factors involved with cell phones, internet and social media. First of all the internet was designed as a military communication system that would not go down in the face of a disaster (Wikipedia.org 2011a). That fact alone shows how the internet has been perpetuated by the government with a goal in mind, and the strength of the internet system. The telecommunications act of 1996 allowed media conglomerates to form by deregulating competition and allowing media giants to do business in many media industries at once (Wikipedia.org 2011d). This allowed media giants such as AT&T to form and dominate the media industry.

Cell phones, internet and social media have all been found to be useful in disasters and emergencies, such as the recent tsunami and radiation leak in Japan (Williams 2011; Saltzman 2011). Being useful in emergencies is helping to promote a push for better cell phones and infrastructure that is sure to hold up, including a wave of disaster applications for smartphones.

It is clear from this discussion of the characteristics of total institutions and how these developing communication systems relate to these factors, that on their own cell phones, internet and social media each have attributes that could be considered to help shape rituals and behaviors of users in a way comparable to a media total institution. This can be seen to really take shape with the increasing ritualistic use of smartphones, but first we need to examine how media could form a total institution and shape how people handle and exchange information.

Altheide, like Branston, proposes that consuming information from the media could have impacts comparable to a total institution. Many of Altheide's arguments can be seen in and applied to cell phones, internet and social media use, especially when ritualistically used by people. The organizational scope of these three developments goes beyond walls to influence individuals anywhere they have a cell phone signal or internet connection. Using a cell phone for non-communication functions can even influence an individual when they do not have any signal, i.e. connection to any networks. Different social roles, customs, practices, norms, language, etc. are communicated through these communication developments and the media involved, influencing meanings, the handling of information and actions of individuals. Cell phones, internet and social media are definitely influencing other institutional realms with their use and presentation



of information, in affect influencing both social definitions of reality and individual's behavior within other institutions.

Cell phones enter other institutions as the user does; thus internet and social media do as well with the increasing adoption of smartphones. Internet contains information regarding all different institutions which can impact people in endless ways. Social media is heavily involved in the institutions of family, education and work, and can potential affect any institution a Facebook user enters. A Facebook user could post information about institutions they are involved with or the institution can use the users Facebook profile to judge the user.

Altheide also applies what he conceptualizes as the major aspects of a total institution to mass media, the first two of which clearly reflect recent cell phone, internet and social media ritualization, while the last two need to be slightly modified. In order, the common aspects of total institutions include: (1) "All aspects of life are conducted in the same place and under the same single authority" (Altheide 1991, 64); i.e. users are connected (often which could be considered constantly) through media channels, which are run by organizations. (2) "Each phase of the member's daily activity is carried out in the immediate company of a large batch of others" (Altheide 1991, 64); i.e. users are constantly connected through cell phones, internet and social media, especially heavy or ritualistic use, compounded by the use of social media and GPS functions on a smartphone. Social media is built on sharing experiences and words over the internet.

Because use of a cell phones is mostly seen as voluntary, even by those who may feel forced into having one for many different reasons, the next two points need to be seen as allowing the ritualistic use of a cell phone to impact one's self in these ways. (3)

“All phases of the day’s activity are tightly scheduled – a sequence of activities being imposed from above by a system of explicitly formal rulings and a body of officials” (Altheide 1991, 64). While there is usually no obligation to use a cell phone, internet or social media, besides to contact family, school or work, people allow the constant incoming messages and media to shape what they do, how they do it and when. With incoming phone calls, text messages, social media messages and alerts, emails, alarms set to remember appointments (i.e. birthdays and any other events), etc. cell phones, internet and social media, especially combined in a smartphone, can really regiment and determine one’s day if allowed to. The last point is, (4) “The various enforced activities are brought together into a single rational plan to fulfill various organizational aims” (Altheide 1991, 64); i.e. equipment and functions are created and perpetuated for cell phones, internet and social media to increase usage.

Altheide applied these last two points in the following ways: “(3) Ratings and programming logic dictate the scheduling of each day’s program offerings, and audience members often adjust their activities to these schedules (cf. Rosengren 1974; Altheide and Snow 1979; Larson and Kubey 1983)” (cited in Altheide 1991: 66); ritualistic cell phone, internet and social media users often structure their routine and behavior around their use. (4) “Major media programming is rationally produced and presented according to bureaucratic, economic and organizational criteria (cf. Epstein 1973; Altheide and Johnson 1980; Kellner 1981; Gitlin 1983)” (cited in Altheide 1991: 66); cell phone, internet and social media providers are constantly updating to please consumers and increase their usage according to business plans.

As Altheide discussed synergy with mass media, many products now have Facebook pages as a way to promote synergy, and all sorts of products are promoted through advertisements on social media, internet sites and smartphone applications. This synergy could greatly contribute to the rising rank of cell phones, internet and social media as it promotes salient, repetitive, homologous RSPs for all three if one has the resources to engage this media. Two subjects in particular noted marketing plans by businesses using Facebook and the internet for synergy, such as local bars and restaurants.

The vast majority of subjects agreed they have noticed synergy practices between these three media forms, such as having to get on the internet or social media, sometimes through a cell phone, to enter contests, get special offers or find out about events. Here is an interesting example of synergy with the internet and cell phones: one now has to have a cell phone to get an email account with Google.com, as it is required to activate the account. By promoting the use of each other, cell phones, internet and social media are reinforcing ritualistic use of themselves, each other, other products/services or anything else connected to them.

As mentioned earlier, Rubin (2006) claims a constant media influence on psychotropic drugs, by advertising and normalization in media and society, and the blurring of illnesses requiring medication, has perpetuated the increased acceptance and use of psychotropic drugs. Cell phones, internet and social media could be seen similarly in that instead of an emphasis on health they are promoting an emphasis on mobility and instant communication, influencing the spread of the rituals and media involved with

these technologies. The spread of rituals and media can influence rituals, social practices, definitions of reality, etc.

Comparatively, if the media can perpetuate drugs it could also perpetuate cell phones, internet and social media in the same way. One subject noted commercials about not having “phone shame” by having an old or outdated phone. The subject said they could see people with older phones, i.e. without smartphones, having this feeling, thus perpetuating and normalizing the adoption of smartphones; and if ritualistically used for internet access or social media use, can be perpetuating the ritualistic use of all three technologies.

Cell phones, internet and social media display many characteristics comparable to a total institution, which Altheide (1991) and Branston (1984) have argued shapes definitions of reality and social practices. Branston mentions the importance of considering and including discussions and aspects of power, circulation, industry, pleasure, economics, technology, and audience as they relate to a media total institution and the control and influence it exerts.

Pleasure, economics, technology, industry, circulation and audience can all be applied to cell phones, internet and social media. All three communication forms are used out of ease or convenience, which is linked to pleasure, as well as being used by some for entertainment. Communication developments are often associated with economic gains, new technology, industry to make the required equipment, and circulation and audience as new technology and media have to be used to stick around or be profitable.

As noted above, the ritualistic and possible institutional, use of cell phones, internet and social media led to many user behaviors and perceptions reflecting the McDonaldization of society.

First of all, cell phones, internet and social media are themselves, and have functions, based on efficiency. Cell phones and social media are systems set up to efficiently connect people, potentially reaching many people at once, but as noted before convenient, quick text messages, Facebook posts or phone calls may be impersonal or used to replace more personal, and thus quality, interactions. Digital and text based interactions may also efficiently help people manage feelings of embarrassment and discomfort when communicating.

Internet is basically just an efficient way to get or share information: one can efficiently find people to chat with, play games, email, get cooking recipes, get instructions to make mustard gas, get pornographic pictures, etc. Social media is an efficient way to spread information, keep in contact with people, present one's self to the world and get to know others. Cell phones, internet and social media are all systems where users decide how to use them on their own and thus are tools for consumers to do different tasks for themselves, possibly choosing the most efficient way.

Cell phones also allow for greater efficiency in many other ways. People can call for directions or to set up appointments. A cell phone can be used at anytime and in almost any location. Cell phones also contain many functions to make life more efficient, like an alarm, calendar, radio, etc, or can be used in an attempt to multi-task, by using a cell phone and performing another activity. Using a cell phone to multi-task can be a bad thing, as multi-tasking is suggested to decrease comprehension and performance (Richtel

2011). A couple subjects felt they could multi-task with their phone and still perform other functions as well, although most subjects knew their performance on both tasks attempted suffered. Cell phones enable people to efficiently avoid each other, or can also enable efficient cheating in school by being a connection to the internet or others, or students even taking pictures of the exams. Internet and social media get consumers to do work for themselves on occasions, such as internet users setting up their own networks and Facebook users setting up their own profiles.

Two of the more prominent features of McDonaldized communication are: the ability to send messages, text messages or Facebook messages, to many people at once, and the ability to efficiently present one's self to the world on Facebook. The ability to message many people at once makes the process of finding someone to talk to, to eat with, to go on a date with, to ask for advice, etc. more efficient, simple and convenient. Sending out several messages increases the odds of a response while possibly effectively shielding one from feeling embarrassed, bad or inappropriate if they send controversial or racy messages.

Many features of cell phones, internet and social media are based on and reflect calculability. Cell phones are based on service plans that are either unlimited or count the amount of minutes people use their phone, how many text messages are sent and received, and how much data was transmitted over the internet. Internet service plans are also based on countable download speeds and websites count visitors for advertisement purposes. Social media counts everything from how many friends one has to how many pictures and posts one has added.

Some people on Facebook get as many friends as possible as a sign of social acceptance; others count pictures or how many times they are tagged in pictures by others. Some subjects mentioned that people may get a sense of self worth based on how many phone calls, text messages or Facebook comments they receive or are part of. Many websites give deals based on quantity of goods offered as opposed to the quality of products. Cell phones are often promoted by emphasizing their increased functionality, which not only promotes quantity of services over quality, but may be subtly pressuring people into adopting more advanced cell phones. One person I know said his parents got new smartphones with internet connection because it was cheaper than getting regular cell phones with a basic calling and texting plan, thus the cell phone providers' business coerced them into adopting newer technology.

Cell phones, internet and social media are strongly tied to predictability. Cell phones are used to call ahead, make plans or meet at the last minute. Internet is often used to learn about and experience endless topics, services and products, or do things like check the weather forecast. Social media is used by people to see what other people are like, to check out products and to keep people up to date and thus able to predict what other people are doing. Predictability is even more tightly coupled with cell phones as they are used as a reminder with calendars and alarms, etc. Cell phones also make it predictable if a person will be reachable, at least people often treat cell phones that way.

Many issues with control or replacing humans with non-human machines are seen in cell phones, internet and social media. Cell phone calls can replace physically visiting others, and possibly verbal communication with others via text messages; while internet and social media can be used in place of asking others for information or about

themselves. Replacing phone calls or physical visits with others could be contributing to the McDonaldization of society and reducing the quality of social interactions and social gratification received through these media channels.

Cell phones are also seen by many subjects as their link to the world, in effect possibly replacing other humans or attachment to place as a form of social integration. The internet is slowly replacing or changing many human tasks, such as going to the library for books and information, going out for entertainment or to see a movie, depending on talking to others around you or taking entertainment during waiting periods, etc. Getting on the internet may also replace needs sought from other humans, such as seeking advice, sexual arousal or socialization.

Social media can be seen in some instances to be allowing computers to replace humans in interactions as the people involved do not have to come into contact or even participate at the same time. Social media basically replaces the friendship process of getting to know each other with an efficient, calculable and predictable website that facilitates this process over the internet. People friend each other, send notes, messages and pictures to each other, talk to many people at once, talk during their own free time, get information that one may or may not ask a friend for in person, and have the ability to control their image on the website to a certain degree.

Though the overall value of cell phones, internet and social media is debatable, obviously some parts of these communication systems lead to irrationality when aiming for rationality. For instance cell phones have been said to possibly cause cancer by the World Health Organization, but people are currently still using them just as much. Cell phones are a distraction in many instances, but could be detrimental when used while



operating a car or heavy machinery or during school. People may come to depend on their cell phone and feel as if they need to have it at all times. The internet comes with the spread of malicious information, computer viruses, the ability to look almost anything up, and can be a distraction or cause user dependency as well. There are issues with social media such as privacy, cyber-bullying, cyber-stalkers, data mining, and basic control or use of information. People can also receive social sanctions over what they are seen doing on Facebook by both personal acquaintances and employers.

How rational is it to always carry around a device that has been suspected to cause cancer and could be used as a tracking system by anyone with the knowhow and right programs? Is it rational to always be reachable by anyone at anytime, and thus possibly always accountable? Is it rational to perpetuate a system and way of life that may be leading to an increasingly rapid disenchantment of society? While many people may turn a blind eye to these consequences because they are outweighed by the benefits received from these communication developments, these consequences are important to be aware of. Even using one's cell phone for virtual emigration, while having its benefits as an efficient, calculable, predictable and controllable way to avoid certain situations or feel more comfortable, may be irrational in the sense that it may be a distraction or barrier to experiences one would be having without their phone.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Through this research project, smartphones were found to be used by subjects mostly out of convenience, though some participants felt some obligation to have a cell phone. It is through this convenient use that RSP's and interaction patterns involving smartphones develop, as use of a smartphone usually evolves to include many different functions. As smartphone use becomes ritualized, heavy use causes individuals to be impacted by the media in a way comparable to a total institution and interactions/social patterns change and evolve with many positive and negative consequences.

People enter a technological institution, composed of heavy media use through the ritualized channels of cell phones, internet and social media voluntarily. In effect, the self one brings into this institution is forced to change to fit cell phone, internet or social media use, rules, formats, structure, etc., or one will be left behind technologically and socially in different instances. Using technology that allows the sharing and retrieval of information gives users an advantage over non-users, as knowledge is power, while at the same time allowing one to keep up with social happenings, either in society in general, such as entertainment news, or in their individual life, especially if ritualistically using Facebook to keep up with others.

One's identity and self changes to incorporate cell phone, internet and social media use into habits, rituals and/or routines. Individuals' means of communication are changed, which obviously impacts how they interact with others. Appropriate use is negotiated with surrounding people and is based on context, impacting definitions of reality. People become bound to their phone for social connection, information, entertainment, etc. Individuals may not ever give up their cell phone, internet or social media use, so the self may permanently be changed by the technological institution they entered.

Using a cell phone, the internet or social media can be done in a functional and appropriate or dysfunctional and inappropriate way, just like behavior in a mental institution. One can text wrong or too much (get bad interpretations and responses) or use their phone at bad times or good times (emergency vs. class). If one likes their phone they can conform more to using it by incorporating more uses and functions; or one can get a cell phone and just use it for calling, as some people do. It is important to note that these people have still entered the institution of cell phones, and use can evolve, like it does for many. Like conforming to the rules of a mental hospital, people are conforming to cell phone, internet and social media as it surrounds them because of its (increasingly) large size, functionally, accessibility, convenience and normalization within society.

Amongst the subjects there was debate as to which new communication form was causing changes in interaction or behavior the most. All subjects could see that both cell phones and Facebook are changing society. Two subjects felt that Facebook was the real culprit in changing how people interact, especially when used on a smartphone, but most subjects saw the phone and all the functions it involves, including Facebook and the

internet, to be the real cause of changing social interactions. It is in this combination of all three, cell phone, internet and social media, in smartphone form, combined with ritualistically having, checking and using one's smartphone where a truly regimenting institution can be seen.

Ritualistic smartphone users are almost constantly doing something with their phone for endless reasons, if for nothing else checking the time. All subjects discussed how almost everyone is on their phone all the time these days. If not talking or texting, they are looking up Facebook or something on the internet with every free second they have. One subject talked about texting the entire time they go shopping, while another mentioned how stopping at a red light gave just enough time to check and possibly use their phone.

It should be clear from this discussion that cell phones, internet and social media can all be seen as institutions, but when combined into a smartphone can clearly be seen to help shape people's interaction and how they receive and use information showing characteristics comparable to a total institution. Not a single subject could mention an aspect of life smartphones and Facebook were not affecting. Ritualistic use of smartphones involves changes in interaction patterns and practices, issues with distraction, issues of dependency and the McDonaldization of some forms of communication.

This research project has many potential research contributions and implications. First of all, this line of research helps to lay a foundation for exploring and understanding how cell phones, internet and social media fit in and work within society, impacting the behavior of individuals and society in many ways. Structural ritualization theory, total institutions and the McDonaldization of society are informative theories within sociology

and have been applied to many different aspects of society; this research begins a line of research to apply all these theories to cell phones, internet and social media, especially when combined and ritualistically used in the form of a smartphone.

This research also highlights some possible key issues that may become prominent social issues in the future. The battle that schools, teachers and professors will have to fight to get students to not use cell phones, internet or social media in class has just begun, but it is clear from this research that some form of social control and norms governing use will have to be developed. The influence of cell phones alone in the classroom, being used by most students according to research subjects in this study, is going to be a difficult issue to deal with when it involves people who have highly ritualized the use of cell phones, internet and social media for many reasons and functions.

Many professors have made comments about being frustrated by the use of cell phones in class, but ritualistic users may need to be winged off an electronic device they are “addicted” to like a “drug” or “candy”, which they may see as a normal, taken-for-granted, part of life. This is even more salient when discussing cell phones’ role in contributing to the increase of automobile accidents, while cell phone use, including ritualistic use, rises within society.

Cell phones, internet and social media have been linked to things such as the recent social movements in Egypt and, through this research, the McDonaldization of society. These are important implications for society in general that will need to be researched in the future, on both an individual and society wide basis. There may also be issues in the future with the amount of surveillance that cell phones, internet and social media enable. It seems as if cell phones, internet and social media may need to be

considered in most studies about how individuals act and how society is organized, as they are greatly contributing to changes in both arenas.

There are several strengths and weaknesses or limitations of this study. The strengths of this study include an in-depth qualitative approach to understanding how individuals feel about smartphones and social media, shedding light on the meanings and interpretations involved with these communication developments. This research is also very timely as this social issue, of how cell phones, internet and social media affect people and society, is a rather recent development, which is not currently done developing or may never be. The timeliness of this research made information about this topic very abundant, and contributed to research subjects being interested in talking about this topic and sharing what they think about it. One last strength of this research is the popularity and broad application of the theories used (SRT, total institutions and the McDonaldization of society) in many areas of research, which may increase the appeal and application of the information found in this research project in the future.

There are several limitations to this study as well. As mentioned before, to increase the confidence behind the generalization, reliability and validity of this research a larger sample population should be used that takes the aforementioned demographic variables, and variables such as geographic region, into account. Due to lack of time and funding a small sample and data collection process was used. This research could be strengthened by adding surveys and more interviews to increase understanding of similar and different uses of cell phones, internet and social media for different individuals and society.

The very subjective classification of high smartphone and social media use for this research, based on research subjects' and informants' perceptions of high use, is a definite weakness of this study. In future studies, usage of cell phones, internet and social media should be broken down and different types of uses and functions examined separately and together to understand more in-depth how they all contribute to the process of ritualized, institutionalized and McDonaldized use of these technologies, individual behavior and society in general.

Overall, cell phones, internet and social media are contributing to society, social organization and individual rituals in many ways. These three communication forms allow constant and almost immediate connection to millions of other people, nearly limitless information, including information about other individuals and businesses over social media. Use of cell phones, internet and social media has consequences that include both latent and manifest functions and dysfunctions, or positive and negative consequences. This is especially true and apparent when a cell phone, internet connection and access to social media are combined in a smartphone and ritualistically used for several different functions. The convenience and functionality, or positive consequences, of cell phones, internet and social media need to be compared to possible latent dysfunctions, or negative consequences such as distraction and dependency, of these technological developments to determine if their use is worth the repercussions.

How ritualistically using a smartphone affects a person is going to depend on their use and the context of the situation, but it should be clear from this discussion that smartphones can shape a person's entire day or life if allowed to. This will happen differently for each individual, but many of the same things are being ritualized, such as

use of the clock, alarm, calendar, etc., functions of the cell phone, and using the internet and social media to share and get information. It is in these common things that people do that we can see an institution emerging that shapes how people are functioning within society. While the future direction of these communication developments is unknown, the potential power and consequences should be studied and prepared for.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### Interview Schedule

(Indented questions are follow-up questions as needed)

How often do you use your cell phone?

-for calls?

-for texts?

-for social media?

-to contact who?

Do you use your cell phone/smartphone for functions other than calling and texting?

-for anything (alarm/radio)?

-how often?

How much do you use social media?

-for what?

Has checking your phone become a ritual? How important?

-social media?

Has use become a normative social practice? Of cell phones? Of social media?

Do you give up other luxuries to have a cell phone/smartphone?

-what luxuries?

Do you like having a cell phone/smartphone?

-do you feel that your cell phone is a (important) part of you?

-do you think you could live without it?

- do you feel you have to have a cell phone to be complete?
- do you feel you have to have a cell phone to be organized?
- social media?

Does your phone go everywhere with you?

- are there times when your phone is not around you?

Do you have a phone for reasons other than personal want?

- for work? Another need?

Do you feel pressure from others to have a cell phone/smartphone?

- who?
- social media?

Does your phone always take priority when it rings? Meaning you answer it.

- do you answer your phone during meal times?
- during meals with others?
- during meals at restaurants?
- would you use your phone at School?
- would you use your phone at Church during service?
- would you use your phone to have a phone conversation while on a date?
- would you use your phone to have a text conversation while on a date?
- would you use your phone to have a Facebook interaction while on a date?

Do you have friends on Facebook?

- how many?
- how do you feel about these friends?



-are they real friends?

-are they people you regularly see in person?

Do you have important relationships with friends, co-workers, or family that are mostly or entirely comprised of digital interactions, such as calls, text or Facebook?

Do you feel like your Facebook page accurately represents you?

-do you like Facebook because you can present yourself how you want?

Does use of a cell phone change you/your “self” in any noticeable ways?

-social media?

Do you feel cell phones have changed your identity?

-social media?

-how you feel around others?

Do you feel you can or do recreate your identity through cell phone use?

-social media?

Have you noticed any changes in social interaction caused by cell phones?

-social media?

-personal?

-in others?

Do you feel dependent on your smartphone/cell phone?

Do you feel dependent on social media?

Do you feel your participation in cell phone use is voluntary?

-social media?

Do you feel cell phones increase or decrease social distance?

-social media?

Do you feel cell phones involve formal or informal communication?

-social media?

-involve spontaneous, equal interaction?

Do you feel as if you share time with cell phone use?

-social media?

Do you feel as if you share space with cell phone use?

-social media?

Do you ever use your cell phone for virtual emigration?

-social media?

-why/how?

Do you think your cell phone use promotes a closed circle of friends?

-social media?

Did you get a cell phone to fit in?

-join social media?

Do you feel cell phones are affecting all of social life? If not all, which parts?

-social media?

Do you feel like using a cell phone blurs the roles you play?

- bridging work and play?

-making roles more visible?

-social media?

Do you feel using cell phones decreases feelings of separation?

-and take away from future encounters?

-social media?

Do you feel the need to justify what you are doing more with having a cell phone?

-or feel free to improvise and change routines more?

-flexibility in obligations?

-with social media?

Do you feel the connection of cell phones gives you more responsibility or tasks to complete?

- but allows more freedom of when to perform duties?

When others are on the phone/social media does it make you feel less important?

-what do you do during this time?

Do you feel you can perform impression management more easily over text messages as opposed to phone calls?

-social media?

Do you feel your use of cell phones distracts your attention?

-social media?

Do you use your phone to fill empty waiting periods?

-social media?

-doing what?

Do you use your cell phone to turn to others for advice?

-how often?

-social media?

Do you feel you share focus with other users – in call, text and social media?

-time?

-place?

Do you feel that communication through your phone creates an “inside place” – privacy?

-social media?

Do you ever give up or miss out on face-to-face interactions in favor of digital interactions?

Do you see any cell phone etiquette developing?

-what kind of norms?

Do you see any rules developing around cell phone use?

-what kind of rules?

Do you think media influences you?

-the way you receive, use or express information?

Do you feel cell phones ever act as a barrier to the outside world?

-social media?

Do you feel there is organizationally sponsored surveillance with cell phones?

-with social media?

Do you see the GPS function on your phone as surveillance?

-surveillance by whom?

Do you feel cell phones media have a hierarchical authority structure?

-social media?

Do you feel cell phones media have social mobility?

-social media?

What do you think the goals of cell phone providers are?

-social media?

-users?

-programmers?

Know of any extra factors that relate to cell phones – monopolies, laws, peer pressure, etc.?

-social media?

Do you feel a “total institution” is emerging with cell phones?

-social media?

Do you feel cell phones are creating a “wall-less” institution?

-social media?

Do you think cell phones are used to spread dominant views?

-social media?

Do you compare cell phone use to anything else?

-social media?

Do you relate with other cell phone users? Feel a connection?

-social media?

Do you think cell phones are using synergy to gain influence?

-social media?

Do you feel cell phone use gives you privacy in communication?

-social media?

Does the price of your service affect what kind of phone you have? Or how often you use it?

Do you feel as connected with digital interactions as with face-to-face interactions?

Do you feel you get social gratification from phone calls?

Do you feel you get social gratification from text messages?

Do you feel you get social gratification from using Facebook?

Do you feel you get as much gratification from a phone call interaction as a face-to-face interaction?

Do you feel you get as much gratification from a text messages as a face-to-face interaction?

-as much gratification as a phone call?

Do you feel you get as much gratification from using Facebook as a face-to-face interaction?

-as much gratification as a phone call?

-as much gratification as a text message?

Have you had any concerns about Facebook? It's downsides?

Have you had any problems with Facebook? It's downsides?

Have you had any concerns with smartphones? Their downsides?

Have you had any problems with smartphones? Their downsides?

Have you had any concerns with cell phones? Their downsides?

Have you had any problems with cell phones? Their downsides?

Basic demographic questions:

-what is your age?

-sex?

-what is your current income?

-what race or ethnicity would you say you are?

-what is your highest level of education achieved?

Appendix B

Figure 1 – Ritualization of Cell Phones, Internet, Social Media and Smartphones Leads to Consequences

**Ritualized Communication Forms**

Cell phone – as tool/object in itself and as communication device

- Phone, text messaging, alarm, calendar, clock, radio, camera, entertainment (games), GPS, microphone

Internet

- Mass of information, news, education, email, endless websites and entertainment

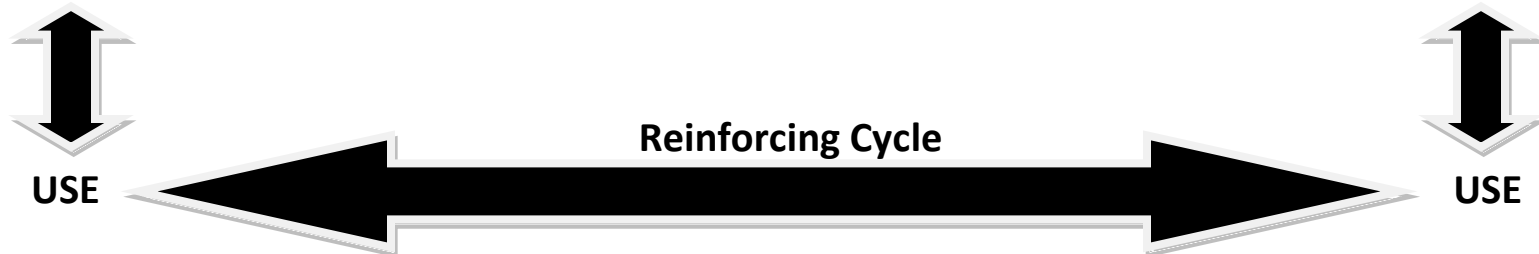
Social Media

- Self presentation, keeping in contact with others, gaining information on others, sharing information with others

Smartphone  
-combines all three  
in one gadget  
(Most Extreme  
Ritualization)

**Consequences (Manifest and Latent)**

Increased communication (by place and method), increased information, increased sharing, McDonaldization of communication (text messaging and Facebook) and self presentation (Facebook), Distraction, Dependency, Safety, Gossip, Bullying, Continual information feed, Surveillance, Changes in interaction patterns (virtual emigration, dual auditory front stages, flexible role switching, ability to impact many domains at once (such as work and home)), Media institution comparable to a Total Institution



Note: Consequences can be seen in ritualization of just cell phones, internet or social media but are most evident, and total institution forming, when all three are combined in a ritualistically used smartphone. This process works as a cycle with consequential use reinforcing ritualization thus reinforcing the consequences.



Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Thursday, February 24, 2011  
IRB Application No AS1122  
Proposal Title: Cell Phones and Social Media as an Institution

Reviewed and Exempt  
Processed as:

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 2/23/2012

Principal Investigator(s):

Timothy William Schmidt  
208 S. Duncan  
Stillwater, OK 74074

David Knottnerus  
413 Murray  
Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

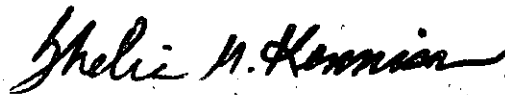
The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Shelia Kennison, Chair  
Institutional Review Board

VITA

Timothy William Schmidt

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: THE RITUALIZATION OF COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENTS:  
INSTITUTIONS AND MCDONALDIZED COMMUNICATION OF  
EVERYDAY LIFE

Major Field: Sociology

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Sociology at  
Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December, 2011.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Sociology at  
Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December 2006.

Experience:

Teaching Assistant experience:

Anth: 3353 Cultural Anthropology under Dr. Stephen Perkins

Anth: 4883 Comparative Cultures under Dr. Stephen Perkins

Soc: 3113 Theoretical Thinking in Sociology under Dr. David Knottnerus

Soc: 3223 Social Psychology under Dr. Dennis Kennedy

Soc: 4433 Environmental Sociology under Allison Lutz

Soc: 4950 Sociology of Sports under Dr. Duane Gill

Name: Timothy William Schmidt

Date of Degree: December, 2011

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: THE RITUALIZATION OF COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENTS:  
INSTITUTIONS AND MCDONALDIZED COMMUNICATION OF  
EVERYDAY LIFE

Pages in Study: 117

Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science

Major Field: Sociology

Scope and Method of Study: Sociological research study; including semi-structured in-depth interviews with 12 college students, internet data and personal observations.

Findings and Conclusions:

Communication developments obviously impact individuals and society as they allow increased communication and information sharing over a distance. Today many individuals carry cell phones on their person at almost all times, allowing them to contact others or be contacted from almost any location; likewise many people regularly use the internet and social media forums. Beyond just being new forms to communicate with others and get desired information, cell phones, internet and social media use is becoming ritualized by some users to the point that it has many consequences for individual users and society. All three communication developments have impacts and functions beyond their manifest functions, including several latent dysfunctions. Through the process of ritualization cell phone, internet and social media use has evolved for some users to the point that characteristics of Total Institutions and the McDonaldization of Society can be seen, while raising issues of dependency and distraction. These consequences come about not just due to regular use, but due to highly ritualized use of these communication developments; including using cell phones as a "link" to society, social filter, watch/clock, calendar, GPS, etc.; using internet for many reasons such as information gathering, online shopping or banking and using social media; and using social media to present one's self to the world, share information with others and look other people up. Cell phones allow users to be almost constantly connected to others or the internet through a media form, but the ritualistic use of a cell phone reaches its peak when users ritualize the use of a smartphone including internet and social media use. It is in this combination of all three communication forms in one device that people constantly carry around and ritualistically use for many reasons that a media total institution involving changes in interaction, possible media influence, distraction, dependency and McDonaldized communication can most clearly be seen.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: \_\_\_\_\_

Dr. David Knottnerus