Mobile phones: impact on interpersonal relationships

According to the International Telecommunication Union, mobile phone users in the world will raise to more than 7 billion at the beginning of 2014. Additionally, the report of ITU in 2013 revealed that over one third people in the world use the web. China, a country with more than 591 million internet users doubtlessly, ranks first on the list of " Five Countries with the Most Internet Users" with the USA the following second 254 million.

Among so large a number of internet users in China, Chinese people always use the web via mobile phones. By the end of December 2013, China had 500 million mobile Internet users […] Among all the Internet users, the proportion of those using mobile phones to access the Internet rose to 81. 0% from 74. 5%, and the number of mobile Internet users grew steadily (" Statistical Report on Internet Development in China" 22).

Therefore, in China, it is very convenient to contact a person—just call him/her or send a message. Meanwhile, one can easily observe that no matter in restaurants or on the road, there being a group of people who always lower their heads addicted to the mobile phones; one can easily observe that some looking down on screens of the mobile phones ignore the others at a meeting; one can easily observe that lots of people no longer listen to and communicate with others but focus on the mobile phones.

Consequently, one must start to consider what the popularization of mobile phone has brought? And think about how does it work to interpersonal relationship? Good or bad? Have people fallen into " a world where [they] are slaves to the technology [they] mastered" (Gary Turk)? Have fallen into " a world of self-interested, self-image" (Gary Turk)?

After reflection, a conclusion that mobile phone exerts a double-edged influence on interpersonal relationships, impairing our affection while it providing people with a more convenient platform for communication is drawn.

Negative Impact on Interpersonal Relationships

The wide use of mobile phones reduces the chances of face-to-face communication. Nowadays, with the emergence of various social instruments in them, such as Wechat, Micro blog, Facebook, it is common to see that people hold their mobile phones all day long. Most of the people would like to make contact with others by those instruments, but not through conversation. Psychologists Kaveri Subrahmanyam of California State University and Patricia M. Greenfield of U. C. L. A. wrote in the journal " The Future of Children" that electronic communications — such as texting, social networking and instant messaging — might be making teenagers less interested in face-to-face talks, according to their initial research (Arvidson " The Effects of Cell Phones on Relationships"). Now, people tend to use texts or calls to inform someone. For example, a mother will ask her kids to go to bed by texting them even though she lives in the next door to her kids. Therefore, some psychologists make a suggestion that people should grasp more chances to communicate with others and pour their feelings into others face to face, because the number of messages they sent is inversely proportional to the feelings of accumulation in a way (Ni 180).

In addition, people focusing on mobile phones when getting together will definitely hurt their relationships. When people get together, it ought to be a chance for them to communicate with each other directly and sincerely.

However, most people are just keeping their heads down and phubbing is seen here and there. When people have meal with their parents or grandparents but just keep their eyes staring at the screens, the eldership of the family will feel lonely and think the young are impolite. Some couples text each other at home though they sit next to. And a group of friends get together, they are laughing not because the party but because the fun news they are reading on their phones. Warner said, " Increasing use of cell phones […] was linked to a decrease in family satisfaction and increased stress over a two-year period" (" Cell Phones Raise Stress"). After a long time, it will do harm for people's harmony of family and friendships.

What's more, being addicted to the mobile phones makes people lonelier. According to a survey made by the China Youth Daily, " 46. 1 percent said that reliance on mobiles was making people's social circles smaller, and nearly 30 percent said it was making them lonelier" (Custer " Chinese Survey Shows Worry Over Impacts of Mobile Phone Use"). Most people have many friends on their Social Network Site. They talk every day, share interesting or sad things every day, but they do not know who those people really are and they might never meet them even once during their whole lives. When they turned off all the social instruments, they realized it was difficult for them to find someone to talk to; when people left their phones at home or some other places, they would become anxious and did not know what they should do. Spending too much time on mobile phones or relying on them will make people feel lonelier step by step.

Also, communicating by mobile phones does harm for the sense of trust. Because when people communicate by texting or other social instruments,

sometimes they do not really mean that. Talking through message is in a negative position, since it lack the face to face sensed presence and the recipient does not know the real surroundings the sender in, which offers chances to lie (Ni 177). For example, when someone send " hahaha" (It means happy or laugh at receiver), most of the time, he is not happy or laugh actually, maybe he is expressionless or upset. Sending message is loses the sense of reality and people cannot feel the real situation of their communication.

Positive impact on interpersonal relationships

Though mobile phone exerts a certain negative influence on interpersonal relationships, it also provides great convenience and enhances the flexibility on social interaction. For one thing, as a modern communication tool, the mobile phone breaks the formal time and place limitations , which makes people more accessible to communicate with others and then get further to strengthen the relationship. In the past, before the invention of the modern communication tools, if one person wanted to discuss something important with another person who lived in a far area, it was very inconvenient and that always cost a lot of time. But now, faced with the same situation, people just wave their fingers to press a call button, and then they can talk to others easily. Besides, owing to mobile phone's convenience, the times for people to contact with their friends, relatives and partners become more frequent. An interviewer says: " Although I cannot meet my friends for a long time, the relationship between us becomes closer rather than alienated by using this convenient communication tool to contact with each other occasionally".(Ni

127)Therefore, the mobile phone is definitely an effective tool for people to maintain their relationships.

For another, mobile phone can make the interpersonal relationships more comfortable. In the daily life of interpersonal communication, people sometimes will feel bashful, uncomfortable and nervous when meeting with others face to face. However, there doesn't exist the same problem on the message communication, people can integrate themselves into the contacts with a more open and bold attitude when breaking away from definite communication environment (Ni 126). For instance, if a boy is too shy to express his love to a beautiful girl face to face, he can choose to bare his heart by sending a message or making a phone call so that he will not miss her. Since the mobile phone provides a comfortable communication platform, it is wise for people to grasp more chances to communicate with others.

As a communication media, mobile phones enhance the flexibility on social interaction. People can do their business whenever they need, and make an appointment conveniently. In addition, it plays a vital role in family relationship, friendship and business relationship. People can chat with their family members or friends without the limit of place. Also they can talk to their business partner to keep a close relationship.

However, mobile phones estrange people from one another. Most people spend too much time in playing phones and ignore talking to others. Technology and humanity are not necessarily compatible. One is about an anonymous push forward into the unknown...to explore it, to develop and

exploit it, which is important. The other is about paying undivided attention to the individual and the world in front of you, developing relationships, and increasing consciousness (" Cell Phones May Hurt Interpersonal Relationships Just by Being in The Room, Study Says"). Both are necessary. The challenge is figuring out how to use technology to enhance humanity, not degrade it (" Cell Phones May Hurt Interpersonal Relationships Just by Being in The Room, Study Says").

Meanwhile, people's sense of loneliness is increasing and the sense of trust decreasing with the popularization of mobile phones. Interacting in a neutral environment, without a cell phone nearby, seems to help foster closeness, connectedness, interpersonal trust, and perceptions of empathy – the building – blocks of relationships (Lin " How Your Cell Phone Hurts Your Relationships").

Therefore, when people have a meeting or party, phones should be gathered in one place. Set the rule that the one who uses his phone without permission will be punished. Perhaps it would be going too far to prepare for important conversations by throwing your cell phone into the closet, or leaving it in the car on first dates. But if you are spending the day with people you really care about, you might want to reconsider the next time you reach for your phone to reply to a text message or check sports sores. Just having that phone nearby is bad enough (Lin " How Your Cell Phone Hurts Your Relationships") . So try to use your mobile phones appropriately, or you are likely to lose your friends and a happy life.

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