

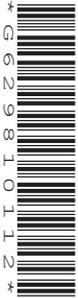
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AS GCE SOCIOLOGY

G671/01/SM Exploring socialisation, culture and identity

PRE-RELEASE STIMULUS MATERIAL

JANUARY 2012



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INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

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Haste, H. (2005) *Joined up texting: The role of mobile phones in young people's lives*

Research has been conducted into the importance of consumer products, such as mobile phones, to young people's identities. National survey data has found that 97% of females and 92% of males have access to a mobile phone. Haste's study aimed to gather data on the role of mobile phones in the lives of young people. The quantitative survey data was gathered by MORI, a large market research organisation, and then analysed by Helen Haste. 5

The research questions included the following:

1. How do young people use their mobile phones?
2. What kind of communication do they conduct with their phones, and what forms of communication do they use with other technology?
3. How does the way a mobile phone is used reflect style statements and displays of self and identity? 10
4. Are there differences between the sexes? Are there age differences? Are there regional differences?

The data was collected by MORI in April and May 2004, using a national representative sample of 1058 males and females between the ages of 11 and 21. A multi-stage sampling technique was used, starting with selecting a random sample of 200 schools and colleges which was provided by the Schools Publishing Company. A letter was sent by MORI to the head teachers of the selected schools and colleges, asking for their agreement to participate in the survey. Once the schools/colleges had agreed to participate, the MORI team selected 25 schools to take part – stratifying the sample by region and school type to ensure a representative sample was included across the age groups. The researchers then used class registers to generate a systematic random sample of students. 15 20

A structured self-completion questionnaire, with mainly closed ended and multiple-choice questions, was answered by 600 school and college students (aged 11–18), 159 university students (up to the age of 21) and 299 young people who were no longer in full time education (aged 16–21 years). Responses among school and college students were collected in schools, on paper. Responses from university students and others not studying were collected online. 25

For the data collection in schools and colleges, the MORI researcher arranged a convenient time and date for the self-completion session and was present to explain the survey to students, to reassure them about the confidentiality of the survey, to assist them in completing the questionnaire by clarifying question wording, and to collect completed questionnaires. In all classroom sessions, teachers were requested to remain present throughout, only to assist with classroom management. As a thank you, all schools and colleges participating were sent a donation of £100. 30

The questionnaires completed by 16–21 year olds at university or among those no longer in full-time education were conducted online. Volunteers were recruited using methods such as: direct emails, banner ads, pop-ups, in-page links, etc. There was also a 'friends and family' referral scheme, available on the website. Entry into a prize draw was used as an incentive to encourage young people to volunteer. 35

The main findings showed that mobile phones are a vital tool for young people's social lives, but they are also part of self expression. According to Haste, the phone is a part of their identity, not just a way to communicate. More than four fifths of females, and seven out of ten males, 'could not bear to be without' their mobile phone. Three quarters use their mobiles to speak to friends at least daily, and one in six do so more than five times a day. However, texting is the most frequent form of communicating; nine out of ten text at least daily, and over half (54%) do so more than five times a day which shows that texting is a central part of young people's social interaction. 40 45

Other key findings were:

- Younger teenagers use both their computers and their mobile phones to surf the Internet and to send emails, but post-16s primarily use their personal computers rather than their mobiles for both Internet and email. 50
- Mobile phones provide a sense of security: 87% of females, and 68% of males agree that 'having my mobile phone makes me feel safer and more secure'.
- Nearly four out of five females, and 64% of males, agree that their parents worry less if they have their mobiles. 55

Managing mobile phone communication is partly a matter of performing a task but it is also a matter of expressing identity and style. Many young people 'personalise' their phones with a background screen image (67%), a downloaded ring tone (58%), or a snap-on cover (36%). But there is also the issue of where young people keep and display their phone (see table below). 60

*Question: In which places do you usually keep your mobile phone?
(you may choose more than one option)*

	All (687)	Males (293)	Females (394)
	%	%	%
In my pocket	79	91	68
On my desk or a surface near to me	53	51	56
In my bag	44	17	69
In a special mobile phone pocket in my bag	13	8	19
On my belt	4	6	1
Other	5	4	5

The study concluded that consumer products such as mobile phones are seen as valuable and central to young people's identities; texting is crucial to their social interaction, especially with peers, but also with parents. The mobile phone is an extension of their identity. 65

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