Rethinking media displacement: the tensions between mobile media and face-to-face interaction

Repensando o deslocamento da mídia: as tensões entre as mídias móveis e a interação face-a-face

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ABSTRACT

The neologism of phubbing, a coalesce of phone mediated activities and snubbing effects, caters to the public's imperative to accentuate the ubiquitous perception of being annoyed, disregard, and offended in light of phone's presence in co-present situation. Its symptomatic recordaccompanies important achievements of diffusing mobile media in developing countries, in which young people are one of the most active social groups in this scenario. By incorporating and relating to the theories of media displacement, we focus on the analysis of a Brazilian and Chinese young people survey, pinpointing how they understand and cope with the tensions between mobile media and face-to-face interaction. The results might provide new tissues to the discussions on media displacement.

Keywords: Phubbing. Media displacement. Mobile media.

RESUMO

O neologismo *phubbing*, junção de palavras que remetem às atividades mediadas pelo telefone e efeitos de desprezo, fornece imperativos para acentuar a percepção ubíqua de ser aborrecido, ignorado e ofendido em razão de um dispositivo móvel presente em situações de interação pessoal. Seu sintomático registro acompanha importantes descobertas sobre a difusão de mídias móveis em países em desenvolvimento, em cujos jovens são os grupos sociais mais ativos nesse cenário.Incorporando e relacionando a teoria do deslocamento da mídia, focamo-nos na análise de um questionário sobre jovens brasileiros e chineses, identificando como compreendem e lidam com as tensões entre as mídias móveis e a interação face-a-face. Os resultados podem contribuir com novas nuances a discussão sobre deslocamento da mídia.

Palavras-chave: Phubbing. Deslocamento da mídia. Mídias móveis.

Introduction

To date, there have emerged tremendous achievements of diffusing mobile phone in developing countries, and young people constitute one of the most active social groups in this scenario. In China, young people account for

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one-third of mobile phone users who access to the Internet through mobile phone. They also proactively adopt emerging mobile technologies (e.g., mobile apps) whereby to fulfill their multifaceted communication purposes and social needs (CNNIC, 2014). Likewise, almost half of the Brazilian young people heavily rely on mobile phone to be connected online, and become enthusiastic with using mobile apps to strengthen their social interaction (FundaçãoTelefonica, 2014). On the other hand, the observable phenomena of using mobile phone in face-to-face interaction inevitably invites critiques drawn from public anxieties and academic concerns. The neologism of phubbing, a coalesce of phone mediated activities and snubbing effects, caters to the public's imperative to accentuate the ubiquitous perception of being annoyed, disregard, and offended in light of phone's presence in co-present situation. Accordingly, one of the pertinent studies suggests that mobile phone operates as a prime that "activates implicit representations of wider social networks, which in turn crowd out face-to-face conversations" (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2012, p.244). In this vein, young people somewhat lapse into the most salient group bearing the duality of culprit and victim due to their excessive reliance on mobile phone. Therefore, by incorporating and relating to the theories of media displacement, we focus on Brazilian and Chinese young people to pinpoint their approaches to understand and cope with the tensions between mobile phone and face-to-face interaction. The research results in turn might provide new tissues to the long established discussions on media displacement.

When media displacements meet co-present situations

Media displacement is one of the acute concerns that draws ongoing efforts in terms of both theoretical debate and empirical investigation. Overall the related strain of thoughts manifests a twofold lens: the evolvement of technology and the displacing effect. The former germinates from the early age of rapid diffusion and development of mass media. Since the forerunner Lazarsfeld (1940;1948) who questioned the possible end of print media brought by radio, a great volume of similar approaches has been implemented in the field of communication and technology studies. Scholars extend this line of inquiry to emerging ICTs—television, cable television, VCR, computer, and the Internet—so that portray the vicissitude of using old and new media technologies (e.g., Dimmick, Chen & Li, 2004; Kayany&Yelsma, 2000; Newell, Pilotta& Thomas, 2008). The latter corresponds to the mechanism of this alteration, surfacing the zero-sum game regarding amount of time invested in various activities based on the ICTs. Basic presumptions that revolve around the object time, like a new

media activity is expected to diminish the time spent on other media activities (Kayany&Yelsma, 2000), are widely discussed and further adapted to the gamut of non-media activities. More to this point, Strover's (2013) critiques about the existing displacement studies cast light on the pitfalls of solely concentrating on time dimension and other forms of displacement. Thus, the research focus of related literature demonstrates the growing trend that geared towards the relationship between media and social life, particularly the social interaction and sociality of media users.

In this vein, how face-to-face interaction is affected by the media activities have drawn enormous attention when studying ICTs. Because not only its social conventionality affords the leeway to comprehend people's social disposition and skill, but also its coexistence with ICT-mediated-communication prompts inquiries regarding the complicated connections in between. As Baym (2010) suggests, early research saw the inferiorities of telephone and the Internet in contrast to face-to-face interaction: people cannot establish concrete and intimate connections through those media technologies like their co-present situations. Recent studies also highlight the significance of face-to-face interaction in people's social lives despite their growing dependence on ICTs. For instance, by examining Slovenian adoption of ICTs for communication purposes, Petrič and colleagues (2011) argue that face-to-face conversations are not supplemented or substituted by mediated types of communication. Rather, various communication channels indeed complement each other, and face-to-face approach still holds its pivotal role to social interaction since its stable frequency of use.

However, it would be assertive to claim that face-to-face interaction is barely faced with the displacement effects from ICTs. Most studies that advocate its unchallenged status, somehow, neglect or underestimate the real-life circumstances under which people simultaneously employ face-to-face and media technologies—it is not rare to witness a whole family spends night together to watch popular TV shows while chatting with each other, or white collars engage in office talks with their eyes fixing on the computer screen. Especially the pervasiveness of mobile phone has incurred certain worrisome issues about the quality and norm of face-to-face interaction. Despite that the human agency to simultaneously handle main and side activities has been well justified (Goffman, 2008), scholars remain vigilant towards the looming problems. Like what Turkle is concerned with: "In the new etiquette, turning away from those in front of you to answer a mobile phone or respond to a text has become close to the norm. When someone holds a phone, it can be hard to know

if you have that person's attention" (2012; p.161). People involved in face-to-face interaction might confront a differentiated pattern of media infringement than those stirred by other ICTs. In this context, the whole experience of physically conducting interactions might be partially displaced by the presence of mobile phone, hence handicapping the mutual efforts to maintain the stream of direct conversation. Therefore, we doubt whether this kind of displacement manifest any palpable novelties; if so, we are interested in exploring the attributes of mobile phone that account for the differences.

Research questions

Put together, our literature review foregrounds several perspectives that crucial to understanding the displacement effects of mobile phone upon face-to-face interaction. In the meantime, their insufficient connections with the contemporary landscape of mobile technologies and the socio-cultural context of local society prompt our research inquires. First, mobile phone has manifested the convergence of technologies, media formats and content from other ICT platforms, as well as the capacity to interact with other media (Stald, 2008). It would be too simplistic to repeat the concerns on calling and texting as they are the only activities that make co-present others absent. Rather, we are interested in knowing to what degree other phone-mediated activities (e.g., browsing SNSs, playing mobile game) account for ignoring people in co-present situations.

Second, most antecedent studies either focus on working place, where usually occurs interaction between coworkers (e.g., Ling, 2008; Turkle, 2006); or activities at the general level without specifications of any social circumstance. Thus, we are interested in knowing how the displacement effects are revealed in different co-present contexts of social interaction.

Last but not least, in spite of the interpretations from antecedent studies, we are interested in knowing the causes and influences of mobile phone's displacement from individual perspective so that interrogate the gap between academic concerns and real-life problems.

Methodology

Subjects – In this study, we recruited 183 college students from a Southwest public university in China, and 101 college students from a Southeast public university in Brazil. Both universities are located in big metropolitan areas known for high penetration of mobile phone (CNNIC, 2014; Fundação Telefonica, 2014). From early August in 2014, the participants were required to fill out a self-report

online survey that open on Qualtrics®within two weeks. The survey was initially written in English and translated into Chinese and Portuguese afterwards by the researchers. Eventually, we collected 123 completed questionnaires (77.2% female, 22.8% male) from Chinese participants, and 81 completed questionnaires (45.7% female, 54.3% male) from Brazilian participants. Those Chinese participants were aged between 19 and 29 years (mean = 21.8), and more than half of them (64%) considered themselves born and raised in middle class families. The Brazilian counterparts were aged between 15 and 38 years (mean = 22.8), and also many of them (56.8%) were from middle class families in their own understandings. Regarding the frequency of using mobile phone, the majority of our Chinese participants (86.2%) often use mobile phone for once or several times within an hour. Similarly, most Brazilian participants (70.4%) use mobile phone as frequently as Chinese participants.

Measures – Provided the scant amount of empirical studies centered on using mobile phone in face-to-face situation, we designed and organized most survey questions based on our own research interests, and partially resorted to a recent report (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell & Purcell, 2010) to work on questions regarding mobile content and consumption. Besides, since it is easily understandable and succinct to the public, we substituted media placement and absent presence with the word phubbing in the survey to make participants informed with our research interests and help them to input accurate reflections.

Social circumstances

Participants were questioned on the frequency of conducting behaviors in terms of phubbing to other people in co-present situations, as well as those seen from others. Five categories of specific social circumstance were listed, including (a) *relatives/parents* (household), (b) *friends* (strong social tie), (c) *co-workers/classmates* (working/studying environment), (d) *your girlfriend/boyfriend* (intimate social setting), (e) *acquaintances/strangers* (weak social tie). These items were rated on a 1-5 Likert-type scale (1 = *always*, 2 = most of the time, 3 = *sometimes*, 4 = *rarely*, 5 = never).

Phone-mediated activities

Participants were asked to pick phone-mediated activities, which they consider as a main course of phubbing, from a short list. It includes (a) *surfing the Internet*, (b) *watching a video*, (c) *playing a game*, (d) *posting something on social network platforms*, (e) *chatting/texting with friends*, and (f) *other* as an open-text option. Except for *chatting/texting with friends* and *other*, the rest correspond

to young people's pervasive adoption and utilization of various mobile apps (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell & Purcell, 2010; Turkle, 2012).

Causes and consequences of phubbing

Following the social circumstance questions, participants were asked to indicate how come they perform phubbing on others. Four items that related to spontaneity (*It just happens, I don't plan it*), communication quality (*It usually happens when the conversation is boring*), deliberate secondary activity (*I do it intentionally because I want to share something with someone*), and forced secondary activity (*I stumble upon something more emergent to deal with*) are listed with *other* as an open-text option. Participant could only rank top three choices based on a 1-3 scale regarding significance (1 = *most significant*, 2 = *significant*, 3 = *least significant*).

For the consequences, participants were questioned about their attitudes towards the negative ("do you think your phubbing behaviors negatively affect the relationships with others?") and the positive ("do you think your phubbing behaviors could enhance the relationships with others?") sides of phubbing with respect of social relationship. A 1-5 Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly agree*, 2 = *agree*, 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *disagree*, 5 = *strongly disagree*) was applied to both questions. Besides, each question is coupled with an open-ended question that allows participant to describe three specific negative or positive influences at most.

Growing variations of mobile phone's displacement?

First of all, we cast light on how mobile phone users redefine or expand the scope of phubbing behaviors (Table 1). For young people from China, engagement in social network platforms (N=115, 93.5%) and simultaneous communication with friend (N=113, 91.9%) were primarily concerned in terms of phubbing behaviors, whereas video watching was least picked (N=33, 26.8%). By contrast, among the Brazilians' opinions, simultaneous communication with friend (N=75, 74.3%) ranked the top that reckoned as a phubbing behavior, followed by engagement in social network (N=50, 49.5%) and Internet browsing (N=46, 45.5%); and similarly, video watching was not widely regarded as phubbing (N=14, 13.9%).

■ **Table 1 – Descriptive Results of Phubbing from Self under Different Social Circumstances**

	N		Mean		Std. Deviation	
	Chinese	Brazilian	Chinese	Brazilian	Chinese	Brazilian
With relatives/parents	123	92	3.45	3.12	0.76	0.97
With friends	123	91	3.22	3.15	0.76	1.11
With co-workers/classmates	123	89	3.17	3.25	0.84	1.06
With your girlfriend/boyfriend	123	89	3.70	3.55	0.79	1.23
With acquaintances/strangers	122	91	2.88	3.23	1.13	1.26

Source: Authors

The results resonate with evidences from antecedent studies and reports. Here the item "chatting/texting with friends" does not exclude phone text message, which is a longtime incentive to absent presence in a co-present situation. Even though it could encourage a more direct exchange of information than phone call (Ling, 2007) and appeal to people suffering from social anxiety (Pierce, 2009; Reid & Reid, 2007), it still serves as a potential source of distraction that might interrupt the face-to-face interaction, and make the co-present others as absent. Likewise, mobile apps or services (e.g., mobile mail, instant messenger) that either resemble or improve the role of text message are questioned in the same vein, particularly since the convergence of SNS app and messaging functions. Although these technologies could help maintaining bonding social capital and bridging social capital (Van Cleemput, 2012), such advantages have drawn some negating evidences from face-to-face interactions. For instance, Gardner and Davis (2013) argue that the constant buzz of text messages and app notifications drive youth away from their in-person conversations, henceforth the threats to their face-to-face interaction that stem from mobile technologies and social media. Turkle (2012) even addresses that mobile apps might not be apt to support the connections that maintain and nourish social relationships for young people.

Also the improvements on mobile phone's instrumentality boost the integration of new mobile communication technology (e.g., mobile apps) into everyday life (Peters & Ben Allouch, 2005), matching the pervasiveness of issues like phubbing among heavy user groups (i.e., young people). In China, the number of young people who are connected to the Internet through mobile

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phone weighs the most of total population of mobile netizen, and still keeps growing nowadays (CNNIC, 2012; 2014). For the status of mobile apps, almost the items listed in our survey obtained good use rate in 2014—IM reached 87.1%, for instance (CNNIC, 2014). In Brazil, young mobile users are avid for connecting with and showing up on SNSs (especially Facebook), and more than half of them (60%) feel the compulsion to check SNS updates for the anxiety of not being online (Cisco, 2014).

Put together, we suggest that it is necessary to readjust the scope of phone-based mediated activities that exert displacement effects. At least, engagement in social network platforms tremendously contributes to phubbing behaviors, and simultaneous communication with friend becomes more strengthened due to mobile app. On the other hand, not only the IM and SNS apps raise further attention to figure out their enactments of displacing social interaction and sociability in co-present situations, but also the overall ethics of app design and patterns of app use should be interrogated in this regard.

Does displacement prevail in face-to-face interactions?

We then look into the specific co-present situations where loom or manifest phubbing issues. The descriptive results show that Chinese participants tended to perform phubbing when they were interacting with acquaintances or strangers (M=2.88, SD=1.13); to the contrary, they were most self-disciplined with the presence of girlfriend or boyfriend (M=3.70, SD=0.79). In the reverse way, they at times face phubbing from friends, co-workers or classmates, girlfriend or boyfriend, and acquaintances or strangers, but barely were caught in such embarrassments from parents or relatives (M=3.97, SD=0.90). Brazilian participants nevertheless provided a differentiated scenario: apart from romantic relationship (M=3.55, SD=1.23), they showed intermediate levels of phubbing parents or relatives, friends, co-workers or classmates, and acquaintances or strangers. And interestingly, they faced a higher level of phubbing from friends (M=2.85, SD=0.87) but much less from parents or relatives (M=3.73, SD=1.07).

Was there an exacerbation of phubbing from others that exist in the abovementioned situations? Regression analyses were conducted to unpack this effect with regard of mobile phone use and demographic variables (Table 2). Although the Chinese participants faced the least degree of phubbing from parents or relatives, the significant association between phubbing from self and phubbing from others predicted that they would react in the same way under this social circumstance. Besides, such a connection also occurred to other situations, especially with the co-presences of significant other and unfamiliar

person, indicating that the exacerbation of phubbing from others was rife to the Chinese participants' social lives.

■ **Table 2 - Regression Coefficients of Phubbing from Self under Different Social Circumstances**

	With relatives/parents		With friends		With co-workers/class mates		With your girlfriend/boyf riend		With acquaintances/str angers	
	C[c]	B[d]	C	B	C	B	C	B	C	B
Constant	2.00***	2.36***	1.90***	1.93***	2.02***	2.50***	1.83***	2.51***	0.80	0.68
Using mobile phone	0.15	0.44***	0.30*	0.38***	0.12	0.37***	0.10	0.11	0.16	0.36**
Gender [a]	-0.06	-0.17	0.08	-0.35	-0.02	-0.36	-0.13	-0.46*	-0.05	0.14
SES [b]	0.04	0.11	-0.10	-0.2	-0.23	-0.13	-0.13	-0.41	-0.14	0.16
(From others) With relatives/parents	0.52***	0.07	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
(From others) With friends	/	/	0.30***	0.42***	/	/	/	/	/	/
(From others) With co-workers/classma tes	/	/	/	/	0.41***	0.27*	/	/	/	/
(From others) With your girlfriend/boyfri end	/	/	/	/	/	/	0.58***	0.53***	/	/
(From others) With acquaintances/st rangers	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0.88***	0.52**

[a] Male = 1, female = 2
[b] Middle income or higher = 1, else = 0
[c] Chinese
[d] Brazilian
* p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.

By contrast, to the Brazilian participants, there was no significant association between phubbing from self and phubbing from others while they were co-present with parents or relatives. However, we still found that the exacerbation from others prevailed the Brazilians' most social interactions, among which the co-presences of significant other and unfamiliar person revealed severity in this regard. Moreover, the frequency of phone use was significantly associated with phubbing under most social circumstances to Brazilian participants (except for romantic relationship); however, it was almost incapable to predict phubbing from self among Chinese participants (except for friendship) The regression results also showed that hardly any demographic variable were apt to predict phubbing from self.

Therefore, it is difficult to claim the ubiquity of mobile phone's displacement in face-to-face interactions with different social settings. On the other hand, the analytical results foreground certain characteristics tied to each group. For the Chinese participants, their inclination to perform phubbing on acquaintances or strangers might lead to their underestimation regarding the significance of building and sustaining social weak ties in China (Bian, 1997); also, their overlook of such social relations could be incurred and intensified by their excessive dependence on the Internet and other ICTs to pull themselves away from unexpected realities (Golub &Lingley, 2007). The rarity of phubbing in households echoes the dominant communication pattern that oriented toward conversations between Chinese parents and children (Zhang,2007). That is to say, the emphasis on undertaking conversations between family members might suppress using mobile phone in face-to-face interaction, since its possible interruption to conversational flows. Besides, the slim correlation between frequency of phone use and phubbing from self might direct to phone-related problems other than time length (e.g., money cost and identity implication; see Qiu, 2009; Yu &Tng, 2003) in China. For the Brazilian participants, their strong reception of phubbing from friends conforms to the status quo of phone issues in Brazilian society: young people in Brazil demonstrate high inclination to ignore their friends in co-present situations while using mobile phone (Fundação Telefonica, 2014). The least extent of phubbing from parents or relatives could stem from the tendency of shifting into a free and open exchange of emotion within family context (Auxiliadora Dessen & Torres, 2002), and mobile phone might imply possible hindrance to this tendency at parents' perspective. Moreover, the observation on the frequency of using mobile phone might raise caution towards Brazilian young people's abusive adoption of and dependence on mobile phone (Fundação Telefonica, 2014).

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In addition, both group demonstrate seriousness with romantic relationships. Their attentive engagements into physical dating might lead to rethinking the mechanism and rationale behind their self-management on ICTs, but also their individualized approach to project mobile etiquettes – the formulated interaction norms by anticipating how the other would want to be treated – into real-life situations (Yuan, 2012). More importantly, the shared phenomena of exacerbation on phubbing seems to further complicate the enactment of media displacement effects in face-to-face interaction. This concern corresponds to early scholars' envision on studying the role of social interaction based on phone-mediated activities (e.g., Campbell & Russo, 2003). They called for attention paid to investigating mobile user's interactions with social contacts that situated in social context. Apparently, this study highlights the necessity to look into co-present partner because they account for aggravating the displacements effects. On the other hand, it turns out to be tempting to speculate a mutual reinforcement: would phubbing from self also heighten phubbing from others? If so, would this connection reveal palpable variations between different social circumstances? We need to incorporate more considerations over social contact and social context to unpack these inquires.

Cause and effects: is phubbing double-edged?

Third, we are interested in realizing how our participants explain their motivations to perform phubbing, and how they consider the influences of phubbing even though the word bears more negative connotations than the positive. At the initial glance, spontaneity was reckoned as the relatively more significant cause among Chinese participants (M=1.50, SD=0.74), but there was no single cause particularized by Brazilian participants. Besides that, Chinese participants agreed that phubbing negatively affect social relationship (M=2.2, SD=0.86), and they stayed arguably neutral towards the idea that phubbing positively affect social relationship (M=3.45, SD=0.96). However, Brazilian participants were arguably neutral towards both the negativity (M=2.88, SD= 1.04) and the positivity (M=3.25, SD=0.91) of phubbing. Pearson product-moment correlation was then employed to measure the connection between self phubbing causes on phubbing influences. For the Chinese participants, the motivation in terms of forced secondary activity had weak, positive correlation with the negative influences of phubbing on social relationship, $r(101)=0.20$, $p < 0.05$. This result indicated that the increase in the extent to which dealing with emergent issues considered as a significant cause was correlated with the increase in perceived negativity of phubbing on social relationship. By

contrast, the motivation in terms of deliberate secondary activity was also weakly yet positively correlated with the positive influences of phubbing on social relationship, $r(100)=0.22$, $p < 0.05$, meaning that increase in the extent to which intentional sharing considered as a significant cause was correlated with the increase in perceived positivity of phubbing on social relationship. For the Brazilian participants, they demonstrated a similar correlation between the forced secondary activity and the negativity, $r(51)=0.29$, $p<0.05$, but nevertheless showed a weak, negative correlation between the deliberate secondary activity and the positivity, $r(48)= -0.29$, $p < 0.05$. That is to say, increase in the extent to which intentional sharing considered as a significant cause was correlated with the decrease in perceived positivity of phubbing on social relationship.

To better capture and summarize our participants' self-explanations regarding both the negative and the positive influences of phubbing, we went through the pool of textual inputs that generated from the two open-ended questions. Almost half the Chinese participants (N=54) typed into explanations on negativity given their own opinions. In general, this strain of explanations (N=118) could be categorized into four terms: communication hindrance (N=59), damage to norms of interaction (N=52), collateral health issue (N=4), and addiction to virtual world (N=3). The first one specified the concerns of how phubbing impedes face-to-face communication. For example, many participants claimed that "it weakens the regular capacity to talk and express opinions". The second emphasized the necessity of social etiquettes and the importance of face. For example, many participants suggested that "it shows lack of respect and courtesy", and worried that "others may think I am indifferent to their talks". The third underscored both the mental and physical issues due to abusive use of mobile phone, and the last resonated with discourse of Internet addiction. For Brazilian participants, only one forth of them (N=21) responded to this question, and their explanations (N=53) resembled those of Chinese participants centered on communication hindrance (N=30) and damage to norms of interaction (N=23). For example, they pitched like "you discourage the speech of another person" and " the lack of attention and respect to the person I am interacting with". By contrast, not many Chinese (N=5) or Brazilian participants (N=7) registered their explanations about the positive influence of phubbing. They pinpointed that phubbing could help them avoid unnecessary contact, network with people beyond physical reach, and facilitate conversation.

Put together, to a certain extent, the results of phubbing cause challenge our presumptions about the motivations that provoke mobile phone's displcement. According to Auter (2007), the low level of being comfortable in

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interpersonal communication results in using mobile phone to purposefully avoid real world conversations (especially group communications). Nonetheless, neither Chinese or Brazilian participants accentuated communication quality as the most significant motivation for behaving phubbing. Instead, the emphasis on spontaneity among Chinese young people might serve as an updated answer to mobile phone's displacement in contemporary Chinese society. Meanwhile, there emerges the importance of examining media use habit and derivative dependence on media technologies to dissect the mechanism of media displacement. Besides that, the relationship between phubbing's cause and effect, at least, directs to concerns over phone user in this study. On the surface, both group casted similar concerns on the forced secondary activity as its penchant to the spur the negativities of phubbing, but their disparate thoughts on the deliberate secondary activity might allude to ongoing inquires that intersects mediated communication and human agency. As we contended about the variation of mobile phone's displacement, how different kinds of phone-mediated secondary activities interfere with face-to-face interaction worth further investigations; also, mapping the phone user's scheme in managing those activities should draw tantamount endeavors.

In a similar vein, the results of phubbing effects might present a more complicated scenario than our expectation. On the one hand, phubbing does not necessarily make our participants conjure with black-and-white opinions towards it influences. Although Chinese participants revealed the consent with the unfavorable nature of phubbing in regard of their social relationship, it did not prompt the same agreement from Brazilian participants. Apart from that, both groups demonstrated their ambivalence about the positivity of phubbing, implying the mixed bag of feelings to decide whether social relationship could be benefited from this kind of behavior. Of course, we could associate it with many critiques on media displacement, like how video games grant users the continual connection to dispel their loneliness, nevertheless drive them become more isolated (Turkle, 2012). What differs in the phubbing case hinges on a better comprehension of the complexities between phone use and co-present context. On the other hand, their self-report inputs reinforce the overall discourse regarding its negativity, and partially echo the positivity mentioned in the early research (Gergen, 2002). These explanations could bring in other dimensions of concern, such as communication skill, social etiquette, health, as we grapple with mobile phone's displacement situated in face-to-face situation. Also, the confirmation of derivative perks from using mobile phone could usher

into new rounds of debate on absent presence targeting at its theoretical connotations and empirical values.

Concluding remarks

In a nutshell, this study manages to unpack the tensions between mobile phone use and face-to-face interaction at a preliminary level. Basically, we notice the forms of media displacement have obtained intensified variation in this context, which urge the importance of looking into updated mobile technology and user's adoption and utilization in tandem. We then cast light on how the displacement act out under different social circumstances. The differences and commonalities foreground their connections with not only the actors in the specific co-present scene, but also the broader array of socio-cultural factors in China and Brazil. Finally, we pinpoint the gaps between academic interpretation and folk discourse regarding mobile phone's displacement, and suggest further contextualized efforts in China and Brazil due to these divergences.

However, the discussions and interpretations in this study endure a set of limitations. Considering the methodology aspect, our sampling approach and result manifest the shortage of a robust sample pool that features a broader coverage over geographical locations in both countries, and a more balanced gender representation in China. Also, the instrumentality of survey could be further improved by surveying pertinent literature in the area of communication studies – obviously, the structure and mechanism of interpersonal communication would lend us more useful variables. For the theoretical backgrounds, we realize the absence of extensive discussion on media users' social skill and communication competency. There have been some scholarships suggesting the association between those attributes and exact phone use in specific social contexts (e.g., Hwang, 2011; Ishii, 2006). Such a shortage of literature review might handicap our theoretical approach and restrain our explanations based on the quantitative results.

In addition, we fail to incorporate the perspective of moral panic, which encompasses a certain array of social reactions to the development of ICTs. We have observed the pertinent public discourse through the lens of mass media in light of its role to initially interpret and present moral panic with regard of the situated social context (Thompson, 2013). To a large extent, the news in Chinese mainstream media commonly underscores the negative influences of sticking to mobile communication under various circumstances. Moreover, they attempt to associate such a set of phenomena with social, cultural, economic, and political backgrounds in China (e.g., People.cn, 2013). By the same token, behaviors that

similar to phubbing are addressed in Brazilian mainstream medias with regard of addictive usages of mobile phone and the Internet (e.g., Globo, 2015). In this vein, moral panic essentially surfaces the necessity of examining young people other than the penetration stats, and contextualizes the displacement concern into specific social contexts. To date there has not been an agreed-on definition of moral panic, but nevertheless at least two of the characteristics are widely acknowledged:" that there should be a high level of concern over the behavior of a certain group or category of people and that there is an increased level of hostility toward the group or category regarded as a threat" (Thompson, 2013; p.9). Provided those two characteristics, the casual relationship between ICTs' displacement and moral panic is crystal since how people engage media technologies are conceptually circumscribed with fears of impaired social interaction and declined moral standard (Baym, 2010; Strover, 2013). Hence for future studies, the angle of moral panic could help highlight significant policy-making at personal, household, governmental and design levels regarding mobile phone, especially centered on the most susceptible age groups like children and young people, so that enrich the scope of environmental factors impacting on mobile phone's displacement.

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Rev Famecos (Online). Porto Alegre, v. 22, n. 4, outubro, novembro e dezembro de 2015.

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