

Immigrant Women's Experiences of Using Mobile Phones: Counting Pennies to Connect Across Continents

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Malik and Kisselburgh: Immigrant Women's Experiences of Using Mobile Phones: Counting Pe



Immigrant Women's Experiences of Using Mobile Phones: Counting Pennies to Connect Across Continents

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Why Women and Mobile Phones?

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- ⊗ More than just connecting people—empowerment of women in knowledge society
- ⊗ Studies from all over the world show ICTs have potential to transform new forms of communication into real opportunities for development and growth, *especially* for groups likely to be bypassed in the absence of concerted effort to include them.
- ⊗ This group comprises people who are marginalized financially, socially, politically, geographically, and include more women than men (Nath, 2006).

Immigrants in the United States

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- ⊗ Immigrants are aliens who are legally admitted with an immigrant visa to the United States.
- ⊗ The Immigration Act of 1990 allows around 675,000 immigrants each year
- ⊗ 480,000 immigrants admitted under family-based preference
- ⊗ 40,000 immigrants admitted under employment based preferences
- ⊗ 55,000 “diversity” immigrants (Kraly & Miyares, 2001)
- ⊗ The low-skilled immigrants like our Bangladeshi and Ethiopian participants typically arrive under the family-based preference or as winners of the Diversity Visa (DV) Lottery

Immigrants City: NYC

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State	Share of Population	Immigrant Population	2000-2010	1990-1999	Pre-1990	Residence in the U.S. (years)
California	27.2%	10,150,429	2,823,969	2,686,511	4,639,949	20.7
New York	22.2%	4,297,612	1,341,567	1,199,340	1,756,705	20.1
Texas	16.4%	4,142,031	1,509,389	1,192,763	1,439,879	18.0
Florida	19.4%	3,658,043	1,292,354	883,965	1,481,724	20.1
New Jersey	21.0%	1,844,581	629,632	511,414	703,535	19.3
Illinois	13.7%	1,759,859	572,494	536,635	650,730	19.2
Massachusetts	15.0%	983,564	374,605	241,810	367,149	18.9
Georgia	9.7%	942,959	408,745	299,347	234,867	15.0
Virginia	11.4%	911,119	378,626	248,646	283,847	16.7
Washington	13.1%	886,262	332,727	255,836	297,699	18.1
Arizona	13.4%	856,663	271,974	245,823	338,866	19.7
Maryland	13.9%	803,695	334,783	205,334	263,578	17.0
Pennsylvania	5.8%	739,068	298,325	188,960	251,783	18.2
North Carolina	7.5%	719,137	328,762	223,399	166,976	14.9
Michigan	6.0%	587,747	218,726	164,457	204,564	19.4
Nevada	18.8%	508,458	162,097	139,712	206,649	19.5
Colorado	9.8%	497,105	199,552	146,320	151,233	17.7
Connecticut	13.6%	487,120	181,951	125,320	179,849	19.9
Ohio	4.1%	469,748	196,391	107,093	166,264	19.7

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Source: 2010 American Community Survey, www.census.gov. Length of residence is from the ACS public-use file.

Ethnic Enclaves in NYC

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Review of literature

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- ❁ Mobile phones have become an “integral part of personal, national, and economic life” (Srivastava, 2008).
- ❁ They not only combine the functionality of voice telephony with audio-visual media, but have also gone on from being a “technical object” to becoming a “social object” (Srivastava, 2005).
- ❁ Prior research supports that practices associated with mobile phone communication have varied across countries, cultures, and gender (Donner, Rangaswamy, Steenson, & Wei, 2008; Miyata, Boase, Wellman, 2008; Portus, 2008).

Review of literature

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- ❁ ICT research from Bangladesh, Guatemala, Mauritania and Ghana show women have used ICTs to find and use information to their benefit (Huyer & Hafkin, 2006; Overa, 2008)
- ❁ Little is known of what happens when residents of these Asian and African countries immigrate to a large metropolis in the U.S.

Research Questions

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RQ 1) What are the barriers to use of mobile phones amongst immigrant women?

RQ 2) How do home and host cultures shape mobile phone use?

RQ3) What are the similarities and the differences in the use of mobile phones across ethnic groups?

Method

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Participants

- ⊗ Interviewed 21 Bangladeshi and 9 Ethiopian working class immigrant women in New York City in summer 2012.
- ⊗ All the participants arrived in the United States after 2002.
- ⊗ The participants hailed from cities
- ⊗ Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet and Comilla, Jessore, Khulna, Noakhali districts in Bangladesh
- ⊗ Addis Ababa, Wollo Province, Showa Province, and Gojjam in Ethiopia

Demographics – Bangladeshi immigrant women

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- ⊗ 18 / 21 participants were married with children
- ⊗ 3 / 21 were employed
 - ⊗ bank teller, restaurant cashier, & retail
- ⊗ 3 / 21 were students pursuing Associate degree at community college
- ⊗ 12 / 21 were stay-at-home mothers whose primary responsibility included caregiving and household chores.

Demographics -- Ethiopian immigrant women

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- ⊗ All 9 participants were employed
 - ⊗ cooks, bartenders and waitresses in mid-range Ethiopian restaurants; nursing aide, movie theatre, retail
- ⊗ 2 / 9 were college students



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- ⊗ Age: All participants were between the ages of 19-42 years, with a majority of them in 20s. ADVANCE-Purdue Gender and STEM Research Symposium, Event 6 []
- ⊗ Jobs: Their spouses and fathers worked as yellow taxi/limousine drivers, constructions workers, substitute teachers, and in liquor stores and restaurants.
- ⊗ All Bangladeshi participants with the exception of one belonged to low-income category, which is \$22,350 for a family of four in New York (Federal Poverty Guidelines, 2011)
- ⊗ Many Bangladeshi participants had qualified for Federal Lifeline Assistance Program (Assurance Wireless) that gave them a basic mobile handset + 250 minutes free talk time/month

Method

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Procedures- Data Collection

- ⊗ 30 interviews (21 Bangladeshi, 71%; 9 Ethiopian, 30%)
- ⊗ 56% participants interviewed at their homes, 20% at their place of work, 13% at the public library, 10% at their church
- ⊗ 10 hours of audio recording = 184 single-spaced pages of transcript
- ⊗ We used pseudonyms

Constant Comparative Method- Grounded theory

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- It is a method of qualitative inquiry in which data collection and analysis reciprocally inform and shape each other through an emergent iterative process (Charmaz, 2011).
- The goal of Grounded Theory approach is to explain how an aspect of 'social' world works
- Constant Comparative Method: is a method to analyze data in order to generate a grounded theory

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Data Analysis-Coding Procedures (Corbin & Strauss, 2008)

- ❁ Transcript coded using Constant Comparative Approach
- ❁ Open coding technique- Opening data to all possibilities and only after considering all meanings and contexts, interpretive labels are put on the raw data (example: parental anxiety->anxiety->barriers)
- ❁ Used this approach to build category constructs on the raw data.
- ❁ Categories: Higher-level concepts or themes under which lower-level concepts are grouped

FINDINGS

RQ1: Barriers to mobile phone usage

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Gender and culture

Money

Limited Time

Barriers: Gender and Culture

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- In the case of married Bangladeshi participants, many reported their husbands were more active on social media and had *better* technology like “iPhones” as compared with their basic handsets or smartphones *without* data plans.
- Women gave their husbands the prerogative over the use and ownership of technology.
- These women relied on husbands and children to store phone numbers and set up Skype connections.
- They stayed in tightly knit communities and limited mobile use to communicate primarily with family

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Bangladeshi Quotes

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Iram, a nursing student got basic mobile phone upon getting married

“Because they take more money for internet...I don't need it because I am at home after I start college this Fall then maybe I am going to take internet. He needs it because he drives yellow cab and sometimes he needs to know the flights arriving so checks you know, that's how he needs the Internet.”

Nazia's husband was in Bangladesh.

“Sometimes I call my friends. I don't really need to contact them much because I contact my husband and my family more.”

Barriers: Money

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Both immigrant groups were price conscious

Sabrina from Ethiopia was juggling two jobs and applying to get into the City college.

“I am thinking oh I am going to pay 50 dollars a month but now I want to include...they said its gonna be 30 more dollars for the data plan. It will be 80 dollars. If it is 80 dollars I think I will take it but if its gonna be more I might change my mind and stick to my computer and then use the phone just for communication no data plan”

Marya used her mobile after 9 PM and on weekends to speak with family

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“Verizon to other mobile minutes, that’s why I don’t more call. Saturday Sunday free, I call this Bangladesh and my friend, my brother, my sister every free. After 2, minute, 3 minute, everyday on Saturday Sunday line. (Not everyday), because minute cut.”

Nishat, a Tmobile subscriber kept her calls to 1-2 minutes with people using other carriers.

“95 dollars too much. My husband’s weekly income is 600 dollar. Not a lot of money.”

Barriers: Limited Time

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- ⊗ Bangladeshi participants not comfortable using ICTs mentioned time constraints
- ⊗ Nilufer understood little English, said she used mobile phone (Banglalink) in Bangladesh and lacked using it in the U.S. because she did not have the time to learn. Her goal was to “learn” mobile phone use over the next 2-3 years when her children grew older.
- ⊗ Hamida took her daughter’s help in saving the numbers of relatives. “I do, then I forget, I feel too lazy to learn again. No time. Busy with household work.”

RQ 2: Home-Host culture

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concerns

- ⊗ Nadira who used her phone to snap family photos, believed mobile phones were “harmful” for the young generation.
- ⊗ She recounted an incident when she saw consumption of adult content in a public place:

“I see, in America, when I go to the doctor’s chamber they look at that type of video.X-file... Actually education is not helpful for that, here is a free sex country it is. But I think it is not good. They all are pregnant in school life. They are not complete their education here. I don’t like it.”

⊗ Fatima, mother to two young children and CUNY student

“I would say of course technology is like from the internet you could know many things, it is very easy to learn. From that also you could teach children, you have information and stuff. That’s also a good thing, at the same time there is bad thing as well. Now for some months when I go to YouTube some pictures come in the side ...they (kids) are so young...it says (advertisements) “this girl is waiting for that. Just click it” something like that. The girls pictures, Brooklyn girls, so if they just click one time they are going to see that stuff. So this is a threat.”

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❁ Marya said she will buy phones for her daughter only after they graduate from college “because cell-phone is time-loss I think study is good.”

❁ Safina had English language difficulty (*translated from Bangla*)

“Yes I feel really bad here it's a new country. That I had to leave my country, my family, my relatives. How do I express myself in a language? Here everybody is talking in English and I can't express myself in that language. When I go outside it is English. I have not been trained in English, in Bangladesh right after birth we talk in Bangla (Bengali)...I am so new here and when I go outside and my husband is not with me, I feel very lonely/alone and I don't know how to express my feelings. I can't make people understand anything, so I feel really bad about it.

RQ3: Similarities and Differences of Use Across Ethnic Groups

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Similarities

- ⊕ Immigrant women from both ethnicities displayed cost conscious behaviors
- ⊕ Struggled with English language

Similarities and Differences of Use Across Ethnic Groups

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Differences

- ⊗ Ethiopian participants were much more likely to have data-enabled smartphones and explore apps and features.
- ⊗ The desire for independence, self-improvement and lack of extended family support encouraged Ethiopian immigrant women to find news, online tutorials, and scout for professional opportunities.
- ⊗ Also, these women had to make their rent!

Ethiopian Quotes

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Tenagne, waitress

“Most of the time I search now I try to go to school. I want to be a personal trainer so I search by that.”

Betty, waitress

“I want to learn . You know I was 25 or 26 when I come here, I am late, I was late for so many things I want to, how should I say, make it better, advance I want to become familiar with technology and environment. Like before 7-8 years ago I was different. Now I learn everything.”

Tami, waitress substituted her GPS with a phone app

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“I have Motion-X. its actually not free, its free for the first 30 days then you have to pay \$9.99 and that is actually for a year, which is not bad.”

Desta, waitress who got a degree in accounting from a community college

“English is my second language (her native language is Amharic). I see so many things like speaking communication like some people are good (English) speaker. I listen.”

Desta watched YouTube videos and tried to learn Spanish using a smartphone application.

Discussion: Preliminary

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Contributions

- ⊕ We assume people change their patterns of technology use upon moving to the another country but this isn't really the case here.
- ⊕ Intervention for the purpose of empowerment would need to focus on expanding their identity anchors (gendered cultural understandings of who they are)

QUESTIONS?