CHOICE, COVERAGE & COST IN THE COUNTRYSIDE: A TOPOLOGY OF ADOLESCENT RURAL MOBILE TECHNOLOGY USE

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ABSTRACT

As mobile technologies become increasingly prevalent throughout Australian society, it is important to consider the impact of local factors on their use. In order to support rural students and develop appropriate mobile learning frameworks, it is essential to have an understanding of the particular communication challenges presented by local experiences. This paper reports some preliminary observations emerging from an ethnographic study of mobile technology use by a group of rural adolescents in Victoria. This research aims to understand their use of various mobile technologies in terms of literacy practices. A key consideration in understanding these particular students was interrogating the rural context involved and the impact this has on their mobile technology use. Key influences on their practices that emerged from their rural context included: network choice, phone coverage and financial cost. Technology use for this particular group of rural students will be examined through the voices of participants in this research. Their experiences, whilst specific to their lives and locality, speak to wider trends and issues concerning mobile technology use by rural students. If we are to develop educational strategies to accommodate young people's knowledge of and experience with these technologies, it is essential to develop an understanding of how particular places – rural places – structure the use of mobile technologies.

INTRODUCTION

Despite assumptions that mobile technologies allow for communication or information access anywhere, anytime, factors particular to individual locations constrain this ideal scenario. Rural environments present their own set of challenges and complications for the use of a variety of mobile technologies, especially mobile phones. When thinking about the use of mobile technologies for educational purposes, rural contexts present particular challenges: the impact of telecommunications infrastructure or instance has a tangible impact on how the technologies are used as part of daily practice.

The ethnographic research on which this article is based, seeks to understand the experiences of a specific group of Victorian adolescents in terms of their lived culture. This involved a close examination of the sociocultural factors of their particular locality, and how these impacted on their individual and group use of mobile technologies. Studies concerning mobile phone use have, in recent years, expanded dramatically as a result of their unprecedented uptake, particularly among youth. The role of various devices in the everyday lives of individuals, in changing communication practices and in the establishment and maintenance of individual and group identity, has been examined across many countries and cultures. Although such research is often contextualised in terms of the global impact of these

technologies, there is a concurrent need to contextualise such research in terms of specific societies and cultures. Throughout this article I will be drawing on the voices of the students who participated in this research (referred to by pseudonyms), in order to illustrate the prevailing communication challenges that they face as a result of their particular rural location. This speaks to the importance for educators and researchers to be sensitive to the individual experiences of students, and the way mobile technologies are, and can be used in their specific rural locations.

The emerging uses of mobile technologies for learning — or m-learning — offer the *potential* to transcend distance and make use of 'down time' (such as when travelling) for learning (Goggin, 2005; Metcalf, 2006; Ragus, 2006). However, as will be seen from the experiences of Riverton adolescents, this ideal doesn't always play out in practice. The particularities of their rural location expose these adolescents to a range of factors which structure their experience in specific ways; in this case, network choice, coverage and cost issues. Therefore, for m-learning approaches to work, they must be tailored not just to the learning task, but to the experiences and usage patterns that a particular group of students experience.

OUTLINE OF ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

The ethnographic research that informs this article was undertaken with a group of adolescent students, between fifteen and sixteen years old (n=13), at a high school in a rural Victorian town, Riverton (a pseudonym) over the final two terms of 2007 and first term of 2008. The aim of this ongoing research is to understand the literacy practices associated with youth use of mobile technologies. Literacy is theorised in line with the New Literacy Studies (NLS) school of thought (New London Group, 2000; Kress, 2003), which understands literacy as inherently multimodal and involved in the everyday social practices of individuals. A central consideration in understanding the structure of this literate social practice around mobile technologies concerned the impact of environmental and situational factors on student mobile technology use. The fact that the students live in a rural location was, therefore, an important factor in understanding their experiences.

Traditional ethnographic data collection methods were used in an effort to understand the culture of Riverton students: participant observation, general observations, interviews (n=35), a focus group and artefact collection. The participant observation was the least conventional of the strategies: I taught a unit of work in English (with two classes), where students were encouraged to think reflectively on their use of mobile technologies, culminating in an informative piece of writing entitled: "How to use mobile technologies properly." All data collected was used in an on-going, iterative fashion to inform further data collection.

The interpretive framework for this study draws on a critical ethnographic methodology and uses the sociological theories of Pierre Bourdieu to interpret the relationship between the students' social practice and their literacy activities. A critical ethnographic approach "…takes us beneath surface appearances, disrupts the *status quo*, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control." (Madison, 2005, p.5). Essentially, the lived experiences of students are examined with reference to social and cultural forces that influence or restrict their behaviours

and beliefs. Bourdieu's theories are used as a framework for articulating the relationship between social and cultural structures (institutional, social and cultural rules and expectations, etc.) and the participants' practices (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991). Both these perspectives require analysis of the factors that structure individual and group behaviours: the focus for this article being their rural status.

Many of the students involved lived some distance from the school and town, some up to one hour away by bus. As such, it was important to be reflective about the impact not just of specific locations on mobile technology use, but also the impact of travel and rural distance on student practices. Whilst the participants' project had a wide variety of experiences and attitudes with regard to mobile technologies, they all shared the experience of living in a rural area.

MOBILE COMMUNICATION

Mobile communications, especially mobile phones, have become one of the most pervasive and rapidly popularised technologies in global history (Agar, 2003; Levinson, 2004; Castell, Fernández-Ardèvol, Qiu & Sey, 2007). In many countries around the world, it has taken less than ten years for these devices to become so common and ubiquitous, that at times they are virtually invisible. This has resulted in dramatic changes to social and communicative practices, which have taken many of us by surprise. As Katz and Aakhus (2002) discuss, many of these changes have been universal (or global) across cultures and societies: the rapid up-take of Short Message Service (SMS), the use of mobiles by youth, and the rapidly increasing pervasiveness and ubiquity of these devices for instance.

In line with global trends, the uptake of mobile phones in Australia has been nothing short of unprecedented. As in many other cultures, mobile phones for example, have moved from the realm of 'businessmen' to become commodities for mass consumption, and an important part of youth culture. In 2004 Australia had the largest number of mobile phone subscribers in the Oceania region, and the highest penetration rate at 82.6 per cent (Castell *et al.*, 2007, p. 8). The Australian mobile market is approaching saturation (Australian Psychological Society, 2004). These figures are not significantly different from other countries: similar penetration rates can be observed across societies as diffuse as Finland, South Korea, Brazil and South Africa. However, despite this common factor, different societies and cultures adopt similar technologies differently. In Jamaica for instance, mobile phones are playing an increasingly important role in collective family life and are primarily used for communication purposes (Horst & Miller, 2006). By contrast, the use of *keitai* (mobile phones) in Japan is more complicated. Due to the particularities of Japanese culture and infrastructure, mobile devices are used as personal devices for a range of purposes: communication, Internet surfing and local-specific information retrieval for instance. (Ito, Okabe & Matsuda, 2006).

Of key interest for educators is that mobile technologies have proven so popular and pervasive amongst children and adolescents. Part of this is that youth are now targeted as an active consumer group in the marketplace (Kenway & Bullen, 2001). In researching mobile phone uptake by Swiss teenagers, Hans Geser agrees that youth are susceptible to fashion trends (2006, pp. 4-6). Combined with this he suggests other factors linked to family dynamics and identity formation that

contribute to their high participation rates: on the one hand, teens seeking to emancipate themselves from their family and form friendships and identities beyond it, and on the other, parental encouragement of mobile phone use, in order to extend the possibilities of parental supervision and security (Geser, 2006, pp. 4-6; Ling & Haddon, 2008, pp. 138-139). A recent Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) (2007) report supported this research with respect to Australian youth and families. Here, adolescents were important consumers of mobile phones, as they "…had become an important part of teenage identity formation and a key infrastructural support for contemporary teen culture." (p. 293). Further, parents played a role in youth uptake of mobile phones, in order to "…extend the reach of parental monitoring." (p. 293). Mobile phones particularly, play both a functional, emotional and symbolic role in the lives of contemporary Australian students.

In further understanding the use of mobile technologies as part of social practice, there are two specific concepts that are useful. The concepts of micro-coordination and hyper-coordination, developed by Ling and Yttri (2002) provide a framework for discussing the ways in which mobile technology has resulted in new forms of interaction and social coordination. The concept of micro-coordination concerns the "mundane coordination" (p. 142) of everyday life, or the use of mobile phones in an instrumental or functional way to organise meetings and social activities 'on the fly'. Micro-coordination is particularly evident in fields of professional endeavour, parental supervision and personal scheduling. The concept of hyper-coordination builds on this mundane aspect, adding expressive and symbolic meanings to the process, including emotional and social communication, as well as negotiation around etiquette and the uses of mobile phones: "Thus, hyper-coordination encompasses instrumental and expressive use of the mobile telephone as well as strictures regarding the presentation of self" (Ling & Yttri, 2002, p. 140). In other words, whilst micro-coordination concerns organising meetings and social arrangements, hyper-coordination has more to do with personal interests (including family and friendship) and developing personal and group identity (in terms of how a technology is used and attitudes towards them). An example of this behaviour was recounted by Howard Rheingold when he explained the practice of "swarming" emerging amongst Finnish teens: "…the cybernegotiated public flocking behaviour of texting adolescents." (Rheingold, 2002, p. 13). Here young people coordinate their meetings and movements via SMS.

It is these two concepts — micro-coordination and hyper-coordination — that I will follow through the experiences of Riverton rural students.

MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES AND RURAL AUSTRALIA

The majority of research that has been conducted with regard to rural Australia and mobile technologies, tends to focus on issues of access to infrastructure; access to devices has become less of an issue as the prices of devices continue to drop. The problem of coverage emerged in response to the particularities of the Australian telecommunications industry:

> Overlooked in the Australian government's decision to mandate GSM [a digital network standard] was the concern raised in the community, especially rural denizens, of coverage issues. … Once the implications of the GSM decision were widely realized, the politically vocal and influential Australian rural community were quite upset. (Goggin, 2008, p.173)

Despite the fact that statistically Australia is an urban society, the Australian rural landscape still features wide and dispersed communities who desire access to mobile technologies. This access of rural people to telecommunications services has remained an ongoing issue of debate, with the majority of the focus falling on Telstra, as the largest provider in Australia, and the debate becoming particularly ferocious during the privatisation of Telstra (Goggin, 2005).

Recent reports by the ACMA point to on-going difficulties that farmers and rural Australians continue to have with mobile phone coverage, despite the extension of the CDMA network deadline (a recently discontinued network standard) and claims in the media that Telstra's Next-G network will offer improved coverage and quality. As reported in the ACMA's report into the farming sector's attitude to, and take-up of, telecommunications: "In general, farm respondents emphasised the importance of mobile phones for work purposes, as well as highlighting issues with mobile phone network coverage …" (2008a, p. 8). This issue was further supported in a subsequent report, which found farm consumer's dissatisfied with mobile phone services: drop-outs and noise (89 per cent) and unreliable service (22 per cent) were two top concerns (ACMA, 2008b, p. 20). Whilst these findings relate specifically to farm consumers, they point to wider trends in rural Australian telecommunications consumption. Although not all the students discussed in this article lived on farms or outside the main town (which had generally good coverage), the activities of their social lives — travel, sports, visiting friends, etc. — frequently took them beyond the town limits and reliable phone coverage.

The intention at this point is not to critique discussions of rural experiences with telecommunications, but rather to point out that rural Australians have a specific experience of mobile communication that can be differentiated from that of urban dwellers.

ARTICULATING THE RURAL EXPERIENCES OF RIVERTON STUDENTS

Although the analysis of literacy practices requires further development, it is important in this process to develop a profile and understanding of the particularities of the communication environment these adolescents experience. Students at Riverton High (a pseudonym) lived both in the township and some distance from it. During an average day they would keep in touch with friends and family, both in terms of micro- and hyper-coordination. This section will focus on communications challenges that were shared amongst youth in Riverton, as articulated though the voices of individual project participants, with regard to three main structuring factors: network choice, phone coverage and financial cost. These issues were key features in the landscape of Riverton students' mobile communication practices.

Network Choice

All participants in this project had mobiles phones connected with Telstra. The reasons for this were multiple: cost, convention, brand loyalty, coverage and lack of an alternative. Because Telstra had the most extensive network in the area, students who lived out of Riverton often did not have an alternative. Optus was perceived to have the second-highest amount of coverage, but this was still absent in many outlying areas. Other networks only had coverage within the township of Riverton.

Connection to the Telstra network was configured as a prerequisite for social interaction via mobile phone, not just because of coverage issues, but also due to peer pressure and cost restrictions. Because Telstra had the most complete coverage, initially it was the network of choice for students. This was further exacerbated by the cheap cost of one-cent text messages, but only to other Telstra phones. As a result, if a student was not connected to the Telstra network, they essentially found themselves out of the social 'loop'; cost being an important consideration for students with limited financial resources (discussed further below). As one student put it: "If you're not with *Telstra*, you're pretty much a loner. Like…everyone's with *Telstra* round here" (Josh, Interview 3, p. 11). This attitude was also reported by other students, including Sarah: "It's either *Telstra*, *Telstra*, *Telstra* or, if you're really stupid, *Optus.* Like, my sister: I told her not to get *Optus*" (Interview 3, p. 13).

Because of the cost issue, students employed strategies to minimise contact with those who were not with Telstra, sending longer SMS messages, claiming to be out of credit, or just not responding to contacts. There is a prevailing expectation among the students of Riverton, that if you have a phone, you are connected to Telstra. This combination of cost and network infrastructure factors, seems to have created market dominance for Telstra in Riverton, which the students continue to perpetuate through their social networks.

Coverage & Reception

Despite claims by telecommunications companies to the contrary, many students in Riverton experienced difficulties with mobile phone communication due to gaps in coverage, reflecting wider rural dissatisfaction with mobile phone services, as reported by the ACMA (2008a). This generally occurred beyond 10 kilometres from the town, and impacted not just those who lived out of town, but anyone who travelled beyond the urban sprawl of Riverton.

For those students who lived out of town, a lack of phone reception was something they found frustrating and annoying, but something they felt ambivalent about: they would like to do something about it, but did not know what they could do. Bailey lived approximately an hour's bus ride from Riverton and explained that she had terrible phone reception at home: the only place being on her 'window-sill'. Erin, also from out of town, had unreliable coverage at home too: in some rooms she received coverage, in others she didn't. In Erin's case, however, one of her friends assisted her: she was advised to purchase a 'reception-boosting sticker' from eBay. This small metal sticker was applied to the battery of her older model phone, resulting in her achieving good reception throughout her home (Interview 1, p. 6). This example points to the important role that peer-networks play in maintaining

mobile contact: the mobile phone is not just used for communication with friends, but is also constructed in certain ways through those friendships (e.g. the preference for SMS-ing).

A particularly interesting experience with network coverage was explained by Brad, who lived some seventy kilometres from Riverton. In the early stages of the research he was connected to the CDMA network, with which he was generally happy. He explained that although there were gaps in coverage, especially while travelling, the network reception was generally good. Like many other rural Australians, he had to swap to the Telstra Next-G network when the CDMA network was closed in late April, 2008. Whereas his comments about the CDMA network were generally positive — "Yeah, I get pretty good reception" (Interview 2, p. 11) — five months later he was on the Next-G network, of which he was far more critical: "I find it's no better than what CDMA reception was" (Interview 3, p. 5). This experience was not universal though: another student who also lived roughly the same distance from Riverton (in the opposite direction), reported improved service on the Next-G network, though he was moving from a digital (GSM) standard which previously received no reception (Peter, Interview 2). However, yet another student who moved during the course of the research to the same area as Peter, indicated differently: Sarah reported that the Next-G coverage at her new home was "… really bad!" (Interview 3, p. 15).

The topic of coverage was related to more technical issues when some students asserted that it was also influenced by the type and model of phone that a student owned. Josh recounted an incident when he was travelling with his brother out of Riverton: although they were both on the same Telstra digital network, his brother's phone had better reception: "…mine will get one bar, he'll have three" (Interview 3, p. 10). Brad's experience, outlined above, offers a counterpoint; he was adamant that it was not the actual phone that resulted in poor coverage, but the Next-G network itself: "… Everyone on the bus … everyone's sort of got the different handsets, like your *Telstra*, *LG*, *Samsung* … and everyone drops out … you see everyone holding their phone up to the window" (Interview 3, pp. 5-6). It is important to remember with regard to the issue of coverage that it doesn't just concern static positions, but rather, as they're 'mobile' devices, regards coverage whilst moving. As such, the nature of phone use whilst travelling emerged as a distinct issue.

An unavoidable feature of living in rural Australia is the distance between locations and, therefore, between people. Despite the fact that such distances also exist in urban environments, more comprehensive telecommunications infrastructure results in generally stable and dependable phone reception, anywhere, anytime (just as in the advertisements!). However, across the wide rural expanses of land that separate these youths from their school and from each other, there are large gaps in phone reception; on the open highway, gaps seem to be the rule rather than the exception. Brad's experience of bus travel was shared by those students who travelled to school via bus (Bailey, Erin, Sarah, Peter): although he had some phone coverage at home, when travelling he was effectively out of contact. The response of these students was to resort to devices and phone features that did not require network access: iPods, PSPs (PlayStation Portable), PDAs (Personal Digital

Assistants), Bluetooth on phones. Listening to iPods when travelling through the rural landscape was a common practice.

Josh, who regularly travelled to Bendigo to visit relatives, articulated the experience behind this shift to non-networked devices whilst travelling:

> *Most of the time that I use my iPod is on the trains [to Melbourne].... I've got a Motorola [phone, but] no range on the train, so I get a message every half and hour, like I'll hear the conversation and I'll reply every half an hour…so you get a message … and then you don't reply in time, so it sends half an hour later. (Josh, Interview 3, p. 16)*

As the students of Riverton travel through the landscape they are in-and-out of phone coverage, making effective, real-time phone communication impossible: phone calls are interrupted by breaks and drop-outs and SMS conversations are delayed until reception is regained. This experience reflects the findings by the ACMA in their study of farm users of mobile technologies, where poor phone coverage and drop-outs were mentioned as major concerns (2008b, p. 20). Even though students were with the most extensive network in the area — Telstra — they had to coordinate their social practice using mobile phones around *expected* ruptures in their accessibility.

The Cost of Mobile Phone Use

An especially interesting discourse that emerged regarding the use of mobile technologies by Riverton adolescents was evident in their awareness of the inherent cost of communicating via mobile phone: not only do these devices cost money up-front, but continue to cost money as they are used. Throughout the study, students articulated an awareness of the cost of mobile communication, to the extent that it determined what they actually did with their phones, particularly as many students had limited financial resources of their own. The most overt manifestation of this was clear when students explained the reasons for their frequent use of SMS: "One cent text" Bailey stated as the reason for her use of SMS, which was the main feature she used on her phone (Interview 1, p. 5). Throughout all the interviews, all participants indicated that the low cost of SMS — one cent — was a prevailing reason that they used it so frequently. This was linked to the fact that both the sender and the recipient were connected to the Telstra network, and as indicated above: if they knew an SMS recipient was connected to another network, they would try to minimise the contact; for instance, by writing a longer SMS or claiming that they were running low on credit (Josh, Interview 3; Peter, Interview 3). Micro- and hyper-coordination were, therefore conducted predominantly via SMS for these students, evoking a connection with the 'swarming' behaviour that Rheingold discusses (2002). Indeed, a number of the participants discussed how when there was a fight in the school ground, SMS texts would quickly circulate to spread the news regarding 'the who' and 'the where'.

Being connected to Telstra on a pre-paid basis allowed most of the students to maintain personal control over how much money they spent. This was further enhanced by the fact that the majority of the students interviewed had part-time, after-school jobs, contributing to their sense of independence and personal ownership of these devices. As a form of hyper-coordination, students also engaged in the sharing of phone credit with friends. This involved the 'sending' of credit to

others, so that they could continue to keep in contact. Brad reported that when he got his new phone, one of his first activities was to return credit to people who had done so for him (Interview 3). The culture of financial exchange and gifting also extended to phones and phone parts: students reported buying or being gifted second hand phones from friends (Erin, Sarah). Further, students were involved in the swapping of both physical and digital aspects of mobile phones: 'bluetoothing' content between phones was a common occurrence in the school ground, and at least one student — Josh — explained how he swapped phone parts with friends who had similar model phones. All these activities fit in with the notion of hyper-coordination, in that how phones are used and how they are articulated at the bodily level is negotiated amongst students. These processes also involved a financial aspect, where students cooperated and shared information about mobile phones (and other devices) in order to circumvent traditional market-based costs: old phones were gifted or sold on to friends; 'bluetoothing' was used because it did not cost money; information about what mobile phone model to buy was discussed so that individuals purchased phones that were in-line with peer-group expectations. These activities point to a connection between friendships and an awareness, both consciously and unconsciously, of the financial cost of owning and using mobile technologies.

Cost had a prevailing impact on a number of other behaviours that students engaged in, and they would avoid cost wherever they could. Brad, for instance, when connected to the CDMA network, found that he could download and play games on his phone for free using a programme called 'Loop'. However, when he changed to the Next-G network, he indicated that he no longer used computer games (except those built into the phone) because they now cost him money. Instead he had discovered that he could access websites without cost through the Telstra Next-G BigPond homepage, an activity he had not engaged in on the CDMA network due to cost. This shift in behaviours — only engaging in additional and extended phone features when they were free — is a further example of the impact cost has on mobile phone behaviours. Additionally, all research participants were scathing about 'SMS-clubs', which they labelled as 'rip-offs' and avoided. These consist of opt-in clubs, whereby digital texts, such as games, songs, ring tones, backgrounds, videos, etc., are purchased via sending an SMS to a particular number. Most participants referred to either personal experience or word-of-mouth as the means by which they learnt to avoid these costly clubs, with only one student (Jennifer) mentioning fine-print from advertising.

In another effort to avoid incurring what they see as unnecessary costs, a high number of the students admitted to using 'pranking'. This involves calling a number, but only letting the phone ring once or twice, not enough for the phone to be answered, but to get the recipient's attention and leave a record of who called. Pranking was used in terms of both micro-coordination and hyper-coordination. Josh and Bailey for instance both indicated that they would 'prank' their parents: this would mean that their parents would call them back. As Josh explained: "… if I need Dad to come and get me … like ring me, I'll prank him and then hang up before he answers it …" (Interview 2, p. 6). However, there was a further playful side associated with pranking that fits more with the concept of hyper-coordination.

Tom, for instance, was known for pranking his friends in class, just to get them in trouble with the teacher. When asked about his reasons for doing this, he exclaimed: "… it's just funny! … But it's got to happen at the right time …" (Interview 3, p. 4). When asked about this dual function of pranking — as both functional and fun — Bailey explained more fully:

> …oh, it's not always used as a joke. Sometimes you can prank people, if you know that their phone's on, so they … you get them in trouble and stuff…but you know, people don't really do that any more. Maybe little kids … Like, [it's] a type of communication, but in it's own way, really. Like, to call me back and stuff. And also, when you prank, it comes up with the person's name. So that you have a missed call, so then you know who it is.

(Interview 2, p. 6)

The use of pranking is an example of how cost-cutting, or cost-avoidance measures, has resulted in specific forms of micro- and hyper-coordination. The financial cost of using mobile technologies (particularly phones) had an on-going impact on what these students actually did with their devices.

Riverton Youth Culture

The specific conditions of mobile communication experienced by the students in Riverton, have given rise to a particular topography of mobile youth culture. Whilst their experiences may contain parallels and similarities with other rural youth, this project has focused on engaging and paying credit to their experiences of mobile technologies for this specific group of rural students.

As a collective, the students of Riverton embraced Telstra as their preferred network, though not exactly by choice, but rather, as a result of the practical demands of their location. It offered the best coverage, resulting in wider up-take. The cheap cost of intra-network communication further exacerbated this lack of network choice among the students, as those who were not with Telstra became more expensive to contact, resulting in a degree of social exclusion where mobile communication was concerned. Mobile technologies were not necessarily considered to be an essential component of their lives, but rather, a natural and expected component of being a rural teenager: they're just there. Talk both about and via mobile technologies was an innate part of their social practice: SMS was at times referred to as a way of alleviating boredom by having a 'chat' with friends. This was particularly important for students who lived out of town, who not only used mobile phones to coordinate social activities with friends who were geographically distant, but to maintain friendships and emotional bonds, through sending jokes and notes just to keep in touch. Thus, despite network coverage issues and concerns over the on-going cost of mobile communication, they have largely become an essential part of the social lives of Riverton students.

In thinking forward about the possibilities presented for rural education by mobile technologies, we must acknowledge the constraints that exist. Just as the rural location of these teenagers structure their use of mobile technologies in particular ways, so too will school location and telecommunications infrastructure impact on how such devices can be used for learning. The experiences of contemporary rural students with mobile phones, iPods and other devices, speak to

us of the possibilities, the potentials and the restrictions of using these technologies across the rural landscape.

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