

**Global and local discourses of media resistance:
The case of the mobile phone in Arab language web sites**

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The global and globalizing dimensions of mobile communication

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Drawing on an extended ethnography of mobile phone practices among Palestinian Israeli teenage girls, this paper focuses on the discourse concerning mobile phone use that the teenage girls encounter in popular magazines and in on-line forums and websites. Specifically, we hope to provide a detailed analysis of the discourse targeted against mobile phone use, as compared to the popular global/North American discourse against media exposure (notably television). Thus we aim to evaluate the extent to which the construction of technology as a moral threat pervades over and above cultural and media differences.

Our fieldwork took place in Palestinian-Arab towns in Northern Israel. The first author observed and interviewed 30 informants (aged 15-18) from the initial appropriation in 2003, when ownership was unbeknownst to the teenagers' parents and the girls would illicitly use phones given to them by their boyfriends; through the explicit incorporation of the mobile phone into gendered inter-generational family relationships two years later. In previous work (Hijazi-Omari and Ribak, forthcoming), we described and analyzed the cultural practices that were involved in the use of the mobile phone and the ways in which they were acted out in the encounter between men and women, tradition and (post-) modernity, and parents and children. Theoretically, by exploring the meaning of mobile phone use in terms of "domestication" (Silverstone et al., 1992), we studied the ways in which biographies of communication technologies derived from and informed cultural practices; we also noted how cultural practice and technological development called for a re-thinking and fine-tuning of the terminology employed in analytical accounts.

In this paper, we wish to take a step backwards and study the discourses and interpretive repertoires that inform and in turn are informed by these practices. Throughout the observations, we were struck by the extent to which our informants relied on and explicitly cited popular family and youth print and on-line magazines, forums and other publications. Upon looking at these reference sources, we noted that the websites construct a picture of the teenage girl mobile phone user as a promiscuous threat, and her use is seen as transgressing parental, patriarchal and religious order and norms. In contrast to this construction of the mobile phone as Satan, the girls themselves discussed this medium in forums as a romantic

matchmaker and as liberator, expressing just the sentiments that their parents, brothers and teachers feared. Yet their construction of romance and their freedom was predicated on a notion of sin and moral decay; and whether or not they perceived themselves as morally impaired, they knew they were taking social risks.

Michael Billig and his colleagues (1988) developed the notion of "ideological dilemmas" in reference to the choices one makes "between the wolf and the precipice." They noted that discourse is inherently dilemmatic or, following Bakhtin, that the word is always a rejoinder. In the paper we shall draw on this argumentative tradition and on the insights of discursive psychology in order to explore (1) the ways in which while distinctive and seemingly antithetical, both the conservative discourse of the community and the romantic discourse of the teenage girls are sensitive and responsive to one another; and thus, that both are ridden with contradictions (e.g. that when dismissing traditional courtship, the girls' liberation consists of a surrender to the romantic utopia of the West; see Erdreich, 2006; Illouz, 1997); and (2) the patterns of similarity and variation between the arguments against Moslem teenage girls' mobile phone use, and earlier and contemporary calls in the west for the "elimination of television" (Mander, 1978) and other media.

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