USER PROFILES:

Uses and appropriations of mobile phones by the youth in the city of Buenos Aires



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Summary

The article presents some results of the research about the uses and appropriations of mobile phones by young people between 20 and 29 years old belonging to middle-high sectors in the city of Buenos Aires. This research was carried out between August 2011 and September 2012. In this paper we propose to acknowledge the codes of significance that actors attach to this device and we make a description of the communication field using mobile phones as topography. This way we try to build classifications and categories that will allow us to synthesize and organize information gathered throughout the investigation. Thus, we have defined four user profiles: the resistant, the pragmatists, the enthusiasts and the heavy users; the first two make up the group of the "unattached" and the last two, the group of the "fans".

Keywords:

Youth studies, sociocultural, sociability, use and cell phone ownership, qualitative research, communication and mobile devices.

Received: March 18, 2013 - Accepted: March 30, 2013.

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INTRODUCTION

The article is based on research about the uses and appropriations that urban young people (of Buenos Aires City) make of cell phone, of high media sectors, including an age range of 20-29 years [1]. The choice of the cell phone as the object of our study reflects the interest in understanding the omnipresence it has acquired in everyday life in general and communication practices of young people, in particular.

Some questions that guide the research are what role does the cell phone in the everyday experience of youth? What is the place of this device in their lives? What influence has on their search for companionship, affection, friendship? What meaning they give to this technological and cultural artifact? What is its logical use? These questions are some issues that will be addressed in the development work.

Mobile telephony has been imposed in an almost universal among teenagers and young people of the great cities of the world. According to the 2010 Youth Survey by the Government of the City of Buenos Aires, in this city, between 15 and 29 years old, the cell phone reaches a 94% penetration. We believe that this trend accelerated growth of cell phone use among young people shows the existence of youth experience that finds that communication through private mobile personal devices are a suitable form of expression and reaffirmation (Castells, 2006; Winocur, 2009; Urresti, 2008a).

Users are adapting -consciously or unconsciouslythe new technologies into their lives, the contexts in which they live, their social, cultural and affective situations, and adequacy subjective expresses a usage logic that we are interested to decipher. In this paper we propose to unravel the frames of meaning that involved actors attribute to this device and develop a description of the field of the communication through the mobile telephony in the terms of a topography, that is to say, constructing classifications and categories that allow to synthesize and organize the collected information about the uses and appropriations that the young people do of the cellular telephony. This way, we have defined four user profiles: the resistant, the pragmatic, the enthusiasts and the heavy users (intensive users).

According to the aspects that they have in common, the two first ones integrate the group of the "unattached" and the two last ones, that of

the "fans". To tackle these questions, two analysis lines are worked: 1) some considerations on the cell phone in the life of the young people. 2) Four user's profile: resistant, pragmatic, enthusiasts and heavy users.

1. METHODOLOGY

The investigation is framed in a qualitative strategy, an analysis of ethnographic type, which tried to approach what Clifford Geertz (1990) names "a dense description". This concept points to make the codes of other cultures understandable. Also, for talking about an investigation that proposed to tackle a field still in development and in constant transformation, one resorted to an exploratory study that received opinions, significances and practices of the young people, and its design had a Modeler Goal.

It worked with young people between 20 and 29 years (divided by age grouping into two groups for analysis: 20-24 and 25-29 years) of upper middle sectors of the City of Buenos Aires, between the months of November 2011 and May, 2012. It was applied to a probabilistic sample of intentional type, selecting the interviewees according to the following criteria: age (20-29 years), place of residence (CABA), occupation and education level reached by them and their parents (as a full secondary minimum or more), possession of a cell phone and the device type.

The young interviewed people live mostly with their family and in some cases alone, in Caballito neighborhoods, Colegiales, Palermo, and Belgrano. Their parents are professionals and / or small-medium entrepreneurs. After having completed secondary schooling, they started college and some, in addition to studying, work.

From these criteria, the sample consisted of twenty cases. We defined the number of cases following the criterion of theoretical saturation, that is, until it reached the practical certainty that new contacts would not provide elements unknown to the research topic. The main data collection technique consisted of an individually semi-structured interview organized on based on guidelines a guide that included several open questions that considered the following dimensions: sociodemographic characteristics of the individual, acquisition of the first cell phone; frequency of use; uses and conditions of use, changes produced by cellular, forms of communication; relationship

between cell phone, landline and home PC, tools and applications used, cellular usage at work, and internet access from mobile.

This technique was supplemented by the use of ethnographic tools of participant observation in everyday social spaces such as cafes, bars, buses, subways, and social gatherings, in order to explore the practices linked to cell phone use. It also took advantage of the interview situations to observe the behavior of young people over the phone during the duration of it.

For processing and analysis of data, the actor's perspective was rescued and it was aimed a way of reading that, in an interpretative mode, is centered on the significance and the sense that youth give the practices related to the cell phone. It is clear that differences of gender and age of the two age groups formed were taken into account.

For the analysis of the material obtained the interviews were read in depth and it was proceeded to build a codebook on function of the approached dimensions and encode them based on it. In this way, the fragments of the different interviews that referred to the same dimension were integrated and analyzed together following as criteria the comparison of the answers and always bearing in mind the characteristics of each interviewee and their differences to refine understanding. It should be noted that the results are representative only of the interviewees of the sample.

2. SOME CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT THE CELL PHONE IN THE LIFE OF THE YOUNG

As a central tool of "first aid kit", the cell phone "sticks" to the body of the young along with the wallet, keys and documents to start the usual routes. It has a constant presence, light and mundane in everyday life and influences their habits and relationships with their social networks and adults (Castells, 2006; Ito, Okabe and Matsuda, 2005). We note that the young interviewees develop a typical procedure, almost a ritual, which involves checking minutes before leaving home if the costume is complete:

"I think the cell phone is like the wallet, or as the keys to your house, something you always have. When you go out of your house, you look if you have the wallet, documents, cell phone and keys. These things are fundamental: the keys to get back, the documents to drive, money if you need to buy something, and the cell phone to be connected." (Adrian, 20 years)

A particular feature of young of upper middle sectors is that they were the first to appropriate this technology. All interviewees had acquired their first mobile through their parents or close relatives, in the case of recent generations, did so at an early age (between 11 and 13 years) and those between 25 and 29 years, acquire them approximately from the beginning of the development of this technology (when they were 17). This means that far from being "outdated", the parents of this social group share with their children the interest in technology and some of them already had a cell phone by the time their children acquired it. In turn, it is observed that although young people wanted an own cell phone, many times it operated as an "anxiolytic" (Winocur, 2009) to reassure parents who felt the need to locate them and coordinate domestic life.



In this sense, we argue that the incorporation of cell phone to their lives responds both, to its own purposes (expectations of independence, privacy and connection with peers) and purposes alien to them, and more than the first cell phone of the children, it often functions as the second phone of parents.

At present, the limited access to a mobile phone has been reduced and there are almost no young people who do not have a cell phone in no sector of society (Hall and Sádaba Bringué Chalezquer, 2008). The low prices of terminals and various payment options facilitate the acquisition of a mobile in all social sectors. According Quevedo (2005), the cell phone is no longer an element of sophisticated consumption has become a widespread element, and it is becoming more rare the decision not to have a mobile phone than to invest in it.

On the other hand, high media sectors young people increasingly have Smartphones access that, permanently connected to the Internet with a fixed payment, allows conversations and send messages for free chat, breaking free of the restrictions of costs of text message and voice call. This ability to communicate extends the connection and increases the volume of messages exchanged.

Among the findings, we note that this device acquires relevance in the lives of young people can be understood from a double function: on the one hand, a material functionality, ie practical, operational (to communicate anytime, anywhere not resorting to booths or public telephones, convenience of having multiple objects in a single device, etc.), and on the other, a symbolic function that has its foundation in the fact that it meets the needs of privacy, Among the findings, we note that this device acquires relevance in the lives of young people can be understood from a double function: on the one hand, a material functionality, ie practical, operational (to communicate anytime, anywhere not resorting to booths or public telephones, convenience of having multiple objects in a single device, etc.), and on the other, a symbolic function that has its foundation in the fact that it meets the needs of privacy, company and affection that young manifested they feel.

We identified that the cell phone built an imaginary space of freedom and autonomy that provides young people control their privacy. From his look, the phone sets up a territory of their own, personal, private, mobile, operating as a shelter at any time and place. Somehow, this device simulates the privacy of the family bedroom and makes the young man a "snail man" piggybacking his symbolic life, work life, and social life. (Fortunati, 2004). This potentiality of the cell phone is highly valued by those who still live with their parents because it helps to create an independent atmosphere from the family environment, an oasis of privacy in the family ground. Hence the young prioritize connectivity above the mobility and to use their cell phone not only when in they are motion but also when remain parked in a fixed place.

The portable telephone is a device that has become naturalized in very little time in contemporary society, for most of the young people interviewed is hard to imagine a life without cell phones and do not understand (and often do not remember) how could one live without that device: how to meet friends without checking delays every minute,

unexpected change of place, some unexpected element it takes, how to notify changes on plans to family and coordinate homecoming schedules on the fly?

"Because when you believe you do not need something, once you start to use it, it becomes part, let's say. Until age 17 I had no phone and I started dating from 14, how I lived those years? I do not know. And now I say: if someone takes my cell phone, how do I fix this? I have no idea... It seems I became ... I went into that ". (Paula, 25 years)

In this sense, the cell phone has a direct impact on the worlds of life of young people, in their everyday experiences; but, in turn, the uses and appropriations that they make of it are shaped by their routines and rhythms of life. The portability of wireless technology fits the typical mobility that young people attain in their growth (Castells, 2006), granting them ubiquity and translocality, and simultaneously setting a kind of affective Wi-Fi that satisfied their desires to be accompanied by their affective community (family, couple, friends, acquaintances) in a fast, casual and informal way.

3. FOUR USER PROFILES

To avoid generalizations about patterns of cell phone use, we have constructed a typology of users considering the following dimensions: intensity of cell phone use, availability management, use of extra-communicative accessories and meanings attributed to the device. The management of the availability alludes to that although the one who has a cell phone is a connected and accessible individual in its contacts network, its availability is potential since it will depend ultimately on how the reception of calls and messages is managed, considering: the emission (or not) of an answer and its immediateness. In this way were defined four user profiles: the resistant, the pragmatic, enthusiasts and heavy users. The first two are members of the group of the "unattached" and the last two, that of "fans".

Worth mentioning that what is presented here are advances of an ongoing research that continues under analysis. Although some differences were noted by gender and age group, has not deepened in this article and they constitute future research lines. We can say that, in general, it seems that the women interviewed are more "fans" than men, as they are who have a more fluid and permanent connection with their contacts.

We can say that, in general, it seems that the women interviewed are more "fans" than men, as they are who have a more fluid and permanent connection with their contacts. From this perspective, we might think that the female communicative mode tends to be broader than the male because while their communication is more operational and punctual among women is more radial and experiential, they seek to create a communicative environment for to accompany them throughout the routine.



As for age differences, it seems to be a tendency to decrease the intensity of cell phone use with increasing age of the young, but this trend is relative and depends on the type of priority use of the artifact (work or social) since many times the labor factor tends to increase the intensity of use of the device, neutralizing the age effects.

3.1 Unattached: the resistant and the pragmatic

The "unattached" are characterized by defining the cell phone as a useful tool for their life but dispensable, an object that fulfills a purely communicative function. These users define themselves as "technical directors" of the artifact and consider it an object that is at their mercy that is controlled and dominated by them.

"Perhaps I do not give it much importance. Moreover, I get home; I support it and leave it there. Moreover, there are times I do not hear any call. I take it as a tool nothing more. I see it as any of the other devices I have here in my house. Such as the TV, the DVD, the computer, the digital camera. They are depending on me, are waiting for my call In

a way, using the metaphor of football, are waiting for me to call to get on the court and I hope that when they come to the court they give their best. But they are waiting for me; I'm the technical director of that stuff. They do not control me." (Fernando, 28 years)

Also, typically they are 'rebels' users, indifferent to the cell phone, which usually have it more often turned off or no credit, and even forgotten at home. The "rebels" are characterized by filter the calls and messages they receive, choosing when to answer and who to call back. The "rebels" are characterized by filter the calls and messages they receive, choosing when to answer and to whom answer the call. When the cell phone rings will not automatically run after it, but they evaluate what they are doing and assess if they can postpone it, based on "who is" and "what wants" the issuer (when is possible to know it). In some circumstances they respond immediately, in others respond later and even may stop responding.

"I like having the choice between responding you or not. (...) With the phone on and silent, you decide whether or not you want to respond it, or discriminate that." (Agustina, 25 years)

These users identify an imposition to be connected that refers to external pressure from the network of contacts (both inner circle and their business contacts) requiring certain immediacy of response to calls and claiming, explicit or implicit, explanations that justify the delay, non-response and / or the phone turned off. In line with the findings of Winocur (2009), we note that this disconnection and virtual invisibility of the cell owner are experienced as warning signs and cause concern and anxiety in the community of contacts.

"Affects me that everybody can or thinks that know where you are, they require for an automatic response. Because I have to give explanations of everything. Because that is what it generates the theme of immediacy, the theme of answering at that moment. I have to be explaining why I did not answer at the time, why I answered in a certain way, why I did not answer, why I did. It is a constant explanation. Even though you have the freedom to answer or not, they will always come to claim back.... I'm pretty attached to the phone not because I want to, but because I know that cell phone is

basically the way to contact my boyfriend, and he is somewhat demanding." (Laura, 25 years)

The resistant

Within the resistant users the "unattached" are considered mainly characterized by the possession of the cell phone as a result of external demand, both the "community of interest", which refers to the workplace, and the "affective community" (Aguado and Martinez, 2006), comprised mostly of family, couple, friends and acquaintances. In that sense, the cell phone incorporation to their lives not due both to their own motivations, expectations of independence, privacy and connection with peers, but rather due to desires of others -the need for localization, control and monitoring of communities of interest and affective. As a result, these users do not perceive the cell phone as a significant purpose in their lives, that satisfies their domestic needs but as an object that responds primarily to the needs their network of contacts.

"The cell phone is dispensable. I use it just because I have the business need to use it and because I find it useful to achieve certain things. But it is absolutely dispensable. (...) There is not an obligation imposed, but I feel obliged to have a phone". (John Martin, 25 years)

We also note that the "resistant" are users who defy their contact network and who refuse to be dominated by the dynamics of the operation of this device, trying to avoid it and use it as a "last resort". For this user, the phone does not give you more independence but it turns him into a dependant, which is available to the requirements and demands of his contacts.

"No, it just makes you more dependent because I can be located. If I leave the work, and I cannot be located until the next day at eight, I would be independent. But where I am now, it is not possible. And I suppose that the most progress in the work, I will have more dependence to have the cell phone". (Juan, 25 años)

"And frankly, I was long out of my house. Finished work, I went to school and almost at one o'clock back to my house. (...) As a

matter of pleasing my family: having a cell phone. I gave up, and bought a cell phone to calm my mom and those who were waiting me to reach my house." (Fernando, 28 years)

The pragmatists

These users differ from the resistant considering that cell phone responds simultaneously to the owner desires and of others. That is, they declare that external pressure has been a key factor to buy it, but recognize that it is a useful device that will simplify your daily activities for its practicality and instrumentality, and they give importance to the perceived benefits of having it: privacy and connectivity. However, they are within the "unattached" because they keep a logic of use similar to that of the resisters: they are "rebels", they regulate their availability and do not like being contactable.



"It does not occupy a primary place, but very useful. That is, I use it because it seems a useful tool, but I am not glued to it, and I am not interested to be one. If it breaks it does not affect me, not that I would go running to buy another. (...) Unattached to, I feel unattached to my cell phone." (Aldana, 25 years)

"I mean, sometimes it sounds and I do not hear. Unless it's a situation where I know it will let me know something or that sort of thing, yes. But if not, I have a quite old cell phone and nothing, That is, I have it there. When it sounds I pay attention, and if it does not sound better. That is, I do not put much attention to that". (Paula, 20 years)

These users identify a number of advantages associated with cell phone, the ability to connect to others to solve issues that are important to them in the moment, and the comfort of having a tool that allows people to communicate anytime, anywhere. But since they use it primarily to meet their own communication needs, But since they use it primarily to meet their own communication needs, usually do not have it incorporated into their routines very often when not required, and tend to forget it at home, at the bottom of the backpack or purse, without battery or credit, feeling its missing only when needed to satisfy a personal need.

3.2 Fans: enthusiastic and heavy users

The "fans" stick their body the cell phone, and they consider it indispensable and fundamental, almost like a part of their body, which is in-corporated to a point where they feel "naked" if they do not have it. Phone use is so intense that it is shown as a staple product. Some of the young people interviewed who belong to this subtype have said that at times they have felt "tied" to the device.

"If I do not have the phone, you feel that you lack something. Forming part of one already. Honestly one already has it incorporated. It's like something that you cannot ... It's like you're naked when you go out into the street without cell". (Luz, 20 years)

The "fans" are typically "loyal" users, they tend to keep turning on the phone anywhere, anytime and answer always and instantly calls and emails you receive, regardless of who issues them and which is the content and / or motive; are pending and attentive to phone because typically consider that the call or message they receive may be important and urgent and who have no other way of knowing that answering, even if the cost is to postpone what they are doing at that moment. If they cannot answer exactly what they are requested to do, they give a response clarifying its unavailability as a sign of courtesy and respect to the issuer. That immediacy is often valued for their network of contacts who perceive it as a symbol of loyalty.

"No, actually that does not pass through a filter. You see the message, is beating there, you need to open it, and needed to know what it is. Already is, I cannot longer make myself the silly because I saw it. Then I have to open it, and then I have to answer it. If I hear it that vibrates, if I feel that it vibrates, the first thing I do is grab it. It is like that at no time I leave it for in a little while." (Lucia, 25 years)

We also find that the phone is for these users a multifunction tool: calendar, alarm clock, calculator, notepad, camera, music player, among others. They refer to the phone as a device that offers a huge range of utilities, allowing them to be in several places at the same time without missing anything and stay in constant emotional connection to their community, feeling accompanied and protected. In this sense, the fans value the ability to be contactable and to locate.

The enthusiasts

Within the "fans" the enthusiasts are characterized by considering the cell phone as a device that gives them many benefits, which include both the ability to locate and be located. Not only recognize its usefulness, but they like to feel in touch and attainable for their community affective and define this as one of its advantages.

"The great advantage of the phone really is that you can be located, in all that is your house: my parents, brothers and all that, and to be connected all the time where you are. Be able when something happened, to tell a friend, even silliness. I feel that is a huge freedom because of the fact about you guided by yourself, I do not inform where I go. I'm at home, most of the day I am alone, I do not call my mom or my dad to say "Che, I'm going to this place", I go, and when they come to my house, and I am not, they call me and ask me - where are you?". (Mariana, 20 years)

Also, they take advantage of all the accessories offered by the device: the music player, camera, calendar, alarm, calculator, notepad, among others. They are interested in having an updated model and they value the tools that it offers.

"It is comfortable, and it is true you stay more communicated. Maybe how beneficial this device has is that extra that this device carries. All the silly things that a device like this can have. If I start thinking, what I said to you before, extra everything that a cell phone can have , for example, a camera, that sort of thing. Although you say to me, "but you can buy one camera", well, yes, but it is good that in one device have everything. Internet also, those things that it can have a cell phone today. It is good that everything is included in a single device. It is a matter of simplicity." (Fabio, 27 years)

Operating simultaneously as a means of communication and an instrument that includes several accessories, its intensity of use increases, and the cell phone is being incorporated rapidly the daily life of this user. However, as discussed below, these users are not considered heavy users because they attempt to regulate their connectivity and in certain situations (on film, in the theater, when they sleep, in vacation) they decide to break away from their phone, turning it off, and do not pay attention.

The heavy users

These users belonging to the group of "fans" are characterized by using the cell phone in his maximum power to a point where the device becomes, according to the words of one interviewee, in its "tool for life", and they cannot imagine how to live without it. The difference between them and the 'enthusiasts' is in the intensity of use and the perception of cell phones as an object that "can do everything" and with which "anything is possible". This idea promoted in our society seems to be a living experience for this user.

"The cell phone is like my hand. In other words, the hand is the tool of your body and the cell phone is the tool of my life. As that I have built my own world in the cell phone. I have all my life. My whole life is on the phone! I lose my phone and I'm dying". (Facundo, 25 years)

The heavy users believe that phone gives them independence and that the porting released them from the constraints of time and space, multiplying their chances to infinity. They feel omnipresent and up even omnipotent.

"I do not mind, in fact, I get the convenience of being able to do what I want when I want because I have the phone within my reach and they can call me, if you need me, I know you can locate me". (Magali, 29 years)

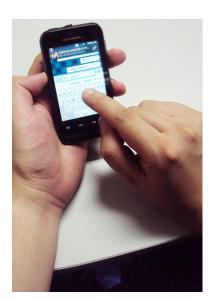
"Having the chance that if I want, I communicate with who I want, you know? When I want. That is, the instantaneity that gives me the phone. I like that. In other words, is to the possibility that if you want to do something, you do it at the time. Not get home, pick up the phone ... one does not depend on anything, only depend on this, from yourself". (Facundo, 25 years)

"You are interconnected with everyone 24 hours. You do not you lose a program! In other words, it gives you immense possibilities; you are able to know what is going on in four or five parallel places. (...) Always want to be where you are not, is amazing, always want to look for something that they do not have. Then you are looking options and this, what gives you is the ease of communication." (Lisandro, 24 years)

Hence, they always have your phone in sight, and they are with the expectation to receive any kind of message or call.

"It's like that all along I wait for something. As that I am pendant on the lookout constantly updating, that somebody writes to me, that it arrives an email". (Leandro, 25 years)

We observe that the heavy users generally are young people who have smart phones that allow them to access the Internet freely (though paying a fixed subscription) and thereby extend the range of possibilities that the phone offers. Thus, have access to their email accounts, to Facebook, to Twitter, to a chat (WhatsApp), to websites, among others. Then, as the enthusiasts, they use almost every tool offered by the device and consider it essential to their daily activities; they give value to its ubiquity, they perceive it as a benefit, be contactable and capable to locate. But unlike those, when they do not have it, feel lost, isolated, and without communication, all of which is seen as negative.



"Sometimes when I leave my house and go without a cell, I come back. I'm two blocks. Not that "Oh, I forgot." It's like my ... I do not know, my little son. I come back in order to stay connected throughout the day. If they call me or ... One clings to you have to have

the phone for over that no one call you. Is like that you feel within ... Sometimes we bother between my friends, you are in the system." (John, 27)

Some of these users have found that this type of intensive use leads them to feel dependent on your phone and distracted them from the activities they are doing, consuming their attention and staying "trapped" on the screen.

"When I had not the cell phone was quieter, your mind is not deviated much in something, you were not so dependent on one thing. Now it is terrible. You are always thinking about it ... and not in that, but in the possibility that someone writes to you, calls you. The cell is like a magnet for me, requires my attention. I take great care of me." (Leandro, 25 years)

According to Urresti (2008b), there is a compulsion that increases in these times it is the Internet that is linked with the need created from being permanently connected to the network and with the unlimited opportunities it offers. According to the author, this infinite promise only is seen frustrated by the interruption, silence or lack of calls, which in these cases is experienced as tragedy, abandon, and lack of love. Urresti argues that this syndrome of not wanting to miss anything and consider all that the virtual world provides represents as a unique opportunity is what leads to the fear to disconnection.

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout our work we have observed that new technologies and in particular, the cell phone are fundamental supports for the construction of the "group culture" to have a social function: to be part of a group and strengthen belonging among peers. The wireless technology portability fits to typical mobility to the young people are reaching in their growth, forming a kind of affective Wi-Fi that makes them feel accompanied and protected by their affections.

The built typology highlights the diversity of cell phone users that exist and avoids generalizations about modes of use and appropriation of this device. We identified an increasing trend of cell phone incorporation in everyday life that is accompanied by a series of commands that determine the uses: keep your phone permanently connected-

and therefore, avoid shut- and be attentive and slope to the demands that the contact network makes through the device, which is accomplished by responding instantly to a call or message, even to indicate unavailability. This use code is dominant and is internalized by the vast majority of cell phone users to a point where that "fans" modality is naturalized and defining it as "natural" and "normal" being always connected and answer to the requirements of the contacts instantly. The young "Unattached", manifested that they are going out of those usage parameters considered "normal" raises questions and complaints from its environment, which must be responded providing explanations to justify the behavior. Also, some users "fans", thinking over their uses, realize they are crossed by a number of existing mandates that have been incorporated and operate tacitly.

In this regard, we note an imposition to "be connected" in contemporary society that operates under the belief that visibility is a sign (and condition) of loyalty to the family, the group of friends and the work. This dominant operating logic makes the cell phone a monitoring tool that often ends being more to the contacts community service than that of the owner. Consistent with the findings of Winocur (2009), observe that the connection is seen as a strategy for cohesion and that, therefore, the disconnection is qualified as an action of isolation, exclusion and disintegration.

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CITATION

[1] This article is a reformulated and expanded version of a paper entitled "Youth and cell phone applications: User Profiles," which was presented at the Second ISA Forum of Sociology "Social Justice and Democratization", International Sociological Association, and subsequently published in Said-Hung, E., Bolanos, CS, Lago Martinez, S., Ruiz San Román, JA (Eds.) (2013): ICT, Education and Society. Reflections and case studies at Latin American level, Volume I, Colombia: Colombia Digital Corporation.

DOI. 10.33571/revistaluciernaga.v5n9a3

To cite this article:

Felice, Magdalena (2013). USER PROFILES: Uses and appropriations of mobile phones by the youth in the city of Buenos Aires. Revista Luciérnaga, Year 5, N9. Grupo de Investigación en Comunicación, School of Communication Studies, Politécnico Colombiano Jaime Isaza Cadavid. Medellín - Colombia. ISSN 2027-1557. Pp. 29-38.