An Exploration of Mobile Telephony Non-use among Older People

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1. Introduction

What if I get my first mobile phone when I'm 75 years old? What if I decide to give it up at that age? Older people are commonly qualified either as later adopters or as the less innovative users of mobile communication (for instance, see Karnowski/von Pape/Wirth 2008). Challenges and difficulties older people face seem to justify why they are not interested in using mobile devices: therefore, a significant number of research is focused on usability. Studies that focus on mobile phone use among older people describe the prevalence of voice communication (see Kurniawan/Mahmud/Nugroho 2006; Ling 2008; Lenhart 2010) and how pressures from relatives can foster use (Ling 2008). Yet mobile phones need to be useful, social –because they allow communication among individuals, that is engagement– and enjoyable to be adopted (Conci/Pianesi/Zancanaro 2009). They usually constitute an extra layer of communication, used in addition to and complementing the landline –at least in developed countries (Fernández-Ardèvol/Arroyo 2012).

In this paper I focus on mobile phone non-use and the meaning this situation has in the case of older people, that is, for individuals aged 60 years old and over (60+). Given the pervasiveness of mobile phones, research questions are: What are the motivations older people have for not using mobile phones? How does this decision shape, if it does, mediated connectivity? What are the perceived effects, positive and negative, of non-ownership? While responding to these questions would be relevant for any age group, I focus on older population because they constitute the age group that has been less studied in this field.

I draw my discussion on qualitative research conducted in five cities between 2010 and 2013: selected metropolitan areas bring diversity both in

socioeconomic terms and regarding telecommunication markets. The cities are Barcelona (Catalonia, Spain); Los Angeles (California, USA); Toronto (Ontario, Canada); Montevideo (Uruguay) and Lima (Peru). We held interviews with individuals 60+ around mobile communication.[1] The paper will analyze common patterns of mobile phone non-use among this subsample of participants. Up to 39 participants out of 147 identified themselves as mobile phone non-users at the moment of our conversation, describing an array of situations when explaining their relationship with mobile devices.

Main conclusions, first of all, have to do with heterogeneity: the simple label "non user" hides a variety of situations in the case of older people. The analysis shows that motivations for non-use are not only the challenges and difficulties I mention above: beyond the commonly accepted reasons, non-use can be a personal decision, a kind of pushback strategy that shows the older person's agency. Besides, interviews demonstrated that being a mobile phone user or not can follow a dynamic path; individuals can, and do, change their minds regarding whether to use a mobile phone or not.

Results are relevant *per se* as there is a need of in-depth empirical evidence on the relationship older people have with information and communication technologies (ICT) in general and with mobile technologies in particular. In addition, as the path of innovations is not going to decrease, current results will also help to better understand the way future new information and communication technologies are adopted, rejected or ignored by older people.

2. Conceptual Framework

Mobile phones are not isolated technologies but part of a landscape that includes other communication media –for instance, landline phones. Media, in this sense, can be approached as an 'ecology' or assemblage of interconnected technical elements (Latour 2005). Individuals would usually make a choice among devices when deciding whether, or not, to incorporate mobile

1 | Case studies relayed in semi-structured interviews except for the case study in Lima, where the author also conducted two discussion groups. Length of conversations varied from country to country, with an average of around one hour conversation. Case studies are part of a research line on older people and mobile communication of the research group Mobile Technologies and (G)Local Challenges (IN3, Open University of Catalonia).

phones into their everyday life (Hashizume/Kurosu/Kaneko 2008). Whatever their decisions are, every individual would identify a specific set of channels in their everyday life, their personal set of communication channels (PSCC). Individual attitudes and aptitudes, as well as personal interests and socially imposed interests or pressures might shape the PSCC (Fernández-Ardèvol/Arroyo 2012). An important aspect to take into account is "the context in which communication processes occur" (Foth/Hearn 2007: 9), as it helps to understand "the impacts and possibilities of a particular medium, and how [mediated] communications fit into the other things that people are doing" (Tacchi/Slater/Hearn 2003: 15). Still it becomes relevant to consider the specific goals (Ball-Rokeach 1985) allowed by different forms of mediated communication, and whether the different communication media available to each individual help them reaching goals in each context. In turn, goals of communication evolve with time because personal communication evolves with age (Charness/Parks/Sabel 2001).

Different typologies of use arise from empirical evidence and in response to different research questions. For instance, Brandtzæg, Heim and Karahasanović (2011) distinguish non-users, sporadic users, instrumental users, entertainment users and advanced users of the Internet. With regard to mobile phones, Oulasvirta, Wahlström and Ericsson (2011) characterize non-users, novice users, casual users and professional users. Policy makers interested in closing digital divides are focused on increasing use: in general, available indicators assume that the higher the level of adoption, the better. They often focus on skills and context conditions to reduce non-use; indeed, affordances of use (Galperin/Mariscal 2007) give more information than the mere dichotomous variable use / non-use. Affordances of use refer to the capacities individuals have to effectively conduct the activities they would like to conduct with specific ICTs. Therefore, in terms of public policies, the analysis of use mainly focuses on individuals' digital activities and their frequency, as these are indicators of use capacity –see, for instance, the Digital Agenda for Europe (European Commission 2015).

Given these assumptions, it is common to find works where non-use is approached as a problem to be solved, but "defining people only as producers or as users of technologies confirms the technocratic vision of the centrality and normativity of technology. Users of technology also need to be seen in relation to another, even less visible group – namely non-users." (Wyatt/Thomas/Terranova 2002: 25) Following Wyatt/Thomas/Terranova (2002), I avoid approaching non-use as a deficit. Non-use can be either voluntary – as

it is for resisters and rejecters – or involuntary – as it is for excluded and expelled (Wyatt/Thomas/Terranova 2002). Similarly, it can be volitional – individuals not interested or those who already gave up using – and non-volitional –individuals who, for different reasons, face lack of knowledge or lack of access to use these communication technologies (Brady/Thies/Cutrell 2014).

When individuals reach saturation, "situational non-use" can appear. That is, established users of online social technologies would occasionally stop using them; that situation can even turn into a permanent drop-out (Leavitt 2014). While situational non-use often refers to online advanced services, the concept can also apply to basic electronic tools such as mobile phones. Perceived usefulness, which shapes adoption, does not exist as a stable category (Chirumamilla 2014): this is one of the reasons justifying changes over time. In this sense, Fausset et al. (2013) approach older adults' perception of technology by using a behavioral change model – the stages of change model. As for this approach, there is always a possibility to stop using a given technology at any point in the process of adoption and appropriation. In line with this, Wyatt (2014) claims there is a need for a new conceptual framework that must include both users and non-users as well as practices of use and non-use, as users of digital technologies need to be conceptualized along a continuum with degrees and types of involvement that may change depending on personal characteristics and circumstances.

It is commonly accepted that older age starts with retirement. Regardless of the specific age (60 or 65 years old), a distinctive characteristic of the category "elderly people" is its high heterogeneity as "lives fan out with time" (Neugarten 1996). Not only educational level, but also life experience and life trajectories create diversity. This should be taken into account when approaching this wide age group which, indeed, gathers different generations under the same label. Neugarten suggested the distinction between young-old and old-old as a "gross way of acknowledging some of the enormous diversity among older persons" (Neugarten 1996: 48) that overcomes the limitations of classifications strictly based on age. The young-old refers to retired individuals, healthy and integrated members of their families and communities. The old-old refers to persons who need a range of health and social supportive/restorative services.

Despite their diversity, industry research often considers older people as a homogeneous group, what Sawchuk and Crow (2011) call the grey zone. This approach can also be found in some academic publications – as is claimed by Loos, Haddon and Mante-Meijer (2012). Yet, some studies on ICT and ageing

do acknowledge such heterogeneity: two examples serve as illustration. The first one, which focuses on the old-old, is a study on the information behaviors in the fourth age aimed to conceptualize information literacy (Williamson/Asla 2009). Authors conclude that, taking into account the limited research on the area, common assumptions on information behaviors in the fourth age are not well founded. The second one focuses mostly on the young-old: the paper claims for heterogeneity in age by studying ICT use by people between 55 and 65 years old – that is, in transition to retirement – as this age group is rarely considered in studies. A focal point is that late-midlife people are challenging "the assumption that they find it difficult to embrace new technologies" (Salovaara et al. 2010: 803). Both examples criticize assumptions on how older people use ICTs. These assumptions are sometimes built upon age norms that construct older people as limited individuals, as "object of others' actions, reducing their prospects of being seen as actors entitled to making their own decisions" (Jolanki 2009: 215). Linked to this idea of agency, it would be a mistake to assume that any older individual not using mobile phones will be, by default, more isolated or will have fewer opportunities to develop their personal interests. Such causal relationship would respond to a non-critical techno-deterministic approach (as argued by Pinch/Bijker 1987).

3. Case Studies

I draw my discussion on qualitative research conducted in five cities between autumn 2010 and autumn 2013: the cities are Barcelona (Catalonia, Spain); Los Angeles (California, USA); Toronto (Ontario, Canada); Montevideo (Uruguay) and Lima (Peru). In each city we conducted an independent case study that followed a common methodological and conceptual framework to allow for a thorough insight into a complex phenomenon from a qualitative perspective and favors the search of common trends that do not depend on contextual settings (Yin 2003). Selected metropolitan areas brought diversity in terms of culture, socioeconomics and telecommunication landscapes. Besides, the generational diversity of participants was guaranteed by establishing only a lower boundary in age – 60 year old – but no upper boundary. A flexible, interactive research design was taken to incorporate the specific circumstances in which the research was carried out (Maxwell 2005). In the paragraphs that follow I will describe the most relevant characteristics of the case studies discussed in this paper.

The goal of the original research project was to understand the relationship older people have with and through mobile telephony. Yet, mobile ownership was not a selection criterion in order to allow the gathering of relevant information for a better understanding of the processes of rejection and acceptance of this technology. Particular attention was paid to the different communication media individuals use in their everyday life, as these allowed us to achieve a better understanding of the specific role of mobile communication within the communicative ecology of each individual.

Case studies relayed in semi-structured interviews except for the case study in Lima, where the author also conducted two discussion groups. A short questionnaire and personal notes taken after each interview complemented information gathering. First of all, every semi-structured interview and discussion group followed a flexible outline and was conducted as a relaxed conversation. Conversations revolved around the communication media individuals use (mainly landline, mobile phone and Internet); the people and institutions they communicate with in their everyday life; and the common uses of communication channels, with a specific focus on mobile phones – if used. The interviews also discussed motivations, opinions and personal experiences regarding the decision to have a mobile phone or not. First, conversations were voice recorded for further text analysis and research ethics were adapted to each country context. Respondents were at all times informed that they could skip any question they did not feel comfortable with and that they could end the conversation whenever they wanted. Secondly, the questionnaire helped to gather structured socioeconomic information. Finally, notes taken after the interview aimed at incorporating non oral information of the whole interaction; for instance, relevant pieces of information that were gathered when the voice recorder was off and, in general, researcher reflections before, during and after the interview.

The number of participants totaled 147, with ages ranging between 60 and 98 years old. The sample was composed by more women (103) than men (44), a common trend in all the case studies. In order to recruit participants, we relied on informants and on snowball sampling. In the metropolitan area of Barcelona we interviewed 53 participants aged between 60 and 96 years old between October 2010 and March 2011. Participants lived in different areas of the metropolitan area, so we accessed individuals of different socioeconomic conditions. Among them, 12 participants were living in retirement homes. In Los Angeles, I conducted fieldwork in autumn 2011: I accessed 20 older people, most part of them volunteers in an organization, with ages

between 61 and 92. While most of them lived in middle-class neighborhoods, some also lived in more modest areas. In Toronto, we conducted interviews in May 2012 with 22 participants during 2 days in a high-end retirement home. This group constituted the most aged section in our sample, with individuals ranging from 75 to 98 years old. Montevideo, where I interviewed 15 participants in June 2012, gathered the younger group with ages ranging from 64 to 75. Finally, in Lima I talked to 37 older individuals in September 2013, their ages ranging from 61 to 98. While in Montevideo I defined no condition on the income level of participants and I accessed middle- and upper-class population, in Lima I focused both in middle- and upper-income neighborhoods, but also in a low-income district to allow for a more thorough analysis.

In order to answer the specific research questions proposed in this paper, I conducted thematic analysis of the conversations and the personal notes of participants who identified themselves as non-users. My focus stayed in the analysis of what was said during the interviews, which was usually a projection, that is, a narrative of what happens in each individual's life (Kvale 1996). Among the 147 participants, 39 identified themselves as mobile phone non-users at the moment of the conversation (26 women and 13 men). I will develop those cases which I consider better illustrate the main ideas found in my analysis, regardless of the case study they belong to.

4. Results

All the participants in the examples had access to a landline, unless otherwise stated, and used it regularly in their everyday life communications. Those in the labor market were regular users of computers and the Internet, while some retired participants did also go online. No real names are used to preserve anonymity.

Paco (84 years old) tried to use a mobile, but he already broke two devices. He then decided he did not want to have one due to those discouraging negative experiences:

I have it in my pocket and it's like I forget it… I don't, I don't hear it. […] Then I make a real mess to call… […] I don't have memory for that. (Paco, 84, Barcelona)*[2]

2 | Legend: * Own translation, from Catalan or Spanish; ** English in the original.

Andreu (88) already adopted a mobile phone and got used to it, but he suffered a stroke that affected his dexterity. He then stopped using the device but,

> I keep it [the mobile phone] just in case one day I need to use that [small] part [the SIM card] in another handset… [or] I need the data stored on it (Andreu, 88, Barcelona)*

Still, the mobile can become useless for reasons not related to usability, as Ann and Consuelo explained. Ann (63) and her husband decided to buy a mobile phone in 2005:

> We both bought cell phones when we figured that we should probably have it for emergency purposes. And then… And also it was cheaper if you bought two. You had two for the price of one. […] So it was… it made sense that I had this. So I just didn't use [it]. So I kept it in the glove compartment of my car. "So this is perfect. In case of an emergency I'll have the cell phone." It just was pointless. I think it's still in the… It's still in my glove compartment. (Ann, 63, Los Angeles)**

In the few occasions Ann needs a mobile phone, for instance when picking her daughter up from the airport, she uses her husband's device. Her friends sometimes tease her for not having a mobile phone, but this is not a big deal for her.

Consuelo (67) also decided to buy a mobile phone in 1993. At that time, mobile calls were significantly more expensive than landline communications:

> I did it for my sons… because of them and because I didn't want to stay that many hours at home, as I was coordinator of a friendship group. The more I was behind the landline the higher the possibilities for people to join the activities of the center. […] Then I thought: "Look, a mobile phone will give me more freedom", but at that time almost anyone had mobile phones and I was a little ahead […]. And it turned to be useless, because everybody called me on the mobile to ask for my landline number, and then I thought "I don't want to pay that bill when people want the landline", and I gave up." (Consuelo, 67, Barcelona)*

At the moment of the interview Consuelo was not using any mobile phone. A friend gave her a device as a present, but she does not feel she needs it. Yet she is clear about priorities: if one of her sons asked her, she would use the mobile.

Wilma (67), who never got used to the mobile phone she received as a present from her son, deployed an interesting strategy for being always

reachable. She does not feel she needs the mobile, but it is important for her not to worry her sons:

I put papers, I tell you, I write in big white papers: "I'm leaving, it's 19h, I'm at the prayer group", [and] there's a phonebook with all the numbers (Wilma, 67, Montevideo)*

Clementine (76) also received a mobile phone as a present but she rejected it immediately. She does not surrender to her family pressures:

Yes, they do [pressure], every day they see me. "You should have a cell phone, something could happen to you. […]" And I tell them, "There's a phone on the corner, there is phones in the store, there are phones everywhere. There is people around that have a phone that maybe they would call them for me." (Clementine, 76, Los Angeles)**

Another strong rejecter is Laura (63): she manages at her job without a car and without a mobile phone. She agrees she is not an "average" person as she is against consumerism, and explains her priorities clearly:

I look for my own [personal] times. But when you have a mobile phone, before you realize it they are already here; everyone is invading your time. And you must be there, in tune with what the other says. Well… on this I'm really resistant, ok? (Laura, 63, Barcelona)*

Esther (87) also considered the idea of having a mobile phone, but has a straightforward opinion:

"I've decided I don't need one [mobile phone]. (…) And I don't want one. They seem to be getting more and more complicated. (Esther, 87, Toronto)**

In contrast, César (68) never considered buying a mobile phone. However, if he were given one as a present he would be happy with it:

"I won't give [the mobile phone] back. I will keep it. (César, 68, Montevideo)*

This was somehow surprising for his son, who eventually explained that her sister and he did not expect Carlos using it that much. Instead, they would expect him to stop using the device once the battery drains, as he would not know what to do then.

Blanca (98) is used to have domestic workers at home. She is living on her own with two workers who take care of domestic duties and, now she is more dependent, of her as well. At this point in her life, many more tasks are done for her than in the past; for instance, she never goes out on her own. Thus, she does not need a mobile phone because

When I go out I'm always with the maid. They [anyone who would like to reach her] can call her. (Blanca, 98, Lima)*

Stephan (78) used to be an international, freelance professional and is now retired. When asked, he said he is not against the mobile phone; it was just that "I don't need it". However, he might changing his decision in the future:

If something came up and I got interested in doing something again that required it [the mobile phone]. […] Not just a bunch of crappy, goofy conversation. If legitimate function was necessary, fine. (Stephan, 78, Los Angeles)**

In the retirement home in Toronto, where landlines are installed in residents' rooms the moment they move to the premise, most part of non-users told us they never considered having a mobile phone. Particularly, John (98) never considered having one. He is a wealthy, self-made man who is proud of himself. Money is not an issue for him:

"I haven't found any use for it [the mobile phone]. […] The lifestyle...I mean, I'm not hopping all over and... if I was going around with...and my wife was alive and something... and you were going downtown, I want to phone her or something, I would have one. […] So […] I can't be bothered with it. And I don't miss it. But I haven't...if I needed it I wouldn't hesitate to get it." (John, 98, Toronto)**

Cora (76) lives in a low-income district. She would be happy to receive a mobile phone as a present for a second time and "learn how to use it again". She explains she "enjoyed" having the mobile phone she received as a Christmas present in 2009, but her device was stolen after few months and, after the experience

They [her children] won't buy me another one. Not anymore (Cora, 76, Lima)*

Catia (88) lives in the same district. She was a hard-working single mother, currently living with two of her adult children. They have a pay-as-you-go landline phone with no airtime, so her children cannot call her when they are late. When asked, she says she would like to have a mobile phone and that this would be the only phone for her:

But I should practice to use it, [because] once I had one [but]… it flew away. (Catia, 88, Lima)*

She refers to a used mobile phone her daughter borrowed her so that she could call Catia during the day: a caregiver broke it and the daughter threw it away but never replaced it.

Finally, Evelyn (90) would also like to have a mobile phone. She explains she is legally blind and already has a phone home with big buttons so she can operate the device properly. But the landline is not enough, as she has a pretty active life:

[…] they're making larger buttons but I just haven't been able to get one yet. […] Yes. I would like to have one with larger letters. […] And then I could take it with me. […] because I go to classes and things and I need something to.... […]. And I go to Braille [classes] and most of the people there have the cell phones. They teach you how to use them. (Evelyn, 90, Los Angeles)**

5. Discussion

The first evidence is that participants identifying themselves as non-users are both young-old and older-old. Some of them never had a mobile phone (Laura, 63 years old; Clementine, 76; César, 68; Blanca, 98; Stephan, 78; John 98; and Cora, 76), while others had some experience with a device (Paco, 84; Andreu, 88; Ann, 63; Consuelo, 67; Wilma, 67; Cora, 67; and Catia 88). Yet a closer look to these wide categories is necessary for a more detailed picture of the motivations and conditions of non-use in the case of older people. I organized the results under four headlines corresponding to categories, although these are not mutually exclusive.

A Present I Keep in a Drawer

It is common to give a mobile phone as a present. Older people are not an exception and it is a way for relatives to foster adoption and it can also act as a gentle form of pressure (Ling 2008), although this strategy does not always work. This is the case of Paco (84), who tried to get used to the mobile but it proved not to be useful, neither socially engaging nor entertaining –or enjoyable (Conci et al. 2009). This is also the case of Clementine (76), who did not even try out her present and rejected using it. Her case reveals she had agency – or free will – to face her family pressures; her rejection demonstrated she was not the object of others' decisions (Jolanki 2009).

I don't Like it!

Laura (63) and Esther (87) also demonstrated their agency when they decided not to have a mobile phone. Even though both participants are under the label 60+, Laura would qualify as a young-old and Esther as an old-old (Neugarten 1996). Their reasons for rejection seem to be shaped by their vital circumstances. Esther would expect unnecessary complications if she had a mobile phone; in contrast, Laura does not discuss usability issues. I argue that, in this case, as mobile technologies are pervasive and have a high symbolic value, rejecting the mobile phone also creates identity. In both cases, part of their identity is built around rejection of consumerist behaviors, which would include using a mobile phone, and that such behavior is related to ideology (Selwyn 2003).

I don't Feel I Need it

In contrast with participants who express a clear position against mobile phones, most non-users argued they already have other channels for mediated communication (the landline, for instance), so they do not need another layer of communication. Blanca (98) would constitute an extreme case: she does not need a mobile phone of her own, as her domestic workers would take care of her mediated communications any moment of the day and they already have one. This does not seem to affect her agency, her free will, as she has got domestic workers 24h a day during her whole life.

Participants who do not feel the need for a mobile phone describe different attitudes towards the idea of having such a device. First, John (98) explains

that in other moments of his life he could have used a mobile phone, but now it does not fit in his lifestyle. Conversely, Stephen (78) would consider having one in case he would like to join an activity that justified using a mobile. Their age difference – 20 years – would be related to their dissimilar perspectives. Second, César (68) never considered having a mobile phone. The initial unawareness he expressed was nuanced by his predisposition to use it if he would be given one. Interestingly, his case illustrates how "preconceptions about [older people] needs and capabilities" (Östlund 2004: 46) operate. His son was surprised when Carlos expressed that attitude: Carlos' children, in fact, would expect him not to use it as he would never understand the device.

Finally, initial reluctance to mobile phones among older individuals can turn into acceptance if the service meets their personal needs (Ling 2008). However, for Ann (63) and Consuelo (67) the experience was the opposite: they tried to use a mobile phone but it turned out to be useless; this is why they did not feel they needed it. They constitute an example of technology pushback, understood as a negotiation that calls into question the norms surrounding the use of digital tools (Young et al. 2014). In the same way, Wilma (67) does not need to have a mobile phone to achieve her goals of communication (Ball-Rokeach 1985), as she built a whole strategy for being reachable when out of home that involved the cooperation of her personal network. While I do not have enough evidence about the perceptions of her friends and relatives, this case would qualify as a "purposeful non-adopter [that can be] unflatteringly described as parasitic." (Katz 2008: 435)

I'd Like to Have one but…

Up to now, the participants made a choice (Hashizume/Kurosu/Kaneko 2008) and discarded the mobile phone. We already saw that some assume – implicitly or not – their decision is straightforward, while others would be open to change it. However, there are participants who look forward to having a mobile phone; this is the case of Evelyn (90), who was not yet able to get a device adapted to her visual impairment. Her attitude seems different to that of Andreu (88), who just stopped using the device after he suffered a stroke. One reason could be that Evelyn joins in a lot of activities out of the home, while Andreu is now comparatively much less active.

Participants living in a low-income district in Lima faced economic restrictions. For Cora (76) the mobile phone would be a complement to the landline, but for Catia (88) it would constitute her only available phone when

she is alone at home. Interestingly, the three women seem to have lot of expectations about mobile phones, as they mention they would be happy to learn how to use the device. Their attitude is the opposite to that of Esther (87), John (98) or Paco (84), who refer to difficulties in either their actual or their expected experience with the mobile phone to justify their non-adoption position.

Research Questions

My first research question looked at the motivations of older people for not using mobile phones. It is possible to divide the participants' motivations for non-use in two categories: the first one would include resistance (I don't like it), uselessness (I don't need it) and unawareness (I never considered it). Resistance and uselessness might be a consequence of challenges and usability issues but, interestingly, they might also be an ideological response of older individuals. Indeed, they can even appear after some experience with using a mobile phone. The second category of motivations is related to economic or physical restrictions: as opposed to agency, these are limiting factors that remove the ability to decide from the older person. While there is not an exact correspondence between these two categories, they are similar to voluntary / involuntary (Wyatt/Thomas/Terranova 2002) and volitional / non-volitional non-use (Brady/Thies/Cutrell 2014).

The second research question looked at how mediated communication is shaped by mobile non-use while the last research question looked at perceived effects, positive or negative, of mobile non-ownership. Not having a mobile phone can become a problem for others, and specific strategies can appear to cope with expected moments of disconnection. However, when non-use is a consequence of a personal decision, participants tend to report neutral or positive effects. If there is any negative effect, they explain they can cope with it. When non use is the consequence of a limiting factor, such as an economic or a physical restriction, non-ownership is evaluated in negative terms and the mobile phone appears to be a desired object. The mobile phone is seen as a tool that would improve their needs for mediated communication while being outdoors. For the rest of everyday situations, as long as they had access to a landline, they did not report any limitations.

6. Conclusions

This paper explored the motivations and experiences around mobile non-use as reported by older individuals who, regardless of whether they had a mobile phone kept in a drawer or not, defined themselves as mobile phone non-users.

My main conclusions, first of all, have to do with *heterogeneity*. The simple label "non user" hides a variety of situations in the case of older people. Some seniors reject mobile phone adoption and fight against relatives' or friends' pressures, thus reinforcing their identity with this decision, while others assert that mobile communication has no place in their universe. The category also gathers individuals who never owned a mobile phone, as well as other older individuals who used to have a mobile device. In terms of heterogeneity, this paper also contributes with empirical evidence to build age nuances regarding the relationship older people have with mobile telephony.

Secondly, *the availability of other communication channels is relevant*. In general, when there is a fixed line, the mobile phone may play a peripheral position within the personal system of communication channels in the older person´s life. Seniors for whom mobile devices are complementary can easily manage without them: this appears to be even more obvious in the case of older individuals who decided to stop using the mobile phone they already had. Indeed, disconnection only appears when there is not any available landline.

Thirdly, it becomes necessary to open the dichotomous classification "user / non-user" to have a better picture of the relationship individuals have with and through mobile phones regardless of their age. Particularly, *(non-) use should be approached as a dynamic category* as, by definition, (non-) use is not a permanent state. Our lives evolve; our interests and our goals of communication evolve; and the digital devices available in the market also do. Therefore, every individual at any age is continuously making decisions regarding adoption, non-adoption, or rejection of digital forms of communication. Gathered evidence shows that older users are not an exception.

Fourth, while I focus in the general trends arising from the case studies, poverty arises as a context-specific issue in the low-income neighborhood I accessed in Lima. When purchase capacity is limited, having a mobile phone becomes a luxury for older people. Non-voluntary non-use is an indicator of lack of agency – or limited free will. In these cases non-users would express a desire to have a mobile phone due to the social relevance of the device.

Finally, when there is voluntary non-use, decisions are related to agency. Particularly, non-use is motivated by resistance and uselessness, but also by

unawareness, and can be understood as a form of agency of older individuals. We should approach decisions on non-use at any age as seen from the subjective perspective of individuals. In this sense, refusing to use mobile phones can be an ideological decision or a way to cope with personal situations that change as we age.

Due to the growing pace of innovations, the results obtained in this study will also help to better understand the way future new information and communication technologies will be adopted, rejected or ignored by older people. Some evidences – as mobile phones kept in drawers, ignored, and regarded as good-for-nothing – bring a suggestive starting point for future research in this arena. For instance, it would be interesting to look to the intensity individuals have with mobile phones from a longitudinal perspective: When do a mobile phone gets into, or jumps out, from a drawer? Or What are the circumstances that change the relationship older individuals have with mobile phones?

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