



Jari Luomanen

LIVING WITH THE MEDIA
ANALYSING TALK ABOUT INFORMATION
AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY



ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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Department of Social Research

Media studies -series includes books dealing with mediated communication. Perspectives vary from media culture to publicity of politics, from organization of mass media to reception studies, from history to new media, and from media management to representations.

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It seems like only yesterday that I started as an eager student of geography in the University of Turku. I was convinced that I would end up as an oceanographer in some remote part of the world. My plan was to explore and photograph all sorts of natural wonders found in the tropical seas. As is often the case, these youthful plans changed as I took an interest in human geography and then sociology after graduating from the Department of Geography. I was particularly interested the methodology of human sciences and eventually did 2nd subject thesis where I studied long-term unemployment using the grounded theory method. Postgraduate studies in sociology began to appear an interesting option and I wanted to carry on doing research. At some point during this time I met Professor Pertti Alasuutari, who introduced me to the social scientific research of technology. I was instantly hooked on this interesting topic of research. The upshot is the dissertation at hand.

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At home in Aitoniemi, September 2010

Jari Luomanen

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Media and communications in everyday life

When was the last time you overheard a discussion when someone was talking on a mobile phone? Maybe it was at a bus stop and you didn't think twice about it. Or maybe it was at a restaurant and you were slightly offended that someone disturbed you and your company with such loud and annoying conversation? Can you remember the last time you left your mobile phone unanswered or switched it off? You probably had a good reason for doing so. Or what about the last time you engaged in a lively discussion about a TV series or the latest news? Perhaps you agreed with others that the series is totally and utterly rubbish or at least not suitable for your children? Or perhaps you thought that it was relaxing to watch it after a hard day at work. The news may have provided you with information that you wanted to discuss with your friends. It may have been a critical issue of global politics or something trivial about the latest peculiar undertakings of a local celebrity. Depending on the topic, your discussion may have taken a serious or a light-hearted tone. It may even have sparked interest to look up for more information on the Internet. It is easy to see that the media and communication technologies present an infinite number of issues that are intermeshed into the fabric of everyday events

and the mundane routines that constitute the basis of our lives. Clearly, we continuously deal with the media and technology in a vast range of ways in various contexts.

The media and communication technologies have significant effects on the daily organisation of modern societies. People are surrounded by various media or communication applications such as televisions, newspapers, magazines, computers, mobile phones and so forth. Many of the things that shape our views are available to us exclusively through the media. Modern communications and the media are, in fact, central to organising almost every aspect of contemporary life. It can be argued that we cannot really understand day-to-day activities unless we appreciate the significance of these technologies. (Deacon et al. 1999, 1-2; Alasuutari 1999b, 86; also see Livingstone 2002, 1-3; Silverstone 1999, 1-12; Lally 2002; Silverstone 2007). It is obvious that they are a significant factor in the way people arrange their daily activities - e.g. time management, errands, leisure activities and personal communication.

The uses of the media - the content and the time used - also give rise to moral debate and questions. Television in particular has been identified as a moral issue in earlier research (e.g. Morley 1999; Alasuutari 1991, 1992 and 1996a, Ang 1996; Ang 1985). It is important to understand moralities as an integral part of the mundane roles of the media and communication technology since they contribute decisively to the ways in which they are used. The flow of social life and daily events that are considered to be "normal" are shaped by a moral order that we internalise as members of society (Garfinkel 1984; Jayyusi 1991; Heritage 1984). Hence, moralities are at the core of everyday activity and studying them will help us to gain a better understanding of the ways in which we, as actors in a culture, use, value, understand and deal with the media and technology.

The speed with which various technologies are advancing is often emphasised in the public discourse. Indeed, many media and communication technologies are a subject of rapid development and hardly a day goes by without some innovation, device or user application being launched on the market. In Finland the development of these technologies has been a source of much public discussion as for quite some time around the turn of the millennium Finland was at the very top in international comparisons of the new technology uptake. For example, in 1999 the number of mobile phones per 100 inhabitants and the relative number of Internet connections was by far the highest in Finland (Statistics Finland 1999, 6-7, also see Castells & Himanen 2001, 17-18). Thus, in public discourse Finland was sometimes described as one huge new technology testbed. Finland as a nation state has also set numerous national goals regarding the development of information society.

Moreover, the successes and failures of large Finnish ICT companies have been subject to extensive publicity and discussion. As new devices and applications are introduced in quick succession, people have become increasingly aware of the media and technology battles raging on the markets. It is probably fair to say that during the last decade or so people have more or less constantly been inundated with news related to the media and communication industry, likewise to developments regarding the national information society.

Public discourse on information society is politically motivated and often used to envision solutions to acute societal problems such as unemployment or the social issues of minorities (Aro 1999, 122). Taija & Tuuva (2003, 7-8) note that public information society strategies are loaded with presumptions regarding end users, the people, but what is assumed to be the role of the new technology in the daily lives of people is often based on "plans, hopes and dreams".

The public discourse does not present an unbiased view of the actual user experiences and user cultures. Information and communication technologies do not merely convey simple messages that are uniformly shared with everyone. Instead, the media offer an infinite range of mental maps that can be interpreted in a variety of ways (Deacon et al. 1999, 2). Devices are appropriated to everyday life in many ways by users and user innovations. The meanings of these elements in people's day-to-day lives are renewed and renegotiated in the conduct of everyday life and interaction.

As with every technological innovation, the new media and communication technologies go through various stages in their lifespan where they are domesticated and eventually integrated into people's daily routines should they prove to be successful (Pantzar 1996). People may discover and innovate creative and totally unexpected ways of using various devices such as mobile phones (see e.g. Lie & Sørensen 1996; Katz & Sugiyama 2005; Agar 2003, 169; Kasesniemi & Rautiainen 2001 and Kopomaa 2000). Thus, it is appropriate to study the ways people describe their daily activities in various contexts and find out what kinds of meanings are attached to media and technology.

Understanding the significance of the media and communication technologies from an individuals' point of view is challenging as many of media related issues are so deeply embedded into everyday activities that they are often taken for granted. Learning more about the significance and meanings of the media and technology not only contributes to the sociological understanding of technology use but also benefits the corporations developing these technologies as well as societies making plans towards becoming "information societies". Cutting edge technology alone does not guarantee success stories as a solid understanding of the significance of media and technology in everyday life is also needed.

Individuals may in future benefit from this knowledge in the form of better services and devices as well as an enhanced understanding of the role of the media and technology in our lives.

In this study the emphasis is on understanding the significance of and the moralities related to the media and mobile communication devices to individuals in the context of everyday life. The approach is to analyse the way people talk about their daily activities and at the same time to describe the multitude of issues pertaining to their use of media and communication technology. As people articulate their uses of the media and technology they can align their descriptions with various values and ideals about how things should be. The discursively produced and managed morality of these verbal accounts is of particular interest. Examining this discursive production of meanings contributes to the understanding of what makes different ways of describing the media and technology related practices sensible and meaningful to people. The study at hand will elucidate these themes on the basis of empirical evidence.

The aim is to produce a discursive understanding of the ways in which people relate to the media and technology. This understanding sheds light on the pathways between meaning making in the data and behaviour outside the realm of the interview. It will help us to see how people are likely to react to new technology and various contents in the media: what cultural resources they invoke in order to produce cogent accounts about them and whether they consider these justifiable or morally problematic. The analysis provides means to understand what forms people's media use is likely to assume and why. This is due to the fact that the meanings associated with action tell us about the motives of action and about the ways in which it is evaluated. (See also Alasuutari & Luomanen & Peteri 2010).

In particular, this research asks how accounts of media use are produced in various contexts and how morality is managed through discursive means. The themes of individual autonomy and social responsibility are examined as essential contributory factors to the cultural place of the mobile phone. Discursive strategies for legitimating uses of the media are analysed and accounts given in the context of hobbies are paid particular attention. Furthermore, this study asks how developing technology is accounted for and how criticism of the technology is grounded. These questions are answered through the analysis of qualitative interview data. By analysing the accounts related to different forms of media in various contexts this research sheds light on these moralities as a discursive phenomenon. Thus, the study provides information on the cultural premises and moralities relevant to the media and communication technologies that are a significant part of practically all individuals' lives in contemporary society.

1.2 Theoretical framing of the research interest

1.2.1 Approaches to researching everyday life

This section will introduce some of the earlier research on everyday life and then proceed to answer what makes *talk* about mundane uses of technology as important as to place it to the centre of attention. What constitutes "ordinary day-to-day life" is discussed and, most importantly, the ways it manifests as a reality in which we live. This section will elucidate how everyday life is available to people and how we can make sense of it. The discussion provides a basis for the data analysis of verbal accounts of everyday uses of technology and will be further elaborated in the following sections of the introduction.

Everyday life, in a sense a residual, defined by ‘what is left over’ after all distinct, superior, specialized, structured activities have been singled out by analysis, must be defined as a totality. Considered in their specialization and their technicality, superior activities leave a ‘technical vacuum’ between one another which is filled up by everyday life. Everyday life is profoundly related to *all* activities, and encompasses them with all their differences and their conflicts; it is their meeting place, their bond, their common ground. And it is in everyday life that the sum total of relations which make the human – and every human being – a whole takes its shape and its form. (Lefebvre 1991, 97).

According to this often quoted text everyday life is the arena where all activity is played out, the glue that holds together the totality of the grand scale of things from the minutest to the most specialized. Statistics give us an idea about these mundane events and knowledge about everyday time use (Niemi & Pääkkönen 2001), and, about leisure time activities (Liikkanen, Hanifi & Hannula 2005) or consumption (Ahlqvist & Raijas, 2004).

However, this research approaches everyday life, “the quotidian”, from another angle. Obvious as it may seem at first glance, upon closer inspection everyday life has a peculiar dualistic nature: it appears to be everywhere, providing a “natural” background for the study encompassing all minute daily events and yet eluding any simple definitions. (Jokinen 2005, 7-10; Morgan 2004, 37; Seigworth & Gardiner 2007; Felski 2000, 15). Particularly when there are significant changes taking place in society and the mundane taken for grantedness is questioned do we become aware of everyday life (Felski 2000, 16; also see Jokinen 2005; Knuuttila 2003), yet browsing through studies addressing the question of its nature it is common to read about the difficulty of conceptualising or theorizing it (Seigworth & Gardiner 2004, 140; Knuuttila 2003, 197).

There has been a long-term interest in everyday life in social sciences. Lefebvre (1971) studied everyday life particularly in the context of 19th and 20th century France although his observations may be generalized to many other advanced capitalist societies as well (Lester 1976). He argued that everyday life is a modern phenomenon as during the 19th century far-reaching societal changes took place due to the impact of industrialisation and people were massed together in cities where uniformity and repetitive aspects of life gained prominence (Felski 2000, 16; Lefebvre 1971, 38). The time of developing industrial societies and the post-war era of maturing capitalism generated a lot of critical talk (Jokinen 2005, 8-9) about everyday life. Regarding the media and communication technologies and their role in everyday life, Knuuttila (2003) notes how there was a proliferation of texts during the late 1990s where technology, society and everyday life were connected in various ways. He points out that the notion of everyday life was used rather self evidently and was the subject of little conceptualisation. He also observes, in a wider sense than only technology research, that even though there are numerous academic accounts that explore a certain theme in connection with everyday life it is all but impossible to find a unanimous definition for everyday life in them or in scholarly textbooks on a more general level (also see Felski 2000, 15).

However, according to Knuuttila (2003, 197-203), the paradox of the obvious, yet elusive notion of day-to-day life is most often addressed with demands for the critical analysis of the recurring obvious events that make up everyday life. On the other hand, in many disciplines everyday life has been studied through negations (*ibid.*): that which is *not* everyday life such as festivals, anniversaries or Sundays. In particular, everyday life has been seen as consisting of repetitive habits and customary practices (e.g. Alasuutari 2004, Felski 2000,

Jokinen 2005; Lefebvre 1971; Heller 1984; Morgan 2004, 37). At times private instead of public has been seen as the main sphere where everyday life takes place (Knuuttila 2003). Jokinen (2005, 10-11) notes that everyday life should not be sought in particular locations such as the home or in particular institutions such as family or marriage. She concludes that everyday life can be found everywhere but not everything constitutes everyday life.

Clearly, much of interest takes place in everyday life but the notion of “everyday life” itself is less often conceptualised. It certainly appears to be filled with endless, often seemingly insignificant habits, events and occurrences that are related to the media and communication technologies. As technological change is commonly described as very rapid in contemporary societies, it is no wonder that everyday life fascinates researchers of technology: it is, after all, the stage where the successes and failures of products are played out. Bakardjieva (2005, 37) agrees with Lie and Sørensen (1996) that everyday life is a powerful concept as it has the capacity to encompass a vast number of activities in multiple settings: the ways in which technology permeates day-to-day life. While the media makes for a number of such settings, the media itself can be accounted for with great plurality in the endless contexts of daily life.

In order to advance our understanding of these topics, this study focuses on the discursive means by which people fashion their accounts of daily media use. Knuuttila (2003, 196) points out that instead of trying to list what pertains to everyday life and what does not it is important to study how everyday life is processed through various practices and how it is produced by humans through language and action, for example. Indeed, this research seeks to understand the ways in which it is possible to produce sensible accounts for the mundane, media related activities and decisions. Everyday life manifests itself

in people's verbal, discursive practices as they describe their activities. The media and technology are such a significant part of contemporary day-to-day life and the everyday experience that their roles in it can hardly be ignored (Bennett & Silva 2004; Silva 2004; Bakardjieva 2005; Deacon et al. 1999, 1-2 and Livingstone 2002, 1-3; Silverstone 1999, 1-12; Lie & Sørensen 1996, 13-14).

The recurrent events of everyday life typically require little reflection and thus enable people to go about their lives without undue stress about every detail they see to during the flow of mundane events. Felski (2000), particularly upon her reading of Lefebvre, Heller and Schutz, parses together a model of everyday life that is grounded in three aspects: time, space and modality. Temporality is particularly significant through the repetitive nature of everyday life. Spatiality makes for an important consideration due to our physical existence in a physical world. Although media technologies enable us to know about remote places and cultures we still live locally and normally have a regular point of departure that we can return to – a home (Felski 2000, 22; Heller 1984, 239) or, to put it in other words, an “investment of meaning in space” (Silverstone 1992, 28). People also bring technology to their homes and, indeed, the way people engage with new technology is referred to as “domestication” (see e.g. Pantzar 1996; Peteri 2006, 54-61). As to modality and habits, we enter an aspect of everyday life that is of great importance to this study: how routines and habits are a constitutive part of the human experience of daily life.

Many everyday activities take place routinely and habitually as it would be unbearable to have to ponder over every small issue and activity (Felski 2000; Heller 1984, 129; Alasuutari 2004; Jokinen 2005, 10-11). In this fashion routine can be set as a central landmark in understanding everyday life. Recurrence allows people some respite in dealing with

everyday life but also enables creativity and harbours the potential for change as even some seemingly small changes in everyday actions may be of significance to the widely accepted norms of the social order (Jokinen 2005, 30-32; Heller 1984, 129; Felski 2000, 29). Thus, it would seem that everyday life consists of layers of action into which various norms and values are inextricably linked. People do not often have to stop and think about them as they appear so obvious as to appear rooted in the taken-for-granted background of daily life.

The nature of everyday knowledge has been studied by Agnes Heller (1984, 203-205) who has elaborated on what it means to “know something”. Everyday knowing, the *doxa*, according to Heller, is inseparably connected to practical activity: it is in this activity that everyday knowing is verified. The *doxa* is characteristically taken-for-granted and “obvious”. It is, quite aptly, “common sense” (Silverstone 1994, 168). Heller points out that *doxa* provides people with a basis for leading a successful everyday life:

“What is the meaning of ‘to know’ in everyday life? It means that we have appropriated the available public experience, we have built into this our own personal experience, and thus we have become capable of carrying out the heterogeneous types of action required in everyday life”. (Heller 1984, 205-206)

Heller sees everyday life to comprise routines and a lack of reflection and sees such disengagement as an important element of sustained living (Felski 2000, 27; Heller 1984, 129-130; Jokinen 2005, 27). As we live our lives through a reasonably ordinary day we do not necessarily “think” about it, as there is little motivation to do so unless, for some reason, any of our activities are somehow called into question. Most of the mundane activities go by requiring no reflection, in a succession of apparently normal, and, as such, taken-for-granted events. As Alasuutari (2004, 15) puts it, in this sense humans are very like the bugs called water boatmen that can

walk on the surface of water: humans “surf on a sea of culture, only invoking the frames and concepts needed on a particular occasion to find our way”.

An important question is: how does everyday doing and knowing make itself available to humans, and most importantly, amenable to empirical analysis? Alasuutari (2004) discusses the nature of “human reality” – the routines or the “culturally unconscious or non-discursive aspects of reality” as a part of daily life and sees routines as a central issue in understanding the composition of human reality and everyday life. More specifically he argues how the interplay between routines and reflexivity is at the core of what he calls the human reality. He notes (2004, 3; 14-15) that people are far from being “walking supercomputers” who constantly evaluate every single action. And yet throughout the existence of the species humans have adapted to a vast array of places and situations and been very successful in the quest, for example, to understand the physical characteristics of nature from the smallest components of an atom to the grandest structures of the universe that existed even before humans existed as species. Although scientific progress may take a single genius (such as Albert Einstein or Stephen Hawking) to progress from one plateau to another, the human intellect as a whole is, according to Alasuutari, in effect stored in language, social networks and culture that also span individuals and individual lifetimes. (Alasuutari 2004, 5-6).

Routines free people from the need to always start from scratch, enabling them to concentrate on the task at hand. We do not need to understand how inventions work to be able to routinely use them and we can engage in communication due to our routinised understanding of language. (Alasuutari 2004, 159-160) Even if human reality has a certain arbitrary character insofar as it builds upon social and linguistic construction (Alasuutari 2004, 12-14; also Berger & Luckmann 1966), daily

life and social order are largely based on routinised and taken for granted thoughts and actions. Alasuutari (ibid.) refers to these as dormant routines that are only every now and then questioned and reflected on. Thus, people need not be supercomputers who continuously deconstruct and reflect upon even the most trivial of mundane events. Instead, only in specific occasions do people invoke some of the concepts that are available to them in their culture.

Although our actions are premised on conditions that are socially constructed, calling an unquestioned routine into question does not mean that all premises are suddenly reflected upon or questioned (Alasuutari 2004, 20-21). As various dormant constructs are at the core of our very subjectivity, they are not *all* suddenly deconstructed when some aspect of life is questioned, discussed and reflected upon. This sort of a “firm ground” (Alasuutari 2004, 21) is indeed necessary in order to have any meaningful acts or communication. It is the firm ground upon which everyday human activity and innovation build and it is stored in and available to us through language. Doubting the very premises of this firm ground is difficult as we routinely exist in the everyday life that presents itself as a compellingly self-evident fact – we *know* it is real (Felski 2000, 27; Berger & Luckmann 1966, 23).

This study treats everyday life as a compilation of recurring events and cycles that are understood on the basis of social constructs available in language and culture. Everyday things can be dealt with relatively effortlessly as people are capable of adjusting their action (including, and this is most important, interaction – doing things via the use of language, by discursive means) guided by the “doxa” or “dormant routines” that typically require little in the way of reflection. Silverstone (1994, 7-8) stresses the importance of understanding the media and particularly television as a crucially significant part of everyday life. According to him, the media have a

central role in defining and sustaining the routines of daily life. Silverstone (ibid. 14-23) discusses the significance of the media as a provider of a framework and ontological security through its cyclical and repetitive nature. As everyday life is continually being reproduced in continuities of language, routines and many taken-for-granted structures of practice, he suggests that media should be seen not simply as disturbers but also as sustainers of social reality. Silverstone, discussing agency, our ability to act within the continuum of everyday normality (1994, 169-170), places media in the fabric of day-to-day life as an integral element: "We engage with television through the same practices that define our involvement with the rest of everyday life, practices that are themselves contained by, but also constitutive of, the basic symbolic, material and political structures which make any and every social action possible". As with the rest of human reality, uses and views on various media can be accounted for and made intelligible in a multitude of ways available to us through language and culture.

Hence, this research makes the ways in which the interviewees describe their media uses the focus of interest. These descriptions are interpreted with attention to their premises and contexts, for example whether the logic of the things described stems from their being ordinary or something out of the ordinary. As people talk about some of their actions they are able to do this, and reflect upon it, based on the "firm ground" of everyday knowing, the culturally defined common sense that we all internalise as members of society.

Uotinen (2005, 55) echoes these thoughts as she notes that the concept of everyday life is useful in understanding the significance people attribute to technology. In this context it is easy to see how commonplace and continuous it is to signify technology. This can be seen as a process of making and sustaining technology as an acceptable and understandable

part of daily activities. People are not simply passive users of technology but, rather, they are active as they attribute various capacities to technology, signify it in many ways depending on the context and, as a result, create new understandings of and uses for technology.

Furthermore, Lie & Sørensen (1996, 13-14) also acknowledge the importance of everyday life as they focus on the users of technology as “the non-experts who involve technologies in their daily activities”, elucidating this involvement and innovation in the context of day-to-day life. According to Bennet and Silva (2004, 2) taking into account the surrounding culture is a part of the effort to understand the variety of social life.

Thus, as people account for their uses of technology, the accounts are rooted in the everyday knowing of things, routinised thinking and actions, the social constructs available to people in the surrounding culture and language. Everyday life is clearly the stage where the significance and meaning making related to technology is played out.

1.2.2 Technology research – understanding the role of technology in everyday life

Technology has a very significant role in the ways the current societies function and how almost every activity is structured and experienced. One only needs to think about engineering, medicine, information technologies or biotechnology and many others to realise that they have thoroughly permeated contemporary societies. While technology is critical in sustaining many of the taken-for-granted elements and conditions that constitute everyday life, not all technology equally raises questions or debates: “Nobody does the sociology of toasters” say Ling, Julsrud & Krogh (1997, citing Berger and Luckmann) – the toaster has become a part of the

contemporary taken-for-granted milieu of domestic appliances and the presence or the absence of the device raises no particular alarm or need to discuss the possible ramifications of the situation nor does it fuel any far-reaching moral debates.

However, even the most mundane technical appliances have at some point been new and subject to debates about their characteristics (Marvin 1988; Pantzar, 1996). This section begins with a brief look at some of the ways in which the development and adoption of technology has been approached. It then proceeds to pay particular attention to approaches that “follow technology all the way to the users” (Lie & Sørensen 1996, 2) and regard the user as an active part of the appropriation and development of technology.

Technological development has posed a challenge for scholarly analysis even outside the field of engineering sciences. The development of technology and the related artefacts have been modelled in various ways that emphasise technology itself, technological knowledge and social practices in various ways (Bijker 1995a). There are materialistic and cognitivist models, also models based on the notion of the social shaping of technology. Models that focus on the social shaping of technology challenge the autonomy of technological development. Development is seen to take place through social practices and shaped by a wide array of social factors. (Bijker 1995a, 237-242). MacKenzie & Vajcman (1985, 2-3) have criticised social scientists for concentrating excessively on the “impact” or “effects” of technology on society while the processes that have shaped the technology to what it is often remained unexplored. In the recent decades a body of technology research in social sciences has sought to better address this challenge (see e.g. Edwards 1995; Bijker 1995a, 254-255; Bijker 1995b, 269-270; Lie & Sørensen 1996; Bakardjieva 2005, 5).

Along with the research tradition of the social shaping of technologies, the notion of technology developing autonomously is also challenged in the tradition of the Social Construction of Technology, known as SCOT. SCOT recognizes human agency as a part of technological development (Bakardjieva 2005, 9). In this tradition the focus is on producing a more multidirectional view on the development and understanding as to why a technological artefact ends up being as it is and why is it that some alterations of a technology die whereas others survive (Pinch & Bijker 1987, 28-29; also Bijker 1993). Taija and Tuuva (2003, 7-8) note that research that takes into account issues related to the social shaping of technology questions the institutionalised suppositions that exist about information technology and the related expertise.

The adoption of new technology has also been modelled with various processes of diffusion and consumer response. Geoffrey Moore (2002) presented the classic model of technology adoption life cycle in which people adopting the technology have been divided into five distinct groups. This is the well known presentation of consumer segments represented as portions of a bell curve, separated roughly by the lines in which standard deviations would fall. As a product (based on new technology) is introduced the first group to adopt it are the innovators. After this vanguard the "early adopters" start acquiring the product. After them early majority, late majority and finally laggards follow suit. Moore's ideas build on Everett Roger's classic work *The Diffusion of Innovations* first published in the early 1960's (see e.g. Norman 1999, 274). Norman (1999, 32-33) notes that models like these are simplifications but that they do on the whole manage to successfully describe the markets.

Even though such theories can successfully represent the adoption of a novel product, they tell us little about the meanings and everyday roles of technology from an individual

point of view. Instead of trying to explain how technology impacts on the lives of people or trying to model purchase decisions or the development of certain technologies, this research rather treats the media and technology as a part of everyday life where people use them and attribute various meanings to them.

Whether and why a technological device or service does or does not become popular is not an easy question to answer. Donald A. Norman (1999) provides thoughts about the “success” of technology products in his book *The Invisible Computer*. Norman set out to understand the ways in which technology is adopted and why it is that some products are successful while others fail regardless of how “good” they might be. He was particularly interested in the personal computer and how it has fared on its way to becoming a mundane household commodity. He notes that every technology has a life cycle and as they “progress from birth, through troubled adolescence, and on to maturity, their characteristics change” (Norman 1999, ix). Such transformations in the way we understand a certain technology can likewise be studied. Until the last decade or so research on the ways in which technologies become a part of the everyday life was relatively scarce (Lie & Sørensen 1996, 2). It is true, following Norman’s thinking, that as technologies age and mature, their characteristics change – as technologies become commonplace, people become increasingly familiar with their presence and various routines and habits develop (see e.g. Knuuttila 2003, 199). As technologies are adapted they are both shaped and shaping as they form a multiplicity of relationships in the culture, manifested in the practices of individuals and institutions (Silverstone, Hirsch & Morley 1992, 26). The users of technology likewise change; technology in use can be understood in multiple ways as people accumulate experiences with it and share them in social interaction.

The adoption of technology is a process which Lehtonen (2003) describes as a set of trials: phases of getting to know the technology during which not only its capabilities, but also the abilities and tendencies of humans are tested. By focusing on the adoption process Lehtonen (2003, 380-381) challenges the notion of market penetration, as it is based on an idea of a technological innovation invading pre-existing cultural practices and habits. Most notably, such a notion assumes that technology producers produce an innovation and the role of consumers is to either accept or reject it while the process of adopting the technology goes unexplored. Lehtonen proposes that this adoption is, in fact, a continuum of phases that actually continue until the device in question is finally at the end of its life cycle and is thrown away. He calls these phases trials due to the tensions and dynamics of a situation in which either the device or the users are on trial regarding its or their capabilities. According to Lehtonen, these trials are decidedly variable. Nor can they be accurately predicted for each device. They may be about the overall suitability and quality of the device, about compatibility between devices and also between people and devices. Marketing ideas and publicity may have an impact in the trials but they are also shaped by myriads of other issues originating in user experiences, culture and specific practical situations. In this process both humans and non-humans may change their qualities and various practices can be adjusted. (Lehtonen 2003).

The focus of inquiry in Lehtonen's (2003) study has some common elements with this research as it concerns the role of the individual users and their understandings of technology. This research focuses on the meanings of communications and the media in the everyday lives of Finnish people. Hence, the study is concerned with the accounts that people produce when they have (in Lehtonen's terms) trialled various devices

and technologies in various stages of their life-cycle (and even before purchase as people evaluate various technologies).

The adoption of technologies is also often referred to as domestication. In domestication studies it is emphasised that adopting a technology is a process rather than a single event. Using and consuming various products is, in itself, a production of meanings and culture instead of just mirroring the meanings and significance already inscribed into products and technologies. (Haddon 2007; Haddon 2003, 44-46). Domestication can also be seen in connection with cultural media studies where e.g. television has been studied as part of social practices and family relations (Peteri 2006, 56-62). According to Peteri (who used the same set of data as that used in this study) the idea of domestication might suggest that technologies are domesticated once, after which they simply exist, resisting change over time. However, the role of technologies, for example in the context of home, is constantly evolving, and even familiar technologies may assume new characteristics. Thus, Peteri (2006) notes that domestication is not a process with a clear-cut beginning and end. This is easy to understand, particularly in the case of information and communication technology, which has multiple uses and is connected to various spheres of social interaction.

Domestication has to do with concrete artefacts, devices and practices that enable negotiations regarding home, family and everyday life (Jokinen 2005, 94). Furthermore, through their uses they contribute to our understanding of private and public, gendered division of labour and work, family and private life. Media technologies are an elementary part of everyday experience and it is virtually impossible to avoid this element of everyday life (Peteri 2006, 381-382). According to Lie & Sørensen (1996, 3) the routines and functions of everyday life signify stability and reproduction of social patterns. They note that introducing technology into this context necessitates

a review of the notions of both everyday life and technology: everyday life is not so stable and technology is not so revolutionary after all. Technology may provide a stimulus for change but it may also serve to further consolidate the routinised actions of everyday living.

A key point is that in the introduction of technology into people's lives, the categories of the designer and the user need to be understood and explored in broader terms than rigid *a priori* facts. Studying the role of technology in everyday life reveals how human actions shape socio-technical relations and how people make technology meaningful in their lives. Instead of studying the "impact" the focus shifts to understanding the innovation occurring after the technology leaves the drawing board. This is a central idea in the constructivist turn of technology studies roughly since the late 1980's. Thus, "taming" new technologies, domesticating them and their capabilities is seen as a process in which the user, the consumer of technologies, has an active role that contributes to the outcome and the role of technologies in the context of everyday life, thus challenging the traditional conceptions of designer and user. (Lie & Sørensen 1996, 4-9).

In addition to this, Katz & Sugiyama (2005, 79) present some important observations on how people act as co-creators when they innovate various uses for their mobile phones. As Lie & Sørensen point out, consumption of technology leaves considerable room for action at the user's end instead of making the user adapt to whatever properties technology may have. Bakardjieva (2005, 25-26) too notes that the term consumption could be replaced with the term use as it "subsumes consumption of both technology and content, but it also encompasses a wide set of significant practices that remain invisible from the perspective of the standard production-consumption dualism". A "common analytical split" (Lie & Sørensen 1996, 9-10) has been identified between production

and consumption: in the protestant spirit of contemporary culture of many societies' production is associated with work and value, consumption with enjoyment and a distraction from the accumulation of wealth. In this thinking, production can be seen as active and creative while consumption would fall into the category of passive and adaptive.

Instead of assuming that the people interviewed for this study are subject to an "impact" of technology (assumed by materialistic models of technology research) this research rather contributes to constructionist studies of technology. A key assumption in this study is that the significance and meanings of the technology are produced in interaction as people account for their uses of and views on technology. Furthermore, these accounts may be numerous, parallel and even in conflict with each other depending on the context. As such, this inquiry treats these discursive practices as empirically analysable data and explores the ways in which people account for technology and devices. The diffusion models depicting how innovations spread over a population or the research traditions concerned with the development of technologies are not used as a starting point for the research. However, the descriptions produced by the interviewees do reflect the user categories of the diffusion models. People can account for buying a device very soon after its introduction to the market or they may evince their reasons for waiting as long as possible before purchasing. While these descriptions are not used to validate the diffusion models, and the quantity of data is anyway insufficient for this purpose, it is noteworthy that early and late adoption of technology is a common cultural construct among the interviewees. The study at hand assumes the notion of the "active" user as the users do produce, reproduce and negotiate the meaning of technology in and through the discursive means and resources utilised during the interviews. These accounts take place mostly in

the context of everyday life, or rather, a multitude of contexts that constitute the experience of everyday life. People also account for their views on the technology of the “future”, the developing technology, and describe its implications. This, too, is of interest in this study as these accounts have many elements that pertain to the role and “visibility” of technology in everyday life.

1.2.3 *Media and audience research*

Information and communication technologies do not manifest themselves only as devices but have a particular functional dimension as they are also media (Silverstone, Hirsch & Morley 1992, 15; also see Livingstone 2007). Media technologies are particularly interesting in the sense that they can be seen as turning the user into a member of an audience: they come with media content and messages available to the user. There are several assumptions that are shared with constructionist studies of technology and the latest generation of cultural audience studies as they both acknowledge the “active” role of a user who does not merely passively adapt to whatever is available to them in terms of technologies or media contents. While the study at hand does not belong to the field of audience research, it has gained inspiration from audience studies. Hence, it is beneficial to discuss the research tradition in relation to this study.

This section discusses the cultural images of the media, presents paradigm shifts in audience research and the challenges posed by the new media for the field. Finally, and most importantly, this section takes a look at earlier research that has identified media – TV in particular – as a moral issue and proceeds to discuss how such moralities can be studied in relation to other technologies such as the Internet and mobile phones.

As the media are a constitutive part of contemporary life, it is clear that many ways of understanding certain issues are shared throughout the modern world. (Alasuutari 1999a, 17). Indeed, we can become aware of distant events in a matter of hours and receive live broadcasts from the remotest corners of the world. For example, the death of Princess Diana was instantly and widely publicised. A tragic event, it was also one in which the media themselves became entangled in complicated ways (Alasuutari 1999b, 86). The photographers who were hunting pictures of Diana were actually implicated in the accident, but the event sparked discussions about the so-called scandal press and the news-hungry international audience with its insatiable appetite for news about royalty. (ibid.).

Not only do media provide us with more or less shared views about the world, but about the role of media itself and its way of presenting things. We share and discuss these views and they exist in the culture, being constantly renegotiated and changing. For example, in 2006, after the Finnish heavy metal band *Lordi* won the Eurovision song contest, unmasked images of the band members were published in Finnish tabloids against the band's wishes. This sparked strong criticism among the audience, who called for measures against the tabloids. Eventually the tabloids publicly apologized for using the images (Salonen 2006).

Alasuutari (1999b) discussing the cultural images of the media touches on this very point. He notes that when we talk about the media, we are, in fact, dealing with the whole organisation of social reality. The media can be talked about in a great variety of ways and can be seen as a construction put together from various culturally shared images and the discourses that are related to them (ibid.). Media are not separate from the continuously flowing experience everyday life.

There are culturally shared views about the media that contribute to our understanding and interaction with them and to our understanding of belonging to certain kinds of audiences. Hence, we can engage in meaningful and sensible conversation about various media and their role for us or even for the whole of society. The discourses we use to talk about them are embedded in the surrounding culture. This research analyses these cultural resources as they are utilised in the data in order to produce cogent accounts about the media.

Being a member of an audience may be a time consuming “job”: Richard Butsch (2000, 295 cited in Nightingale 2004, 227) points out that Americans spend more time being an audience than sleeping or working. The term audience is obviously central to a wide range of media related research. As a concept it is rather vague unless put into a specific context (see e.g. Silverstone 1994, 132-134). According to Kitzinger (2004, 167-168), the concept of audience may be defined in relation to texts such as films and soap operas or objects such as books and TV sets. As to who actually constitute an audience, and in what specific time situation or setting, is harder to define (ibid.). Alasuutari (2007) points out that originally, during the 14th century, the word audience used to mean spectators at an event. During the mid-19th century the word was used to refer to the readers of a certain publication or an author. Since then the meaning of the word has been expanded to include other media, for example all radio listeners and television viewers. As audiences have grown bigger, the theoretical concept of mass audience was coined during the 1930s. (ibid.).

During the last few decades in audience research the role of the audience has more or less turned from passive to active. As David Morley (1992, 18) put it, in the “bad old days” television audiences were considered to be passive consumers, but since then the notion of audiences has become much more diverse and researchers have begun to see audiences as consisting

of active people who evaluate and actively debate media messages instead of merely passively consuming them. For example, the uses and gratifications tradition (U & G) already emphasised the active role of the members of the audience and studied what people do with the media. (Alasuutari 2007; Ang 1991, 10-11). These changes can be seen as significant shifts in the paradigm. Importantly, three generations of reception studies can be outlined (Alasuutari 1999a) in a way that indicates a trend in audience research. Outlining these phases also serves as an introduction to the way audience is treated in the research at hand.

First, a generation of reception research can be distinguished (Alasuutari 1999a, 2-4). Stuart Hall's (1973) article "Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse" initiated the widespread use of reception theory that (according to Alasuutari 2007) focused on the semiotic nature of messages, implying that different audiences attach different meanings to media. Hall (1973) noted that television programmes as "meaningful discourses" will not always be decoded as intended by the producers. Thus, there is distortion in the communication as the preferred dominant meaning that the producers have sought to create may not be understood in the same way by the viewers. In some ways reception research continued studying and readdressed some of the themes already raised in the U&G tradition (Alasuutari 1999a, 2).

Since the early 80's the field of reception research has placed more emphasis on the roles of different media in people's everyday lives instead of concentrating on the reception of a particular programme in a specific audience group. Thus, a phase of audience ethnographies can be distinguished as a second generation of audience studies, characterised by a shift from conventional politics to identity politics and questions of gender as well as by a growing interest in fictional programmes (Alasuutari 1999a). Furthermore, the interest in programme

contents was diminishing while the various functions of the media were given more emphasis. For instance, television was regarded more as a social resource for conversation and as a part of the reproduction of power relations in homes. Media were increasingly seen in the context of everyday life – as having a role in it instead of the everyday life having an impact on the reception of programmes. (Alasuutari 1999a, 4-6). It is clear, then, that between contemporary audience research and sociological research on technology many assumptions about the nature of “active users” are shared.

The theoretical term audience has been questioned since the late 1980s as it is after all very difficult to pinpoint any well defined audiences. Thus, it has been argued that as it is so difficult to find “real”, clear-cut audiences out there, the notion of “audience” is merely a result of a particular type of analytical discourse that has been widely adopted, for example, in a lot of media research. (Alasuutari 2007; Alasuutari 1999a, 6-8; see also Ang 1991, 3-14; Livingstone 2004). This is the basic premise for the third generation of audience studies. Ien Ang (1991, 1-3) points out that the views on television audiences have been dominated by what she calls “the institutional point of view” while the complexity of everyday audiences is neglected. These institutions are those that actually produce and sustain television programming and depend on the existence of an “audience”. Silverstone (1994, 132) notes that the complexities related to the mesh of social and cultural relations (in which the audiences are deeply entangled) need to be acknowledged in order to even try to find solutions in audience research. While the “third generation” of audience studies is not a clearly defined paradigm (Alasuutari 1999a, 6-8) it is characterized by the rethinking of the concept of audience and the place of the media in everyday life. Thus, instead of trying to understand a specific audience, attention is turned more to understanding the role of media in everyday

life – the cultural place of the media and the ways they and their uses are meaningful and make sense to people.

No particular audience has been sought after or targeted in this research. Instead, the aim is to grasp the cultural place and the meanings that people attach to various media technologies. As to the computer, Internet, online gaming and other such applications they pose a challenge for audience research. Livingstone (2004) asks aptly: “what is the audience researcher to do in the age of the Internet”. She notes that even though the Internet poses a great challenge to audience research as the content can be produced by one to one, by one to many, or from many to many, the new technologies are still loaded with symbolic messages, available to the user:

In short, whether the media in question involve the peer-to-peer communication of email, or the one-to-many communication of a global news network, new media and communication technologies are text-centred. They not only have symbolic meaning as objects per se but they carry multiple, diverse and changing symbolic messages. Hence, where a sociological account of consumption or of everyday practices of use will suffice for the washing machine or the toaster, it will not do so for the walkman or the games machine. Hence the promise of a text-reader analysis. (Livingstone 2004, 84).

Thus, reception is still a relevant notion in the new media environment. Even though audience research clearly faces a moving target, “audiences” will remain central to the analysis (ibid.). However, the notion of audience is not adopted in this research in the sense that it serves as some kind of a common denominator between the interviewees – as if we could to target some specific audiences. Instead of trying to see the interviewees as a part of an audience that decodes and uses media messages in certain ways, attention is paid to the descriptions and contextual logic that people produce as they

talk about their media related activities. Alasuutari (1999a, 13) points out that during the development toward constructionist approaches audience researchers have taken distance from studying the 'determinate moments' of decoding: "A psychological interest in viewers' mental processing and interpretation of media messages has given way to a more sociological perspective, within which one studies the range of frames and discourses on the media and their contents as a topic in its own right, not as a lens through which to peek into individual acts of reception".

In this sense, the study at hand comes close to the latest generation of audience research where media uses are seen as a part of the everyday activities that make up people's mundane lives. The progress in audience research has led to questions similar to those in the sociological research of technology. Instead of focusing on the 'impact' of the media or technology the centre of interest lies in the meanings that people attach to various devices and services as they describe their daily lives and various situations where technology is relevant. Most importantly this research aims to understand the ways in which people account for their uses of media and communication devices in connection with various cultural resources and values that are available in contemporary society.

Research has also shown that the media are a moral issue. Various moralities are in fact quite often an integral part of studies that deal with television (see e.g. Morley 1999). In audience and television research matters of good taste, categories of high brow and low brow as well as moral issues regarding the media have been studied to some considerable extent (Alasuutari 1991) and television in particular has been the subject of numerous such inquiries (e.g. Alasuutari 1991, 1992 and 1996a, Ang 1996; Ang 1985; on morality and media on a more general level see Silverstone 1994, 49-50; Silverstone

1999, 138-142; Silverstone 2007). Alasuutari (e.g. 1991 and 1992) has noted that moralities and descriptions that justify various uses are, in fact, fairly common as people account for their media uses. As will be seen in the analytical chapters of this dissertation, this also holds true for the data set used in this research.

Contributions to this topic are also provided by Ien Ang, who has studied the ways in which people make categorisations for good and bad cultural products. These categorisations are a core element in what Ang calls the “ideology of mass culture” (Ang 1985, 92-96). Ang notes that some cultural products, for example some very popular American programmes, can emotionally be labelled as “bad culture”. This is because they are perceived as products of economic determinism while the artistic merits can also be criticised. Taking the TV series *Dallas* as an example Ang points out that even though the series can be seen as bad culture, people expressing these views might still be fond of it and might describe an ironic attitude as an essential part of their viewing habits. As members of a culture, people have means to elaborate the reasons and issues behind watching television shows (e.g. Alasuutari 1992, 577-579). Alasuutari (1992; also Alasuutari 2004, 49) notes that people had several ways of accounting for watching less valued programmes. They would admit to watching the programme but hasten to give an account for their reasons for doing so. As people account for their viewing habits they can emphasise critical attitudes in order to express an awareness of the cultural location of the programme in question.

How people value various programmes has been further explored by Alasuutari (1996a) who identified a moral hierarchy in TV programme categories and pointed out how, in this hierarchy, factual programmes rank distinctly above fiction. This hierarchy is manifest in the ways that watching some TV programmes is “explained, defended or justified”

and described in a manner that places them in a category of “bad taste” in the general hierarchy of cultural products. People are reluctant to describe their television viewing in ways that would place them in an audience that appreciates these products and might instead prefer to describe their viewing habits in ways that allow for an interpretation that they prefer culturally higher products instead. The rationale behind this is that the programmes watched are indicative of the cultural tastes of the individual. Hence the propensity to describe viewing habits so that programmes that can be seen as representing “good taste” are emphasised in their importance. People recognize positions in the moral hierarchy of programmes and as they volunteer to give accounts of and justify their viewing habits regarding these programmes they simultaneously mark these as programmes that do not rank too high in this hierarchy. Of particular interest regarding the research at hand is the observation that:

“What we have here is a discursive ‘layer’ of reflectivity surrounding low brow programmes, a layer that in fact constructs them as ‘low brow’. What is more, it appears that the notions of what ‘bad’ and ‘good’ programmes are, are more or less shared”. (Alasuutari 1996a, 105).

Alasuutari (1996a) points out that the media are a routinised part of everyday life that is seldom reflected on consciously. Along with the contents of media messages he notes that watching television as a time-consuming habit also contributes to its morally loaded nature. Unlike when listening to the radio, it is difficult to do something else, perhaps something more worthwhile, while watching television¹. He also notes that the way in which media fit in the everyday common sense ontology and mundane routinised actions result in a

1 It is probably common for example, to surf the Internet or do something else while watching television, but the radio in the data is in general still accounted for as being less problematic than television.

sporadic nature of the descriptions of media uses, the ways in which the uses are discursively covered. In other words, as people account for their activities, the culturally unconscious everyday logic does not necessarily automatically lend itself into coherent and comprehensive accounts on the level of discursive knowledge (ibid.).

Not only do media prompt questions about individual tastes and use of time but also about other morally loaded matters, such as child protection (Kytömäki 1991, Alasuutari 1999b, 88). It can be argued that watching television is not just a matter of selecting programmes that seem suitable, but also a shared experience of contemporary culture. Just like the neighbourhood one lives in, television programmes need not be particularly liked for people to watch them and to draw their own conclusions about them. Television continues to be a moral issue because of the evaluative and critical outlook that people have on their surroundings, the “real” ones as well as those available in the media. (Alasuutari 1992, 579-580 and 1996a, 113).

Furthermore, Alasuutari (2005) has also argued that the prioritisation of factual programmes and “quality films” over serials and fiction is linked to a moral question of media use and leisure in everyday life. According to him media use is weighed against other uses of free time. Consequently the fact that people account for their media uses in certain ways is not only about wanting to portray themselves as informed citizens with a good sense of what is high brow and what is low brow. It is also about reflecting on a fundamental question about what people should do in their lives. Thus, Alasuutari concludes that accounts in which media uses are justified or described self-critically actually reflect a civic religion that is about constantly developing oneself and taking care of significant others and related duties (ibid.).

This research approaches the media as an element deeply embedded in the social organisation of everyday life that is also a moral issue. The uses of the media and the meanings attributed to them are the focus of interest. Hence, the active role of the user, or a member of an “audience” that uses the media, is similar to that adopted in a range of sociological technology research.

1.2.4 The theme of morality in interaction research

Earlier audience research has dealt extensively with the morality related issues of “high” versus “low” culture. The discursive management of moralities related to media use accounts, which are in the focus of this research, has not been studied to the same extent. In one definition, moral responsibility is something that is not induced by laws or regulations. While legislation endorses a definite set of rules that need to be obeyed, moral obligations are different. Bauman (1997, 88-89) notes that moral responsibility is not something that can be negotiated, delegated or escaped, especially when talking about helping other people, particularly one’s significant others. Everyday moralities such as these are deeply embedded in the mosaic of shared cultural values and demonstrably normal mundane actions. Although morality may appear an elusive subject for a study, research has shown that solid empirical analysis is indeed possible. This section discusses how to turn morality into a topic and understand its role in everyday life and in the context of media and technology uses. In particular, this section considers how morality can be identified as a discursive phenomenon amenable to empirical study.

A good starting point for understanding morality is offered by Billig et al. (1988, 10-15) who discuss the problematic nature of ideologies and how there are ideologies and counter-

ideologies that often make decision-making difficult. Our common sense provides us with an understanding of the nature of the decisions we make. A decision that might give one pleasure or some kind of an advantage might, on the other hand, mean neglecting other people or even insulting or hurting them. Billig et al. discuss a classic example of a soldier in a battle zone: he or she may have the opportunity to desert but whether this can be seen as just or unjust is a question that raises deep moral issues. The soldier may be opposed to killing and equally concerned about surviving. Then there are duties related to one's family at home and duties that have to do with fellow soldiers. In the battle zone none of these questions probably seem easy to resolve. And it does not take a war to cause pangs of conscience: it is easy to think of a plethora of mundane issues that are moral in nature. Good parenting, for instance, is such a topic (also see Billig et al 1988, 41-42). With individual aspirations as well as responsibilities towards their families, people will find countless ways of accounting for their decisions about how they use their time at home, at work and so forth. Awareness of the ramifications of our decisions and the conflicting interests behind them makes us think; it enables us to evaluate our actions. This characteristic of commonsensical thinking has the ability to bring to fore the moral and even dramatic aspects related to the decisions we make. (Billig et al. 1988 10-15).

Furthermore, Billig et al. note that individualism, for example, has caused a lot of moral deliberations. Individual freedom is a strong value and those openly opposed to it are few. On the other hand, few people would proclaim themselves categorically selfish and socially irresponsible. Values have counter-values and this creates various tensions between alternate decisions or models of thinking. Philosophers have addressed many such problems, but studying these tensions and their premises need not be confined to the canonic works:

such tensions are also played out in everyday thinking. To understand the meaning of argumentative discourse it has to be understood in terms of its argumentative context: what is justified can be rendered comprehensible by seeing what is being criticized. (Billig et al. 1988 34-38).

According to MacIntyre (1987, 1-6; see also Alasuutari 1999b, 99), however, the language related to moralities is in such a state of disorder that it is virtually impossible to successfully and unequivocally present moral issues or claims. Expressions derived from historical contexts are no longer viable in contemporary society and, consequently, any attempts to formulate rational arguments based on moralities in a contemporary culture are problematic: moral concepts undergo a change as social life changes (MacIntyre 1967, 1-2) According to MacIntyre (1988, 1-3) notions of justice and rationality are challenging as such a vast array of conflicting conceptions exist that defending any points of view based on either of them is bound to be ultimately difficult.

These notions have been contested based on the observation that people still tackle moralities in and through the conduct of everyday life. In opposition to MacIntyre, Jayyusi (1991, 245) points out that:

What MacIntyre radically misses is that change, difference, and diversity (the interminable moral arguments of our age against which he rails) are not a 'disorder', but are rather emergent from a specific practical order of (reflexively available) optionalities that are ongoingly realised, constructed, defeated, played out, worked up, and otherwise made relevant and oriented to, in the conduct of practical life. (Jayyusi 1991, 245).

Jayyusi raises points that are relevant for the study at hand. First of all, she refers to the reflexive availability of resources that exist in a culture. These resources are not cut and dried but, instead, as described by Jayyusi, they are produced in and

through the mundane activities and interactions of everyday life and are thus available for research (see also Luckmann 2002, 19). In his famous “breaching experiments” Garfinkel (1984, originally published in 1967) studied how moral order is played out in social interaction. For example, in one of these experiments (Garfinkel 1984, 42-44; Heritage 1984, 86-91) Garfinkel’s students were instructed to insist that people clarify their ordinary, simple remarks during daily encounters. In these cases the interaction that normally goes unnoticed, as people take it for granted that others already have assumed some things without saying, quickly collapsed and many people grew angry and demanded that the experimenters be accountable for their odd behaviour. These experiments revealed how important an element trust is for concerted action (both spoken and unspoken) and for the sustainability of mutual understanding. Garfinkel used the term trust to refer to a person’s compliance with the expectations of everyday life that are moral in nature. (Garfinkel 1984, 50; Jayyusi 1991, 236-237; Heritage 1984, 89). Thus, the conduct of social life, the flow of daily events and interactions that are considered to be “normal” are at the heart of the everyday practical moral order:

A society’s members encounter and know the moral order as perceivably normal courses of action – familiar scenes of everyday affairs, the world of daily life known in common with others and with others taken for granted. (Garfinkel 1984, 35).

Thus, “morality” emerges not as regulative of social conduct but actually as constitutive of it (Jayyusi 1991, 237). In the light of Garfinkel’s study, it appears that powerful incentives to comply with these taken-for-granted expectancies exist. It is perhaps not so much breaching some rules or regulations that irritates people in these experiments but a threat to the

normative order of events that might lead to a collapse of social organisation if no legitimate alternative interpretation is available. In interaction people place this “trust” upon other people to understand their accounts insofar as they are located in the socially organised world available to both parties. This world is normally sustained as a matter of course but it may collapse if this “trust” is not present in the interaction. Hence, it is not surprising that people in the breaching experiments insisted that the experimenter be accountable for his or her “obviously” deviant actions. (Heritage 1984, 89-90 and 102-13).

According to Garfinkel’s studies the morality in interaction emerges not as a collection of cut and dried rules that regulate the actions “from above”, but as a perceivedly normal course of events through which the social organisation of the world is maintained. The basis of the “trust”, what everyone ought to know in order to have any meaningful interactions with fellow humans constitutes the perceivedly normal course of events in a culture. Alasuutari (2004) refers to Garfinkel’s thinking as he explains the routinised nature of everyday activities:

When a break from the ordinary takes place, thus calling attention to a dormant routine, one tries to interpret the deviants’ behaviour in one way or another. One wonders whether the deviants are stupid, ignorant, sick, rude or up to something that isn’t immediately obvious. (Alasuutari 2004, 22).

Here, the dormant routines that represent the “firm ground” in interaction become a subject of reflection, as something takes place that falls outside of routine course of events. We have values and counter-values and we still deal with everyday life with relative ease. We can see that the incentive for compliance with cultural expectations is high, since deviant behaviour is typically met with a demand for accountability and efforts to legitimate the actions.

However, it is important to note that “deviance” need not be obvious and requiring particularly laborious justification or be subject to “active” reflection or questioning. Examples are offered by Nikander (2002, 164-74) who observed how people engaged in discursive moral work to account for their incongruent descriptions related to their age. This talk “against linearity”, for example describing thoughts or actions that challenge preconceived notions of what is appropriate for a person of a certain age, resulted in perturbation and some “extra accounting” to justify the departure from these preconceived ideas. This allowed people to express awareness of and align with normative notions (thereby preserving them) of maturity expected of a person of a certain age, but at the same time to challenge such notions. Through discursive means they were able to position themselves as people who may at times choose to act or feel differently, making the described departure from the norm an act of choice. Thus, we can see how talk that goes against certain cultural expectations or preconceived notions calls for justification and typically triggers further accounting that allows the person to align with the normative order of things.

Thus, morality can be seen as an intrinsic feature of dialogue – it is in and through dialogue that humans actually constitute themselves as moral agents (Linell & Rommetveit 1998). The media, too, can be a topic of morally charged accounting and perturbation. In our data, as people talk about their experiences and voice their opinions, they describe things related to various media and media use. Sometimes uses are explained without hastening to legitimate them, but they can also be justified or rejected by discursive means. The discussion above is helpful in elucidating ways that can transform morality into a subject relevant to empirical research and of particular interest to discourse analysis. Vivien Burr (1995, 120) has pointed out that it is fairly typical in research

on interpretative repertoires that people's accounts for their actions can be seen as efforts to construct themselves and the actions described as morally justifiable. Hence, people can be seen as actors located in a moral sphere, utilising discursive means in order to manage their position in the sphere. As the discussion above shows, descriptions that can be interpreted as deviating from the normative order of things result in perturbation. As Nikander puts it, they prompt "extra accounting" that allows people to align themselves with the cultural expectancies relevant in the specific situation where the interaction takes place.

Sustaining morality as an empirically analysable subject has posed a challenge for research. Bergmann (1998) notes that the relationship between discourse and morality is by no means a new topic for academic inquiry (see also Jayyusi 1991, 227 and 231). As the conceptions of modern science evolved, it was understood as early as the second half of the 19th century that moral commitments and factual discourse can be separated and studied in a scientific manner. The word "morals" originates from the Latin word *mores* meaning traditions and customs (Bergmann 1998, 282-283). As the basis for shared moralities has for centuries been largely derived from religious settings, moral orders have often been legitimised with a reference to sacred transcendent frames of reference. In modern societies in particular the religious content in moralities has become less prominent due to the decline of religion as a sole source of moral orders. Bergmann points out that morality is always in connection with specific sociocultural forms of life. Thus, changing times are often referred to as having changing moralities as well. Similarly, in different areas and cultures prevailing moralities differ from each other. Bearing this in mind Bergmann makes a point about the historically and culturally specific moralities being ultimately built upon an "elementary, culturally

unspecific substructure". He distinguishes between morality as an empirical question (that must refer to a specified set of communicative forms in which the moralities can be realized) and proto-morality, being the substructure underlying the social constitution of humans. Bergmann depicts proto-morality as being a set of discourse-internal moral tenets that do not exhaustively explain the culturally specific forms of morality crystallized in the everyday interaction. Instead, the proto-moral features have an obligatory quality upon which all identifiable norms and values are based. The notion of responsibility is also closely related to the theme of morality: the word responsibility is derived from response which denotes an essential interactional act, thus denoting to the discursive nature of moralities. Bergmann concludes that "in dealing with the discourse we are always dealing with the morality too". (Bergmann 1998, 283-284).

In discursive as well as in some streams of conversation analysis morality is treated as an empirical question that is analysable (Nikander 2002, 150). As Bergmann notes:

"Morality is constructed in and through social interaction, and the analysis of morality has to focus, accordingly, on the intricacies of everyday discourse. Through a thorough analysis of descriptive practices and the mechanisms of everyday interaction the working of morality can be revealed". (Bergmann 1998, 286)

A helpful comparison between the thinking of Bergmann and Jarryusi is provided by Nikander (2002, 153-157). Both authors emphasise the importance of studying "actual instances of moral discourse" and deal with morality as an "undercurrent" of human interaction, but Bergmann maintains that some distinction is possible between everyday morality, the proto-morality, and its analysis, while Jarryusi makes no such distinction. (ibid.) Instead, she maintains that practical and

moral are intertwined in situated action (Jayyusi 1991, 242). Thus, the practical everyday morality and academic inquiry into it are embedded in the same moral order. Jayyusi (1991, 246) points out that “there is no exit from the moral order”: just as it is impossible to escape language to talk about language, it is impossible to escape moral order to discuss moral order. Jayyusi maintains that the researcher’s knowledge of the habitual organisation of the practico-moral order is used as a resource even though it is turned into a topic in data analysis. She notes that these cultural resources need be exposed to view in the analysis and pursued analytically. (Nikander 2002, 157; Jayyusi 1991, 248-249; see also Suoninen 1992, 130).

Based on this discussion it is evident that talk about media and technology is also a part of this practico-moral order of social interaction. As morality is here understood as a part of social interaction, a discourse analytic approach is adopted in this research to provide a way to study and understand its role in interaction. Nikander (2002, 157-162) notes that “the notions of moral order and morality in interaction do, however, carry multiple problems for the analyst and for the validity and rigour of the analysis”. She has pointed out three such problem areas in the analysis: fuzziness, ascription and psychologisation. Fuzziness relates to the ubiquitous nature of morality in everyday interaction: there is not only a danger of losing the distinction between moral accountability and accountability that arises from rationality, but also of ending up blurring the line between orientations of rationality and morality. She notes that separating morality from notions such as rationality is bound to be difficult and consequently in research they also often appear intermeshed. Analytic ascription is related to “singling out moral orientations from other normative interactional concerns”. Thus, it is important to substantiate and anchor analytic claims in the data, although in discourse analytic works the credibility of the analysis is

always to some extent left to the judgement of the reader. With psychologisation Nikander refers to the overly psychological and individualistic overtones that may confound the analysis and divert attention from the analysis of the interaction itself. (Nikander 2002, 157-162). As to the fuzziness of analysis, as meant by Nikander, the research at hand may be guilty of not distinguishing between morality and “rationality” as the focus of the inquiry is in understanding the situated expressions as people give accounts of media and technology. The analysis does seek to elucidate the discursive logic and the relevant cultural values pertaining to them.

The theme of morality has been addressed empirically in a range of research topics. The management of morality is for the most part “invisible” to the participants in interaction although at times it is reflexively dealt with and people become aware of the morality of their accounts. According to Rapley and McHoul (2002), who studied the discursive management of moralities in sports management by analysing newspaper interviews, in discursive psychology discourses can be seen as “resources available to members, as repertoires for the production of locally relevant meanings – and particularly, here, for the avowal and ascription of moral character”. Management of moralities has also been studied in the contexts of e.g. neighbour disputes utilising data from community mediation and televised documentaries (Stokoe & Wallwork 2003), parent-teacher interaction utilising data recorded during parent-teacher meetings (Baker & Keogh 1997) and medical encounters with health professionals utilising taped discussions between parents and a nurse making house visits (Heritage & Lindström 1998).

Understanding the production of locally relevant meanings and positioning in relation to the surrounding cultural values and expectations is in the core of the analysis in this study. Garfinkel’s experiments and the discussion above have shown

how actions that go against the perceivedly normal course of events can very quickly result in demands for accountability and moral reproach. On the other hand people may ward off these accusations by fashioning their accounts so as to reject any notions of “true” moral deviance. Regarding morality in interaction, the role of accountability is crucial.

Blame and accountability can be attributed to others in social interaction (Sneijder & Molder 2005). Sneijder & Molder analyse how people discuss online the potential problems in the vegan diet and show how, through discursive means, people are able to manage accountability. Pomerantz (1978, cited in Sneijder & Molder 2005, 681) showed that the absence of an actor-agent is a common feature in descriptions where people attribute responsibility for infelicitous events. For example, when a person offered an account where she represented nutritional deficiencies as a potential general problem in the vegan diet, another participant was able to reformulate this as “a matter of bad, individual practice”, thus attributing responsibility to the original poster.

Discursive management of responsibility is often a result of intricate accounting that can best be understood in its original context. Kurri and Wahlström (2005) studied how placement of responsibility and moral reasoning are managed in a couple therapy session. Individual accountability was managed by descriptions of events where agency was placed outside one’s own actions. Of particular interest was how individual autonomy and responsibilities towards other people emerged as central themes. Kurri and Wahlström note that it is necessary to study these moral dilemmas and the way they are constituted in actual therapeutic encounters (Kurri & Wahlström 2005, 367). Thus, they emphasise that these dilemmas and the ways in which the participants attempt to resolve them can best be rendered comprehensible in the social context where the argumentation takes place.

Indeed, it is the social and argumentative context that Billig et al. (1988, 37 and also 41-42) also emphasised. By making this the focus of inquiry, we can see how such tensions enable us to consider, justify and criticise various issues. Jayyusi (see above) pointed out that morality is produced in and through the day-to-day activities and interactions of everyday life and is thus amenable to research. The reflexive availability of shared resources enables us, in the conduct of everyday life, to make sense of these issues. As Jayyusi pointed out: morality should not be seen to be regulative of social conduct but actually constitutive of it (Jayyusi 1991, 237).

A good example of such moral accounting is given by Kurri and Wahlström (forthcoming, 1-2) who analysed how a client was able to portray himself as a “responsible observer of his irresponsible actions” by efficiently utilising agentless talk in order to save his face (on concept of face see Goffman 1967). The client used variations in his descriptions of events in order to manage his conversational position. In psychotherapy, a growing body of research sees therapy as a conversation (ibid.). Complex issues of morality can be seen as being managed dialogically (Kurri & Wahlström 2001). Thus, from a discursive point of view, accounting for one’s agency produces a sense of agency. However, an optional way of accounting for one’s actions is to do it via “agentless” talk where the speaker avoids assuming full accountability of his or her own actions as they are described being driven by something else (such as a rule or a norm) than the individual in question. (Kurri & Wahlström, forthcoming). Thus, diminishing individual responsibility is seen purely as a discursive accomplishment.

While the goal of therapeutic discussions is different from research interviews, the premises for understanding the discursive means and the centrality of language remain much the same. Tolvanen & Jylhä (2005) have studied the discursive construction of moralities in talk related to alcohol

consumption. In their conclusion (ibid. 432-433) they note that people utilise various culturally shared resources and modes of speech which enable them to position themselves in relation to the surrounding social world of which moralities are a significant part. Their analysis of interview data showed that by such discursive means people are able to produce sensible accounts of their lives. Utilising interview data Baruch (1981) studied parents' accounts about encounters with health professions. He found that parents were able to achieve a status of moral adequacy as they accounted for the treatment and care of their children. Nikander (2002, 192) studied age-related talk and noted that people produce "morally insulated" accounts designed to dispel any suspicions of moral deviance. She notes that "Throughout the extracts we have seen a variety of discursive practices by which speakers fashioned the morality of their accounts and how a combination of self-reflexive monitoring and defensive design was used to construct morally insulated accounts" (Nikander 2002, 202). Thus, via discursive means, people were able to manage their position as morally adequate individuals.

It will be seen in the analysis in later chapters that it is in much the same way that people account for their media uses while managing their "moral position" via discursive means. Managing individual accountability is of particular interest in Chapter 5 of this study. It is related to the way people align themselves with the cultural values as they describe the reasons why they may, at times, deviate from a set of values or cultural expectations that pertain to the media use or technology discussed. Studying these discursive means and premises is fundamental to this research: it is in these that the moralities can be revealed and analysed.

Seeing interaction and language as the stage and means of negotiating, renewing and managing morality is, thus, crucial to this research. This management is woven into mundane

interaction in such a way that, as Bergmann put it, people hardly recognize their actions as moral dealings. In discursive studies on morality it is sometimes difficult to avoid the impression that the people interviewed are somehow acutely aware of their attempts to manage their moralities. However, morality itself is such an integral part of every interaction that, according to Bergmann (1998, 280) “it is usually invisible to us, like glasses that provide a sharp sight of the area beyond although they themselves remain unseen”. This is a central assumption in this study as well (see also Alasuutari 1996a, 102). Of course, moral values do not only manifest themselves as speech, as many actions (For example, opening the door, handshake, placement of technology) are also connected to them. The emphasis on this research on language is simply a methodological choice. Language is closely related to action, material world, traditions and so forth.

It could be claimed that there is some apparent hypocrisy in the accounts of media uses. This would amount to a gross misunderstanding of the nature of discursive morality, tantamount to saying that people constantly and consciously reflect on every word they utter. Clearly, no day-to-day interactions would be possible in such a situation. This likely holds true in the context of the research interview, too (Nikander 2002, 19-23), although people may reflect on their activities more than usual when specifically asked about their media uses. But even then the meaning making has to be sensible to both parties, and the interviewer is also a part in the process of morality management. Certainly there are media uses that may evoke “active” talk such as someone saying “oh, you must always explain if you watch *The Bold and the Beautiful*” but in this study it is not regarded as “hypocrisy”. As Bergmann (1998, 280) notes, morality is so deeply integrated into everyday interaction that “people hardly ever recognise their doings as moral business”.

As is evident from the discussion above the descriptions people give of their media use, and equally numerous other things, are often fashioned by various discursive means with which the moral position of the speaker is managed. Understanding these means as well as the contextual logic is one of the aims of this research. As a starting point the data are treated as texts and only the ways in which people give and structure their verbal accounts for their media uses are studied. The actual uses themselves are not studied as the data consist of interview talk not observations. Thus, this research deals with the meanings people assign to various devices, features and contents as they describe them and their uses or potential uses.

Consequently, in the following analysis morality always means the morality that is dialogically produced and managed in the interaction between interviewer and interviewee. This dialogue reveals clues about the values embedded in the material and social worlds around us. Shared resources are invoked in talk and used to position the speaker and others within relevant moral values.

Following the discussion presented in the section above on the theme of morality in interaction research, the analysis in later chapters focuses on the discursive formation and management of morality and the implications and premises of these occurrences in various contexts. As a result, the discursive means and production of morality will be presented. Furthermore, as these discursive elements can be seen as a means of managing one's position in the cultural sphere of values, the relevant values and cultural categories will also be discussed.

1.3 Research questions

This study explores what kinds of moralities are related to the media and technology. The main interest of the study is: how do people account for the uses and meanings of media and technology in various contexts of their everyday lives? Furthermore, this study asks how these often parallel and contradictory accounts are premised in order to be sensible and legitimate. This research interest is encapsulated in the chapters presenting the empirical analysis. In these the focus is on the discursive practices related to the way people fashion their accounts in order to align themselves with the more or less shared values of the surrounding culture.

Earlier in the introduction there were sections about everyday life, technology research, media and audience research as well as the theme of morality in interaction research. All these topics contribute to the understanding of morality in this study. Morality is treated as an everyday phenomenon that manifests itself constantly in the multitude of day-to-day interactions. It is not seen as the exclusive province of philosophy but, rather, a phenomenon integral to everyday lives of humans. Such moralities are invoked in accounts of the adoption and use of the media and technology, as will be shown in the empirical chapters.

This morality is first studied in the context of managing individual autonomy and social responsibilities. The first empirical chapter asks why people account for the mobile phone in such conflicting ways. Personal autonomy (the ability to choose when not to be reached by phone) and social responsibility are both valued aspects of mobile phone use. And yet there are great tensions between these modes of using the mobile phone. The mobile phone has shaken the boundaries of private and public, thus stimulating morally loaded accounts about its use. This study explores the cultural

values that contribute to the morality of mobile phone use. To elaborate: the chapter analyses how tensions between individual autonomy and social responsibilities are managed with discursive means. The study moreover elicits what kind of cultural resources and values are invoked to produce sensible descriptions of these morally complex issues.

The next case and the second empirical chapter are built around the means of discursive elevation of one's media uses. Accounts of Internet use are studied in order to understand the phenomenon. The variety of content available on the Internet makes it a complex media in terms of legitimate appropriation. Concerning leisure uses of the Internet the category of a hobby emerges as a central and interesting way to justify using time for surfing on the Internet. In developed societies hobbies are known as legitimate and useful pastime activities. Hence, the moralities of Internet use are studied with the cultural category of a hobby in particular focus, as this provides a good case to see what exactly is being justified when people describe the ways in which they surf the Internet.

Not only specific devices and media but the notion of technology itself creates talk about how good or bad, useful or useless technology is. Especially when technology is very new or merely a vision in the future it is assessed and valued based on its characteristics. As to what makes certain technologies dubious or laughable while others are successful is of course a big question, especially on today's markets, where the search for the next killer application is nothing short of hectic. This study asks what moralities are relevant in developing technology and uses examples found in the data. As to what constitutes "good technology" is a question that is inextricably linked to the prevailing values of the surrounding society. This is answered in the third empirical chapter.

The discursive production of morality warrants further inquiry as it is at the core of this study. While people portray

awareness of the debatable aspects of certain media uses, they may still admit to subscribing to them themselves. Verbal displays of language that enable people to manage their position as users of technology and the media are studied and the discursive means of such morality management are explored. Hence, the final empirical chapter focuses on practices of language use. The chapter asks how discursive resources can be used in order to manage one's position in the surrounding cultural sphere of values and also to manage one's accountability and to achieve status as a morally adequate person.

Morality as an omnipresent element of all activities is of great interest to sociology. Even when things are not formally agreed upon people tend to behave according to various moral guidelines that they have internalised as members of their society. The discursive practices presented in this research do not only have validity in the data set used: rather, they are samples of cultural representations that are shared in society. Culture can be seen as a pool of resources used in various contexts in order to render understandable accounts about it. These resources must be shared as they are understandable in the first place. Their recurrence in the data also signifies this.

Hence, this study will also benefit the processes of design, planning and marketing of devices, services and the media in various forms. ICT strategies from the smallest to the largest will benefit from the expanded understanding of the cultural places and significances of media and technology. Furthermore, the study will provide insight to the users of technology and media. As a contribution to our understanding about the media and technology, this study will hopefully be helpful in developing better technology, services and individual experiences.

In sum, the research questions are concerned with the production and management of discursive morality. The aim

is to understand these descriptions in their social and cultural contexts so that the logic behind the discursive practices can be seen. In the analysis of the data, special attention will be paid not only to the various justifications and other accounting related to the “proper” use of the media and technology, but also to the way these discursive means are used to manage one’s accountability regarding the uses described. Thus, the most prominent common denominator in all these questions is the way in which individual accounts are fashioned to manage their position among the shared cultural resources and ideals that are relevant to the use of the media and technology.

1.4 The Data

This study utilizes the data gathered in the Media and Everyday Life research project². The qualitative data set used in this study consists of 68 interviews in which a total of 100 people participated. In autumn 2001, 37 interviews were carried out with 57 people interviewed. Between early 2002 and late 2003 additional data including 31 interviews with 43 interviewees were collected. Inclusive to this figure of 100, (and the following figures below) are ten people who were interviewed twice, the second interview following usually about one year after the initial interview. Thus, the number of individual interviewees in the data is 90. There was also some interview material in addition to these but in those cases the

2 This project spanned from 2001 to 2005 and the data were collected by researchers Jari Luomanen, Seppo Järviluoma, Virve Peteri and Tuula Puranen. Professor Jari Aro was the manager of the project and also carried out interviews. The supervising board for the project included Professors Pertti Alasuutari and Kaarle Nordenstreng likewise representatives from Alma Media and StoraEnso corporations. The author joined the Media and Everyday Life research project when it had already been running for a little over a year and a half and by this time a good half of the data had already been gathered. Taking part in the latter part of data collection the author carried out thirteen interviews.

recording of the conversation was at least partly unsuccessful, bringing down the number of transcribed interviews used to the figures mentioned above.

Of the interviews in which more than one interviewee participated most were couples living in the same household. However, there is also an interview in which the participants were recruited from a parent association of a school and in one case the participants were members of a small village resident's association. Ten interviewees were recruited from a computer skills course. Nine interviewees were recruited by sending invitations to an Internet newsgroup and to a number of people who were responsible for the broadband Internet connections in their apartment block. Other than these, the interviewees were recruited through the personal networks of the researchers contacting people from cities and smaller towns they have lived in. These people included school friends, workmates, neighbours and relatives who in turn might contact people they knew. There were no criteria for participants' possession or competence regarding media use and devices. Everyone willing to participate was welcomed to do so regardless of their "media backgrounds". (Peteri 2006, 31-32).

The geographical spread of the interviews is as follows:

- The metropolitan area (Greater Helsinki and surrounding areas such as Espoo and Vantaa): 13 interviews
- Southern and central Finland (excluding Tampere region): 24 interviews
- Tampere region: 39 interviews
- Northern Finland: 24 interviews

In the data there are 61 women and 39 men. In total 41 have a higher education (university level), 22 have an intermediate

grade, 16 have completed comprehensive school, 10 are upper secondary school graduates (or university undergraduates), 2 had completed vocational school and the education remains unknown for 9 interviewees. Some people may have marked themselves as having a university level education even if they had not yet completed their studies. Most of the interviewees were employed, and a great majority of them fall into the category of “employee”. 5 had their own business, 6 were in managerial positions, 7 were employed as experts (such as researchers), 3 were clerical employees, 9 were students, 5 schoolchildren, 4 pensioners and the occupation of 4 people remains unknown.

The spread over various age groups in the data is as follows:

10-20 years:	6 interviews
21-30 years:	17 interviews
31-40 years:	32 interviews
41-50 years:	30 interviews
51-60 years:	10 interviews
61-70 years:	4 interviews
Unknown:	1 interview

It is perhaps worth noting that the research project Media and Everyday Life started out as “New Media and Every Day Life” but the official name was changed after about half of the data had been collected. Thus, one may speculate that the earliest interviews might bear slightly different emphasis than the later ones. Mentioning new technology did prompt a few initial comments where the people recruited doubted their knowledge of “new” technology. Both “new” and “old” media and technology were discussed in all interviews and it is not likely that the name of the project had a drastic effect on the ways in which people account for their media uses. During the course of the interviews people were encouraged to talk about their day-to-day lives in general.

The interview schedule was formulated around various media and communication devices (e.g. television, Internet, mobile phone, radio, newspapers and magazines, music and films) that ordinary people use and spend time with during their day-to-day lives. At first, the questions were shared with every researcher and the questionnaire included the following themes: possession of devices, media uses, private spaces and sociability, redundant devices and expectations for the future. All these themes included numerous subquestions but the interviews were carried out on the principle that it is just as important to leave room for discussion rather than stick rigidly to the questionnaire. As the data accumulated and the participants in the research project processed their ideas and pondered over particular research topics each of them started to put more emphasis on these particular themes in the interviews. However, the general questions above that concerned the research project as a whole were not excluded.

During the final stage of data gathering the present author was using a questionnaire that included general questions about the life of the interviewee and also elicited descriptions of recent media uses at home or at work. People were asked to describe their concrete activities during a particular day. Various types of media and devices were discussed in conjunction with these descriptions. Uses of various types of media and communication technologies were covered in numerous contexts as people accounted for specific situations and places, such as watching a film at home or going to a local shop to buy milk. As the approach to data analysis is textual and discourse analytic, and the analytic emphasis is on the cultural logic of the descriptions, the specific questions about specific media uses are important only in the sense that they tend to produce accounts in which people describe their views and uses. The questions are usually included in the samples presented and analysed in the following analytical chapters.

All the names have been changed and some information (such as the names of small towns or other details) have been omitted to ensure the anonymity of the interviewees. Virve Peteri, a co-researcher who worked on the project from the beginning and has carried out numerous interviews, has described the data extensively and discussed its features in her doctoral dissertation (Peteri 2006, 28-37).

Due to the nature of the interviews, the multiple ways of accounting for the media and technology were not inhibited. In fact, it would be difficult to do so unless the respondents' answers are restricted to simple utterances of yes and no. Interviews are not treated as situations where informants will, on command, regurgitate preformed and static pieces of information. Instead, interviews are a site where interpretative resources available to participants are utilised. (Potter & Wetherell 1987, 164). This variation in verbal accounts is of utmost importance to this study. The sense-making between talkers in the interviews, including the interviewer's contribution, results in a discursive landscape that lends itself to empirical analysis. The interviewer is not seen as a "talking questionnaire" dictating the course of conversation in a neutral and passive way, uncontaminated by his or her membership of the surrounding culture (see Potter & Wetherell 1987, 163-165). The difference between this kind of a cultural approach and structured or "traditional" research interviews is quite remarkable and can be summed up in three points:

To summarize – interviews in discourse analysis differ from conventional interviews in three ways. First, variation in response is as important as consistency. Second, techniques which allow diversity rather than those which eliminate it are emphasized, resulting in more informal conversational exchanges and, third, interviewers are seen as active participants rather than like speaking questionnaires. (Potter & Wetherell 1987, 165).

As the data include no observations, the analysis focuses on understanding the descriptions instead of trying to formulate direct factual claims about the ways people think about and use the media and devices. Rather, the significance these have for them and how this is accounted for is the focus of interest. The fact that questions were not always asked in the same manner and order and that the interviewer discusses these themes with the interviewee is not regarded as a problem for the validity of the data. The discussion of both the interviewer and the interviewees is seen to be of interest to the analysis. The way the analysis was carried out is further discussed in the sections on the methodological approach (particularly in the section Interpretative work with the data) as well as in each of the chapters presenting the empirical analysis. Although the data is described numerically as accurately as possible, the figures above are mainly provided to give an idea of the characteristics of the interview material. The weight of the analysis does not rest on the use of background variables or quantitative reasoning. Instead of individual informants or groups of them, the focus is on the culturally available ways of producing cogent accounts of media and technology.

The discourses geared towards justifying media uses are to some extent invoked by the interview situation, in which a previously strange person asks individuals about their personal lives. However, these discourses are not invented in that situation; rather people simply resort to culturally available resources concerning the media and technology and more generally acceptable or questionable behaviour. Such discourses may be contradictory and do not directly reflect our actual behaviour, but they do reflect the way in which reality is conceived of in the culture in question, and they serve as yardsticks by which we assess our action. (Alasuutari & Luomanen & Peteri 2010). It is noteworthy concerning this research that these accounts are not simply artefacts of the

interview situation but connected to the surrounding culture and activities both before and after the fact.

The transcriptions do not include minute detail such as the length of pauses, overlapping of talk and such. The question about the necessary level of detail in the transcripts is problematic. Answering the research questions posed in this study does not necessitate the use and analysis of all the minute detail of timing and intonation (see Potter and Wetherell 1987, 166). Unlike conversation analysis in which the analytical emphasis is on the way the interaction takes, the emphasis here is on the way meanings are produced in the interaction (Jokinen 1999, 45). Hence, the transcriptions were done to adequately facilitate the types of analysis carried out by the researchers in the Media and Everyday Life project. The people who did the transcription were advised to mark laughter (usually in brackets) and to underline any particular emphasis in talk. In some of the transcriptions pauses have been marked with [.] and sometimes they have been marked with three dots (...). Words uttered with emphasis are underlined. In some of the transcripts there were also indications about the overlapping of replies, but these have been omitted from the samples used.

The analytical chapters study the talk about various themes and often illustrate the variation in the data by offering an adjacent pair of a “question” and an “answer”. The interviews were carried out in Finnish and the translations were made by the author. These translations did pose somewhat of a problem due to the fragmented nature of spoken language. This, of course, is a problem for the original language transcriptions as well, since casual spoken language hardly consists of complete sentences. The idea has been to retain the idea and substance of the account.

Translation is not a mere technical performance but also an analytical one (Sneijder & Molder 2005): it is designed to

present the features of the data perceived as significant by the researcher. Furthermore, they are not literal, word-for-word translations in order to preserve the conversational style and readability. The translations and original samples in this research do not claim to be beyond criticism but, rather, are provided so that the reader can make his or her own assessments. (Nikander 2002, 223-224; Nikander 2008). Some of the repetitive utterances and sounds such as “uh huh” or “mmm” have been omitted in order to enhance the readability of the transcripts. Whenever the use of a data sample has been deemed to need it, what sort of discussion has preceded the excerpt is explained.

The data set is extensive, a mass of text consisting of nearly 5 million characters. Thus, the sheer quantity of analysable text alone posed a serious challenge for the analysis. This will be further discussed in the following sections on the methodological approach.

1.5 Social Constructionism

Throughout the introduction it has become clear that language is pivotal in this research. Language is of crucial importance as in this research it is not seen as a window that lets us see “the real world” out there. Thus, language is not being treated as a straightforward medium that humans use to describe reality. Instead, assumptions of such a simple, referential nature of verbal or textual descriptions are abandoned and language is seen as constitutive of the everyday reality that is borne of, played out, negotiated and renewed in social interaction. The importance of language is one of the central claims of a diverse research tradition called social constructionism (Burr 2003, 2-5; Gergen 2003; Harré 1988; Gubrium & Holstein 2000; Jokinen 1999; Parker 1998). Along with the traditions discussed in the

section Outlining the Research Interest it could be said that it is the body of social constructionist research on the media and technology to which the study at hand also contributes. This section will present premises of social constructionist research and discuss their role in this research. It will become evident that some of the ideas presented earlier in the section about everyday life are inseparably embedded in the social constructionist understanding of language and human reality. These themes also serve as an introduction to the methodological approach presented in the next section.

Language has been the subject of extensive research during the last few decades (Potter & Wetherell 1987). The main argument of poststructuralist research is that meanings are not predetermined, but always contestable and subject to change. Thus, language can be seen as a site for various activities and struggles, a way of *doing* things in various contexts. (Burr 2003, 52-62; also see Jokinen 1999, 48-49). Consequently, language use cannot be reduced to strings of words. Berger and Luckmann (1966, 3) outline some issues regarding the symbolic construction of reality that are at the heart of social constructionism and pointed out how “reality” and “knowledge” in a society are maintained in and through social activity and that this knowledge is for the most part taken for granted. Thus, they contend that “sociology of knowledge is concerned with the analysis of social construction of reality” (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 3). Even before Berger and Luckmann’s contribution the traditions of symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology also shared the theoretical idea of an individual’s identity created and maintained in social interaction. These streams of sociological theory influenced Berger and Luckmann’s contributions and the development of social constructionist theory as a whole (see Berger & Luckmann 1966, 17; also Burr 1995, 9-10). Social constructionist research has also been influenced by Michel

Foucault, who studied the constructive elements of language and the ways that subject positions and modalities can be recognized in research data (Foucault 1972, 38, 48-49 and 50-55; Alasuutari 1996b, 18). Foucault (1972, 49) emphasised the way in which discourses achieve more than is evident from the use of signs that designate things, thus rendering discourse irreducible to language. According to him “it is this ‘more’ that we must reveal and describe”. For Foucault, the centre of interest is just as much in the “constructive *whats* that discourse constitutes as it is on the *hows* of discursive technology” (Gubrium & Holstein 2000, 494) and how the use of language results in action in the reality in which it is used (Alasuutari 2004, 69).

Such assumptions on the nature of language can be found at the core of poststructuralist, or social constructionist research, which has had a significant impact on social sciences and humanities during the last few decades. Numerous research traditions have emerged such as post structuralism, discourse analysis, critical psychology and deconstruction. While differences between them exist, they share many principles regarding the notion of socially constructed knowledge. Since social constructionism derives from a number of disciplines it is difficult to pinpoint its origin to any one research tradition (Burr 1995, 1-5, 9, 14). On a larger scale, social constructionism can be seen as a descendant of the poststructuralist movement which rejected the idea that any grand theory could satisfactorily explain social phenomena as a result of “hidden” or “underlying” structures such as the economic system or class relations. Poststructuralists stressed the contextual and pluralist ways in which people live in the (post modern) world (Burr 1995, 14-15). As a result of these theoretical developments, an increasing number of sociologists already during the 1970’s already began to emphasize the element of interpretation and social interaction in the forming

of views of reality (see e.g. Burr 1995, 8-9; Sulkunen 1997, 14-17). Today the assumptions of social constructionism have been taken up, at least to some extent, in many social and humanist sciences. It has had an impact on several research traditions such as cultural studies and social problems theory (see e.g. Miller & Holstein 1993, 5; Burr 1995, 1-2; Nikander 2002, 34).

While it is impossible to describe social constructionism with a single definition, there are a few assumptions that are crucial to social constructionist research. The notions of knowledge and reality have a special meaning as it is considered that these are fundamentally born in social interaction and are thus inseparable from interaction, language or texts. Furthermore, the ways in which meanings are produced and interpreted are affected by the context, history and culture. Thus, multiple versions of reality can be produced and be considered legitimate. One of the basic tenets of social constructionism is that as people observe the world and then talk about it, they cannot simply reflect the world "as it is" in a purely "objective" manner. The world exists as a dynamic set of meanings that people use and renew in and through social interaction and ultimately, via the use of language. Hence, language is not only a means to describe various things that exist in the "real world" but it is also a means to *do* things that are constitutive of the real world. (Burr 2003, 46-62; Potter & Wetherell 1987; Potter & Wetherell 2001; Wetherell & Potter 1992; White 2004). In other words, language is not regarded as a bridge that would enable a connection to the "real world"; language is seen instead as an integral part of this world (Jokinen, Juhila & Suoninen 1993, 9). Thus, as things can be achieved, done, renewed and renegotiated through social interaction the use of language itself is turned into a topic in constructionist research.

So far it has become evident that language is central to constructionist studies and empirical analysis. According to Burr (2003, 2-5) social constructionism has four main assumptions. First, the researcher should always remain critical and challenge all the taken-for-granted ways of perceiving the world. Secondly, researcher must take into account the historical and cultural context in which interpretations of the data are made and in which the data have been collected. Thirdly, Burr stresses the fact that in a social constructionist understanding of the world, knowledge and worldviews are generated and maintained in social interaction of everyday life. The fourth assumption is that knowledge and world views correspond to patterns of social action: if people's understanding regarding a certain phenomenon changes, the social actions related to it may also change. For example, such concepts as childhood and parenting as well as alcoholism (and actions related to these) have undergone significant change over time (Burr 2003, 4-5). All these assumptions are relevant to this study: in our data there are a great number of accounts related to the media and produced in a specific historical and cultural setting. Therefore the goal in this study is to understand why certain ways of accounting are meaningful in the interviews and on what premises they are based. The way people understand the media and technology, as well as their role in the surrounding culture corresponds to the nature of these accounts and the way media use is described.

As the discussion above indicates, social constructionism is a term used in a wide range of studies. Social constructionist approach to understanding interaction and the way people talk in various situations renders people as subjects who are not only able to produce a multitude of accounts for various things and issues (such as various media and technologies) but also a multitude of discursive practices that constitute them and others in various ways, allowing for situated positions

that are understandable in the specific social interaction in which they are created. (Burr 2003, 54; Davies & Harré 1990; Wetherell & Potter 1992, 77-78; Jokinen, Juhila & Suoninen 1993, 37-40; Alasuutari 2006, 82). For example, in some contexts people may describe a mobile phone as an important and lovely thing, while in some other contexts the phone can be described as an exceedingly frustrating or threatening device. Similarly, these descriptions in various contexts leave latitude for interpreting the person as an efficient user of modern technology or a person who puts great value in his or her independence of technology. This assumption about the anti-essential nature of human identity (Burr 2003, 5-6 and 54) is important: in this sense individuals cannot be stacked in neat categories regarding their use and attitudes towards technology but instead have “many voices” in which they can express themselves cogently in different contexts.

The data include a lot of talk about various mundane activities, indeed about “everyday life” as it is perceived and experienced by people. People produce multiple accounts of the media and technology and their significance to themselves as well as to others. A social constructionist approach enables discussing the cultural premises in the logic of these accounts. In this sense this study does not completely fall into either micro or macro (Foucauldian) constructionism (Burr 2003, 21-22) but, rather, incorporates elements from both of these approaches.

Placing language so firmly at the centre of interest, one might wonder if it is not excessive to claim that language has such a fundamental role in the experience of life and reality. One might ask: surely some things exist regardless of the language we use to describe them – how else could it be – and wonder why anyone would be content to study “merely” discourse instead of “real life” things and actions. Such criticism of social constructionist research is not new.

According to Alasuutari (2006), in Finnish sociology there have been two recent lines of criticism of cultural studies and social constructionism (on the realism – relativism debate see also Burr 2003, 22-23 and 88-103). According to the one, sociology related to the cultural studies produces trivial research with no relevance to society. According to the other, researchers doing constructionist research only concern themselves with interpretations and experiences people have and overemphasise the impact of culture in their work. The validity of social constructionism has been questioned, but the most heated debate has been about the strongest forms of constructionism (see e.g. Hacking 2000). Alasuutari (*ibid.*) notes that the emphasis given to meanings (produced in social interaction) does not categorically mean that activities remain unstudied and beyond the scope of constructionist research. Instead, when the ways in which people describe things and produce assessments regarding various situations are studied, the sense behind various activities can be understood. This is the approach adopted in this study.

Another reason to emphasise the study of meanings and discourses is methodological: Alasuutari (2006) points out that methods based on constructionist thinking enable empirical study of talk and texts. In this sense, it is necessary to take into account the historical and cultural context in which the talk or text has been produced. It does not, however, mean that these assumptions automatically lead to idealism, where reality would be considered to only consist of symbols. Thus, it is not possible for an individual to simply alter everything by thinking and acting differently (*ibid.*). As Alasuutari puts it, due to multilateral interactions and causalities, a variety of phenomena exist that are often referred to with the metaphor of structure. Some forms of interaction are institutionalised and such an integral part of daily routine so as to become invisible and, for the most part, taken for granted. Laws and the legal

system are an example of such “structures”. As to the nature of reality and the laws of physics, they are certainly not ignored. For example, a person may, of course, refuse to believe that a leaking boat will eventually sink but failure to take it into account will inevitably lead to a new, probably a much worse situation. Just as they account of such realities people also communicate with others in terms that are shared in the culture. Mundane social interaction such as daily shopping and paying for groceries happens routinely. Reflection on the sequence of events and behaviours is hardly needed. The same goes for a wide range of societal issues. However, when the cultural premises for understanding and interpreting these issues change, the actions and routines related to these issues are also questioned and renegotiated (one only needs to think, for example, about the concepts of alcoholism or childhood as mentioned above). Thus, a constructionist approach to understanding sociological phenomena does not mean that “reality” is ignored and only language and interpretation matter as if lives were but a simulation. Rather, such dichotomy can be avoided. (Alasuutari 2006).

On the other hand, it is not possible for people to simply imagine any sort of reality they wish (Heiskala 2000, 197-198). There are realities that constrain people and their activities. According to Heiskala people are not conscious of all the constructions that exist in the society and social interaction and, thus, the various streams and traditions of social constructionism differ from each other in the way they recognize these unconscious constructions and constraints set by the “real world”, nature and society. White (2004, 11) notes “humans construct ‘frameworks of meaning’ or ‘interpretative repertoires’ or ‘discourse’ to make sense of the world” and these repertoires then shape the action that humans embark on. Consequently what is assumed is that people have no choice but to rely upon the constructions (stored in language

and culture) they have formulated regarding the natural world and adjust their interaction with it accordingly: people evaluate the premises and conditions available to them and adapt in a suitable manner. A lot of this evaluation has become a routine and these routines can be argued to be the basis of societal order (Alasuutari 2006; Alasuutari 2004). Assuming the great importance of routines does not render people as subjects mechanically executing daily tasks but enables creativity instead: routines make it possible for humans to concentrate on issues that require individual reflection. Even daily communications would be impossible if people had to stop and think about the meaning of every word separately. It would be equally difficult to go shopping or embark on any of the mundane activities that are by and large taken for granted in “normal” day to day life. (Alasuutari 2006; Alasuutari 2004).

The issues discussed in the section on everyday life are relevant to this kind of understanding of language and culture, which binds together the way the media (and media contents as well as their uses), technology and the experience of everyday life are treated in this research. The way people account for their media and technology related actions and uses are studied from a social constructionist viewpoint adopting the assumptions which have been discussed above.

1.6 Methodological approach

1.6.1 Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is a methodological approach that seeks to take into account the assumptions and implications of social constructionism. It is also in many ways intertwined with other research methods such as semiotic analysis, rhetoric analysis and ethnography (Jokinen 1999, 37-41, Sulkunen 1997, 14-17).

It was described in the late 1980's as a "radical new perspective with implications for all socio-psychological topics" (Potter & Wetherell 1989, 32). Perhaps no longer considered "radical" in the overall scene of social scientific research, the assumptions of discourse analysis still differ markedly from everyday thinking. In discourse analysis processes internal to language and their outcomes are the focus of attention. This section outlines the scope of discourse analysis and the way it is used in this study.

Importantly, it is not within the scope of discourse analysis to discover mental processes (separate from the verbal outcomes), causal relationships or "objective" facts outside the language (Jokinen 1999, 40-41). Instead, Jokinen (*ibid.*) notes that the relationship between the researcher and the subject of research is also constructionist. Not only does the researcher seek to describe the subject of the research – the socially constructed reality – but also constructs it by taking part in the verbal processes in which social phenomena are constantly defined and reformulated. Vivien Burr notes regarding her own book *An Introduction to Social Constructionism* that "In writing this book, then, I am contributing to what might be called 'the social construction of social constructionism'" (Burr 1995, 10). However, as discussed in the section above on social constructionism, this does not mean that such research loses sight of the subject and the "real world" altogether.

Discourse analysis promises to be a viable method in the attempt to understand the plurality of roles and meanings of media and communication technologies in day-to-day life. However, drawing a line between discourse analysis and other similar research methods is often difficult since many variations of these exist (e.g. Jokinen 1999, 41-50). Potter and Wetherell (1987, 6-8) note that as discourse analysis has been developed and carried out by so many disciplines with a large number of theoretical perspectives, the name discourse analysis

has been connected to “virtually all research concerned with language in its social and cognitive context” (also see Antaki et al. 2003; Nikander 2002, 40).

Some of the key premises adopted in the analysis in this study can be outlined as follows (Potter and Wetherell 1987, 35; also Potter and Wetherell 2001, 200-201):

1. language is used for a variety of functions and its use has a variety of consequences
2. language is both constructed and constructive
3. the same phenomenon can be described in a number of different ways
4. there will, therefore, be considerable variation in accounts
5. there is, as yet, no foolproof way to deal with this variation and to sift accounts which are “literal” or “accurate” from those which are rhetorical or merely misguided thereby escaping the problems variation raises for researchers with a “realistic” model of language
6. the constructive and flexible ways in which language is used should themselves become a central topic of study.

Discourse analysis allows the exploration of text, not as a straightforward description or representation of reality – for example uses of the media – but as social interaction through which various media and technologies as well as their uses are defined, contested and negotiated. Hence, it is clear that discourse analysis shares many of the assumptions of social constructionism. The use of language, the way in which various things are described or accounted for, may not only sustain various parallel understandings of an issue, say, like the use of the mobile phone, but also has consequences that are relevant in the immediate context that the accounts are

produced in. Talk is not seen as a viewfinder through which the “real world” of the interviewees can be accurately parsed together (Wetherell & Potter 1988, 168-169). Instead, meanings, identities and subject positions are constructed in a plurality of ways in various contexts. This study treats language as a constitutive part of the human reality, as a means to produce and sustain a plurality of parallel understandings of the media and technology.

For example, Huuska (1998) has identified parallel language systems, “interpretative repertoires” (see Wetherell & Potter 1988, 172; Potter & Wetherell 1987, 149) used by transsexual women as they account for various aspects of sexuality. By studying these systems she was able to explain what kind of cultural categories were utilised to describe their sexual identities in various contexts and, consequently, what kind of subject positions were afforded by the use of these repertoires. For example, in some contexts sexuality was discussed primarily as related to physical features and in other contexts it was accounted for as being grounded in the experience of sexual tensions between the interviewees and the opposite sex. Thus, instead of trying to answer what sexuality “really” is, she set out to study gender and sexuality as they are produced in and through the use of language in various contexts and situations (Huuska 1998, 102-103). With similar constructionist premises, this research will elucidate the situational logic and functions of media use accounts and discuss the shared cultural values that are mobilised in the accounts.

Another example of context bound discourse analysis is provided by Suoninen (1992), who analysed a single interview and identified several interpretative repertoires through which a mother married for ten years accounted for her family life. Describing her life through a range of repertoires, e.g. familistic, individualistic or romantic repertoires, enabled the

mother to express the wide range of perspectives and issues that contribute to her experience of family life. Suoninen noted that the mother interviewed aligned her accounts with culturally strong values such as good parenting, true love and independence. In a sense, then, she was “wrestling” with culture (Suoninen 1992, 71), producing descriptions that take into account various culturally prevalent values. In the analysis, Suoninen paid attention to pairs of accusation and justification (on discursive accusation and charge-rebuttal sequences see also Billig 1989, 218-219 and Silverman 1987, 232-235) where the interviewee perceived the interviewer’s question as a (potential) accusation rooted in the argumentative logic of the repertoire. On the other hand topics were identified where the interviewee came up with similar accounting spontaneously, implying the presence of a particularly strong cultural norm.

Furthermore, Suoninen (1992, 73-89) also identified a cultural preference to describe problems and conflicts so that an impression of overall control and ability to deal with these issues is created. To accomplish this the interviewee had to utilise many repertoires and while this is difficult, Suoninen points (1992, 83) out that it can be accomplished in interaction as it is typical of people in our culture to form an overall picture of someone’s talk even if the talk itself, upon closer inspection, is fragmented and contradictory. Garfinkel’s (1984, 79-94) classic studies support this as he observed how people go to great lengths in order to make sense of the other person’s talk (also see Suoninen 1999, 33). On the other hand, Suoninen notes how accounting against the cultural expectation of overall control has immediate consequences in the interaction, as the interviewer demands an explanation (Suoninen 1992, 115). This, too, is in harmony with Garfinkel’s classic studies (discussed in a previous section).

Huuska’s and Suoninen’s studies show how the use of language affords a plurality of understandings on various

topics. It also affords us with various positions (a good parent, or, say, a person who uses technology appropriately) and makes it possible to assign positions to other people (for example, people who are excessively dependent on technology). Interaction takes place in a culture and, as Garfinkel puts it, the perceivedly normal course of action is sustained with strong moralities. It is possible to account against shared cultural values but not without consequences. Hence, as Vivien Burr (1995, 120) states, it is typical that in interpretative repertoires research the descriptions people give of their action can be understood as efforts to construct themselves and the actions described as morally justifiable.

The word discourse has been used in many ways and in its most open sense it can be understood as encompassing all kinds of spoken interaction as well as written texts (Potter & Wetherell 1987, 6-7). One way of describing the outcomes of language is to study systems of language that construct an issue in a certain way. Systems like this are referred to as interpretative repertoires (Potter & Wetherell 1987, 149; Wetherell & Potter 1988, 172). These systems have various functions and marked plurality. According to Potter and Wetherell (1987, 149), interpretative repertoires are systems of language used recurrently to describe various social and other phenomena. Within these language systems things and actions are evaluated and characterized, and through their recurrent use, they renew, reformulate and maintain meanings regarding things and actions of the socially constructed world.

Such language systems can also be referred to as discourses (Jokinen & Juhila 1999, 67; Jokinen & Juhila & Suoninen 1993, 26-27) and in this research the word discourse is used to refer to such a language system. Ian Parker (1992, 5) provides a compact definition for discourses: "definition of a discourse should be that it is a system of statements which constructs an object". Thus, even if a person were to say during the same

interview that she hates the mobile phone and perhaps later say that she is rather fond of it or finds it very important, the researcher does not need to wonder whether this person should be put into the slot of mobile phone “haters” or “enthusiastic users”. Rather than trying to categorise people the analytic emphasis is on elucidating the ways it is sensible to account for the uses and roles of the mobile phone, what premises these accounts are based on and what sort of positions are accomplished and given to others.

Thus, the focus is not on the individual but on culturally sound ways of accounting for the media and technology. This study will identify and present discursive means utilised in the situated production of accounts about people’s media related activities and opinions in various contexts of everyday life. The social order of everyday life and discursive formation of morality is taken into account and treated as a constitutive part of human reality and interaction. The approach is to study context-bound language use and in particular the discursive means that people utilise to make themselves understood in each context. Elucidating the logic and function of these means allows for seeing the plurality of roles which the media and technology have in everyday life. Whenever the taken-for-granted nature of the media is questioned during the interviews it creates talk where the media or technology is accounted for in a manner that is sensible in the context. Language use not only enables people to construct objects in a certain manner, often in contradictory ways, but also to manage their position and alignment with culturally shared values. In a sense, it is like going through Garfinkel’s experiments again and again (Alasuutari 2004, 41).

In discourse analysis it is maintained that a self-sustaining and coherent self or an identity is an illusion insofar as context-bound repertoires produced by people are often internally contradictory (Alasuutari 2004, 121). One of the

social constructionist assumptions that plays an important role in discourse analysis is the notion of anti-essentialism. As the world is available to humans as socially constructed³, individuals' identities cannot be seen as self-sustaining and "natural" entities (Burr 1995, 5-6, Burr 2003, 54). Instead, people continuously construct their identities in social interaction with various repertoires which, depending on the context, might be contradictory with each other (Alasuutari 2004, 121; Wetherell & Potter 1988, 171; Wetherell & Potter 1992, 78; Edwards & Potter, 1992, 127; Jokinen & Juhila 1999, 68; Potter & Wetherell 1987, 95-104; Jokinen, Juhila & Suoninen 1993; 38-40; Suoninen 1992, 9; Burr 2003, 106-109). The construction of identity can also be seen as heavily contextual, as in various discourses or social repertoires people may produce different kind of identities. In this respect, language use is directly linked with the construction of the identity as it affords individuals with various subject positions (Jokinen & Juhila 1999, 68; Alasuutari 2004, 127).

These positions are discursively produced through social interaction:

An individual emerges through the processes of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate. (Davies & Harré 1999, 35)

Hence, these positions are created, accomplished and assigned to others through various discursive practices that people utilise in social interaction. Instead of having "roles" people manage their positions, making them available with discursive means. The focus is on the ways in which speakers and hearers are constituted with these practices. Various issues, concepts

3 One might ask what it means that the world is "socially constructed" as there certainly are real material objects, processes, actions and so forth. Section 1.5 deals with these questions in some detail.

and moral judgements depend on the way they are accounted for and what kinds of positions are available to the speakers. Individuals do not necessarily produce a continuous “image” of themselves but, rather, a multiplicity of positions in various contexts. The positions are not necessarily non-contradictory, but fragments in the discursive production of personhood. (Davies & Harré 1999; Davies & Harré 1990).

This research adopts an anti-essentialist (Burr 2003, 5-6) view on identities and focuses the analysis on the way people construct their identities and actions in various contextual descriptions that people produce in the interviews. Identifying various discursive means, the positions afforded by them and understanding these as factors contributing to the internal and context-bound logic of accounts is one of the aims of the analysis.

1.6.2 Interpretative work with the data

Language use produces parallel understandings of various phenomena. People utilise cultural categories and shared values in order to present sensible accounts in whatever context the discussion takes place and, just as importantly, whatever context has been created by previous discussion. Unlike “natural”, everyday understanding of language, here it is possible to analyse transcribed talk in detail to see how various and parallel understandings of the media and technology are produced. There was a lot of room in the interviews for discussion on various media and technology related topics (also see Peteri 2006, 34-36). Spontaneous talk was indeed encouraged. Thus, the data consist of a large number of accounts that form a rich discursive landscape. There is no difference in the talk of the interviewers and interviewees as the accounts are shaped in accordance with shared cultural values and hierarchies. The perceivedly normal

order of things in everyday life is played out in the interviews mostly in a taken-for-granted manner including any discursive means geared to shape the moralities of the accounts and the positions of the speakers within them.

When reading the data attention was paid to the variety with which media and technology was accounted for. Many of the research questions posed at the beginning were reformulated and refocused during the reading of the data as new observations were made. In the data there are various discursive practices, values reflected on and positions achieved. Variation in these was sought after in the analysis. The data was seen as a space where discursive practices, the premises used and the positions accomplished formed constellations held up by the discourse internal logic of the context. With discursive means these constellations take various shapes but not at random. Instead, being aligned and premised with surrounding cultural values, they are sensible to the conversation participants. The interpretative work carried out by the researcher consisted largely of identifying and understanding such constellations and the variation between them. The results presented in this study are based on understanding the constellations within language use: i.e. the discursive means, cultural values, management of morality and the positions accomplished.

As the data set used is so large, it is not possible to treat it exhaustively in one research report. Indeed, the data set was utilised by four researchers. Hence, the study at hand presents a number of topics that emerge from the data analysis but does not claim to have treated this data exhaustively. The results are illustrated with number of data samples deemed sufficient in terms of the readability and reliability of the report. As Maarit Alasuutari (2003, 158-159) has noted, the reliability of discourse analytic studies is in part assessed by the readers of the research report.

QSR NVivo software was used to facilitate analysis and data management. Software programmes for qualitative analysis have caused a fair amount of discussion and confusion among researchers. Whether or not the programmes are able to provide help for the researcher to test his or her hypotheses and whether the programmes force the researcher to adopt some predetermined frame of methodology, such as grounded theory, has been debated (see Luomanen & Räsänen 1999 and Luomanen & Räsänen 2008). The challenge is to find out how the software best facilitates the particular approach adopted in this study. The use of the software was limited to those tasks that could not be done better or more conveniently in some other way. It poses a problem for a qualitative analyst to face the challenge of mapping the richness of data to its fullest extent while not being drowned under masses of notes, concepts and inductive working hypotheses that are increasingly difficult to manage as the research progresses. Facing the great amount of data was undoubtedly one of the most daunting aspects of this research project.

The strategy in the analysis was to start with a limited number of interviews and interpret them carefully, producing numerous concepts and labels for interesting samples of data. In the beginning the data was coded in relation to the media discussed in the interviews. The aim was not simply to code every mobile phone related sample into a single node, but instead to create sub-nodes which code various dimensions related to each device or medium. The nodes that nest under the parent nodes for each medium contain samples that were found to be relevant to research interest. At first they were not, however, created with a particular language system or a discursive practice in mind. During this process some node structures were developed in order to record some more abstract issues, such as talk about developing technology in general. This categorization facilitated further analysis

and was a way of getting more familiar with the data. As to the specific needs of a discourse analytic approach the ideas and hypotheses on the discursive work carried out by the interviewees emerged through the coding and the general reading of the data. This was done by making numerous searches throughout the data that produced a number, typically hundreds, of occurrences where the topic was discussed. This helped in identifying variation in such a large data set. The searches were carried out until it was felt that there was no need to find more data about the subject or that the searches had exhausted the data regarding the topic. The searches also produced numerous occurrences that were irrelevant to the current topic but this still proved an efficient and versatile way of probing the data compared to manually browsing through a massive stack of printed interviews. Even during the finalising of the manuscript new searches were made simply to see whether it would be possible to expand or challenge the observations presented in this research report.

Along with the general reading of the interviews, sampling like this proved to be a convenient way of accessing data while mulling over certain ideas. At the same time the NVivo project allowed the retrieval of materials that are coded under the specific medium related nodes, illustrating various dimensions that emerge from the data regarding any particular medium. Often these were printed out to see whether something might have been overlooked. Furthermore, as a part of the Media and Everyday Life research project a table was created about the interviewees so as to track some of the background variables such as age groups, gender and education. This was convenient during the data gathering as it enabled us to keep track of the data collected and what kind of interviewees to recruit next.

The discursive practices and the language systems presented in the analysis emerged, took shape and solidified in and through the process described above. However, the

connection between data grounded research results and the data is often impossible to establish in a straightforward manner: the results cannot merely be concentrated passages of data, organized by the researcher. Instead, the results are formulated in a mental process which is guided by the methodological tradition and theory relevant to the research questions. The printouts were read and re-read, coded as was deemed necessary to be able to retrieve samples on the topics of interest while the analysis took shape in the manuscript.

1.7 Structure of the book

The analysis is presented in the following four chapters. Each of the chapters is built around a research question presented in the introduction to the chapter and answered in the subsequent sections.

Chapter 2 reports how mobile phones and their use are accounted for. The chapter presents a language system that addresses the tension between individual autonomy and social responsibility that can both be described as essential issues regarding the proper use of the phone. The cultural resources utilised in these accounts are also discussed.

Chapter 3 presents the discursive means utilised as people account for using the Internet. The cultural category of hobbies has a significant effect on the discursive logic with which various Internet uses are described and evaluated. Hence, hobby related talk is paid particular attention in order to elucidate how people describe “proper” uses of the Internet. Internet use emerges as a moral issue that is managed through discursive work.

In Chapter 4 the ways in which people account for developing technology are studied. The chapter illustrates

how the moralities in the talk about developing technology are premised with various cultural categories. In light of the data analysis, these moralities and the shared values they draw on are presented and discussed.

Chapter 5 focuses on the discursive means used to talk about media uses that have the potential for negative inferences regarding the speaker's position. These uses are identified in the data by looking at descriptions of why or how the speaker ended up using the media as described, thus producing a legitimate and cogent account of the potentially debatable use of the media. Four discursive means for managing one's individual responsibility are presented and discussed.

In Chapter 6 the results are compiled and discussed. Some ideas for future research are also presented.

2 AUTONOMY, RESPONSIBILITY AND THE MOBILE PHONE

2.1 Introduction

Finland has been near or at the top of the statistics as a country where new technology has been adopted at a fast pace (e.g. Statistics Finland 1999, 6-7; also see Castells & Himanen 2001, 17-18; Castells et al 2004, 64; Townsend 2002, 63) and has often been referred to as an information society or a mobile phone society (e.g. Kasesniemi & Rautiainen 2001, 11, Kopomaa 2000, Oksman & Turtiainen 2004, 320). However, even despite this characteristic of Finland as a mobile phone friendly country, studying the device is a challenge as there are so many angles from which its use, meanings or impacts could be approached.

Obviously, there is more to the mobile phones and the related industry than just the individuals' point of view, the ways in which the technology is discursively available to us. For example, at the beginning of his study Jon Agar (2003, 6 and 12-15) took a hammer to his mobile phone and smashed it up to see what sort of components there were inside. He then describes some of the implications these have on a global scale. For example, the demand for some of the raw materials, Tantalum in particular, used in mobile phones has even served to exacerbate a civil war in Central Africa that was

partly fought over strategic mineral rights (Agar 2003, 13). The industry itself has great significance both locally and globally.

On the other hand, as an artefact, the mobile phone has considerable cultural significance (e.g. McGuigan 2005; Katz & Sugiyama 2005). This significance from the user's perspective is connected to the totality of relations that constitutes everyday life. In the data there are descriptions of people using mobile phones in inappropriate ways in various situations. People account for the use of the mobile phone in ways that constitute "proper" use of the phone. Many uses are described as debatable, such as taking the phone to sauna, using it when enjoying the great outdoors or dining in a restaurant.

The data, however contains descriptions of the mobile phone in other contexts where the use of the device is portrayed in a completely different light. It may be described as a "lifesaver" or otherwise indispensable in many situations. It may also be described as a normal, basic part of daily social interaction. Clearly, the mobile phone fits certain situations better than others and when it does not fit, it is described as a particularly annoying thing to have around. This dualistic nature of the mobile phone is explored in this chapter.

Personal autonomy (e.g. the ability to choose when to be private and the ability cope at times without technology) and social responsibility are significant, culturally shared elements of this mobile phone related talk. However, there are significant tensions between these elements. People may express strong emotions and opinions as they account for their mobile communication related experiences. These expressions may be about the ways of communication or the device itself. This is partly explained by the relatively young age of mobile communication in the context of everyday life and the way this mobility itself presents new challenges for daily interaction.

A mobile phone can be described as an important means of maintaining a solid bond between members of the family and

friends. In these accounts, the phone is described as providing people with feelings of safety and comfort as it enables instant communication and subsequently provides information regarding the whereabouts and well-being of those significant others. On the other hand, the mobile phone can be described as a burden or an annoying threat to one's privacy. The threat to privacy was already noticed when landline phones were introduced to households but it seems that the mobile phone has extended this threat well beyond the confines of one's own home (e.g. Ling 1997; Ling 2000; also Castells et al 2004, 70-71).

Acknowledging this phenomenon, Ling, Julsrud & Krogh (1997) studied the ways in which Norwegian people talk about their uses of the mobile phone particularly in the context of *hytte*, a Norwegian cottage that is traditionally a place where people go to spend their free time, to relax and unwind from the stresses of everyday life. In this regard it bears a great resemblance to the Finnish *kesämökki*, a summer cottage that is also referred to in the data of this research project. While the mobile phone has altered the boundary between self and others it has also intruded into the places and contexts that have traditionally been reserved for relaxing seclusion. They note that the management of reachability is socially problematic as the technology was only introduced relatively recently. People want to manage the reachability and they can do this by switching off the phone or muting it. According to Ling, Julsrud & Krogh (1997) in this sense the phone resembles the Gore-Tex membrane that allows moisture to dissipate in one direction but not the other.

The problematic nature of the constant accessibility has been identified in many studies. In the literature there is an abundance of observations, for example, about the distractions that the use of the mobile phone may create in public places (see e.g. Ling 1997; Kopomaa 2000 81-93; Castells et al. 2004, 80; Geser 2004, 22-23). Katz (2003, 22-25) has even speculated

on the possibility that humans may in fact be “hard-wired”, or, rather, not particularly willing to endure such an “artifact of our socially constructed culture”.

There is a growing body of literature that focuses on the social management of mobile phone use (e.g. Katz 2003, 22). McGuigan (2005, 56) notes that from a sociological point of view it is important to discuss the actual and potential social uses regardless of their sheer technological capability or marketing value. However, it has been noted that scientific research sometimes cannot move quickly enough to properly address new fields of inquiry such as those presented by the rapid development of wireless communications technology (Castells et al. 2004, 1; see also McGuigan 2005, 48). It has also been noted, that research has only begun to address the ways in which particularly the latest forms of communication technologies are integrated into family life (Bachen 2001).

The following analysis will place mobile phone use in a wider frame of reference. Through the analysis it will be shown that the tensions that fuel the discourse on mobile phone use are deeply rooted in the surrounding culture. As a result, mobile phone use will be reflected against the core values of contemporary culture.

2.2 Talk about mobile telephony – the approach to the analysis

The analysis is restricted to the talk produced in the interviews or, more precisely, to the transcribed texts that form the data. (e.g. Potter & Wetherell 1987, 149; Jokinen, Juhila & Suoninen 1993, 17-20). The way people describe the importance of autonomy is of particular interest. In some contexts the interviewees describe their use of a mobile phone as a means

to escape numerous ill effects of technology that can endanger one's privacy. However, there are also a lot of descriptions of responsibility towards others. People account for the importance of family and friends and describe situations where the ability to contact various significant others is of high priority. The approach in this chapter is to analyse the discursive production of these uses and situations that are accounted for in various contexts. Thus the approach is language-centred and discourse analysis is used as a method: the analysis is concerned with the ways in which mobile phone use is described and what kinds of moralities are produced and managed in these accounts.

Though the aim is not to analyse communication on a device-by-device or on a feature-by-feature basis, it is notable that other communication (such as email and laptop computer) were also discussed in the interviews and share some of the issues with mobile phones. An example of this is receiving work related email at home, which is something not all people wish to do. However, mobile phone related accounts were prominent in the data. This chapter concentrates on them in order to understand in depth the specific meanings attributed to the mobile phone in these descriptions and to better handle the abundance of data available. The tensions described in this chapter are not unique and restricted to mobile phone use. Rather, mobile phone use is treated here as exemplifying the phenomenon.

While general reading of the data gathered in the Media and Everyday Life research project provided the initial observations of these conflicting ways of describing the significance of a mobile phone, occurrences where people discuss mobile phones were also searched for using NVivo software (see e.g. Luomanen & Räsänen 2008). These searches were carried out using various versions of e.g. the word "*kännykkä*" (the mobile phone. In our data the word *kännykkä*

is much more common than e.g. the more formal word "*matkapuhelin*"). This was a good way to sample discussions about mobile phones along with the general reading of the data. The exact terms were not of significance as during the discussions people used various wordings and the goal was simply to sample mobile phone related talk from the data. Having a large data set to search from made it easy to find occurrences of such talk and gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

The interest is in the way people talk about mobile phone use and what sort of shared cultural values and categories are utilised in order to produce cogent accounts in each context. The analysis explores the discourse of social responsibility and autonomy – and the tensions that fuel the discourse. These tensions are accounted for in various ways depending on the context, thus creating variation in the descriptions of the use of the mobile phone. Part of the analysis is to explore what sort of discursive resources are invoked and used to premise the accounts. As various technology based issues or dilemmas are addressed and negotiated in social interaction such as the research interview, it is possible to see how contextually bound and even contradictory these evaluations are. To illustrate this, this chapter uses samples from two interviews in particular, although the analysis is not restricted to them. Rather, they serve as examples of the context bound production of logic. Samples from other interviews are used as well.

Excerpts were identified in the data where people describe the importance of protecting their privacy and also where they account for the importance of being more or less constantly accessible due to family related issues and commitments in other relationships. Both the things that people wanted to protect themselves against and the ways the need to be accessible was described were studied.

2.3 Individual autonomy and social responsibilities

2.3.1 *Communication cocoon – the cultural image of individual autonomy*

The logic of the argument against excessive mobile phone use is often based on the use of the category of “normal and healthy people” who should not be dependent on technology. Consider the following sample about this:

Interview #03. Woman 41-50 years.

Interviewer: So do I interpret right, well, are there devices that really are – something that, that you really wouldn't want to part with?

Interviewee: Umm, I don't...

Interviewer: Or that you cannot part with?

Interviewee: Well yes, of course, I mean nothing is truly compulsory if you're like a healthy person and so forth, but. I don't want to give the cell phone away [.] and I will use the computer according to my own – the way I want to use it, because it benefits me.

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: And it's really this day and age... it's a basic utility of this... this time to put it that way. But I don't, I wouldn't suffer if I had to give it up. Something would fill the void and you can find it in the libraries and elsewhere. But the fact that... that... it's a basic utility of this day and age, there's no other way I can put it... And the bias that... well of course it exists because I am... well I know people who really take their cell phones to sauna with them and stuff like this. And there's no way that I can understand.

Interviewer: Hmm...

Interviewee: The thing is that I object that kind of slavish... thing. I may well turn off my cell phone at the summer cottage, or leave it uncharged for a while – my world is not going to be messed up because of that.

* * * *

Interviewer: Tulkitsenko oikein, niin tota, onko kumminkin olemassa jotain semmosia laitteita, jotka- jotka oikeesti [...] on semmosia, et niitä- niistä ei halua luopua.

Interviewee: No emmää.

Interviewer: Tai ei voi luopua.

Interviewee: Niih, no voi tietenkä ehän, mikäänhän ei oo pakko jos niinku terveestä ihmisestä on kysymys ja näin, mutta tota. Emmä halua luopua kännykästä [...] ja tietokonetta tulen käyttämään ihan omien- haluan käyttää, koska sii-siit on mulle hyötyä.

Interviewer: Joo-o.

Interviewee: Ja se on tätä päivää, se on- se on... tän ajan... ajan niinku semmonen käyttöväline, sanotaan näin. Mutta e- emmää- mitenkään kärsi, jos mä nyt joutusin siitä luopumaan. Kyllä se aukko jollakin täyttyy ja onhan niitä sitten kirjastossa ja muualla, mutta siis se että... et tota... se on tän aikakauden käyttöväline, emmää sitä muuten osaa ko. No se asenteellisuus, tottakai sitä on jonkin verran koska mä... mä olen niinku... tunnen ihmisiä, joi-jo- jotka niinku... menee kännykän kanssa saunaan tai tai johonkin tällaseen paikkaan, niin sitä mä en tahdo niinku millään käsittää.

Interviewer: Hmmm.

Interviewee: Et mä ny vastustan sitä orjallista... tapausta. Mää saatan hyvin pitää kännykkäni kiinni jossakin kesämökillä, tai... jättää sen lataamatta kokonaan vähäks aikaa, ei mun maailmani siitä me mikskään.

Due to the interviewer's wording in her response (cannot part with) it was likely interpreted as an accusation (see e.g. Suoninen 1992, 53-60, for charge-rebuttal sequences see Silverman 1997, 233-235; Billig 1989, 218-219), a negative inference in the sense that an assumption like this would imply unwelcome characteristics in the interviewee. The interviewee evades this by emphasising the difference of having to and wanting to use something: she does not have to, but she wants to. In order to be a normal and competent person it is

important to have the ability and power to decide how to use these devices (in this account the computer is also mentioned) for her own benefit.

Thus, a normative distinction is made between the user and the device: the user should always be in control and the use of technology should not be compulsory to anyone's existence, lest the person falls out of the category of being "healthy and so forth". This description positions the interviewee into this preferred category with a good command on technology. In addition, she consolidates this position by describing these devices as basic utilities of this day and age: there is nothing wrong with owning them as long as they are used properly. She describes how others may be enslaved by the phone, which impairs their freedom to be alone, enjoying privacy. In contrast to this the interviewee describes herself as better prepared against if not immune to the effects of the mobile phone in the sense that in the end she can always switch it off at her own discretion. In this account independence from technical devices is described as an important characteristic of a "normal" person.

In the sample below the same interviewee describes the questionable uses and some ill effects of the new technology through examples of how other people use their devices.

Interview #03. Woman 41-50 years (continued).

Interviewer: Yes. Well... do you think you can tell something about people based on what sort of devices they have – as we are talking about cell phones, television and whatever cropped up?

Interviewee: I can only speak for myself, so can I really tell [anything about this], but yes, yes I must say that I do draw conclusions if people have, in a way, imprisoned themselves with these technical devices. For instance people can't travel a few kilometres by bus without making three phone calls and blabbering that "I'm here, where are you" and so on. It's

a bit ridiculous in my opinion. So... I'm not judging those people, I just get a feeling that... can we, can we be with just ourselves at all [anymore]... or... and as Finnish people are not too talkative, we'll soon be unable to talk with each other and other people... (laughs) as we are talking to these contraptions [instead]. I'm extremely worried about this socialisation... the lack of social activity that these communication devices may... It's like a part of one's ego to some people, or on the other hand, if you must change your ring tone once in a week or so, then it's just a toy for grown up people or something like that. Well... I don't get it.

* * * *

Interviewer: Joo. Tota... Voiks sun mielestä päätellä sitte jotain ihmisistä sillä perustein että minkälainen toi välinevalikoima sillä on, jos puhutaan kännyköistä, televisiosta ja näistä mitä nyt täs on tullu esille?

Interviewee: Mää en puhu muista ku itestäni, et voiko siitä päätellä, mut kyllä- kyllä m-mun täytyy sanoa, et kyllä mää vedän johtopäätöksiä siitä, jos ollaan tällasten teknisten välineitten... vanki, tavallaan. Et esimerkiksi bussissa ei voida jotain kahden kilometrin matkaa matkustaa puhumatta kolmeen kertaan puhelimessa, tai tai jorisematta sitä et mää meen ny tässä missä sää oot ja niin pois päin. Se on vähän naurettavaa. Mun mielestä. Et mää- mun tuli- siis mä en arvostele niitä ihmisiä, mun tulee vaan semmoinen olo, että osaaks- osataanks ollenkaan enää kohta olla iteksensä... vai tota... ja sitku me suomalaiset ollaan tällasia vähäpuheisia, ni me ei voida enää puhua toisemme kanssa emmekä ihmisten kanssa sitäkään v... vähää (naurahtaa) mitä ennen ku me puhutaan näitten teknisten vehkeitten kanssa. Mä olen erittäin huolissani tästä sosiaalistumisen... sosiaalisen toiminnan niinku vähäsydestä mitä nää viestintävälineet toisaalta on... Se on joku tämmönen egon jatke mun mielestäni joillekin henkilöille, tai sitten se, et jos kännykän soittoaäntä pitää vaihtaa kerran viikossa tai tai tälle näin, niin musta se on niinku kans aikuisten leluna toimimista tai jotain semmosta että... noh... mä en ymmärrä sitä.

In this context, the description of other people's uses in general, the mobile phone is accounted for as having the potential to cause various harmful outcomes such as decline of social skills, dependence on the "excess" use of technology and using technology in superficial and debatable ways. The reference to the somewhat deeply rooted image of Finns as "not too talkative" people serves as the basis for the claim that the mobile phone might introduce even further problems in face-to-face interaction. There is a contradiction between the described lack of social interaction and the compulsive need to call people even during short bus journeys but this can be understood as the mobile communication in this context is described as something that threatens the traditional ways of interaction and the ability to cope without technical devices.

Indeed, according to Bachen (2001; see also Ling 2000) whether technology is replacing face-to-face contact is one of the controversial topics of technology research. The excerpt is an example how the somehow debatable uses are often described as pertaining to other people. As well as the ability to engage in face-to-face interaction the interviewee describes the ability to enjoy time alone being under threat. The logic of this account invokes the shared cultural value of individual autonomy.

The description of the mobile phone as a toy for some people creates a strong contrast to the phone as a basic utility. Toy use is not described as being purposeful as is legitimate, "real" use. As is also illustrated in the excerpt above, mobile phones can be described in the context of consumption or, for instance, fashion. This critical account positions the interviewee as a person who is aware of the negative connotations sometimes related to the public display of mobile phones (as described in the sample above) and as a rational user who does not long for the latest "toys". Somewhat later in the interview the interviewer asks about the looks of the

devices – whether they matter to the interviewee at all. The reply is an exhaustive account elaborating the superficiality of using the mobile phones as status objects and an example of the multidimensional nature of mobile phones in the interview data.

The appearance of the phone, however, is important to many people. Katz and Sugiyama (2005, 79-80) studied mobile phones as fashion statements and the ways in which the possession of a phone is a fashion statement just as one's clothes are. They also note how people are not just passive users of the mobile phone but may manipulate the devices to reflect their personal tastes and then display these to the outside world. Thus, the mobile phone not only exists as a means to communicate with an absent interlocutor, but as a means to communicate things about oneself to those who are present (ibid). According to the sample above, this type of use can be described as vain just as can many other fashion related activities: a fashion item is not easily justifiable as a necessary utility.

The next excerpt illustrates how the mobile phone is accounted for as a device that is not necessarily used everywhere despite its portability.

Interview #27. Woman 41-50 years.

Interviewer: So... is it a disappointment of sorts if one can't reach somebody?

Interviewee: Probably it is, like I said, that's why I felt that I have to keep the phone switched on. That it feels like a bit hurtful thing, in case one of my friends tries to reach me. Or, even more so, it's for my mother. But, with friends too, if I just keep my phone mute and don't bother to answer, then I think it's somehow offensive. Not necessarily, but I have come to think that way. However, I do have a lot of situations after all, where I don't, you know it isn't like, I don't take it everywhere with me... If I go to pick

mushrooms or to an island, or something, I definitely won't take the phone with me.

Interviewer: So you don't feel like...

Interviewee: No (laughs).

Interviewer: ... that a limb has been amputated, in case...

Interviewee: Definitely not. Some things are unconditionally, you know, and I never take it to a restaurant or anywhere... So I have certain things, where it won't, I mean no matter what.

* * * *

Interviewer: Ett se... onks se sitte jonkinlainen pettymys, jos ei saa jotakin kiinni?

Interviewee: Varmaan on, niinku mä silloin sanoin, että siks musta tuntu, että mulla on oltava se puhelin auki, ett se tuntuu loukkaavalta, jos joku mun ystävä niinko tuota yrittää saada mua kiinni. Tai enempi se on niinku sitte mun äitiä varten, mutta että, jos ystäväkkin, niin sitt mulla on vaan puhelin mykkänä, enkä mä vaivaudu vastaamaan, niin jotenkin se loukkaa mun mielestä. Ei välttämättä, mutt mä oon jotenkin asennoitunut sillälaililla. Mutta onhan mulla paljo semmosia tilanteita kuitenkin, mihin mä en sitä, ett ei se, en mä sitä kuljeta joka paikassa mukana, että ... että jos mä lähen jonnekin sieneen tai saareen, tai jonnekin, en tosiaankaan ota kännykkää mukaan.

Interviewer: Ei oo semmosta oloa, että se...

Interviewee: Eih (nauraen).

Interviewer: ... olis jotenkin amputoitu joku raaja, jos niin...

Interviewee: Ei tosiaankaan. Ett ne on ehottomasti tietyt asiat, just mihin, enkä koskaan ota ravintolaan, enkä minnekkään... Että on tiettyjä juttuja, ett mihin ei, ei niinku missään nimessä.

A number of things concerning mobile phone use are accounted for in this sample. Reasons for not answering or having the mobile phone at hand all the time are described as a part of a complex social reality where the expectations of others, the desire to avoid offending anyone and individual

aspirations need to be somehow matched. Providing care for a sick family member is a strong norm and does not require any further explanation. Keeping the phone switched on so that her friends can reach her as well is described as slightly less “compulsory” and must not bind her so much as to render her unable to leave the phone behind on occasion.

While the illness of her mother is a factor so strong as to require no extra accounting it is interesting that keeping the phone switched on because of friends does. In this context, keeping the phone on is described as a matter of a choice. The description of places and occasions where she would not take her cell phone “no matter what” is an important one as it positions her as a person with the sole ability to choose when she wants to be private. The interviewer supports this notion and contrasts the ability to be without a cell phone to feeling as if a limb had been amputated⁴. The interviewee laughs and concurs that this indeed is not the case with her and – together with the interviewer – dismisses the potential notion of having lost the ability to control this technology.

As these samples demonstrate, talk and social interaction deal with culturally shared understandings about the world we live in. People take into account the sphere of shared moralities that shape the everyday interaction. Thus, descriptions of various actions include management of these moralities. Positioning oneself among the shared cultural values is done via mundane everyday talk (see e.g. Burr 1995, 120; Kurri 2005, 11; Sterponi 2003). In this manner, people describe various free time activities that they would like to keep particularly well protected against the ill effects of mobile communication. Spending time in natural surroundings, being in a restaurant or at the cinema are examples of such activity. As the time spent in the great outdoors is often seen as a symbol for relaxation

4 The Finnish word “kännykkä” is actually derived from the word “käsi” (hand) and its colloquial form “känny”.

and personal fulfilment “being just a touch of a button away” from other people can be seen as being out of tune with this experience. The interviewer also participates in this description and through a humorous remark a mutual understanding is achieved. Thus, both participants in the discussion have accomplished a position as independent and autonomous individuals capable of identifying and refusing the unwanted effects of mobile communication.

There was a quote earlier in this chapter: “nothing is truly compulsory if you’re like a healthy person and so forth” (Interview 03, woman 41-50 years). A central element is describing sovereignty and the ability to use technology in the way it benefits the individual the most. Thus, a legitimate cultural image of a technology user appears to be one of an autonomous operator – essentially dictating the uses according to what beneficial outcomes the technology affords. On the other hand, other people can be described as unable to manage the technology around them. This is in fact rather typical in the data – for example, the elderly or people who are in some ways challenged are often pointed out as people who might need the technology or at least it is thought that new devices will probably solve many of their problems. Thus, this discourse of mobile phone use also outlines the cultural image of a capable and independent person.

Discursive means related to portraying autonomy by being in control of technology are built on the foundation of controlling the technology. While mobile communications devices are described as basic utilities of modern day to day life – and thus of some legitimate use instead of being mere toys – their essentiality is accounted for with references to this situational control. This is illustrated by descriptions in the data where people are criticised for their inability to shut down the devices even at some cherished leisure moments, such as going to sauna or spending time at the summer

cottage. Being unable to do this – losing the ability to control the technology or becoming blind to its effects – is described as becoming enslaved by it. Being so dependent on the mobile phone as not to cope without it at all is described as unhealthy. Maintaining control over the devices is a significant element of the discourse.

Consider the following account as an example. In the interview the man describes how great it was to get his first mobile phone a few years ago but that now it has become a normal part of the daily routine. He also accounts for his ability to do without the phone every once in a while. Just before the discussion sample below the interviewee's job is discussed. He says he even used to get calls even during the night, but that lately he has started to regulate his phone calls more actively.

Interview #08. Man 41-50 years.

Interviewer: So, if in the beginning it was really cool to have a cell phone – “Hello I have a new cell phone” – and be able to call friends from wherever, are there any situations now where the mobile phone particularly sparks emotions? Irritation or relief or, or anything? Or is it just a neutral gadget, a part of daily life?

Interviewee: Well, it really is rather a neutral gadget in the daily life, but certainly, certainly in a way it is a neutral thing as you can leave it out if you go out, for example, and have a dinner with your wife at a restaurant. You don't have to take it with you; it can be left at home. For the most part it is – for us when we travel around – if we'd happen to need it, if the car breaks down or something: “Help! Hello, I've got a” if we need to contact someplace. Then we'll have it.

* * * *

Interviewer: No, jos silloin alussa oli niinku vähän leuhkaa, että oli se kännykkä, että haloo, mulla on tällöinen kännykkä ja soitan täältä ja tuolta kavereille, niin onks nyt mitää semmosia tilanteita, että herättääksee mitään

tunteita? Ärtymystä tai helpotusta, tai, tai mitään? Ett onks se niinkku semmonen neutraali kapula osana arkee?

Interviewee: No, se on oikeestaan aika neutraali kapula osana arkee, mutt toki, toki silti niin, niin se on sillä tavalla neutraali kapula, ett sen voi jättää poisikin, jos lähtee vaikka ravintolaan illalliselle vaimon kanssa, niin sitä ei tarvita ottaa mukaan, sen voi jättää kotiin. Lähinnä se on, lähinnä se on meillä mukana reissussa sen takia, että jos tulee tarve, tulee autoon joku vika tai joku muu juttu, että; apua, haloo, että nyt mulla on, että täytyis saada yhteyttä johonkin. Sitte se on mukana.

In the sample above the interviewer provides alternative descriptions of the mobile phone: potentially arousing strong emotions or being just a neutral part of daily life. Not only does he echo the earlier discussion in the interview but he also provides legitimate alternative approaches for the answer. The interviewee agrees that the phone can be seen as a neutral thing but then provides further accounting about how this is achieved via the user's own actions. Only through active personal decision making does the phone become a neutral thing: it can be left at home on certain occasions and at other times, should it be necessary, it can be taken along. This sample also provides another typical example of a situation that is worth protecting against any invasions of privacy: having a dinner with one's wife in a restaurant.

In the description a distinction is made between desirable events (having a nice dinner in a restaurant) and those that are out of the ordinary, even dangerous (the car breaks down). A moment where one can cocoon himself from all the distractions and stress of every day life is cherished and protected by making sure that phone does not ring during the dinner. Thus, having described how the mobile phone only becomes a neutral, unthreatening device once it can be left home or switched off whenever that is desirable, the interviewee

attains a position as a person who can and does cope well with this technology. In this context, the usefulness of the phone is constructed around the possibility of something bad happening – certainly the phone will come in handy in those situations. Much as there was a reference to health issues in the earlier sample, here the legitimation for having the phone is illustrated by the possibility of the car breaking down.

Maintaining autonomy is something people describe as important and in relation to mobile communication it appears to relate to something that could be described as the cultural image of a communication cocoon. As this cocoon is invoked in talk, it is ideally a place or a situation where one can relax and legitimately, or even as a “duty”, enjoy total (or at least a controlled level of) privacy and not respond to every call, email or other communications. Enjoying the great outdoors or spending time with family or good friends are examples of this. To enjoy this ideal state one must have control over communication technology. Thus, issues of autonomy and privacy are close to each other in this context. The idea of securing “shielded” time like this is so widely accepted that it is sometimes difficult to notice its relevance in the data. However, if someone were to say that it does not matter at all if a dinner is interrupted because of work related calls or that the phone is ringing throughout the sauna at a summer cabin, it is likely that an account like this would be seen as out of place and require rather careful explanations as to why it does not matter at all. The perceivedly normal course of action is, again, bound together with strong moralities (Garfinkel 1984; Heritage 1984).

The excerpts above illustrate the importance of being independent of technology as well as nurturing one’s free time. In many cases it is assumed to be obvious as to why people dislike the idea of the phone ringing. It can be pointed to in a very casual way without further explanations.

Such assumptions are culturally recognized, but they are also debatable. The next excerpt provides an example as the woman wishes to talk about the ideal uses of the mobile phone and her partner eagerly contradicts these with witty remarks about “real life” use. The ensuing debate makes for a rich account of the significance of the mobile phone in various contexts.

Interview #14. Man 31-40 years (Interviewee 1) & woman 31-40 years (Interviewee 2).

Interviewer: Umm... What sort of situations do you have, like, when you would switch it off?

Interviewee 2: Umm, well, I can well imagine situations where I see no reason to even keep it with me. If I go to the local shop, then why would I take the phone with me, in case somebody wants to reach me when I’m picking up the milk...

Interviewee 1: But you will have it with you in the shop anyway, so that you can call me which type of milk was it that you wanted again?

Interviewee 2: Well, no I won’t!

Interviewee 1: Yes you will! For sure! Well, maybe not totally sure.

Interviewee 2: Or if I go to the pictures, or have dinner out, then it really is rude, that one would sit in some restaurant and talk on the phone.

Interviewee 1: But wasn’t it just the idea, that you can use it to phone someone else, like, hey, we’re actually now going to that place after...

Interviewee 2: Well, ok, if I have it with me, then I can switch it on and call them, but you know.

Interviewee 1: Oh yes, quite true, you can have it but not keep it on. So, it’s like the selfish.

Interviewee 2: In case I already am with some people some place and I just want to be with them and not... be available to everybody.

Interviewer: Umm... Do you think that you... will get, or receive work related calls through the phone as well?

Interviewee 2: I... Hopefully not. But then again you never know. In some curious way the students have obtained our fixed phone number, although we have told everyone not to give it. They... I don't know, maybe they'll get it someplace and start calling me. Which would be quite infuriating.

* * * *

Interviewer: Ööö... mitä sulla on niitä tilanteita, semmosia, milloin sä pitäisit pois päältä sitä?

Interviewee 2: Ööö, no, siis, kyllä mä voin kuvitella tilanteita, että missä mä en nää mitään syytä pitää sitä edes mukana. Että jos mä lähen käymään jossain maitokaupassa, niin miks mä ottasin kännykän mukaan, että jos joku haluaa yhyttää mut jostain maitohyllyn luota.

Interviewee 1: Sulla on kuitenkin maitokaupassa känny mukana sen takia, että sä saat soittaa mulle, että kumpaa maitoo sä nyt halusitkaan?

Interviewee 2: No, eipäs oo!

Interviewee 1: Onpas! Ihan taatusti! No, ei nyt ihan taatusti.

Interviewee 2: Tai jos menee jonnekin elokuviin, tai ulos syömään, niin se on vähän röyhkeetä, että istuu jossain ravintolassa ja puhuu kännykkään.

Interviewee 1: Mutt eiks se yks idea ollu, että sillä sä voit soittaa jollekin toiselle, että, hei ollaankin nyt menossa tän jälkeen tonne.

Interviewee 2: Niin, no jos se on mulla mukana, niin sitt mä voin laittaa sen päälle ja soittaa sille, mutta niinkun.

Interviewee 1: Ai niin, niin joo, voi se olla mukana, muttei oo päällä. Niin, ett itsekkäät.

Interviewee 2: Jos mä oon jo ihmisten kanssa jossain ja mä haluan olla vaan niiden kanssa, enkä... olla kaikkien tavoitettavissa.

Interviewer: Ööö... Odotaksä, että sä... tuut saamaan, tai saamaan sen kännykän kautta myös työpuheluja?

Interviewee 2: Mä... toivottavasti en. Mutt eihän sitä koskaan tiedä. Jostain ihme keinolla ne opiskelijat on saanu meidän

kotipuhelinnumeron, vaikka me on kyll kielletty antamasta sitä. Ne... en mä tiedä, ehkä ne saa sen selville ja rupee soitttelemaan. Mikä olis kyllä aika raivostuttavaa.

The woman accounts for her ability to leave the phone behind and her opinion that it is not always necessary to be available. Her description is an ironical one: why should anyone have to contact her while she is just out to buy some milk. The example she provides is instantly refuted by the spouse. He provides an equally ironical counter-example as to why she would need the phone while shopping for the groceries: she might want to ask something trivial such as what type of milk to get this time. In both of these descriptions the irony stems from the idea that people may use the mobile phone even if it is not strictly "necessary". The woman accounts for the ability to do without the phone and the man teases her about the chance of taking and using the phone anyway, thus slipping from the ideal she has just described.

Undeterred by this, she provides another example, this time a description of going out to the cinema or for dinner, and the irritation of someone blatantly talking to a mobile phone in such a setting. As the spouse still contradicts her on the fact that the cell phone may still be taken along, she deploys a very particular account about the ability to shut off the phone and only use it as necessary, to safeguard the time spent with friends. At this point the spouse, who is obviously teasing her, refers to the described action as being selfish (since keeping the phone shut off rebuffs any other people who might try to contact them at the same time). These contradictory remarks are interesting as they reveal the tensions that dictate the ways in which the device is used and understood as a part of everyday life. While the woman accounts for her principles the man is easily able to make challenging remarks that, indeed, most certainly do have merit in many situations since they

draw on the tensions that are discursively available to us as members of the culture.

The remark about being selfish is relevant to the themes studied in the next section where the mobile phone related social responsibilities are examined in more depth. It is a powerful argument against the account the woman has produced. The sensitivity of the topic is evident as the woman then accounts for her desire to keep the phone shut as a means to preserve the time with friends, to respect those with whom she is already committed to spend that particular time. The phone is thus described as a device with the potential to add another layer to the social interaction at any given time and during certain moments such mixing is considered impolite. Thus, active management of the use is necessary and justifiable.

Depending on the context (one only needs to think of weddings, funerals and such), probably any form of mobile communication can be described as unwelcome. Not only is, for example, being in a restaurant described as worth special attention to privacy, but also some other – and much more mundane – activities such as going to the local shop can be used as an example of time spent without a phone. Being inaccessible every once in a while is appealing and indicates the autonomy and freedom of the individual. It is also obvious in the descriptions above that once a commitment is made to spend some time with friends it is preferable not to engage in conversation with other friends by mobile phone. As such interruptions are accounted for as potentially annoying, it is hardly surprising that in this context an increased likelihood of receiving work related phone calls is then described as utterly exasperating. On the other hand there are examples in the data where it was pointed out that should accessibility outside working hours be a part of the job (and thus compensated somehow) it would then “obviously” be perfectly acceptable.

Privacy is not only described as an issue during free time. The data also includes descriptions of the desire to keep one's working hours free of unnecessary phone calls that are not work related although arrangements can be made for family members to reach each other if necessary. Furthermore, in the data there is, for example, a description of how using a mobile phone actually allows one to concentrate on one's own thoughts in a public place, such as a smoking area at work where social interaction might otherwise be expected. In such a context the phone may emerge as an instrument to gain privacy instead of compromising it – creating a cocoon instead of ripping it to pieces. So not only does the mobile phone introduce the opportunity to mix work and free time in unpleasant ways, but it also allows for active management of private moments at the micro level of the everyday. While elements of individual autonomy and privacy are most accounted for, the mobile phone blurs and rearranges the boundaries of private and public in many interesting ways.

In the previous sample the couple was describing the uses of a mobile phone and the man made several remarks that contradicted with the woman's account. It was mentioned that one of the remarks draws on the tension between autonomy and social responsibilities that people can utilise as they explain their mobile phone use. The next excerpt is another example where this tension is accounted for as the interviewee remembers what she initially thought about getting a mobile phone.

Interview #19. Woman 41-50 years.

Interviewer: OK. Well, do you remember how it was when you started using it, were there any problems related to learning to use it, for example?

Interviewee: Yes, things like... for starters I had this thing that, I was strongly opposed to getting a mobile phone.

[.] Perhaps I was somehow... like a little bit annoyed prior to getting one, that it would become a nuisance, that you are, are reachable. Of course there's the fact that you can switch it off (a sigh), but then, then I thought that when my daughter goes to school and she spent quite a bit of time with her cousins who are in the same class, at their place, and I always had to make sure of things like whether she has found the right bus and whether the bus is there, whether she's arrived and all that sort of thing.

* * * *

Interviewer: Joo. No mu- muistatko minkä- millaista se oli ottaa käyttöön, olisk siinä mitään niinku oppimiseen liittyviä pulmia esimerkiks?

Interviewee: Ooli, tämmösiä niinku että... ensinnä mulla oli se, että mä vastustin sinnikkäästi kännykän hankkimista mmm tää [.] ehkä jotenkin mua... vähän niinku etukäteen raivostuttiki se, että siitä kännykästä tulee semmonen riesa on, et on, on tavotettavissa tottakai siin on semmonenki et sen saa pois päältäkin (huokaisee), mutta tota, sit mä aattelin sillee, että kun on tytön koulun alkaminen ja sit mun tyttöni aika paljon kulki serkkutyttöje- serkkutyttönsä kanssa, joka on samalla luokalla, ni heillä kotonaan, sit sinne aina piti varmistella sit semmosia et onko tullu oikeeseen bussiin ja onko se bussi nyt päässy sinne, onks lapseni tullu ja kaikkee tällasia.

To describe the idea of buying and using a phone as “infuriating” is interesting as the ability to switch off the phone does not seem to make up for the constant reachability that the user is subjected to while the phone is on. The importance of keeping in touch with her daughter is at odds with her craving for privacy. This description enables the listener to see the interviewee as a person who regards her privacy very highly and quite clearly is not dependent on technology. She is a good parent and willing to compromise on her own ideals in order to provide best possible care for her daughter. Thus, in this context, using the phone is accounted for as a trade-off

or a sacrifice, underlining the urge to hold on to these values. Similarly, any accusations of being dependent on technology or not providing best possible care for the family are effectively warded off.

2.3.2 Managing social responsibilities

Mobile phones are used to manage social relationships and not all of them were addressed in the previous section. For example the last data excerpt in the previous section (interview #19, Woman 41-50 years) has some significant further aspects to it: while accounting for the reasons why she bought a mobile phone, the willingness to take care of friends and family is described to overcome the drawbacks in personal autonomy that the device may cause. The tension is a strong one: while the mobile phone can be described as technology that might enslave its user and compromise his or her autonomy, accounting for social responsibilities in a different context can result in markedly different descriptions about the mobile phone.

Parenting is a good example of this. Haddon (2000, 3-4) notes that the history of discourses regarding what counts as good parenting include the notion of monitoring of issues such as what does the child do and what types of media does the child have access to and how he or she uses them. Even though the child gains some autonomy in his or her communications by having a mobile phone, the parents also gain a way of keeping track of their children's whereabouts and doings (ibid.). Clearly, the mobile phone can be described as conducive to good parenting.

Consider the next excerpt as an example of these types of responsibilities - the mobile phone is being discussed in the context of family and the interviewee's own use in general.

Interview #03. Woman 41-50 years (continued).

Interviewer: Has your own life changed since you got a mobile phone several years ago?

Interviewee: What do you mean changed?

Interviewer: In some way.

Interviewee: In some way. Well, of course, let me see... Now I don't have to – like when I had a fixed phone – to record stuff on the answering machine, and so on, and I know that... for example my mother can reach me, I don't have to call her to see if she's having problems, or my kids or anyone, if there is... there have been illnesses and things like that, and I don't have to think about whether everything is ok – I can be reached. Those kinds of things. And then I can check things myself if I'm going to run errands, "I'm on my way now, are you at home, I'll pick up that and that", I don't have to waste time knocking on doors. These kinds of things. So... yes... I really cannot say whether my actions have changed because of this, but it's all become more straightforward.

* * * *

Interviewer: Onks se muuttanu se kännykän tota saaminen sun omaa elämää sen käyttöönottovuosien aikana?

Interviewee: Millä tavalla muuttanu?

Interviewer: Jollakin tavalla.

Interviewee: Jollakin tavalla. No tietysti sillä tavalla, et että tota noin... mun ei tarvi sillo kun oli lankapuhelin, laittaa puhelinvastaajaan mitään tai, tai näin, ja mä tiedän et... esimerkiks äiti saa mut kiinni, mun ei tarvi soittaa sille, onks sillä hätä, tai lapsilleni tai jollekin, jos on joku se... ollu tilanteita et on ollu sairauksia tai tämmösii näin, ni mun ei tarvi miettiä sitä juttuu et onks ne nyt kaikki asiat ookoo, et mut saa kiinni. Jossain sellasis asiois. Ja sitte se että ite voin kännykällä tarkistaa jos oon menossa jotain asiaa toimittaan et sopiiks se nyt et mä oon tulos nyt, ootsä kotona, hakeen sen tai sen, ei tartte käydä turhaan ovikelloo soittelemassa. Jossain tällasissa jutuissa. [...] Et... nii [...] Emmä osaa sanoo, et onks mun toimintani muuttunu sen takia, mut siis mutkattomammakshan se on.

The significance of being reachable at all times regardless of one's physical location is described as essential since, as a result, it is no longer necessary to worry about the well-being of significant others. Critical incidents in the past and the mere possibility of medical or other such emergencies are described in relation to the possession of a mobile phone. It emerges as an essential element in the social interaction between members of the family and positions the interviewee as someone providing good care as a responsible mother and care giver. The mobile phone has reportedly transformed these separate actions of making calls to a perpetual state of connectivity.

This phenomenon is recognized in Ling and Haddon's (2001) study about mobile telephony and the coordination of everyday life. It is noted that the use of mobile telephones "softens time" in the way it reduces the need to agree upon exact times and places where to meet people as these things can be negotiated and "micro-coordinated" on the move. In the data sample above the phone is described as an indispensable element in getting all the mundane activities done as efficiently as possible. The logic of this account has to do with the management of time as well as being a good carer. It also positions the speaker as a person capable of using the mobile phone to achieve one's own objectives.

The mobile phone links its owner with the outside world in many ways that can be described as inappropriate or unwanted but in some contexts it can just as well be described as a delightful or important way of staying accessible and being responsible to significant others. In such a context being continuously available is not described as a burden but rather as a natural and an important thing. These accounts are often consolidated with a reference to safety – for example that it is necessary to be accessible because people close to them may have issues regarding their well-being or because something unexpected may happen. While the ways in which people

use their cell phones – be it work related communication or phone calls between friends – are often susceptible to criticism in the data, it is interesting how the context of taking care of significant others' wellbeing or simply being polite to friends can transform the issue of accessibility into something quite different.

The discourse is not simply split between taking care of significant others, which is described as an essential thing, and on the other hand obsessively clinging to the cell phone – and thereby being enslaved by technology. Based on the data it is clear that, despite all the potential negative effects, owning a mobile phone can be accounted for as a favourable thing, as a basic utility of modern life that may be used only in ways that benefit the user the most. Mobile phone use is also described to reduce friction in the constant process of doing everyday things. As accounts regarding the use of the cell phone are given, they are formulated depending on the context: the argumentative logic can be premised on inescapable and important responsibilities, such as taking care of the family or the perceived threats to individual autonomy and privacy.

The notion of being a good and caring parent or a caretaker, being in close touch with friends and safety in general – for example in traffic – are described as important. The mobile phone is described as providing feelings of safety and comfort in these contexts. Safety in general has been reported as a central theme in mobile phone use in many studies (see. e.g. Geser 2004; Ling & Haddon 2001; Kopomaa 2000). In the accounts the mere existence of the phone dispels a lot of worries that one might have regarding family and closest friends. In this context the mobile phone emerges as an unobtrusive device requiring little attention. Thus, describing the mobile phone as an unproblematic tool that allows for easy maintenance of every day issues helps the speaker to accomplish a position as a good caretaker or

a friend instead of a person enslaved by technology. In a somewhat similar fashion, younger people with no families of their own emphasize the meaning of staying in touch with friends – being without a mobile phone could result in feeling excluded from the circle of friends. Eija-Liisa Kasesniemi and Pirjo Rautiainen (2001, 91) point out that this is especially true of young, schoolchildren.

The way the people in the data describe themselves in this context leaves latitude for them to be seen as socially active and responsible people. Should something unexpected happen, they need to be available: children need their mother, friends and members of the family may encounter hardships and so on. As a result, it is legitimate in this context to maintain that one has to be accessible. While it is pointed out that the new mobile devices have made people more efficient and added a new level of comfort to the management of everyday things an important point is to bear the moral responsibility of “being there”. It is hard to imagine anyone saying that “someone I love may need me but regardless of that I’ll just keep my phone shut off since I value my privacy so dearly”. Being compassionate and sensitive to other people’s needs and other such qualities in a person are very highly regarded in our culture and, depending on the context, the accounts can be premised with these values.

The following excerpt provides some points for further consideration. Prior to this sample the interviewee has mentioned that she likes to spend time at her summer cottage.

Interview #27. Woman 41-50 years.

Interviewer: When at the summer cottage, do you take the cell phone with you? Do you have a cell phone?

Interviewee: Yes I do. Which I hate every now and then.

Interviewer: Is it... do you have it switched on at all times?

Interviewee: Well, in fact it is on almost all the time, but...

Interviewer: At the summer cottage too?

Interviewee: Yes. But that is really a kind of... for some reason... anyways, I haven't owned one for long and at first I really only wanted to use it for emergencies. But somehow it's been left switched on as, after all, my friends do keep in contact with me. So I feel I'm doing terribly wrong to them if I keep the thing shut off. But it really doesn't clatter... clatter very often.

* * * *

Interviewer: Onks sulla siellä mökillä sitte puhelin mukana?
Onks sulla kännykkä?

Interviewee: On. Mitä mä vihaan aina välillä.

Interviewer: Onks se ... pidätsä sitä koko ajan päällä?

Interviewee: No, se itse asiassa on miltei koko ajan päällä, mutt tota noin...

Interviewer: Siellä mökilläkin?

Interviewee: Niin. Mutta se on kyllä semmonen... Jostain syystä... kuiteskin niin, mulla ei oo se hirveen kauaa ollu ja ensten mä en sitä halunnu ruveta pitämään ko vaan hätäpuhelimena. Mutt sitt se on jääny jotenkin, kun kuiteskin kaverit pitää yhteyttä. Niin musta tuntuu kauheelta niitä kohtaan jos mulla on sitte kiinni se vehje. Mutt ei se tosiaankaan pärise... pärise kovin paljo.

In this sample the interviewer's comments can be interpreted as morally charged. The logic behind the interviewee's account is clear: obviously it is not the physical device that's annoying – instead the phone is a means for anyone to contact her whenever they wish which in this context is described as exceedingly annoying. As the interviewee continues that “Well, in fact it is on almost all the time, but...” the reply can be interpreted as a confession. This is followed by an account about the reasons why the phone needs to be switched on regardless of being at the summer cottage. Clearly, the context warrants further accounting that is geared to justify the described use. This allows the listener to see the interviewee as

a person who is aware of the dilemmas regarding the use of the mobile phone to her personal autonomy and yet is prepared to compromise her ideals so as not to offend her friends. Through these discursive means she establishes a justified position regarding the use of technology in this context.

Again safety issues and the moral obligation to be reachable are discussed. The reason that the phone was acquired in the first place is explained soon after the sample above: a close member of the family was dying and apart from that the purchase might have been further postponed. After this the interviewee describes her efficiency when using the phone to take care of things and how she does not really like “babbling” over the phone too often. Furthermore, she stresses the fact that she does not give her cell phone number to anyone related to work in order to protect her privacy. After a short discussion related to the features of the phone, the interviewer returns to this issue:

Interview #27. Woman 41-50 years (continued).

Interviewer: So really, as you said, about that... you really cherish your privacy. So, don't you ever have situations where you switch off the mobile phone?

Interviewee: Yes, or then I put it on silent mode and see if anything happens. Yes, sometimes, but really not quite so often these days. Simply because, for the most part, because my mother lives alone and she's really kind of attached to me so if she wants to reach me she can. I was thinking maybe more, that if I want privacy I'll put it on silent mode.

* * * *

Interviewer: Mutt ett, tosiaan kun sä sanoit, sitä niinkun... tykkäät niinku yksityisyydestä, niin, eikö oo tilanteita, että missä sitten laitat pois sen kännykän?

Interviewee: Oon, tai sitt mä laitan äänettömälle sen, mä katon jos tapahtuu. On joskus, mutta harvemmin mulla se nykyään on. Ihan tuota, ehkä lähinnä sen takia, että mun

äiti elää yksin ja se tuota noin niin, se on jotenkin kiinni mussa, niin, että jos se haluaa saada mut kiinni, niin sillä on mahdollisuus saada. Mä nyt ajattelin ehkä enempi sitä, että siinä, sitt jos mä haluan sitä yksityisyyttä, mä paan sen äänettömälle.

The interviewer's question draws on the cultural image of the communication cocoon. The context warrants some further elaboration however: the distinction between silent mode and the phone switched off is accounted for. The silent mode is not such a clear rejection of any attempts to reach her as switching the phone off would be. As she describes this, her mother's needs play a big part in making the situation understandable. A legitimate reason is provided that supports the logic of this use of the phone. Treading such a fine line between being responsible and yet accomplishing an autonomous position is a good illustration of the tensions in the discourse of autonomy and social responsibility and our ability to intelligibly fashion our accounts that are premised with conflicting values.

The silent mode on the phone is described as allowing the interviewee to escape incoming phone calls while still keeping track of whether anyone has tried to reach her. This way she is able to check this at her own discretion and to decide which calls or messages to return. This can be seen as "being there" for significant others even if no live conversation takes place immediately. It is easy to see how in this context text messages can serve much the same purpose as the call register. No immediate response is required, but the connection with others is maintained. The messages and the call register provide cues regarding the needs of others while they let the interviewee conveniently decide what to respond to and when.

Social responsibilities and the complex nature of work related phone calls is further illustrated by the following sample. Prior to this quote the interviewer asked whether the cell phone introduces problems in separating work and free

time. The interviewee explains that as he is a teacher he needs to keep the phone on even during classes so that parents can reach him in case their children are ill. Otherwise they would have to contact the school secretary and the interviewee says that it would be unreasonable on his part as it would burden others. However, just before the sample below he says that he has expressed his request be contacted only during reasonable hours.

Interview #30. Man 31-40 years.

Interviewee: And then, as I have the distance education thing, where I have to be available during evenings. So, what I have done is that I don't always keep the phone switched on in order to... Because it might then slip – I mean the parents only call every now and then about someone being sick or for a request to be excused and so on. It's not a problem, at all [.] These... but the problem with this distance education thing is that since all the assignments are done as distance learning, in a way then they are [-.] more, as they are adult students, and have to study independently, and have a lot of questions, then it might easily slip into something where I constantly have to be a teacher. And that's why I have, when the distance education period is going on, which is six weeks, then I have just given [.] certain times when I'm reachable, and. [.] And then I have also told my friends that I'm now having this distant learning period and that I won't be keeping my phone on all the time so that I don't constantly have to [.] be at work even when I'm home. During those periods I have switched it off but then again every now and then it is left switched on.

* * * *

Interviewee: Ja tuota sitte kun mulla on se etälukio mmm homma, eliikkä mulla on sitä iltapäivystystä niin mää oon sitte tehny sillee että mä en pidä aina kännykkää päällä että, koska sillon saattas niinku lipsahtaa, siis vanhemmathan ei soittele ku aina sillon tällön mmm että

joku sairastapaus tai nii poissaolopyyntö tai niin edelleen, se ei oo ongelma, ollenkaan [...] nää, mutta tuota niin tässä etälukiotoiminnassa on se ongelma että kun tehtävät on etätehtäviä, ikään kun on sitten [...] enemmän ih-, kun ne on mmm aikuisopiskelijoita niin, ja, ja tuota joutuu itsenäisesti työskentelemään ni on paljon kysyttävää ni se vois helposti lipsahtaa mmm siihen että joutus koko ajan olee opettajana. Ja sen takia mä oon sitte, silloin ku mullon se etälukiojakso mikä kestää sen kuus viikkoa niin mä oon ilmottanu ihan [...] vaan tietyn ajan millon mä oon tavattavissa ja [...] ja silloin mä oon kyllä yle- ystävillekin sanonu että mullon nyt tää etälukiohomma että mä en piä kännykkää aina päällä että ei tarvii olla koko ajan [...] niinku töissä sitte kotonaki. Silloin mä oon sen sulkenu mutta tosi ainahan se joskus jää päälle.

After this account he also explains that another reason for keeping the phone switched on during working hours is in case something happens to his daughter so that he can be reached immediately. He also points out that this is particularly important as they live in rural area, where it might be difficult for the children otherwise to get help.

In the excerpt the work related use of the mobile phone is described in great detail. Unlike in day-time teaching, working with the adult night schoolers has led him to regulate the times he keeps his phone switched on. Work related phone calls to a personal cell phone during "reasonable hours" are described acceptable if they serve the purpose of getting the work done in a more efficient way. Thus, a manageable solution where efficiency at work and the resulting loss of privacy are in an acceptable balance has been created. In daytime he described responsibilities towards the parents of schoolchildren and during the evenings in night school periods he accounts for his responsibilities towards friends. Interestingly, if he did not regulate the use of the phone he says being a teacher might easily "slip" into an all-day occupation. To protect his free time,

the time devoted to himself and his family, he controls the use of the mobile phone. And in order to fulfil his responsibilities towards friends it is described as necessary to inform them about the reason for his being unavailable so as not to offend them. Through these discursive means, a justifiable balance between various responsibilities and the ability to stay on top of the situation as an autonomous individual is accomplished.

Using a mobile phone is accounted for as a task that requires attention to maintain autonomy and yet to be responsible in appropriate ways. Through this account the interviewee emerges as a person who recognizes the potential pitfalls in either direction and manages to utilise the technology so that the outcome is as positive as possible while the idea that he would be enslaved by technology is dismissed. Social responsibilities regarding the use of the cell phone are related to the desire to secure individual autonomy, for example, through careful attention to individual privacy. On the other hand calls from significant others (and not just on work related matters) are sometimes regulated in order to create moments where individual privacy takes priority. The sense of responsibility is described to arise from the importance of being a good care giver for the family (e.g. children, elderly parents) as well as the importance of maintaining good relationships with friends. According to the analysis, these relationships are given very high priority. However, even if a person is not strictly speaking obligated to use the cell phone to receive work related phone calls he or she might still do so out of loyalty to the people who are affected by the decision (e.g. parents of schoolchildren, co-workers). Thus, both the desire for autonomy and taking care of social responsibilities are complex issues that people manage on a contextual basis in order to strike an intelligible and legitimate balance between the two.

3.5 Conclusions

This chapter presented examples of accounts where people discuss their use of the cell phone in various contexts that have made it evident how the cell phone can be described to have the ability to jeopardise individual autonomy. This chapter has also laid out a framework of language use about the management of accessibility: the ways of describing the main mobile phone related tensions. In light of the analysis, the division between the desire for autonomy and the desire to be available is not a clear-cut issue between various social bonds and work related issues. Instead, there are exceptions to this as the logic that is not solely based, for example, on the urge to safeguard one's free time from work related issues.

The conflict between the urge to cherish autonomy and yet maintain the position of a socially responsible person proves an interesting case of how people account for their day-to-day activities through discursive means. People may, for example, want to keep their mobile phones off during the day as they know that family members could, should they really need to, also reach them via a fixed phone. The free time communication elicited the most elaborate responses from the interviewees. This is due to the freedom to individually decide how to arrange and regulate communication flows outside working hours.

As both answering the phone and leaving it unanswered or off are described as having social consequences, owning a mobile phone results in a kind of never-ending contact with others that is sometimes difficult to manage. People handle these responsibilities by e.g. describing morally acceptable places and situations where the phone can or should be ignored. These accounts invoke a cultural image of a "communication cocoon": various situations, places or moments that "must" be guarded against any unwelcome

threats to individual autonomy and privacy. On the other hand, there are moral obligations towards other people that people account for regarding their use of mobile phones. Ignoring the phone or shutting it is often described as a potentially impolite gesture to significant others. Or it could result in failure to receive important information about the well-being of others. Thus, it is easy to see how tensions between these things are imminent: the responsibilities described may be at odds with individual aspirations and the desire to regulate the use of the phone.

The discourse of autonomy and social responsibility includes occurrences in the data describing how some people may, perhaps, lose the ability to enjoy privacy due to the compelling need to be in contact with others. The notion of “normal” use is deployed in reference to the ability to cope without technology or at least without being too dependent on it. Abnormal ways of using technology are, however, described as understandable or particularly useful e.g. for handicapped people. While the interviewees point out that the mobile communication devices facilitate daily errands, they are also potentially enslaving, taking over control from individuals. Thus, following the argumentative logic of the discourse, being able to ignore the phone not only constitutes a neutral device but also a normal user. Finally, mobile devices are accounted for as rationally justified, basic utilities of modern daily life, but in some contexts their inappropriate use renders them merely as toys or ego boosters.

Not only do the accounts define acceptable use of the communication devices but they also constitute “normal behaviour” and “normal people”. Abnormal situations, such as various crises in close relationships – someone having a serious illness for example – immediately activate the communication network among those involved. Times like these are described as making communication especially crucial for everybody

and, at the same time, the devices and their uses warrant a lot more attention. When people explain their uses of technology they sometimes refer to instances like this and account for the effect it might still have on them and their willingness to negotiate the use of the mobile phone in various situations.

The discourse analysed in this chapter constitutes ways of appropriating mobile communication as a part of everyday life. First, the urge to safeguard individual autonomy results in constructing justifiable “communication cocoons” where communication can ideally be regulated as desired. On the other hand, to cope with the moral obligations especially regarding close relationships, the repertoires constitute morally acceptable ways of maintaining the webs and structures of these relationships but also, at times, providing discreet means of control over the actual live communication.

The importance of autonomy applies to both work and free time related communication. The mobile phone can be accounted for as a threat that blurs the boundaries between work and free time in unwanted ways. It is evident that people attach great value to their free time. If the use of the mobile phone is not an obligatory part of the job, people regard it as important to protect their free time from work related communication. On the other hand there may be situations where availability through one’s personal phone actually makes some work related matters significantly easier to handle. In such a case people are inclined to use their mobile phones to make things easier as well as out of loyalty to their workmates and other people involved. Thus work related uses and social responsibilities may sometimes also be connected.

The accounts for the importance of controlling work related communication through mobile phone use decisions reflect the high value and importance of being able to distance oneself from the stresses of working life. Taking care of the family, good parenting and care giving are also strong cultural

norms. The family is described as being prioritised very high if not the highest of all regarding the use of the mobile phone. Individual social relationships based on friendship are also important and people account for their responsibilities to explain – at least to some extent – why they are not constantly available. Yet friends are also a threat to one’s privacy at times, as are family members. Thus, the use of the mobile phone is also regulated so that at times not even significant others can make contact straight away. “Obvious” exceptions to this are accounted for, such as health related crises and other such times when constant availability is generally described as necessary.

The mobile phone is also considered to be a very private device. This was demonstrated when advertising via mobile phones was discussed – people who had received unsolicited advertising on their cell phones described it as particularly offensive. While this is not directly connected to the themes discussed in this chapter, it helps to gain perspective on the ways in which mobile phones define boundaries between private and public in contemporary Finnish society. The responsibility towards family and friends and the urge to maintain individual autonomy can be seen as distinct layers of mobile phone use. When people talk about the ways they use their phones they also construct boundaries between private and public as well as negotiate and renew norms regarding the proper use of the phone across these boundaries. These accounts are the result of the technology challenging conventional boundaries between private and public. In and through this talk justifiable ways to manage the situation are constantly formulated.

According to the analysis the accounts are fashioned in each context in ways that are justified and premised with shared cultural values in order to make sense to all parties. The

discourse of autonomy and social responsibility is loaded with tensions that can be presented as follows:

Controlled device (autonomy)	↔	Controlling device (loss of control and privacy)
Freedom (individual aspirations)	↔	Responsibility (friendship, parenting, obligations)
Justified (mobile phone necessary utility)	↔	Debatable (device as a toy, status symbol)
Normality (legitimate use)	↔	Deviance (abnormal use of the technology)
Health (independency of technology)	↔	Disability (enslaving technology, dependency)

As people account for the use of the mobile phone, some of this talk is normative and constitutes a “normal user”. Deviant uses are described as being at odds with various aspects such as good manners, traditions, specific locations or the maintenance or development of individual abilities. Value is attached to purchasing and using the mobile phone because it is necessary instead of getting it just for the sake of owning and displaying one. It is described as an important principle to be in control of the use of the phone instead of being enslaved by it. Similarly, the maintenance of individual autonomy is a strong value. It is accounted for as a supremely essential ability to maintain control and nurture one’s privacy.

However, related to this and generating a lot of talk is the tension between two virtues: individual aspirations (often related to spending some time alone or in specific company) and friendship, family, good parenting and a host of other types of possible important obligations⁵. By discursive means

5 Kant already argued that freedom of the will is “not only a necessary but also a sufficient condition of the moral law”; they are, thus, reciprocal concepts (Allison 1986).

people are able to align their accounts with these values and position themselves in a legitimate way in each context. The discourse of autonomy and social responsibility and the management of discursive morality within it are fuelled by a set of complex tensions between these values at the heart of contemporary culture.

In their analysis of the cultural meanings of a Norwegian "*hytte*" and the use of the mobile phone Ling, Julsrud and Krogh (1997) note that the key positive issues about having a mobile phone in the *hytte* are freedom, security, responsibility and efficient relaxation. Freedom and security arise from the ability to communicate regardless of geographical location and the ability to get or provide help in case of accidents or other emergencies. With responsibility they refer to the ability to see to the needs of e.g. one's family or work related matters. Efficient relaxation means that people can quickly and efficiently dispatch work related matters while vacationing. However, as the *hytte* can be seen as a sanctuary, Ling, Julsrud and Krogh (ibid.) note that people also want to seclude themselves from mobile communication and cherish the relaxing time on vacation. This is obviously subject to various negotiations as there are also many positive aspects to having a phone. They also note that with the arrival of mobile communications technology the social adjustment has only begun. Accessibility that might be appropriate in some situations can be very much out of place in others and this has proven socially problematic. They point out that mobile communication devices demand active management and that it is important to ask how much people need a refuge from all this "storm of communication". In their data they noticed a recurring metaphor of a one-way barrier between an individual and the rest of the world: it is good to be able to contact other people but not necessarily good to be reachable all the time. This they call the "Gore-Tex principle" as the telephone in

effect acts as a membrane between the user and the world. They also note that the need to control the use of a telephone is not a new phenomenon but has been an issue already with the “traditional” fixed phone. (ibid.).

However, the user now has more options to regulate communications than before (Ling, Julsrud and Krogh 1997). But this is often socially problematic. In many ways these findings are similar to those presented in this chapter. Here the approach to this topic is to present the discourse and the tensions that are a part of it and then discuss the cultural categories that they reflect. Enhancing the understanding the cultural position of mobile phone use contributes to the topic in general. The pervasive nature of mobile communications and the issues of continuous availability (e.g. Cooper 2002, 27-29; Kopomaa 2000, 91-93; Ling 1997; Haddon 2000; Castells et al 2004, 80; Katz 2003, 22-25) have been widely noted in research. Less attention, however, has been paid to the discursive production and management of moralities that pertain to the mobile phone use.

When people describe the social interaction and the uses of the mobile phone as a part of their daily lives they also position their accounts within the framework of cultural expectations and values related to social relationships. Thus, the accounts are treated as samples of discursive management of moralities which is deeply embedded in the everyday interaction (e.g. Burr 1995, 120; Nikander 2002, 150-157). These moralities are connected to various culturally shared values and norms that enable us to connect with the accounts. It is evident that using mobile phones is not an isolated activity among daily routines – quite the contrary as it is embedded in all the activities and social interactions that the totality of every day life consists of. Furthermore, throughout the extracts a moral geography of everyday life emerges where some areas are mobile phone friendly whereas other areas call for restricted use.

Thus, mobile phone use as a part of the totality of everyday life is inextricably linked with moralities, values and ideologies of the surrounding society. Billig et al. (1988, 10-15) discuss the problematic nature of ideologies and how ideologies have counter-ideologies. Our common sense provides us with an understanding about our decisions: a decision that might yield some benefit, might on the other hand mean hurting other people. This is how we ponder over our actions and how we can talk about them in several ways during the course of our day-to-day lives. Billig et al. also note that individualism, for example, has aroused a lot of moral deliberations. Individual freedom is a strong value but on the other hand few of us could comfortably proclaim ourselves selfish and socially irresponsible personalities. Values thus have counter-values (e.g. freedom and responsibility) and tensions exist between them. The principal values of the French Revolution are a good example: *liberté, égalité, fraternité* (freedom, equality, fraternity) are much appreciated values but limitations to these were also necessary (Billig et al. 1988 35-36). Taken to extremes, single values can be criticised. Such tensions fuel the discourse of autonomy and social responsibility presented in this chapter. To gain an understanding of the argumentative logic and to make sense of these tensions they have been studied in the context of everyday life mobile phone use. Billig et al. also emphasised the importance of the context: what is justified can be made intelligible by seeing what is being criticised. (Billig et al. 1988, 34-38).

To extend this line of reasoning the study by Kurri and Wahlström's (2005) on couple's therapy talk is considered: in the study individual autonomy and responsibilities towards other people emerged as central themes. Kurri and Wahlström note that it is necessary to study these moral dilemmas and the way they are constructed in actual therapeutic encounters (Kurri & Wahlström 2005, 367) where they can best be

made intelligible. Echoing this tension, Alasuutari (1986) has observed discord between personal freedom and the relationships with significant others in the life stories of blue-collar men. Clearly, major cultural categories are being dealt with here. Mobile phone use is intricately intermeshed with these categories. Hence mobile phone use creates a lot of talk as people premise their accounts with such strong values.

Tensions like these enable the justification and criticism of uses in various contexts. As was discussed in the section “theme of morality in interaction research”, Jayyusi points out that morality is produced in and through the daily activities and interactions of everyday life and is thus available for research. The reflexive availability of shared cultural resources enables us, in the conduct of everyday life, to account for our actions. As Jayyusi (1991, 237) pointed out: morality should not be seen as regulative of social conduct but, rather, constitutive of it. Hence, the production and management of morality related to mobile phone use is related to the shared values of present day society.

3 DISCURSIVE ELEVATION OF INTERNET USES AND THE CULTURAL CATEGORY OF HOBBY

3.1 Introduction

People's various hobbies often surface in discussion during interviews. People do not hesitate to tell – even spontaneously – what their hobbies are and how they are related to other aspects of their lives. According to statistics various free time activities are deemed important and their significance has clearly risen in recent years. The portion of those who regard free time as very important rose 12 percent from 1991 to 2002 (Liikkanen 2005, 11-15; Nätti & Anttila 2002, 76). As to the roles of media and specifically the Internet, not only can the computer and the World Wide Web as such be seen as providing some people with a hobby (as is often thought to be the case with “nerds” or online gamers, for example) but they may also enhance the experience and facilitate activities related to other hobbies.

Internet has become an increasingly accessible and popular medium in Finnish households and the uses of Internet can often be related to individual pursuits other than work. This chapter explores how people fashion accounts about their Internet uses, particularly in the context of their non-work

activities. The interest is in the consequences when the cultural category of hobbies is invoked in the discussion and how “proper use” of the Internet is accounted for. Through this analysis will be shown that Internet use is an issue subject to moral reasoning.

There is a range of research on hobbies with a variety of approaches. While the concept of a hobby seems intuitively clear and its meaning is mostly taken for granted in everyday language, it is a somewhat challenging subject for research. Hobbies have been studied, for example, in psychology and nursing. These studies have portrayed hobbies e.g. as a means to gain or maintain some positive aspects in life. On the other hand their risks and connections to various aspects of human wellbeing have been evaluated. Furthermore, lists of hobbies have been used as an indicator of people’s creativity (Wolfradt & Pretz 2001) and the importance of leisure time in coping with stressful working life (Trenberth & Dave 2002) has been studied.

In research the concept of leisure is usually related to hobbies: hobbies are defined as leisure time activities. Hamilton-Smith (1990) emphasizes the complex nature of leisure itself by stating that “activities undertaken during non-work-time” do not adequately explain the concept. Instead, he suggests that for an individual, leisure can be the experience arising from an exercise that achieves personal satisfaction and is a result of free will, regardless of the place or time where this occurs. He also stresses the need to separate leisure from the notion of recreation instead of using them synonymously. As leisure has generally been seen as non-work, as a result of the partitioning of work and non-work time, Hamilton-Smith suggests that recreation might best be understood as an activity which takes place within leisure time. In this sense, hobbies are also recreational activities. The amalgamation of free will choices, gratifying recreation and involvement is

called the leisure experience, which in turn is greatly affected by the individual's social and economical position (*ibid.*).

Another way to categorise leisure activities is to make a distinction between serious and casual leisure. Robert Stebbins (see e.g. Stebbins 2001) introduced these terms to distinguish between the immediate, short-term popular leisure of the twentieth century and the kind of activities that require steadier, long term efforts. Stebbins describes casual leisure, such as watching television, requiring only minimal or no training and offering little or no feelings of full existence. According to him, serious leisure, on the other hand, offers a deeper experience of existence and is "the steady pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist or career volunteer activity that captivates its participants with its complexity and many challenges". Serious leisure also rewards people in considerable ways by allowing them to fulfil one's human potential, exercising skills and providing valued memories and experiences thereby developing an appreciated identity. In contrast to this, casual leisure is more superficial and does not offer a basis for a lifestyle where a leisure activity is in fact a part of the identity (Stebbins 2001; also see Yoder 1997 and Baldwin & Norris 1999). Interestingly, here, watching television is depicted as an inferior use of time when it is compared to "serious leisure". The cultural category of hobbies does indeed, based on this, seem to resonate with the above description of "serious leisure".

Used in research and widely shared in western culture, the category of hobbies clearly packs a lot of cultural punch. Historically, the notion of hobbies has been used in a politically motivated way. During the Great Depression of the 1930's in the United States there was a rapid growth of hobby related discussion and hobbies were seen as a positive way to spend one's free time. Especially as there were many under- or unemployed people, hobbies were widely promoted in the

public discourse (Gelber 1991). During that time the category of hobbies was utilised as an ideological construct, geared to differentiate between “good” and “bad” pastimes. Gelber points out that at this time, the term hobby became popular not merely as a description of a leisure activity, but as a means to attach “the weight of authoritative approval when applied to individual activities”. Thus, the term was an instrument to differentiate between welcome and debatable forms of pastime activities instead of being simply a “neutral” description of some types of leisure activity.

Gelber notes that hobbies also served the purpose of maintaining and preserving work ethics at a time when employment itself was scarce. It was clear that hobbies were not work but that they were not just play either – instead hobbies were seen as voluntary activities that consisted of something more than “mere” entertainment or, even, something “bad”. Having a hobby was, then, almost like having a job without some of the unfavourable aspects of an ordinary paid job. Since nobody could be laid off from a hobby, unlike from any job, hobbies actually provided a sense of continuity that unstable labour markets so obviously lacked. The importance of hobbies as respite from the stresses of work was also recognized but hobbies were nevertheless promoted to adults and children alike. Hobbies were even seen as an “antidote for juvenile delinquency”. People were also instructed on how to choose a good hobby and advised to keep challenging themselves through their hobbies. (Gelber 1991).

Hobbies are a basic category of contemporary societies and manifest themselves in various spaces. Gelber (see Walkowitz 2001) elucidated the reorganization of social space through gendered hobbies. The workshops in basements typically became male spaces which even today have their commercial counterparts in hardware stores. Of course, a range of dedicated spaces for hobbies exist such as football

fields, training centres and so forth. Commodification of many recreational activities (see e.g. Yoder, 1997 and Hamilton-Smith, 1990) is said to play an important role in contemporary leisure experience and hobby related knowledge has been incorporated in R&D (Kotro 2004).

This study, however, treats hobbies as a discursive resource. In the data people talk about their use of the Internet and discuss their views on the web in general. The subject may provoke elaborate and detailed accounts about the proper use of the medium – acceptable ways of using the Internet. Internet certainly is not a uniform medium for all users, but, on the contrary, provides each user with a host of options to browse the particular contents of interest. Some types of Internet use, such as some online chat groups or random surfing in general, warranted elaborations and questioning more than other uses. Internet is no different from many other types of media insofar as it creates discussion about the merits of the use. While accounting for their uses people express their awareness of various values with which the acceptability of the uses and the worth of the time spent can be negotiated and justified in each context.

In the following excerpt the interviewer assumes that the female interviewee might be interested in participating in online chats. This assumption is quickly denied with considerable vigour by both interviewees.

Interview #31. Man 31-40 years (the interviewee 2) & woman 31-40 years (the interviewee 1).

Interviewer: But Anne, I could imagine that you, as you said that you do [...] like, umm, check your email, that you would visit some other places, such as going online and chatting somewhere.

Interviewee 1: Oh come on. I mean that's something I really don't get. Like, it is so, you know, the whole idea makes me sick you know. [...] Ahh, to join some absolute strangers

in some [...] some stupid comments you know, that [...] (laughter).

Interviewee 2: Truly brilliant.

Interviewee 1: So no, no, you know nooo. So that [...] you can really shake me out of it if I go and chat someplace [...] so no, then [...] ahh.

* * * *

Interviewer: Mut Anne susta mä voisin ajatella et sä, niinkun sanoit et sä käyt [...] niin, ääh sähköpostia tarkastele-tarkastamassa niin sä kävisit jossain muualla, vaikka chattailemassa jossain linjalla.

Interviewee 1: Älä viitti. Siis sitä mä en niinku ymmärrä. Siis, se on niinko tiätkö jotakin aivan oksettava ajatus niinkö, siis [...] ääh, mennä joittenkin uppo-outojen ihmisten kanssa johonki [...] jotaki typerä kommentteja niinkö että [...] (nauria).

Interviewee 2: Tosi järkevää.

Interviewee 1: Siis ei, ei niinku eiii. Että siis [...] mua saa kyllä ravistella mmm jos mä meen chat- chattailemaan johonkin [...] et ei, siis [...] ahh.

For some reason the interviewer makes an assumption about the female interviewee's Internet use⁶. By uttering "oh come on" first and not avoiding strong metaphors the interviewee makes it clear that she does not chat and in fact really dislikes the whole idea. She immediately accounts for her opinion on chatting as something repulsive since it is in contrast with several attributes of interaction that she considers important. First of all she points out that random chatting with complete strangers is a revolting idea. The other interviewee concurs by uttering an ironical remark "truly brilliant" in support of

6 Although it is beyond the scope of discourse analysis to make guesses about discussants' thoughts, here a claim is made about the interviewee's habits and the reply is a clue about the way in which it was interpreted. Sometimes interviewees (and no doubt interviewers) may make assumptions about the tastes of other discussants e.g. based on their perceived "class" (see e.g. Skeggs et al. 2008 and Seiter 1990).

the woman's description. This account constructs online chats as a polar opposite to meaningful, inspiring conversations with friends and people who are familiar and trustworthy. Here chatting is associated with worthless comments and an ultimate way to completely waste one's time. Chat is, in fact, likened to losing one's wits: the interviewee remarks, albeit in a humorous tone, that should she be seen doing this, she wants to be "shaken out of it", as if she were hypnotized or inadvertently caught in some peculiar and uncharacteristic state of mind.

Certainly not all forms of online interaction by all interviewees are described as void of any value in this manner. Instead, the descriptions depend on the context of the interview. In another context online exchange can be seen as a fine way of using the Internet.

Interview #62. Man 31-40 years.

Interviewer: So, what is it that makes it meaningful and nice, is it like fun to be in contact with people like that or do you learn something in it or, or.

Interviewee: I wouldn't call it entertaining in the newsgroups there are a lot of expert people. Newsgroups aren't yet, I mean, and they probably never will become something for the mass audience. It's a bit like an inner circle, although Outlook Express is supplemented with windows, and you can use it with that, but the majority of people don't know what newsgroups are, that's pretty much how it is.

Interviewer: Oh, so that too makes it like, that there are pretty knowledgeable people there?

Interviewee: There are some pretty knowledgeable people over there. You'll get your question answered pretty quickly over there. And I have also answered quite many questions. So there's pretty good team spirit over there, like you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours.

* * * *

Interviewer: Tota mikä siitä tekee niinku mielekästä ja mukavaa, onks se niinku hauskaa olla sillai ihmisten kanssa tekemisissä vai oppiiks siinä vai vai.

Interviewee: Emmä sitä hauskaks sanos mutta uutisryhmissä on aika paljon asiantuntevaa väkee uutisryhmät ei oo vielä niinkun su- eikä varmaan koskaan tuukkaan suuren yleisön jutuks se on vähän semmosta sisäpiiri vaikka se Windowsissa tulee mukana Outlookexpressi jolla sitä voi käyttää mutta suurin osa ihmisistä ei tiedä mitä on uutisryhmät, niinhän se on.

Interviewer: Ai et sekin tekee siit semmosen et siel on aika osaavaa porukkaa.

Interviewee: Siel on aika osaavaa porukkaa siel saa aika äkkiä vastauksen kysymykseensä ja itteki on tullu aika paljo ihmisten kysymyksiin vastailtua et siel on semmonen aika hyvä me-henki että minä autan sinua, auta sinä minua.

Here the online interaction is accounted for in a favourable tone. It is noteworthy, however, how the interviewee contrasts the newsgroups he uses with other kinds of Internet forums that are not of equally high quality due to easy access and the resulting popularity. Thus, the value of the forums he uses is presented as a result of the select, knowledgeable people who are there to share ideas and provide solutions for technical problems for instance. Help is often said to be quickly available, making this a particularly useful forum. The interviewee rejects the idea that this is "fun", and describes the interaction to be more of a serious matter than merely entertaining. Being fun is contrasted with expert knowledge and the ability to provide help to other people with their "real-life" dilemmas which, in this case, are technology oriented. A rewarding sense of belonging to such group is accounted for.

In the sample above the newsgroups are described as still being a domain for relatively experienced users and while they have become slightly more accessible over the years they still, at least to some extent, retain their special character. It can be

seen that such Internet uses can be accounted for as acceptable or not at all acceptable in different contexts. The diversity and contradiction in the ways people describe online interaction is, at first, quite baffling. It is evident that in some contexts many forms of online interaction are readily belittled while there are also ways to make them appropriate and justified by accounting for them in a specific context.

Invoking the cultural category of hobbies has effects on how Internet uses are described but it also emerges as a part of a wider tendency to account for the uses in a certain way. This chapter elucidates how some of these uses are subject to questioning whereas others are regarded as useful and, thus, do not warrant any particular criticism. In what follows I show how the use of the category of hobby can turn what otherwise might be deemed a waste of time into a worthy pursuit. As to how this discursive resource is utilised when people account for uses of the Internet is the focus of this chapter (also see Luomanen 2006).

To gain a further understanding of how people make sensible accounts of these uses this chapter also asks, in light of the data, what constitutes a “hobby”? In particular, the interest is on how people utilise the category of hobbies or such specialised interests in order to legitimate their Internet uses. The research question may then be formulated as follows: what significance does the category of a hobby have for people? How do people account for “proper” and acceptable use of the Internet in general and what relevance do hobbies have in justifying a particular use and making it appropriate? Through the analysis Internet use will be shown to be a complex moral issue.

3.2 Interpreting talk about hobbies – analysis and the data

The way people account for their use of the Internet and the argumentative logic produced in these descriptions are studied. Hence, the various meanings and implications people (including the interviewer) assign to the uses discussed – in order to make sense in the specific context – are of interest. Such an approach allows the researcher to identify what cultural values the accounts utilise and what kind of logic is produced in these particular contexts of interaction. These values and logic are not artefacts of the interview situation but enable us to understand what kinds of factors underlie the uses and what the uses are likely to be like.

While studying the data in order to understand this particular theme it soon became obvious that many Internet uses are something the interviewees were accounting at some length. Not necessarily “actively” or consciously, but nevertheless in a manner that elaborated the nature of the use and aligned it with some notions of what is proper and what is not proper use. This may be a reflection of the relative newness and fast evolving nature of the medium, particularly in domestic environments.

The data gathered in the Media and Everyday Life project includes a great number of accounts of the uses of Internet in various contexts. To begin with, special attention was paid to some of the most recent interviews carried out with people with broadband Internet access. Both the acceptable and questionable (or, rather, uses warranting some justification) ways of using the Internet are discussed in the data. Occurrences of the word hobby (and variations of it) were searched with NVivo software. The data retrieved was then studied. From these occurrences spontaneous occurrences were separated from those where the interviewer initiated the

subject. The uses were largely similar in both contexts with the exception of the importance of the category of hobbies being marked as an important one through hesitation when the interviewer asked about interviewee's hobbies. Furthermore, accounts of Internet use outside the hobby related context were also studied.

Furthermore, the meanings of the word hobby in general were studied instead of limiting the inquiry to the occurrences where it was used in conjunction with some technology. Even though the interviews did not focus on hobbies, it is a category that emerges as a much used resource for rendering cogent accounts of leisure activities: both the "serious" as well as other kinds of activities. One way of conducting this analysis was to look at the samples where the word hobby occurred and try to substitute alternative words or, rather, descriptions to replace the word "hobby".

This chapter does not claim to reveal whether the informants have put a lot of effort into their hobbies or piece together the way hobbies have truly had an "impact" their lives. Instead, the way the category of hobby contributes to the logic of the accounts and the ways in which it is utilised to yield meaningful descriptions of activities are studied. This is not to say that the shared understanding created by the use of the word has no implications for the way people organise their activity. Instead, by elucidating the meanings attached to the category of hobby the premises contributing to how people regard their activities in their day-to-day lives can be better understood.

By using language people do things and construct reality (e.g. Potter and Wetherell 1987, 35; Jokinen, Juhila & Suoninen 1993, 17-18; also Potter and Wetherell 2001, 200-201). The way Internet use is produced in the accounts depends heavily on the context: there is marked variation in the way these uses can be talked about. The following sections elucidate the logic

created in the accounts utilising the category of hobby. The focus is then broadened to include Internet use descriptions outside this context.

3.3 Leisure activities and the Internet – an overview

Leisure has become an important part of contemporary life in modern societies. Individual pursuits outside the realm of working life are a significant driving force for many actions and interactions that take place over the Internet. Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that the digital environment has not only introduced new ways of gaining knowledge about hobbies, but also the way hobby related social exchange takes place.

The number of Internet connections in Finnish homes has risen fast during the last ten years. At 2002 there were ten times the number of broadband connections in private homes than a year earlier, see e.g. Nurmela et al. 2002, 18. At this point, 8% of households had a broadband connection. By April 2004, the percentage was already 21 (Koivumäki & Soronen 2004, 3 and 10). In February 2006 just over 60 per cent of Finnish households had an Internet connection: in four cases out of five the connection was broadband (Statistics Finland 2006).

In a survey, Nätti and Anttila (2002, 76) asked highly educated people to prioritise three areas of life: work and career, home and family and other areas of life. As expected, family was ranked first (56%), but – perhaps somewhat surprisingly – work and career were superseded by other areas of life. The results were similar when people were asked about their main objectives and pleasures in life: of the alternatives given people chose their immediate family first, followed by proper execution of one's own work. Other important

sources of pleasure were outings and exercise, friends and social life as well as hobbies. Significantly less frequently mentions included success at work, familiarising oneself with information technology, accumulating wealth, or the so-called "extreme hobbies". In light of this survey, social relationships and hobbies are important elements in people's lives.

Internet use has been the subject of great interest since the 1990's. In Finland information networks have also been involved in various national strategies for the future. Taija & Tuuva (2003, 7-8) point out that these strategies often exclude the everyday user experience while Aro (1999) has noted that the discourse of information society often emphasises politically loaded issues such as unemployment and the welfare of minorities. Research on Internet adoption in Finnish society includes the societal level, workplaces and homes. A large part the research during the 1990's consisted of quantitative surveys and statistics, which do not produce in-depth information about the meanings of technology in the people's daily lives. The newness of the Internet has also presented a challenge in designing successful research settings and data collection methods (Savolainen 1997, 124-132, also Taija & Tuuva 2003, 7).

The negative social impacts and other threats posed by the information networks have also raised concern. The diffusion of the Internet into various sectors of society has been measured and the time spent with new and more traditional media have been studied. The role of the Internet as a source of information and entertainment has also been explored, likewise its impact on daily communication and information seeking (Savolainen 1998 and 2000).

Furthermore, the uses of information technology have also been studied from the perspectives among others of expertise, gendered technology, elderly people and the related user experiences (see e.g. Taija and Tuuva 2003, Sankari 2004), but

research focusing on Internet use in the context of hobbies is still relatively scarce. The UCLA Internet report (2003, 18) lists the most popular Internet activities, and hobbies were in sixth place in 2002. Above hobbies on the list were categories such as “Web surfing or browsing” and “Accessing entertainment information” which probably also include some hobby related activities. In the 2004 Digital Future report (USC Annenberg School Center for the Digital Future 2004) hobbies remained among the most popular topics of Internet use. Seeking hobby related information does not necessarily require special Internet skills. In the US, men (21%) were more likely to search for hobby related information than women (14%) on a typical day. The seeking of hobby related information drops about one third during weekends. Most importantly, half of the users said that Internet improves the way they pursue their hobbies (Howard, Rainie & Jones 2002, 54-71). Clearly, leisure, hobbies and Internet are in many ways connected to each other in the totality of everyday life.

3.4 The discursive relationship between hobbies and Internet use

3.4.1 The meaning of hobby

For many interviewees hobbies are a significant part of their leisure and descriptions of various sports, pets and other activities are common in the data. A few characteristics can be identified in the way people account for their hobbies. Firstly, they are described as free time activities without the stress and responsibilities of working life. Furthermore, hobbies are often accounted for as being very dear and commitment to them is expressed in various ways. Indeed, the word “amateur”

derives from the Latin word *amare*; to love something and the descriptions of hobbies often do reflect a strong commitment.

People sometimes spontaneously point out the difference between randomly and superficially dabbling in something as opposed to having a “real” hobby. Thus, having a hobby is described as a serious issue that people distinguish from less meaningful, less “serious” activities. These descriptions illustrate the individual importance as well as the generally legitimate nature of these activities. For the most part people do not stop to specifically recount the nature of the hobby itself – as to exactly why they choose to spend their time on it – but simply state what they are interested in. In this sense, the category of hobby appears as a culturally legitimate and unproblematic way of describing some leisure time activities.

The term hobby occurs in many contexts during the interviews. The interviewer may ask whether people have some particular hobbies or whether these are somehow linked, for instance, to the way they use communication devices. The term also surfaces spontaneously when people describe their interests and the nature of their leisure activities. It is notable that the term requires little explanation or “extra accounting” (Nikander 2002). The legitimacy of activities representing this type of leisure is usually taken for granted.

The use of the category of a hobby implies several things. To begin with this inquiry, excerpts were searched in the data where the interviewee is asked about his or her hobbies. If a particular hobby is dear to the person, he or she usually readily explains what it is like and how they are involved in it. The next sample provides an example.

Interview #45. Woman 31-40 years.

Interviewer: But then you clearly have things like, that you just mentioned, that you have hobby activities and also some, like, individual work assignments. That you actually had a,

I'd like... What, what sort of, can you tell about your hobby?

Interviewee: Well, the hobby activity is this specific type of a theatre, the local theatre, which is, that I actually got involved with through other activities. Sort of through the back door, so it didn't actually have anything to do with theatre. And I have been actively engaged in it for five years now. And it has then, of course, created links to making this kind of regular theatre.

Interviewer: Oh, you're in it. Yes.

Interviewee: And now, it is this kind of [the interviewee describes the specific characteristics of the theatre and the theories that it is based on].

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: So that's what my hobby has been. And occasionally it has been quite time consuming and active exercise.

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Interviewer: Mutta että sulla oli ihan selkeesti tollasia näköjään, että, niinku sä mainitsit tossa, että oli tällasta harrastustoimintaa ja kaikkee tämmöstä niinku omaa työtoimintaakin. Että sulla oli ihan semmoinen, että mä haluan... Mitä, minkälaista, voiksä kertoo siitä sun harrastustoiminnasta?

Interviewee: No, harrastustoiminta on tämmöstä kun tietyn-tyyppinen teatteri, joka joo, elikkä paikallinen teatteri, joka on siis, johon tulin tulleeeks ihan muuta kautta, eli tämmöstä niinkun takakautta tavallaan, että se ei liittynyt itse asiassa teatterin tekemiseen millään tavalla. Ja oon siinä nyt ollu mukana 5 vuotta aktiivisesti oikein, ja sitten se on linkkiytynyt tietysti myöskin tähän niinku varsinaisen teatterin tekemiseen.

Interviewer: Ai, sä oot siinä. Joo.

Interviewee: Ja tota, se on tämmöstä [haastateltava kuvaa kyseisen teatterin erityispiirteitä ja teorioita, johon toiminta pohjautuu].

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Niin sitä oon tässä harrastanut. Ja se on välillä ollu hyvinkin aikaa vievää ja aktiivista touhua.

The interviewee describes her hobby without any hesitation or efforts to provide additional justification for the time spent on it. The nature of the theatre and the efforts required are described with specificity (omitted to preserve anonymity) which serves to position the interviewee as an advanced member of the hobby community as well as someone who is capable of pursuing intellectual and social challenges of this kind. In the excerpt the term hobby is associated with seriousness, active participation and long-term commitment. The background work is described as occasionally very active and time consuming, which contrasts the hobby against more casual, superficial pastime activities that do not carry such aspirations regarding personal skills and knowledge. Thus, a well organised activity that involves many people, requires specialised skills, commitment and creativity is described. Obviously, in the excerpt above the term hobby is used to describe something particularly valued and important that is culturally legitimate.

The category of hobby is also defined in many other ways. Not only are the elements of a certain hobby described as important and a source of gratification, but hobbies at a more general level can be accounted for in numerous contexts. The next sample provides an example.

Interview #33. Man 41-50 years.

Interviewer: Now that some time has passed since you moved, this is a good opportunity to ask, that [...] that [...] what was it about this new place that made it home, did it immediately feel like your own home or how did it become one?

Interviewee: Well [...] it were the surroundings that made it home. It immediately felt like that's a place where I want to be.

Interviewer: What do you mean by those surroundings, this milieu right here?

Interviewee: The milieu. [...] Shot distance to services. Hobby opportunities extremely close. The workplace extremely close.

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Interviewer: Nyt kun sillon siit muutosta niin vähän aikaa, niin nyt onkin sit hyvä kysyä, että [...] että [...] mikä tästä uudesta paikasta sitte teki kodin, tuntuks se heti sinun omalta kodilta vai miten siitä tuli koti?

Interviewee: Tuota niin [...] ympäristö teki sen kodiksi. Se tuntuu heti että tuonne minä haluan.

Interviewer: Mitä sie tarkoitat sillä ympäristöllä, tätä miljöötäkö tässä?

Interviewee: Miljöötä. [...] Lyhyt matka palveluihin. Harrastusmahollisuudet erittäin lähellä. Työpaikka erittäin lähellä.

The interviewee mentions three things that are important when choosing a place for a home: easy access to services, good hobby opportunities nearby and short distance to workplace. He says “immediately knew” that he would like to live there. In this context hobbies are described as an equally relevant factor as the other two – work and services – that can be seen as elements at the very core of the everyday life. Thus, a hobby may denote a particular place or a type of environment and also symbolise the quality of life. No explanation for this is offered nor does the use of category of hobby lead to any sort of perturbation regarding the nature of the activities. Taken for granted as a legitimate part of peoples’ lives, hobbies go without further explanation in an account like this. In the same interview he accounts for his great interest in photography that he would love to have as a “real hobby”, but unfortunately does not currently have the time required to do so. This description too, supports the interpretation that hobbies require dedication in order to be gratifying and to be counted as “real” hobbies.

In harmony with this culturally elevated image of hobbies, they are accounted for as something essential even if the interviewee does not have the time to engage in something very intense and organized. These accounts are shaped as if there were an implicit assumption that everyone should have a hobby of some kind and a reason for the lack of one should be provided. The sample below is an example.

Interview #29. Woman 41-50 years.

Interviewer: Have you, do you belong to any hobby groups or clubs?

Interviewee: Like have I belonged?

Interviewer: Yes, do you belong?

Interviewee: Hhhh, yes of course I do have some hobbies, yes, but, not terribly active so that for the most part it's supporting the kids' hobbies, mainly driving them around.

Interviewer: [utters half a word, unknown]

Interviewee: Let's put it this way, like [...] ummm, there's a bigger hobby, in a way for the whole family and every individual as well, which involves the whole family: music. So, we have [...] in the family three people who are, who play music as a hobby. I used to sing myself, still do.

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Interviewer: Ootsä, kuulutsä mihinkään harrastusporukoihin tai yhdistykseen niin.

Interviewee: Että oonko kuulunut?

Interviewer: Niin, kuulutsä?

Interviewee: Hhhh, kyllä mulla tietenkin jotakin harrastuksia on, on mutta tota, en kovin aktiivisesti että enimmäkseen menee siihen lasten harrastusten tukemiseen lähinnä kuljettamiseen.

Interviewer: [sanoo puoli sanaa, epäselvä]

Interviewee: Sa- sanotaanko näin että [...] äää, semmonen isompi harrastus mikä tavallaan koko perheellä ja yksittäin on, niin se koskee kuitenkin koko perhettä on musiikki.

Eli meillä on [...] perheessä kolme jokka on, jokka harrastaa musiikin soittamista. Mä oon ite laulanu, edelleenkin.

The interviewee points out that of course she has hobbies as if it were a reproach by the interviewer to assume otherwise. However, she first hesitates to name any one particular hobby that she pursues actively and notes that a large amount of her time goes on supporting her children's hobbies. Her account reflects the way the cultural category of hobbies being generally only used to describe rather time consuming and serious pursuits. Thus, her account positions her as a person who is aware of the significance of hobbies but is willing to sacrifice her own time in order to support the hobbies of her children. She then continues by saying "let's put it this way", and describes how the whole family is interested in music: three of them play instruments and she herself sings. The longevity of the singing is also emphasized to underline the long term effort that it is described to be. Hence, a position as a person who has aspirations and long-time goals is accomplished.

The category of hobby is discursively available to people and used in these accounts in a way that produces it as a valuable component of everyday life. The category consists of many valued and respected elements that imply active lifestyles and a will to develop oneself in one way or another. Not having any hobbies is regarded as something that warrants some extra accounting by way of justification.

3.4.2 *Internet and hobbies*

Depending on the context, some forms of Internet use can be accounted for as either obviously legitimate or somehow lacking in importance or meaningfulness, for example online forums. Without a legitimate context they can be described as unworthy of any serious attention. Thus, the way various online sites or forums of interaction are depicted as purposeful

or futile depends less on the technical implementation (be it e.g. a message board, online chat or a newsgroup) but more so on the nature of the content and the reported purpose of visiting the site. The next sample provides an example of the context bound appreciation of a certain type of Internet use.

Interview #12. Woman 41-50 years.

Interviewer: So, yes, about virtual communities? Did you want to add something?

Interviewee: Yes. I keep wondering. I wouldn't, I mean I wouldn't bother spending my time with that kind of... that type of entertainment stuff. I can well understand if there is for example a bunch of dog lovers. Or myself with colleagues at work. Mailing lists are really good and... and you can in a way, just that, that you can ask for help and advice and... support. Or other such things. But then, like this sort of, that a bunch of random people, or, or pretend to be someone else and fool around, that doesn't interest me one bit. I just haven't been able to see any point in it.

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Interviewer: Niin tota, niin virtuaaliyhteisöistä? Jäiks siulla kesken?

Interviewee: Joo. Mie aina ihmettelen niitä. Etten mie, mie en niinku viittis käyttää omaa aikaani sellaseen... semmoseen viihteelliseen. Mie hyvin ymmärrän, jos on esimerkiksi tällöinen koiraharrastajien porukka. Tai mie ite työkäytössä kollegojen kanssa. Postitusryhmään on tosi hyvä ja... ja voi niinku, just sitä, että kysyy apua ja neuvoo ja... tukea. Tai semmosta. Mutt sitte niinku tällöinen, että satunnaisten ihmisten joukko, tai, tai tekeytyä joksikin muuksi ja leikkiä, niin se ei niinku kiinnostaa yhtään. Ei oo niinku keksiny, mikä se pointti on, että.

A dichotomy is outlined as entertainment Internet use is contrasted with hobby and work related uses. A certain purposefulness is called for and along with this a legitimate assumption as to why people would want to engage in online

exchange in the first place. Without these, a legitimate point for interaction is said to be hard to come by. Thus, the difference between purposeful and merely entertaining uses is accounted for. While the reason for the futile nature of “random” online interaction is not explicitly articulated, it appears to draw on a general assumption of time wasted without proper cause. The possibility of using fake identities for questionable purposes is brought up to support the claim that participating in random forums is of dubious nature.

However, online interaction in the hobby context is accounted for as being similar to resolving work-related matters via a mailing list. Both the work and a hobby provide a solid basis for the interaction where motives for the participation are not of a dubious nature but, rather, about pursuing matters of importance. This is further outlined in the next excerpt. Prior to this sample there has been some talk about whether there are appropriate or useful online forums.

Interview #16. Two women, both 41-50 years.

Interviewer: So, now, is there like any subject, that you could, or you both, that you could imagine like writing about, with total strangers [.] in the Internet? Like anything that you'd be interested in, a topic, something that you can talk about?

Interviewee 1: One rather talks about, sort of like this, that you can also see. No... There's no time, it would be pretty weird. But who knows if one tries it.

Interviewee 2: Mmm. Knowledge about life philosophies. Well, I know that there are those no-nonsense, well, some of them, are they – they are not about chatting these. Some of them are for, people who have a certain hobby, and then among themselves and around the world. So that they can get [.] (laughs) a patchwork and something. It is like a hobby club. I don't know about chatting. But some kind of exchange anyway. But somehow, I'm not sure if there is something questionable? I have not thought about what the people on the other end are. But you could get some nice

[.] oh well, it is so random, that there would be some [.] person, who would have some genuine opinions. I too would probably rather have it live. Rather than try and find some conversation. Maybe if you were terribly lonely, and didn't have anyone to talk to. Yes I could understand that.

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Interviewer: Niin silleen, että onko mitään niinku aihetta, mistä sä voisit niinku tai te, kuvitella niinku kirjottavanne niinku ventovieraitten ihmisten kanssa [.] sitä verkossa? Niinku mitään semmosta joka kiinnostais silleen, aihepiiriä, jostain niinku pääsee jotenki puhumaan, että niin niin?

Interviewee 1: Mieluummin kyllä ihan puhuu sillai tällä lailla, että näkkeeki. Ei... ei oo aikaa, tuntus aika ouolle. Mistä sitä tietää jos kokkeilis.

Interviewee 2: Mmm. Elämänfilosofiasta tietoa. Kyl mää tiän, että on sitte semmosia asiallisia on, niin no joku onko se – ei se keskustelua ookaan näitä. Joku on semmosia, jotka harrastaa jotaki niin ne keskenään sitte ja ympäri maailmaa. Että ne saa [.] (naurahtaen:) tilkkutäkki ja jotaki. On tämmönen niinku harrastuspiiri. Emmä tiä keskustella. No kuitenkin että vaihtaa. Mut jotenki, emmää tiä oisko siinä jotain arveluttavaa? Mää en oo miettiny, että mikä se onkaan se henkilöstö siinä toisessa päässä. Mutta siinä vois saada hienoja [.] niin no se on niin sattumanvarasta, että siellä ois joku semmone [.] tyyppi, jolla ois omia mielipiteitä. Kyllä määkin ehkä niinku livenä. Ku lähtee sieltä hakemaan jotaki keskustelua. Ehkä jos ois hirveen yksinäine, ei ois kettään, kenen kanssa puhua. Kyllä mä voisin ymmärtää kyllä.

The interviewer stresses the tension between proper and improper online forums as he formulates the question whether the two interviewees have anything at all that they would like to discuss online with complete strangers. Already loaded with a preconception, the question sparks an initial sceptical answer. The remark about discussing life philosophy can be interpreted as utilising irony in order to mark the boundaries

for topics that are obviously not appropriate or suited for the kind of interaction suggested by the interviewer. In order to provide an example of acceptable topics, the interviewee describes hobby related interaction that she knows exists and is appropriate. She emphasizes the difference from “chatting”, saying that such discussions are no-nonsense in nature. Thus, the cultural category of hobby is utilised to account for some types of uses in a favourable way. Here the hobby is indeed the vital element that can make an online discussion worthwhile.

Hobbies are described as legitimate topics for discussion and accounted for as a theme that imbues the whole experience of online interaction with trust. The category of hobby frames Internet use so that the participants appear united. Consequently, there is less need to assess the motivations of the discussion participants or other such matters. Without a hobby-related discussion topic the chances of finding interesting people with whom to talk about general matters with are described as rather slim. Again, the category of hobby is used to describe proper Internet use in contrast with trivial entertainment.

However, some exceptions to this are also accounted for: should a person be very lonely and lacking any natural face-to-face contacts it is described as understandable to seek company through channels like online discussions. Consequently, the normality of the online interaction in question is assessed and defined by describing these uses as a particularly important domain for people in marginal social positions. Not only are normal uses, but normal users defined in this account. The notion that “normal” people would not necessarily be interested in *general* online interaction – as they get involved in interaction like this through “normal” daily events such as conversations with workmates and family members – is significant. Clearly, it is the *specificity* of hobby related discussion that makes it acceptable.

According to the data, hobbies are also accounted for in such a fashion that they represent the will to develop individually by improving one's skills and knowledge outside work life and daily routines. The next sample illustrates this.

Interview #11. Woman 41-50 years.

Interviewer: Did you have in mind, when you thought about the structure and the content, some sort of an audience in quotation marks? Or some kind of an idea about the people you have meant them for?

Interviewee: Okay, yes. Well, something like, maybe some sort of a general audience. So it doesn't really matter who visits it. Now that I have uploaded some, should anyone find them interesting, then maybe it would, or actually should be someone who is familiar. I mean I don't usually visit strange people's homepages either. Because they don't, if they don't have anything, for example some cat stuff, a hobby, which, that would have been linked to some other page for me. So it's just that they have zero interest.

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Interviewer: Oliko sulla tätä rakennetta ja sisältöä miettiessä, niin mielessä semmonen, niinku lainausmerkeissä yleisö? Tai joku mielikuva siitä, kenelle sä oot tarkottanut ne?

Interviewee: Niin, joo. No, jotain sellasta, ehkä semmonen yleinen yleisö. Ett sama toisaalta kuka siellä käypi. Ett kun mie oon nyt laittanu sinne, ett jos ketään niinkku kiinnostaa, niin kyll se nyt melkein niinku, tai pitäis olla oikeestaan semmonen, joka tuntee. Ett en mie ittekkään käy yleensä tuntemattomien ihmisten kotisivuilla. Kun ei niistä, jos niissä ei oo mitään sellasta, esimerkiks jotain kissajuttua, harrastusta, mikä, jost mie olisin saanu linkin jostain muualta siihen sivulle. Niin ei just niinku niiss oo sitten mitään mielenkiintoa.

Hobbies are not only accounted for as a legitimate reason to engage in discussions over the Internet but also as a source of online information of general interest. Personal information

and things specific to a particular individual are reported to have little interest outside his or her immediate circle of friends and family. Thus, websites containing only this type of information are described here as uninteresting⁷. However, hobby-related materials are described as having the potential to turn a website into an interesting source of knowledge instead of a strictly personal account. Furthermore, any potentially negative inferences about the interviewee being interested in visiting the homepages of unknown people are dismissed. The way the category of hobby is utilised in this context produces this kind of peer information as interesting and worth reading.

The next sample provides another example of the ways in which a website can be described as something useful instead of being merely about chatting of a somehow debatable nature.

Interview #67. Woman 21-30 years.

Interviewer: Do you follow any discussion forums?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: For example, you haven't any interest in them?

Interviewee: No no.

Interviewer: Okay, yes.

Interviewee: It's like, somehow I feel like that they would demand quite a bit of, err, intensive attention to them. Really like literally and the fact that, well of course there could be discussion forums that are useful professionally. But I have not sort of acquainted myself with them so much that I would have gotten an idea that they would be worth my while.

Interviewer: So, yes, like following them in general or specifically at work, do you have?

Interviewee: Well, generally.

⁷ Social media such as Facebook have gained great popularity since the data were gathered. The personal information on them is diverse and dynamic and, evidently, interesting. Clearly, there is a marked difference from the random personal Internet pages talked about in the data.

Interviewer: That kind of feeling.

Interviewee: Even like generally, that like, maybe it would be possible that you could think that maybe at some point some hobby stuff could be. And in fact when, sort of, regarding this Cuban vacation I checked out as there was the “around the world” [TV show], as they have their own website. And I did pick up some things there but even that was a bit.

Interviewer: Meaning Travelling around the world?

Interviewee: Well yes, is it just travel around the world dot fi or what is it then. So there, as I was checking out those things, there was this feature that people who had been to Cuba were able to comment on things, or so, and they had written short bits about it. But it really quite wasn't an actual discussion board then.

Interviewer: Yes, it is more like.

Interviewee: Well, it is more like a kind of a review or how would you put it, a review forum.

* * * *

Interviewer: Seuraatsä mitään keskustelupalstaa?

Interviewee: En.

Interviewer: Esimerkiks, et oo semmosiin innostunu ollenkaa?

Interviewee: En en.

Interviewer: Just, kyllä.

Interviewee: Et se on jotenki must tuntuu että ne vaatis niinku niin paljon sitä sellasta ööm intensiivistä keskittymistä siihen. Ni ihan ihan niinku nimenomaisesti ja se tosiaan että tota et tottakaihan niitä nyt vois niinkun tavallaan ammatillisessakin mielessä olla ihan hyödyllisiä keskustelupalstoja. Mutta tota mä en oo niinku perehtyny niihin niin paljon et mä olisin ainakaan millään muotoa saanu sellasta käsitystä että et mun kannattais käyttää aikaani.

Interviewer: Nih joo niitten seuraamiseen niinku nimenomaan niinku ylipäätään vai vai nimenomaan työpaikalla, onks sulla?

Interviewee: No ihan.

Interviewer: Semmonen olo.

Interviewee: Ihan niinku yli ylipäättäänkään että tota et et just mahdollisesti et vois nyt ajatella että ehkä joskus et joku harrastusjuttu vois ehkä olla. Ja itseasiassa silloin tota no just tähän Kuuban matkaan liittyen niin mä kävin kattomassa et ku oli sitte se sen ”maailman ympäri” [TV-ohjelma], et ku niillähän on ne omat sivustot. Niin siellä mä sit katoin jotain et et mut sekin oli vähän.

Interviewer: Nii Matkalla maailman ympäri?

Interviewee: Että tota että että et onks se ihan maailman ympäri piste fi vai millähän se menee sitte se se niin tota. Niin sieltä kun mä sitte kattelin niitä juttuja niin siellähän oli sit semmosta et ihmiset oli saanu niinkun kommentoida jotka on itse käyny Kuubassa tai näin ja et oli kirjottanu pieniä pätkiä. Mutta se et eihän sekään nyt sinällään varsinainen keskustelupalsta sitte ollu.

Interviewer: Niin jo se on semmonen niinku.

Interviewee: Että tota se on enemmän niinku semmonen arviointi tai tai miksä sitä nyt sit vois sanoo arvostelupalsta.

Discussion boards are described as something that the interviewee knows about but has not familiarised herself with due to the fear that they would prove too time consuming. Professionally relevant discussions are accounted for as potentially very useful but so far no such facility has emerged. As the interviewer wants to know whether this applies to working hours only or also her leisure time, the interviewee repeats her notion that such Internet sites are not worth her while in any case. However, then she mentions a travel-related Internet site that has an abundance of reader commentary on various travel destinations. This description is begun by saying that in contrast to the discussion sites she referred to before, she might appreciate some hobby-related online resources. In an effort to avoid any indication that she would in fact fancy the site as an arena of conversation, she describes the site as

a place to publish reviews instead of merely chatting casually about travelling. Hence, a clear distinction is made between “just” conversation and useful peer reviews. The category of hobbies is related to this type of serious information, contributing to its valued cultural place.

Again the futile nature of online chats is first accounted for, as if to get it out of the way and to display a proper and legitimate understanding of the present day online landscape. However, as seen above, the category of hobby makes a difference and in this instance the fact that people gathered on a website to discuss various travel locations resulted in naming the site a public review site instead of a discussion forum. This addresses the particular function of primarily supplying information instead of opportunities for “mere” conversation. In the next excerpt some ordinary uses of the Internet are discussed in a hobby context.

Interview #66. Woman 21-30 years (interviewee 1) and a man 31-40 years (interviewee 2).

Interviewer: Yes, let’s now talk about those things regarding your dogs in more detail. So, when you compare this to the situation two years ago and now this, as you have a fixed charge and apparently quite an efficient setup. In a way you can do whatever you want with it, has this changed your hobby in any way?

Interviewee 1: Well, it has at least seeing that I only used to use the Internet to browse our club website for our Finnish friends’ stuff. And now I’ve begun to surf more, all those, as in the ’net there is a [a rare dog species] web ring. Meaning that you can then see them all, it’ll just skip to the next page like this. So there is, like from all over the world, I think they list over two hundred websites or something like that. So that’s where I always hang around marvelling at pictures and pedigrees and.

* * * *

Interviewer: Joo mennään nyt sit enemmän siihen siihen koirahommaan. Niin, kun vertaa tätä siihen kahen vuoden takaseen tilanteeseen ja nyt tähä, kun on on niinku kiinteellä hinnalla ja ilmeisen tehokas toi joo homma niin. Voi tehdä tavallaan mitä vaan niin, onks se muuttanu sitä harrastusta millään tavalla?

Interviewee 1: No on se ainaki sen puoleen että kun nyt on tossa netin kautta niinku ennen katto aina vaan meidän yhistyksen sivult näit suomalaiste tuttujen noita. Nii nyt sit taas oon mie enemmän ruvennu surffaamaan kaikki nuo, netis on semmonen [harvinainen koirarotu] webringi. Elikkä sielt voi sit se menee kaikkien niinku, aina vaan hyppää seuraavalle tämmöselle sivuille. Niin siel on niinku ihan ympäri maailmaa, et niit muistaakseni listal yli kakssataa nettisivuu tai jotai tämmöstä. Niin siel mie ain roikun ihmettelemäs kuvia ja sukutauluja ja.

Unlike in some other contexts (see next section for examples), surfing and spending time on hobby-related websites are accounted for as a desirable thing to do. In this context it leaves the listener with a lot of room to perceive the interviewee as a person who is able to appreciate all this information and has a thirst for further knowledge and strong dedication to gain new insight and skills. Thus, the time spent browsing the Internet is not described as something problematic when it is described in this manner. The hobby context itself is a sufficient justification for the time spent online and, thus, no further explanations are warranted.

Not only does the notion of a hobby “ennoble” many Internet uses, but in more general terms it can also legitimate the time spent with computer related gadgetry and various kinds of internet contents as well when the whole sphere of information technology is accounted for as a hobby. In the data there is a 17-year old boy who goes to upper secondary school and says he is and has always been very keen on information technology. In the interview he says that “I managed to

explode a power source from our computer when I was about one and a half years old” and describes his pastime activities consisting of staying in touch with friends and competing with them about who has the coolest and most advanced website, playing online games and managing the computer network at home – complete with UNIX servers – as well as engaging in various other technology related endeavours and keeping up to date with the latest IT news. Furthermore, he accounts for his use of the Internet as a continuum instead of sporadic moments for a particular purpose.

Interview #65. Man 10-20 years.

Interviewer: Now, what would your typical moment be like, when you specifically use the Internet? So if you did, what sort of things do you do and at what time of the day, and.

Interviewee: One really can't say a moment with the Internet but rather it should be called an Internet continuum.

Interviewer: Okay, fantastic, tell me about it.

Interviewee: Because usually my, I'm in the Internet for the first time in the morning about quarter of an hour after I wake up. Meaning the time that it takes for you to read the letters to the editor in *Helsingin Sanomat*, domestic news, *City* [sections of the paper] and cartoons. After that, having eaten some breakfast, then I would check my emails right after that. I do have, if we are, if I just am home, I have the computer on and the email client running. So the email usually rings in or the email gets read within ten minutes after it's been sent. Then in case I really specifically spend some time with the Internet then I chat with my friends in ICQ, surf and read Internet cartoons. I read newsgroups an awful lot, one reason for us having the cable modem is that newsgroups took an awful lot of time.

* * * *

Interviewer: Tota minkäslainen ois sun semmonen tyypillinen nimenomaan nettihetki. Et tota jos sä, mitä kaikkea sä siis teet ja missä vaiheessa päivää ja.

Interviewee: Nettihetkestä ei oikeestaan voi puhua vaan pitää oikeestaan puhua nettijatkumosta.

Interviewer: Okei loistavaa kerro siitä.

Interviewee: Koska yleensä mun, mä oon netissä ensimmäisen kerran aamulla suunnilleen varttitunti heräämisestä. Eli se aika mikä on kulunu siihen et on kattonu Hesarista mielipiteet, Kotimaan, Kaupungin ja sarjakuvat. Sen jälkeen syöny vähän aamupalaa niin sen jälkeen kattoo heti sähköpostit. On mulla sitte, jos me ollaan jos mä suinkin oon kotona mul on tietokone päällä ja siel sähköpostiohjelma päällä. Että sähköposti yleensä kolahtaa tai sähköposti yleensä tulee luettua kymmenen minuutin päästä siitä kun se on tu- lähetetty. Sit jos mä ny netissä rupeen jotenki erillisemmin oleen niin juttelen kavereitten kanssa ICQ:ssa surffailen luen nettisarjakuvia. Luen uutisryhmiä hirveen paljon yks syy minkä takia meillä on kaapelimodeemi on se että uutisryhmät vei hirveesti aikaa.

In this context the positive meaning of having a hobby extends to the entire online realm of hardware and applications as well as the related social innovation. Internet use is described in conjunction with other media use making it as a part of a normal day. Surfing is described as something that the interviewee does if he really devotes some time to the Internet. However, he then emphasizes that it is the newsgroups that really rivet his attention. Thus, a position as a keen, yet purposeful Internet user is established.

On a few occasions the cultural category was also used as a source of irony. For example, in one interview the father of the family was keen on computer games, and the mother of the family commented on it in a sarcastic way:

Interview #28. Man 31-40 years (interviewee 1) & woman 31-40 years (interviewee 2).

Interviewer: Mmm, have your children really hit it off with the playstation?

Interviewee 1: Well, there really are no games for the kids yet for this playstation 2, so due to that it's naturally.

Interviewee 2: So it's like dad's hobby (amused).

Interviewee 1: And then there is.

Interviewee 2: They are a bit too difficult those games. Maybe there will be games for a bit smaller kids. And then, the kids, or the kids will grow. Whichever way. On the other hand (I) have thought that, they don't really have to get overly excited about these machines, then.

* * * *

Interviewer: Mmm, onks teillä lapset innostunu siitä Pleikkarista?

Interviewee 1: No ei oo oikein niitä lasten pelejä tullu tähän kakkospleikkariin vielä, että sen takia se on tietysti.

Interviewee 2: Että semmonen isin harrastus (huvittuneena).

Interviewee 1: Sitten on tässä niinku.

Interviewee 2: Ne on vähän liian vaikeita ne pelit. Ehkä tässä sitte noita, tulee vähä pienempien lapsien peliä. Ja sitten tota, lapset tai sitten lapset kasvaa. Kummin päin vaan. Toisaalta pitäny hyvänä, ettei niitten tarvi nyt hirveesti koneisiin i-innostuakkaan, sitte.

The use of the category of hobby as producing irony accords with its serious meaning. The bemused mother likens the use of a playstation to a hobby, thus humorously portraying the father as someone who is a dedicated player. The father accounts for the nature of the games and his views about the suitability of the games for the children, thereby gaining a position as a person who is involved in gaming as a responsible parent. Peteri (2006, 270-273) also analysed this sample as a display of gendered meaning making related to technology.

3.4.3 Proper use of the Internet

When descriptions of Internet use are "elevated" by discursive means utilising the cultural category of hobby in contrast

to some other type of uses, it is a part of a wider effort to rationalise the use of the Internet. Using the Internet for other than obviously important information searches and work-related matters often evokes accounting about usefulness and the value of the time spent. People can justify their use of the web by providing reasons that make the use described acceptable. Often the nature of the information that is sought is described as “serious”, “essential” or otherwise appreciated. Timetables, scientific articles and banking in the Internet are typical examples of unproblematic Internet content – they are free of any form of entertainment and have no questionable connotations. Thus, these uses require no extra accounting to ward off any inferences of improper use.

As the Internet in the public discourse is known not only as a fascinating environment for innovation and useful content but also for the availability of many kinds of dubious and offensive content, people may emphasise how they actually use the medium for legitimate purposes. Some cases, such as online forums or newsgroups are, in the data, differentiated into justified and debatable groups depending on the perceived motivations that attract people to these forums.

Use of the category of hobby invokes the notion that the person is simultaneously also engaged in something else – the hobby provides a counterpart. The category proves a useful resource as it produces a shared understanding of something serious and justified, something to do with personal improvement and long term development of skills and sharing of knowledge.

The following sample illustrates how proper uses of the Internet can be described.

Interview #08. Man 41-50 years.

Interviewer: Yes... we had many, many topics for further questions, but now... do you go in for the Internet as a

sort of a – if its irrelevant to you as far as entertainment is considered, or your enjoyment is considered – as a sort of a random field for surfing? Do you have a hobby like this?

Interviewee: No. No, no, no, because, well, it's a waste of time considering that I use Internet mainly to search for information. I search for some information, I need some information, that's what I use the Internet for.

* * * *

Interviewer: Joo... Tässä tuli monta, monta kysymyksen aihetta, mutta tota... harrastatsie internetin käyttöä ollenkaan tämmösenä – jos ei sillä oo niinkun viihteen kannalta, tai viihtymisen kannalta merkitystä – niin tämmösenä päämäärättömänä surffailukenttänä? Harrastatsä semmosta?

Interviewee: En. En, en, en, koska tota noin niin, se on ajan tuhlaamista siinä mielessä, että käytän internettiä lähinnä sen tiedon hakuun. Haen jotain tietoa, tarvitsen jotain tietoa, siihen mä käytän internettiä.

The interviewer's question regarding Internet as a playground for random surfing and for light entertainment is presented as referring to general knowledge about the nature of the Internet. The question is loaded when it comes to the value of that particular kind of Internet use. Thus, a strong position is offered to the interviewee – perhaps he is one of these people? The question is likely interpreted as including potentially negative inferences and the interviewee immediately rejects the position offered. After this he utilises strong discursive means in order to further establish the boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate.

Even though the interviewer uses the word hobby in the question, in this context it is used as a verb denoting recurrent pastime activities. Thus, it does not serve to elevate the uses described but can be interpreted as a suggestion that the interviewee is indeed somehow interested in random surfing and entertainment. Through these means the man resolutely

rejects the idea of using the Internet like this, let alone making it a hobby.

The value of one's free time is typically accounted for in a critical way and random surfing can be presented as being close to the bottom in the hierarchy of all the possible things one could engage in. By emphasising issues of specific needs for useful information the interviewee manages to create a lot of leeway in order to be seen as an Internet user who is aware of the cultural connotations related to random surfing and who has legitimate views on the proper use of the Internet.

The next sample provides a further example.

Interview #20. Woman 61-70 years.

Interviewer: Well, so how did the mother react to it, that there it [an Internet connection] was, then?

Interviewee: Well, I sneered. Like, what am I supposed to do with it. But [...] these days I'm extremely happy that he did not budge. Not for anything else, as I use the Internet awfully little for any of the stuff that other people use it for. I never surf and I do not participate chat rooms or that sort of stuff, but the email, I mean it is, I see it as totally absolutely fantastic as one gets used to it. So it is the most comfortable means of communication.

* * * *

Interviewer: No, no mites äiti reagoi siihen, että siinä se [Internet] sitten-.

Interviewee: No, hymähdin. No, että mitä minä sillä teen. Mutta [...] nykyään olen hirveen tyytyväinen että se piti oman päänsä. E-en minikään muun takia, mä käytän kauhean vähän sitä internettiä mihinkään tom- tomloseen mihin muut käyttää sitä. En surffaile ikinä enkä osallistu keskustelupalstoihin enkä semmoseen mutta se sähköposti, siis se on, se on minusta aivan kerta kaikkiaan hieno kun siihen tottuu lopulta. Et se on kaikkein mukavin kommunikointimuoto.

In the excerpt above the interviewee herself is the mother in question whose son had persisted and pushed things forward so as to finally get them an Internet connection. The morality of proper Internet use is produced in the discussion. The mother accounts for her own use in a strict way: she says she never “surfs”, participates in online conversations or uses the Internet like “the other people” do. The notion of other people, here, is of significance as it can be interpreted to represent her idea of what the contemporary online culture is like: something not too fine or proper, and, consequently not at all inviting from her point of view. However, she describes email as an extremely pleasant form of communication. Surfing and online discussions are used as an example of debatable Internet use but email is described as a truly superior form of communication. An account like this is fashioned to position the interviewee as a person who rejects many uses that the Internet enables but not due to her lack of technical competence, as she speaks strongly for the virtues of email, but due to her high standards and proper use of the Internet.

Perhaps it is also the relatively young age of the Internet as a domestic medium that makes it a subject of such an active discourse internal moral work. People account for the uses of Internet in order to morally grasp the new and emerging uses of a personal computer and the word wide web. These discursive means regarding Internet are a part of negotiating and creating a shared understanding of the Internet which has proved to be developing at breakneck pace. Thus, the data set gathered in the Media and Everyday Life research project is interesting in the way it has preserved a glimpse of the time of a fast change in domestic media environments at the very beginning of the 21st century in Finland.

3.5 Conclusions

During the writing of this chapter only a brief Internet search was needed to produce a lot of images of domestic work spaces. In a matter of minutes numerous images were seen of workrooms and desktops where on top of the computers and monitors and on the walls above them there were a lot of items telling about the persons' interests. For example there was a poster of Bruce Lee on the wall right above the monitor in one image and an OS X logo on the other. There were images of loved ones, postcards and birthday cards, baby shoes, a sports cap with a logo, a king salmon trophy, sports posters, games posters, lots of miniature figurines, stickers, a licence plate with a text UNIX and so forth. It is probably correct to assume that many of these items and themes are important in the context of their owners' leisure time activities. They symbolise things important to people, and the way they conveniently seem to find a place near the computer likely also speaks about the unproblematic relationship between the category of hobby and the computer and Internet.

Hobbies are described as a core element in many people's lives and even as something that one is expected to have in one's life. In the data people give elaborate reasons as to why they – at least at present – do not have an active hobby if they are asked about it, instead of simply stating that they don't. People can describe themselves as being so busy at work or with their families that they hardly have any time for hobbies, effectively denying any suggestion of being a lazy person without passions and initiative. Hobbies can be used to justify personal decisions regarding the place of residence. They are described as a form of serious activity that requires long-term efforts and considerable amounts of personal investment (not necessarily monetary) and perseverance.

Internet access has become commonplace and easy; people may routinely use it for various tasks and information searches. Some of the uses are, however, debatable. People provide justifications for some their uses of the Internet and may account for other people's questionable uses. Clearly, many uses of the Internet warrant such legitimation where the speaker positions him or herself as a person who uses the medium appropriately. This chapter studied a cultural resource, the category of hobby that emerges as a discursive resource that can be used to describe some Internet uses in a legitimate way. This observation also prompted the study of how the "appropriate use" is produced in the accounts given.

The cultural category of hobby is utilised in the accounts in several different ways. As people describe their uses of the Internet hobbies can be likened to work-related issues and, just as well, contrasted against frivolous online entertainment. Regarding online interaction the specificity of hobby talk is contrasted with random online chatter which can be described as a waste of time and also rather questionable in its nature of faceless and potentially dishonest social exchange. There is also an account where hobbies are described to add an important element to personal websites, transforming them from personal accounts to sites of more universal and legitimate interest. Furthermore, spending a lot of time browsing through websites and from one community to another was not considered a futile activity in the context of a hobby related interest. Instead, such browsing serves to illustrate a dedication and strong will to develop one's skills and knowledge in the hobby related pursuits in question.

The analysis revealed what kind of consequences the use of the category of hobby introduces into the interaction and how this was critical in the production of logic in some of the descriptions. It was used to provide contrast as well as justification in critical accounts. Based on these observations

and the other hobby related talk presented the cultural category of a hobby can be outlined in some detail. It is easy to come up with descriptions about hobbies such as “something interesting and gratifying that you do in your own time”. Intuitively this sounds right and probably captures some of the essential characteristics of hobbies. However, the category of hobby proves a complex discursive resource. It can be used to align some of the accounts with legitimate, culturally shared values.

This category can be further elaborated in terms of the section about everyday life and the nature of human reality in the introduction, taking into account Alasuutari’s (2004) and others’ (e.g. Berger & Luckmann 1966, Heller 1984, Felski 2000) contributions on the experience of daily life. The way knowing things is available to humans is relevant: in some of the use descriptions people invoke the category of hobbies in order to sensibly account for some activities. Discursively, this can be seen as means to construct the use and position the speaker in a particular way, thus fashioning the morality of the account and aligning it with surrounding cultural values (Nikander 2002; Burr, 1995; Jayyusi 1991; Bergmann 1998). Something “more” (Foucault 1972, 49) is done in these accounts than what can be understood by staring at the transcribed string of words and utterances.

This “more” can be further understood when looking at the history of the category of hobby. The historical construction of the concept of hobbies and “serious leisure” manifests itself in the way the interviewees use the term in the data. Based on it, the category of hobby emerges as a strong discursive means of describing an activity in a serious, purposeful manner. By accounting for some of their Internet uses in association with a hobby related interest, interviewees are able to ennoble or elevate the Internet use and ward off any notions of using the medium simply for the sake of the lowbrow entertainment of

random surfing, which is often described as a vain use of the medium as well as a waste of time in general.

The positions accomplished via the use of the category of hobby are produced in the specific context of discussion in which they occur and “exist” among other positions created with discursive means. The positions accomplished are related to how invoking the category of hobby results in discursive elevation of the activity described. While some activities may be of debatable nature, they can be elevated by discursive means. Like television (e.g. Alasuutari 1991, 1992, 1996a, 2005; Ang 1996; Ang 1985), Internet is a moral issue for members of the culture and as they account for it, they invoke cultural categories to express the cultural place of various uses. Using the category of hobby to ennoble particular Internet uses emerges as a part of a wider tendency to rationalise Internet use and make it purposeful in its nature.

4 DEVELOPING TECHNOLOGY – MARKING THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN JUSTIFIED AND OBJECTIONABLE

4.1 Introduction

Finns have witnessed the growth of national and international companies that operate in the field of information and communication technologies. These companies are major players in the national economy and even contribute to the international image of the country: increasingly, Finland has become known as one of the most developed information societies in the world. Furthermore, it has become a general political ambition to advance and nurture the development of the information society. On the other hand during the last decade people have also witnessed the great losses that many media (technology) companies have produced and the end of information technology hype. As new technologies have been introduced at breakneck pace people have also become aware of the media and technology battles waged on the markets.

During these years it has been common to read in the newspapers what percentage of homes already have an Internet connection. There has been great interest in the number and uses of broadband Internet connections, as they were quickly making the Internet an increasingly attractive

medium in people's homes. Digital television was about to challenge traditional TV but to many has yet to prove its real value. Various mobile applications and communication devices already provided access to the Internet. The "conventional" mobile phone has sometimes been described as being challenged by the new multifunctional smart phones. After Christmases and Valentine's Days there have been speculation in the newspapers regarding the fate of the traditional postcard – just how long it will survive in the battle against text messages, multimedia messages, e-cards, email and so forth. People have constantly been fed with news and information related to the media and communication industry as well as the developments regarding the national information society.

The relationship between individuals and society or the relationship between media technologies and society crops up especially when people are asked about their ideas on how technology will affect their lives in the future. People describe their observations of the technological development and the implications it seems to have over the whole of society. These implications are accounted for in many ways. While the new technology can be said to bring with it a lot of positive effects, and the public discourse often emphasises the development of information society, growth of the national economy and so on, marked apprehension regarding the development has also been expressed. This chapter analyses such conflicting ways to talk about developing technology. Particular attention is paid to the way these accounts are premised.

In the data the interviewees account for the uses they are particularly fond of, but also for the many less attractive implications they have noticed. This is not a paradox in the sense that people would somehow be particularly inconsistent as they talk about technology. Instead, as is illustrated in the other empirical chapters, the descriptions of media related

activities are heavily dependent on the context which provides the premises for understanding the logic of each account. Thus, in different contexts the notion of technology can be accounted for in a multiplicity of (and sometimes conflicting) manners: even though it is possible to describe some media uses as pleasant and gratifying activities, it is equally possible that the same interviewee evinces a rather elaborate account of the serious risks of technology.

In the initial reading of the data, it was observed that people often point out the risks that the evolving technology may introduce. On the other hand, the familiar everyday uses of technology (that may even have become commercially available quite recently) may be described without hastening to account for the potential pitfalls of technology. The excerpt below illustrates this:

Interview #15. Woman 31-40 years (interviewee 1) & Woman 31-40 years (interviewee 2).

Interviewee 1: I've started to fiddle with a digital camera now and upload the images to the computer with the software and post process them. In fact it is really nice as I, as I have always had this terrible fear of photography since I don't know how to shoot.

Interviewee 2: With a digicam.

Interviewee 1: It is so easy with it. In fact it's great fun. You can have your own content on a website. I mean if you were to make a website for your own company at some point, then [...] what would be easier than snapping some photos and [...]

* * * *

Interviewee 1: Mä oon ruvennut vielä räplään nyt digitaali-kameralla ja purkaan kuvia ohjelmalla ja käsittelen niitä. Itseasiassa se on ihan kivaa kun mulla, mullon ollu aina kauhee kammo aina valokuvaamista kohtaan kun mä en osaa kuvata.

Interviewee 2: Digikameralla.

Interviewee 1: Toss se on niin helppoo. Itse asiassa äärettömän kivaa. Voi saada sivustolle ihan omaa sisältöä. Siis jos tekee vaikka omalle yritykselle webbisivut jossain vaiheessa ni [...] mikäs sen näppärämpää kun näpsiä kuvia ja [...]

Prior to this sample the interviewee has just explained what sort of computer skills she needs in her work as she is responsible, for example, for maintaining some websites. Using a digital camera is a recent development and she says that “In fact it’s rather nice”. This is accounted for in contrast to earlier times of film photography that were “terrifying” because the results were unpredictable and this resulted in the described apprehension regarding photography. After this she repeats that “in fact it’s great fun”, which emphasizes that this is something that is not necessarily taken for granted. It also leaves latitude for the listener to see the interviewee as a person who was apprehensive and critical regarding this new method of producing images, but who has been surprised about how usable and what fun the digital camera has turned out to be. Thus, any assumptions regarding uncritical use of technology are effectively dismissed. In this context the digital camera is described as a welcome new device that has proved its worth in many situations and does not pose any particular threats.

In the same interview some aspects regarding future technology are also discussed. In this context, the technology is talked about in a different way.

Interview #15. Woman 31-40 years (interviewee 1) & Woman 31-40 years (interviewee 2).

Interviewee 1: Maybe by the time you do the next interview I’m going to tell you that oh, I can no longer live without the computerized jacket (laughs). I have a disposable two-piece suit and a rechargeable [...] computer on, on my head. So,

okay, it could be that it changes [...] into that sort of stuff but as of now it pretty much sounds like a [...] joke. So, where was it that I read about it, in a science magazine about this [...] toaster developed by Siemens [...] that has its own IP address, that you can switch on via an online connection. Oh hell, what if your computer malfunctions does that mean that you can't toast your bread, so even that is vulnerable in a way.

* * * *

Interviewee 1: Ehkä se ku sä teet seuraavan kerran haastattelun mä sanon sulle että joo et mä en voi enää elää ilman tätä tietokonejakkuu (naurua). Mullon kerta-käyttönen jakkupuku ja sitten ladattava [...] tietokone päällä, päässä. Et okei että voihan se olla että, et se muuttuu [...] semmoseks mutta lähinnä se nyt kuulostaa [...] vitsiltä. Nii et mi-mistä mä luin tiedelehdestä tästä [...] Siemensin kehittämästä leivänpaahdistimesta [...] jolla on oma IP-osote, jonka saa kytkettyä internetyhteyden kautta päälle. No helveti jos ei sun tietokonees toimi niin tarkottaaks se sitä et sä et saa paahdettua leipää, et siis sekin on niinku haavottuvainen.

Just before this sample the participants have discussed the importance of opportunities for equal access to information technology as well as the many imaginary possibilities that the concept of virtual reality might offer some day. In this sample the uninviting aspects of developing technology are addressed. Firstly, the interviewee laughs at the notion that should she be interviewed again in the future, she might by then have become addicted to “smart garments” technology and that she might have a portable computer on her head. This utterance is marked by laughter (e.g. Glenn 1991) and meant as a joke. Nevertheless it is noted that technology might very well develop in such a direction. Laughing at the idea and pointing out the humour in an addiction or dependability like this positions her as someone who is aware of such outcomes but not a potential victim.

The description of the future toaster is used to point out how some innovations have little value in everyday life and that the new technology is also vulnerable to glitches that can be very annoying. After the excerpt the interviewees discuss the future of the least developed countries and the gap between those countries and the rest of the world in terms of access to the latest technology, and whether the technology developed actually benefits people in either place after all. Thus, the technology is accounted for with apprehension regarding its true value and the potential negative outcomes.

Meanings assigned to technological development are in the focus of this chapter. These meanings are related, for example, to tradition, society and individuals. According to the analysis, there are many culturally sound ways to account for various kinds of technologies in terms of their familiar uses as well as the potential pitfalls embedded in the emerging technology. Attention is paid particularly to the occurrences of talk where technology was described to be in some way excessive: too easy, too difficult, too dangerous, too commercial and so on. These kinds of remarks also mark the technology that is discussed as morally problematic or debatable.

This chapter presents these ways and discusses various cultural values that are invoked in order to produce sensible accounts of technology. As to why people are prone to criticise new technology and how they premise these critiques, and, on the other hand, how some technology uses are described without hastening to provide critical views on them is explained through the analysis of the data. The goal is to analyse the argumentative logic of the accounts and to provide an understanding of the ways it is premised with various cultural values. As a result, the ways in which the critical accounts are fashioned and how moralities are managed in these contexts can be understood.

The argumentative logic in the techno-critical accounts proved a challenging topic for the study. The data samples illustrate how the accounts are fashioned so as to cogently account for the technology in question and also to legitimately position the speaker among cultural categories. The nature of these categories and the argumentative premises are discussed. It will be seen that in and through the interaction between the speakers a wide variation in language and discursive positions is accomplished. The topic of developing technology emerges as one pervading the whole domain of everyday life, clearly visible and easily lending itself to questioning from the perspective of “proper” use of technology, tradition and values of the society and the elements of good life.

In the next section this chapter will take a brief look at the earlier research on the domestication of technology and the history related to the reception of technological innovations. It will then present the analysis on the technology related talk. Furthermore, the discursive production and management of moralities is discussed in the light of some earlier research and reflected upon in the analysis as well as in the conclusions.

4.2 Living with technology

The domestication and life cycles of technologies have been studied to some extent. Glancing through some of the earlier research this section provides an historical background for the analysis that follows. It will be seen, however, that moralities related to the theme warrant some further research.

For instance, Donald A. Norman (1999, 26-27 and 56) notes that at some point technology becomes “invisible” in the way it is present in consumer products. He illustrates this point by referring to computers that have become embedded systems

in many consumer appliances. The fact that a product such as a television set or a car includes a computer is no longer mentioned in its name or proclaimed in the advertisements. As such, a computer has become invisible in many products. At some point in its development, a technology matures and becomes “good enough” so as not to be of poor performance from an average user’s point of view. At this point, technology becomes more of a consumer commodity than something seen as a piece of high technology.

This process of domestication can be described as a set of trials (Lehtonen 2003). Not only is the domestication of a technology about what the device can or cannot do, but also about what the user can or cannot do. He notes that it is typical that a technology requires a lot of attention in the early phases of its domestication (ibid. 377-378). A TV in a living room or a radio in the kitchen does not create such a buzz these days as it did when they were still new items in an ordinary household (although, it must be said that the digitalisation of the TV has not gone without widespread discussions). Thus, typically, as a technology ages and matures, it requires less and less attention, becoming increasingly invisible to the average user. A similar observation was made by Nieminen-Sundell (1998, 29-30) who studied household technology. In contemporary society, IT technology is rather obviously accounted for as “technology” while some of the more established household commodities are not necessarily perceived as “technology” at all.

Not only is the new and emerging technology particularly “visible” during its introduction to the market, but it may also cause quite a bit of fear and apprehension. Mika Pantzar (1996) plotted the history of technological innovations in Finland and provides interesting examples of various products that were originally thought to be uninteresting or even somehow dangerous, but which eventually turned out to be very successful and widely accepted. The telephone was invented

by Alexander Graham Bell in 1876. When it was introduced to the public, for example, in various trade fairs it raised little interest. Outside the U.S. in Europe the telephone was greeted with even less enthusiasm. It certainly was not deemed as something groundbreaking and interesting but rather as a scientific gadget or a meaningless status symbol.

However, telephone technology was quickly adopted although people still were unsure regarding its appropriate uses. Experiments were carried out where court sessions and operas were transmitted to a wider audience by telephone. In industry and commerce telephone was initially deemed simply an inferior telegraph system and people who were using it were constantly made fun of. Hardly anyone envisaged any social uses for the technology. (Pantzar 1996, 20-22). In Finland as well as in other Scandinavian countries the telephone was adopted faster than in other parts of Europe. During the 1890's in Finland the telephone was deemed a luxury product and a means for social distinction. During those early times telephone was mainly regarded as a means for communication in the retail trade and commerce and its social uses had not yet developed. Along with technical difficulties the more widespread use of the telephone technology was delayed by fears that the telephone might be used in inappropriate ways. For example, in the United States it was feared that the technology would be used (especially by women) for frivolous, unimportant communication and gossiping. (Pantzar 1996, 22-25).

The mobile phone has also been criticized (Pantzar 2000, 116-117). The development of the telephone into the everyday necessity that it is today has not been straightforward. Along with technological issues the telephone seemed to pose a social threat of some kind. This is how many groundbreaking technological innovations have been perceived. For example, when radio was introduced into Finland in the 1920's it was

by many people deemed menacing as it was “so electric” and also somewhat impious. It was feared that people would no longer go to church to attend services because divine services were broadcast on Sundays. The services were among the most popular programmes while jazz music was found objectionable. There were also assumptions that radio would eventually make newspapers obsolete. (Pantzar 1996, 25-28).

Although radio was greeted with a lot of scepticism, it did not have to cope with similar volumes of prejudice that people initially had against television. In Finland television quickly gained popularity after it was introduced in the 1950’s. It was a fascinating status symbol as well as a source of entertainment. However, just as the radio had been a few decades earlier, television was also seen as a threat. It was feared that children would be so mesmerised by television as to ruin their health and imperil their normal development because they failed to spend enough time in natural surroundings and playing outdoors. For example, in the United States and Finland alike people expressed worry over the quality of housework as wives and mothers were spending time watching television instead of bustling around with domestic work. Men, on the other hand, were thought to spend too much time in the pubs watching television and drinking beer. (Pantzar 1996, 31-35). Despite all the fears television also created fantasies such as world peace as a result of the information flows through the new medium (Salmi 1996, 160). Pantzar also notes that when VCRs were introduced in Finland in the 1980’s there was a lot of concern over VCR dependent young people, “the vidiots” (1996, 31-35).

At their introduction, even the bicycle and automobile were deemed threatening to people’s health and moral values (Pantzar 1996, 37-50). Although it may be difficult to appreciate the moral concerns of the past, they have throughout history contributed to the collective understanding of the media and

technology and its uses. As times change and technology evolves and conquers new territories the related moralities also change.

The media itself has taken an interest in the threats that new technology poses. Jaakko Suominen (2003, 98-101) writes on technology related fiction and other horror stories. In these, technology is often first seen in the form of a promising new innovation but then something goes wrong and a catastrophe ensues. According to Suominen (*ibid.*) David Nye has referred this kind of a human-induced-end-of-the-world-through-technology-turned-vicious as the most common way to talk about technology. Indeed, Lie & Sørensen (1996, 6) point out how typical a conception it is to see technology as a “human creation coming to haunt its creator”. According to them, prior to present day studies of technology, technology was often seen as a dangerous force, quite capable of undermining human society. Suominen also discusses the fear of robots and technology related malfunctions that have been already relevant, for example, in the contexts of science and computers during the early twentieth century. Suominen (*ibid.*) points out that the development of technology has created a modern paradox: although technology serves to make many improvements in human life, it also makes it more complicated and difficult to comprehend. Even in problematic situations people often have no choice but to trust distress signals that come from various complex machines.

Thus, emerging technology simultaneously creates a fear of new things but also a craving for them (Pantzar 2000, 242-243). He points out that it would be an over-simplification to think that people could be grouped, for instance, into technology loving young men and older women who fear it. Instead, he proposes that these issues figure in everybody’s relationship with technology in some way or another. A brief look at some historical innovations in technology reveals that

emerging technology has nearly always been greeted with some suspicion.

As people describe their technology related experiences and opinions, they often say that something is not good, or ought to be otherwise. Occurrences of talk like this are of particular interest as the way in which the tension between good and not good is described also allows for the analysis of the cultural expectations and values that are significant in the context. People can position themselves in a legitimate manner by deploying descriptions that correspond with shared values and expectations. It is there, in this context, that we can see how the practico-moral order of everyday life is played out (Jayyusi 1991; Bergmann 1998).

There are other reasons to be apprehensive regarding today's technology when compared to the times of the introduction of radio, for instance. The practico-moral order consists of new culturally shared and shaped values. Discursive elements are studied in order to elucidate how people in the data account for the role and meanings of technology and how they manage the morality of these descriptions.

4.3 Accounting for the many faces of technology

4.3.1 *Valuable and versatile versus vulnerable and wayward technology*

In this and the following section the accounts on the drawbacks of emerging technology are analysed. First, the focus is on accounts of culture and society. In the following section descriptions of individual uses and risks of technology are discussed.

The data contains accounts of the way people use or think about various devices and technologies as a part of their daily

activities. Depending on the context, these accounts vary in terms of the apprehensiveness expressed regarding the value of the device in question. Next a pair of excerpts from a single interview is presented. In the first sample a woman describes her use of the cell phone and in the second she discusses the potential outcomes of the new communications technologies such as email.

Interview #18. Woman 31-40 years.

Interviewer: Do you think that these cell phones have somehow changed [...] sort of, human relationships in some way?

Interviewee: Yes... it is like, like, I think it's really good. Indeed I have a mobile phone that's already three years old, it has no games and clocks and other [...] any sorts of features, but it is really very straightforward and a good thing. So in case I'm going some place, I can call my friend, where are you, where are you going at the moment.

Interviewer: So... I do have coffee, thank you, so err, so it's mostly about having made life easier in some way.

Interviewee: No, my phone does not ring so often as to annoy me. You ought to observe my brother, who is on vacation or. His mobile keeps buzzing all the time with work related calls.

* * * *

Interviewer: Luuletsä että nää kännykät on jotenkin muuttanut [...] silleen ihmissuhteita johonkin suuntaan?

Interviewee: On..., onhan se niinkö niinkö tosi hyvä musta se. Mulla on itellä tosiaan ku tuo jo kolme vuotta vanha kännykkä, siinä ei oo mitään pelejä ja kelloja ja muita [...] mitään tämmösiä näitä ominaisuuksia niinkö, mutta se on niinkö hirveen luonteva ja hyvä juttu. Että jos mää oon menossa jonneki, ni mä voin soittaa kaverille, että missä te ootte, että missä sä nyt oot ja.

Interviewer: Eli... mulla on kyllä kahvia, kiitos, niin äää, et se on niinku lähinnä, et se on jotenki helpottanu elämää.

Interviewee: Ei, mulla ei soi niin taajaan se puhelin, et se ärsyttäis mua. Pitäs seurata jotaki veljee, joka on lomalla tai. Sillä soi koko ajan kännykkä työpuheluja.

The mobile phone is by no means a device that is always described as a non-debatable part of daily life. Instead, it often gives rise to lengthy accounts of the implications that it has introduced into the interviewee's life. The phone is described as a good means of making contact with other people. The interviewee does not hasten to provide an account of the downsides of the mobile phone in her personal use but immediately after the interviewer concludes that apparently the phone has made her life easier she mentions the situation of her brother, who gets large numbers of work-related calls even during his holidays and describes her own situation as one that is significantly better: the phone does not annoy her because it does not ring so often. This account positions the interviewee as a person who is aware of the potential pitfalls of the technology in question but who has so far managed to maintain the phone as a problem free device.

The tensions between an acceptable mobile phone and an annoying one are created by describing the potential drawbacks of being too involved with other people and work related things even during one's free time. The account concurs with the results presented in Chapter 2. Autonomy and ability to control how to spend one's free time are strong cultural norms invoked in these accounts.

It is also interesting that the interviewee describes her phone as a very basic device that has no extra bells and whistles but just the very basic functions. Aro (2003), who analysed the same data set as that used in this study, notes that people can produce rational and culturally justifiable accounts by emphasising rationality that rejects any notions of the user being overly keen on unnecessary and expensive gadgetry.

This rationality is often realised in the data in accounts about a basic mobile phone, a device devoid of any “unnecessary” features.

Elsewhere in the interview the interviewee describes the Internet as a very good invention that can be very useful, especially once the initial learning curve has been dealt with. On the other hand she describes her experiences of an online chat room that were rather negative due to the superficiality of the discussion as well as the doubt about other participants’ true identities. The next sample follows a discussion regarding new technologies such as virtual reality and email, where the interviewee points out that social skills may degenerate due to the excessive use of technology.

Interview #18. Female 31-40 years (continued).

Interviewer: So have there been other such observations that you have made, regarding...?

Interviewee: Well, yes, perhaps there might be something like all the, kind of, being considerate to other people and that kind of interaction will start wearing thin and politeness and all the traditional good manners and such. I think they’ll be forgotten to some extent. I don’t know, I might be completely wrong but somehow I just feel like that. But there might also be other kinds of similar, sort of societal things as well.

* * * *

Interviewer: Nii että niinku ollu muita tollasia jotenkin että tai mitä niinku havaintoja sitten niinkun, et...

Interviewee: No ehkä jo-ehkä siinä voi olla jotaki semmosta niinkö, että semmonen niinkö tavallaan niinkö semmonen toisten ihmisten huomioon ottaminen niinkö ja semmonen niinkö vuorovaikutteisuus niinkö jotenki rupiaa pätkimään sillä tavalla, että niin et että jo- kohteliaisuus ja kaikki tämmöset perinteiset niinkö hyvät tavat ja tämmöset niinkö. Mää luulen, että niinku, että nii-ne unohtuu jossain määrin. Em mä tiä, saatan olla ihan väärässäkin, mutta

jotenkin niinkö tulee semmonen olo, että vähän semmosta.
Mut ehkä se voi olla niinkö kaikkee muutakin tommosta
yhteiskunnallista ja niin päin pois.

In this context technology is described as a force that can erode many traditionally esteemed values such as courtesy and being considerate towards other people. It is described as an element that will increasingly affect the ways in which people interact with each other, thus altering traditional ways. This change is described as a particularly negative one, somehow changing the premises of social interaction in a way that erodes the grounds for human emotions, caring and politeness. Furthermore, as the ways in which individuals interact with each other change, the whole society is also described as vulnerable to these effects, indicating a potential major change in the culture. The values invoked are so central to contemporary society that their erosion can be seen a symptom of declining culture.

Not only is technology described as having the ability to initiate such a change; an implication is produced that a lot of people in general are potentially vulnerable, possibly unable to change the course of this process. In the data, other similar worries are accounted for as well, such as the decline of language as a result of using modern communication technologies. People's connection, for example, with nature and traditional books can also be described as threatened by the allure of modern technology. Furthermore, an interesting account regarding societal change was provided in one of the interviews: the Internet was described as such a powerful forum to likeminded groups of people that these groups might eventually separate from the rest of the society in some ways even in the off-line world.

In the sample above a tension is created between the use of technology and being polite to other people and having good manners. Technology has proved versatile enough to be involved

in an increasing number of day-to-day actions. The decline of manners and politeness is described as a drawback. A strong cultural norm of being considerate to other people is reflected in the description. Thus, it draws a line between the benefits and negative effects that uses of technology may have.

The next excerpt is about the vulnerabilities created by the new technology.

Interview #05. Man 10-20 years.

Interviewer: Well, have you pondered over these kinds of scary scenarios or the hype which is related to technology. So, do you have any take on them?

Interviewee: But, of course, the more everything goes online, then [...] of course unemployment figures might rise and then again, then again criminals will also start to go online. It's not yet terribly common, but it's just all these viruses and such can totally take down a company if they get access to their computer. If the company is dependent on those machines, it can be quite a devastating blow, if (coughs) they gain access into the system.

* * * *

Interviewer: Tota, oot sä pohdiskellut näitä tämmösiä uhkakuvia tai sitten tämmöstä hypeä, mikä liittyy tähän teknologiaan. Ni onks sulla mitään kantaa niihin?

Interviewee: No, tietysti, että mitä enemmän kaikki menee verkkoon, niin [...] sitä tietenkin työttömyys saattaa kasvaa ja sitte taas, sitte taas niinku myös rikolliset rupee siirtyyn verkkoon. Se ei ny oo viä kauheen yleistä, mutta just kaikki tämmöset sitte viirukset sun muut voi tuhota niinku yrityksen kokonaan vaikka mmm jos pääsee sinne koneelle. Jos se yritys rii-on riippuvainen niistä koneista, se voi olla aika kova isku, jos (yskäisy) sitte pääsee jo järjestelmään sisälle.

The excerpt above follows a discussion on whether purchasing things online forces the user to usurp the occupation of ticket sales personnel, bank clerks and such. The interviewee

describes the situation as potentially reducing the need for such workforce. The interviewer then asks whether the interviewee has any further thoughts about threatening scenarios or technology related hype in general. Regarding the cultural significance of this discourse, it is noteworthy that the interviewee begins his description of the potential pitfalls of technology with an utterance “but, of course”, thus positioning him as a person who is aware of such a notion regarding developing technology. The risks inherent in technological development are a part of the public discourse and as such require little explanation. However, it is important to be able to answer such a question in order to maintain a legitimate position in the discussion.

The interviewee describes new technology as potentially increasing unemployment and also opening doors to new types of crime, exploiting the vulnerabilities of the latest information systems. Again, as was the case in the short sample in the introduction to this chapter, both the interviewer and the interviewee casually account for technology as potentially generating problematic situations, reflecting the cultural prevalence of such a discourse. In the accounts of modern technology, contemporary information society is often described as being vulnerable to many new threats. The high level of dependence on sophisticated technology and all the potential threats associated with it (computer viruses and so forth) are described to create risks that are new and yet to be fully discovered.

Two things in the account are particularly notable: first the notion that increasing unemployment is a negative phenomenon as employment is highly regarded. Secondly, a tension is created between the new technology related vulnerabilities and the benefits of the increasing web-based application and services: reaping the rewards of the new

technology inevitably introduces threats as well. Thus, a line is being drawn between the benefits of the new technology and the issues of increasing vulnerabilities and unemployment.

Along with these threats, the data mention the increasing power of the media and communication technology corporations. These organizations are described as being such powerful bodies that they may be able to sway the markets and affect the welfare and development of nation-states. Below is an excerpt which illustrates this point. A couple discusses the influence of media corporations over independent journalism and mass communication.

Interview #2. Woman 31-40 years (interviewee 1) & man 40-50 years (interviewee 2).

Interviewee 1: Well, these like, journalists are working in, in some media companies, and there is like some board there...

Interviewee 2: Which has certain targets and modes of operation.

Interviewee 1: And they have a certain, definitive view of the world.

Interviewee 2: Yes.

Interviewee 1: A vision about how society must be built.

Interviewee 2: Yes.

Interviewee 1: And how the economy must be constructed so that it will pull through, and that, these things are in fact quite obvious really.

* * * *

Interviewee 1: Niin tämmöset niinku se, toimittajathan on töissä niinku jossain, niinku jossain mediayhtymässä, niin siellä on niinku joku niinku hallintoneuvos.

Interviewee 2: Jossa on tietyt niinku tämmöset [...] joo toimintalait ja -päämäärät.

Interviewee 1: Ja niillä on tietynlainen, niil on tietynlainen, niil ihmisillä on tietynlainen niinku maailmakuva.

Interviewee 2: Joo.

Interviewee 1: Tietynlainen kuva siitä, miten yhteiskunnan pitää rakentua.

Interviewee 2: Joo.

Interviewee 1: Ja miten yhteiskunnan talouden pitää rakentua, jotta se tulee toimeen ja se, se tietysti, nähän kuuluu jo aivan itsestään selvyyksiin.

This description is actually a rare occurrence in the data – more often people suggested that the risks involved in some corporations might become so big that their failure might have nationwide economical effects. However, the description above adds another dimension to the talk about corporate influence. As media companies have grown stronger, they are believed to have a societal role not only through their economic success or failure, but their strategies to achieve their goals and the future of the markets. An account like this also leaves latitude for the listener to attribute to the media corporations the power to promote their goals through their actions. Thus, the emerging technology is described as creating markets for new kinds of players that can potentially influence the future of the society.

Here, the media companies are described as so big as to be able to realistically promote their own agenda in the society in which they exist. The ideal of neutral mass communications is thus described as potentially threatened by the sheer amount of leverage that these companies have in societal issues. Thus, the economic position that these companies have come to enjoy is described as threatening the integrity and transparency of today's society, which is highly valued.

Another threat described in the data is social exclusion as a result of inability to adopt new technology. The next sample (part of a long turn in a discussion about Internet and learning to use it) provides an account where this exclusion is attributed to both the level of skills and, at least to a point, to the people's economical position. The interviewee makes a comparison

with TV and describes Internet as a technology that can, to some extent, determine the standard of living.

Interview #25. Woman 51-60 years.

Interviewee: ...Wait, now what would make a good comparison? For example I remember the time when television was not yet a common thing, only few people had them, so you started feeling like umm: “we don’t yet have one”. I remember that time. So we got one and it was marvellous and everybody came to see it and soon they all wanted to have one too and got one of their own. Now that we have computers, they say, that one might become socially excluded (without one). People say that they do all sorts of things with their computers, and they do, if something is up (they can easily look it up). For example you can find medical information and all kinds of other information in the Internet once you learn how to do searches. Training courses seem to provide people these skills, how to get that information and so on. So if you compare it to the time we had a television and others didn’t – “we need to have one”. Now everyone has a computer, otherwise you become excluded. You’re deprived of something in a way. It’s funny, with people. Has it got to do with the standard of living, or [...] is it, um, there’s the danger of becoming excluded.

* * * *

Interviewee: Mikähän se on mikä miten vois verrata, esimerkiksi että siihen aikaan, kun televisiota ei ollu kaikilla, niin sitä sitten tuntu, että ku meillä ei oo televisiota mä muistan sen ajan. Meille sitten kotiin laitettiin televisioo, no sehän oli upeeta ja toiset tuli kattomaan ja kohta kaikki halusi sen television ja kohta se olikin jo kaikissa sitten. No nytten sitten ku on tietokone, ne puhuu, sitähan on niinku syrjäytymässä sitten, ne puhuu, että että niin niin, mää teen tietokoneella, sitten ne tekeekin kaikkia juttuja siellä ja ja jos on jostaki asiasta kysymys. Internetistähän löytyypi esimerkiksi lääketieteellistä tietoa, löytyy muutakin tietoa kaikkea, että kun oppii niitä hakemaan ja tuommosilla

koulutuksilla näköjään niinku saa sitä tietoa, miten niitä haetaan ja ja tuota. Sillai että sitä varmasti niinkun siihen aikaan jos vertaa siihen tosiaan että meillä oli televisio, toisilla ei ollu. Meilki pittää saaha. Nyt on tietokone kaikilla, muuten syrjädyn.. Niin että jääpi niinku jostaki. Se on hassua, ihminen tää sit ei, onko se sitä elintaso vai [...] vain onko se, jotaki syrjäytymisen vaara siinä on.

People are described as being constantly constrained to keep up with the emerging technology. The danger of becoming excluded is explained as a result of the constantly developing devices that require not only a certain amount of money for the initial purchase and maintenance but also suitable skills. Thus, people are unequal in terms of their ability to keep up with the technological development. Developing technology is described as setting definite standards, which then impose various demands and constraints on individuals.

Exclusion is described as the opposite of being equal in terms of the media and information access. Thus, emerging technology poses a threat to equality as it requires funds and skills not easily or automatically at everyone's disposal. Equality, quite obviously, is one of the most highly regarded values in contemporary societies as discussed in the conclusion of Chapter 2.

4.3.2 Useful innovations vs. making life too easy

The accounts of developing technology sometimes include the notion of people getting somehow weaker both mentally and physically as innovations are introduced into their daily lives. This happens as some things are made easier or even too easy for people. Morality is produced in these accounts, premised with several cultural values. The next sample illustrates one such theme about new technology: dependency.

Interview #18. Woman 31-40 years & man 31-40 years.

Interviewer: Err, have you ever thought about this, as all sorts of devices and inventions come along, in which direction do they seem to take the lives of Finnish people. If you think about it in ten years' time, so have you, do you think that the world is going in a certain direction because of this?

Interviewee: It's totally going in a certain direction. Like, particularly young people, what comes to young people then at least a part of the population has, sort of, quite clearly trouble being without any machines and devices. So [...] so how insecure do they feel, if they have none.

* * * *

Interviewer: Ooo, ootsä miettiny koskaan sitä, että kun kaikenlaisia niinku tämmösiä laitteita ja keksintöjä tulee, mihin suuntaan niinku ne näyttäis muuttavan suomalaisten elämää. Jos jos sä mietit kymmenen vuoden tähtäimellä, että ootsä, ajatteletsä, että maailma on menossa sen takia niinkun tiettyyn suuntaan?

Interviewee: Ohan se menossa ihan totaalisesti tiettyyn suuntaan. Niinkö varsinkin niinkö nuoret, nuorten osalta niin ainaki niinkö jollakin tietyllä osalla väestöä niin niin niillä on niinkö ihan selvästi vaikeuksia olla ilman niinkö mitään koneita ja laitteita. Että [...] että miten turvattomaksi tuntee ittensä, jos ei niinkö mitään.

The interviewer presents the idea that the ordinary life of Finnish people might be going in a certain direction as a result of the constantly emerging technological innovations or that life is otherwise somehow changing. The woman then describes the change as an obvious one and hastens to mention that particularly some of the young people are already showing signs of excessive dependency on various devices. She describes young people as excessively dependent on or addicted to technology: not only do the young prefer to have their favourite gadgets with them at all times, but they also feel insecure should they not have access to these devices. This

description implies a low level of autonomy and incapability to cope satisfactorily without the means provided by various devices. Thus, in this account, technology is assigned the potential of robbing people of some of the basic skills required to lead their daily lives.

In the sample above the tension is created between the preference of young people to spend their time with technological devices and their ability to cope without any of these devices. However great the allure of the new technology is, in this account it is described as potentially eroding some of the basic abilities needed for a sound and secure existence. Thus, cultural values of individual independence and autonomy are reflected in this account.

In the next sample a couple accounts for new technological inventions.

Interview #39. Man 21-30 years (interviewee 1), woman 21-30 years (interviewee 2) & woman 31-40 years (interviewee 3).

Interviewer: Would you say this is something that is welcome or desirable here?

Interviewee 2 or 3: Yes features that are useful are welcome.

Interviewee 1: Yes, some of them are, but I will still want to walk there with my very own legs (laughter). One doesn't need to push a button: transport me to the living room, open the telly.

* * * *

Interviewer: Oisko tää siis teidän mielestä haluttavaa ja toivottavaa tähän?

Interviewee 2 or 3: Kyllä semmoset hyödylliset toiminnot on tervetulleita.

Interviewee 1: Joo jotku kyllä mutta kyllä mä sinne haluan ihan itte kävellä viel (naurua). Ei tarvi painaa nappia että siirrä mut olohuoneeseen, avaa televisio.

This sample follows a discussion on intelligent features for the home, such as a remote controlled sauna among others. The interviewee raises a question whether such features are actually desirable, thus questioning the nature of the technology. The other woman welcomes *useful* features and the male interviewee articulates his will to stay active regardless of all the possible technology. This is done through a remark that virtually everybody is likely to recognize as a humorous one: he would still like to walk to the living room instead of being transported there to watch television. This remark makes room for the technology to be seen as an amusing thing. Such applications might distance people from useful and important routines such as daily physical activities and thus impair their ability and autonomy. Hence the utterance ends in laughter. Furthermore, the distinction between useful and useless features demonstrates how some of the technological inventions can be described as gimmicks with no valuable uses.

In the interview sample above – not wanting to be automatically transported from one room to another – a contrast is created between technological innovations and one’s ability to move around and do things. This reflects perhaps both the culturally shared value of maintaining good physical condition and the ability to move around autonomously and do things without help from technological systems. Thus, the autonomy and freedom accounted for not only pertain to mental things (as was illustrated in the sample prior to this one), one’s ability to manage his or her autonomy (as noted in the Chapter 2 in the case of mobile phones) but also the physical ability to do things unaided.

Below is another excerpt where other people are described as having some undesirable issues with new technology.

Interview #03. Woman 41-50 years.

Interviewer: So, tell me what you meant about trendy knowledge?

Interviewee: What, what did I mean by that? Well, again, when did I.

Interviewer: In the context of the Internet, when you compared knowledge available from books and.

Interviewee: -Yes, well, it is based on just the fact that. I use this word just to, I haven't given it a lot of thought, just because, I have not used the Internet myself so much, that I could claim, that its it is equally reliable. But the fact that this whole Internet, err , the world of Internet use and, well, the way to use it, it is, I mean a bit, that is what I use the word trend for. Many people don't really – for example my fellow students, when in May we had to complete a seminar, and they were divided, who's going to research each topic. And I just happened to know, that there are countless books covering the topic available in the library and the employment office, real black on white knowledge. So they cannot be bothered to do anything else but to sit down at a computer and then wave their arms that they could not find it online. And what they did find was completely trivial and I said walk to the unemployment office or to the local library, in there, I know that those are the places.

* * * *

Interviewer: Tota, kerro mitä sie tarkoitt tällä trenditiedolla?

Interviewee: Mitäs mitäs mää ny sillä tarkotin? Niin siis –missäs kohtaa mä ny sen.

Interviewer: Netin yhteydessä, nii verratessasi kirjatietoo ja.

Interviewee: -Niin no no se perustuu ihan siihen. Mä käytän tämmöstä sanaa ihan nii joku ihan silleen, em mä ny sitä sen kummemmin miettinyt, juuri siks, etten mä itte ole käyttänyt nettiä niin paljon, että mä pystysin väittää, että että se on tota noin se luotet-luotettavuus on yhtä suuri. Mutta se että tää koko netti, öö , se netin käytön maailma ja ja tota se tapa käyttää sitä, niin on, vähän siis , siitä mä käytän tämmöst trendi-trendi-sanaa. Ihmiset ei niinku

välttämättä monetkaan – esimerkiksi mun opiskelukaverit ku täs esimerkkinä toukokuulla piti tehdä yks seminaarijuttu, et ne oltiin jaettu siin, kuka mitäkin aihepiiriä etsii. Ja mä sattumalta tiesin, että siit aiheesta on lukemattomia kirjoja saatavana kirjastosta sekä työvoimatoimistosta ihan mustaa valkosella tietoo. Niin ei ne viitsi mennä ku koneen ääreen ja sit levitellä käsiä et ku ei he löytänyt netistä. Ja sit se mitä ne löysi oli ihan triviaalitatiotoo siitä asiasta ja mä sanoin, et kävele työkkäriin tai Metsoon, et sielt, mä tiedän et siältä löytyy.

In the sample above using Internet is contrasted with using books and libraries. This is done with a description of people who needed information on a particular matter, but who were so lazy as to only look for it up in the Internet. This laziness is described to have resulted in finding only trivial information. The interviewee accounts for this kind of use of the Internet as particularly trendy as opposed to actually taking the time and making the effort to go to a library to see what sort of information is available in there. Hence, the use of the Internet in this context is produced as a morally questionable shortcut that should not be used as an excuse for not making a decent effort in the first place.

The word trend or trendy is often attributed to frivolous and debatable practices that appear to have no solid foundation or justification in the context of use. The sample above is an example of this. The people who decided to rely on Internet instead of libraries are described as lazy and the Internet as a medium that needs to be used with caution and discretion. A tension is created between being lazy or unenterprising and being a hardworking person. Thus, the sample reflects the virtue of being a diligent, hardworking person instead of being lazy and inambitious. Such a virtue is highly appreciated in the surrounding culture.

Importantly, the interviewee does not describe the Internet as a useless medium as such – instead the ways and habits

of using it that she had observed are described as deserving criticism. A description like this positions the interviewee as a person aware of these pitfalls. In this sense some of these accounts are also relevant from the viewpoint studied in Chapter 5. However, here the emphasis is on the ways in which people assign and premise their critiques of technology and not so much on their management of morality by discursive means.

As the interviewees account for their observations regarding other peoples' uses of new technology, they may assign blame or criticism as was seen in the excerpt above. Another way to talk about technology is to assign some uses as particularly suited to people with a handicap. Below is an excerpt that illustrates this.

Interview #17. Man 31-40 years.

Interviewer: Are there any sort of things in your own life to which you expect technology to bring some kind of a relief or so... the development to bring help through new inventions or applications?

Interviewee: Well no, well, I first think of Liisa of course, seeing as she leads a restricted life, such a severe mobility handicap, that [...] if it were to become so that she could cope independently. That's the first thing that comes to my mind, but not really anything else.

* * * *

Interviewer: Onks mitään niinku silleen omassa elämässä sellasia asioita, joihin niinku odottaa niinku tekniikan tuovan niinkun jotenkin apua tai niin... sen kehittymisen niinku tuovan apua uusien keksintöjen tai sovellusten niinku?

Interviewee: No ei, no ensin sitä tietenki tulee Liisa mieleen, että ku sillä on mm tuota rajoitteista elämä, niin kova se liikuntavamma siinä, että [...] jos sitä tulis sillai että pystys pystys tuota toimiin itsenäisesti. Siinähan se ensimmäinen tulee mieleen, että ei se oikein muuten.

Tension is created between the interviewee's own life and a person who has a severe mobility handicap. The interviewer asks whether the man expects that new technological inventions could help him in some way. Such a need is swiftly rejected. However, he describes a person with a physical disability as someone who could obviously benefit from innovations, to better lead an autonomous life. Here, the need for technology is produced as something that can be justified through a significant handicap that constrains life. Consequently, a normal person is someone who will not benefit that much from the technological advances. Hence, an image of a normal person is constructed and the need or justification for technological aids is described in relation to this image. Thus, in this context, the technology is described as promoting equality between people and the speaker establishes a position as an autonomous person.

The sample above is an example of a fairly common theme in the data as people often account for the various opportunities that technology may bring with it as a welcome alleviation to various types of deprivation, deficiency or lacking that other people may experience. This lack may be physical (i.e. a serious injury or disability), social, economic or a mixture of virtually any elements that can affect life in a negative way. A typical example in the data is provided in the descriptions of how technology will increase safety as it will provide new means to aid and monitor the health of the elderly.

Sometimes, however, it is not about any particular type of "handicap" that people refer to, but more like an alleviation of some mundane issues that can be described as being relevant to almost everybody. Below is an interesting excerpt from an interview where a man describes the effect of Internet on social interaction.

Interview #01. Man 31-40 years.

Interviewer: Ok, could you tell me, now that you have observed this, how do you think the way in which relationships are formed there (in the Internet) differs from the way they do in traditional ways? I mean like in face-to-face situations in general.

Interviewee: Well, it's like, it's really so that one is able to get directly to the point, in a way. Because you don't have to deal with distractions, things like your face and your body and the shame you may experience over these things. And many times you join a discussion that already exists and it's about certain issues. And if you have any opinions or experiences regarding those issues you are able to express them in a very prepared and direct way.

* * * *

Interviewer: Tota, ööö, voisiksä vähän kertoo, ku sä oot seurannu niitä niin miten sun mielestä niinku tälleen ää tavallaan ihmissuhteet muotoutuu tai miten ne niinkun e-ee-eroaa siellä, kun niitä muodostetaan siellä kun kuin monin muin perinteisemmin kanavin? Elikkä nyt yleensä ehkä face-to-face tai?

Interviewee: Se tota niin niin niin niin. Ohan se siis silleen ehkä jotenki niinku pääsee niinku suoremmin asioihin varsinaisesti sit sillä lailla, et se että et ku sul ei oo ikään kuin siis tämmösiä niinku sitä häiritsevyyttä, mikä syntyy sun omasta kasvoista sun omasta ruumiistas mahdollisesti häpeästä siitä. Ja toisaalta sit siitä niinku kun monesti liitytään johonki keskusteluun, otetaan kantaa johonkin keskusteluun, joka on jo olemassa ja ja ja ikään kuin tietystä asiasta. Jos sulla on niinku jotain omaa kokemusta, jotain omaa näkemystä siihen asiaan niin niin sä voit ikään kuin kirjoittaa sen niinku hyvinki niinku valmistellusti ja suorasti.

The Internet is accounted for as a means for an intelligent and rewarding exchange of views and opinions that is beyond the distractions of the physical appearance and other such things

about the discussion participants. Thus, in this context an individual is described as an actor who may be inhibited in his or her pursuits by issues that are irrelevant to the main focus of the action. Not only is the freedom from the distractions of one's physical appearance presented as a positive thing, but the very nature of the social exchange that enables the expression of opinions in a particularly efficient and rewarding way. Hence, the Internet is produced here as a means of realising one's true intellectual potential to its fullest extent.

An account like this is geared towards positioning the person as being aware that not only handicapped people but each and every one of us may have some issues with our habituses and benefit from technology in subtle ways. In this context, technology is also described as promoting equality and removing obstacles from social exchange.

The nexus between these accounts and the shared cultural values of the contemporary Finnish society is further discussed in the following section.

4.4 Conclusions

“Lie detector eyeglasses perfected: Civilization collapses”.
– A six word story by Richard Powers. (2006)

This chapter has illustrated many ways in which technology is accounted for in the data. New and emerging technology attracts criticisms of various kinds. As is obvious from reading earlier research this is not confined to the latest innovations in IT. Quite the contrary, new innovations have been greeted with pronounced apprehension in earlier times as well. This chapter contributes to the understanding of the issues regarding developing technology that people account for in the data.

According to the analysis, innovations and development in technology can be described as a far reaching and powerful force in contemporary society. The implications of new technologies are described to manifest themselves not only in new gadgets and services but throughout society – in the ways in which day-to-day interaction is carried out between individual peoples as well as between peoples, society and corporations. While it appears that technology is subjected to a variety of critiques, people on the other hand may produce neutral and enthusiastic accounts of their own use of technology. In order to understand the meaning of technology in the context of everyday life this chapter analysed these accounts and the ways in which technology is produced in them. The erosion of social interaction, decline of language, vulnerability of technology based systems and social exclusion are examples of the unwanted effects described in the data.

One of the issues that people describe as a potential threat of technology is the erosion of culture and values. Furthermore, making life too easy is rejected as a bad goal for development. In these contexts technology is described as something that can make people less capable in various ways, impairing their skills and understanding of culture as well as of traditions. Isolation from other people, the lack of face-to-face communication and deteriorating abilities were described as potential consequences of spending too much time with various devices and applications.

Thus, being socially considerate, empathetic to other peoples' feelings and able to display good manners are regarded as important values. In much the same vein diversity of social interaction and other activities are described as essential to people in order to develop and maintain a balanced set of physical, mental and social abilities. Based on the analysis, these issues emerge as important and culturally shared values that are in particularly high regard. In contrast

to these the notion of technology making life too easy is criticised. The same goes for gadgets that are accounted for as unnecessary gimmicks. Innovations that can be described as useful or as means to make some activities more efficient are justified, but some things, such as too automated daily functions in the home, were met with apprehension. Maintaining autonomy and individual abilities are valued so much that people are unwilling to negotiate them. Thus, making life easier does not equal making it better in quality.

The description of the future toaster (in section 5.1) was evinced as means to point out how many innovations have little value in everyday life. Such innovations go against culturally shared categories of useful technology in such a way that they can in some contexts be described as jokes. But not only the technology that can be described as the latest whizz-bang gadgetry is a subject of critical talk: in the data there are discussions about the need for domestic appliances such as the toaster and a kettle. A brief google search was made in order to find material regarding toasters and the following account in form of a blog entry about an ultra modern toaster was found.

On a recent business trip, I wanted toast for breakfast. I had no trouble putting the toast INTO the toaster; however, I thought it was running long and attempted to get the toast OUT of the toaster. Finally, after 5 tries, I managed to get it out, thanks to the help of a tiny little button on the front of the toaster called “cancel”.

I am not sure that I want a toaster that is so technologically advanced that it needs a “cancel” button! (Gray 2003)

The blog entry is accompanied with an illustration of the struggle to get the toast out of the toaster. A discussion on the characteristics of the toaster followed the entry. For example, an ironic remark was made about waiting for a talking model so that one can discuss philosophy with it while eating crumpets. Two posters ask with equal irony why anyone would put toast

in a toaster and one calls for some common sense in the way the toasters are developed. Clearly, even a device as mundane as the toaster may become a source of debate and a subject of elaborate accounting once it has gained some new features and characteristics. Instead of staying in taken-for-granted invisibility such a toaster becomes a subject of reflection as its new features are evaluated in social interaction. In some contexts the extra functionality can undoubtedly be described as basis for purchasing one or giving one as a gift.

Concerning the way other people use technology, one pitfall was described in the way people may always end up taking the easiest way out to carry out their duties and activities. In the sample presented the interviewee described how her coursemates were unwilling to go to the library and, instead, preferred the Internet due to its easy access. This was described as being so lazy as not to make the effort and actually walk somewhere to gather more and better information on the subject. In the account the criticism was not levelled at the Internet as a medium, but the ways and the habits people may acquire regarding its uses. The outcome of this was accounted for as sloppy practices and lack of proper initiative. This creates latitude for the listener to see the interviewee as a person with initiative and high work ethics, both of which are highly valued attributes in contemporary society.

The time spent with technology is also a cause of concern. Technology can be described as so fascinating that people are in danger of becoming addicted to it. Exclusion and becoming isolated from normal daily activities are also described as a serious danger of technology. Children and young people are described as being specifically vulnerable to the negative effects of the excess use of technology. These issues are described as being counterproductive to the development of the children and their ability to live life to full. Isolation, becoming isolated from normal day to day interaction due to the time spent

online, was accounted for as a possible hazard of excessive Internet use. On the other hand, a situation where one does not have the access to technology perhaps due to a lack of funds or the skills needed, can also be described as resulting in exclusion. There is also a sample in the data where the digital divide between developed and the third world countries is described as a worrisome effect of the development. Thus, proper or “good” use of technology is claimed to consist of reasonable access to services and applications, but not of their excessive use. Exclusion like addiction is an issue with a strong negative connotation in Finnish culture. These accounts, too, are fashioned and premised so that they align the speaker within values in a moral sphere, the surrounding culture and the specific context in which they are produced. Hence, the way in which cultural resources are invoked provides us with clues as to how people evaluate technology and take action on it.

The way people assign attributes of proper use to themselves and others, as discussed above, has one notable exception. People with disabilities or who are otherwise disadvantaged in the sense that they lack some abilities which the majority of “others” possess are often accounted for as hopefully benefiting from the development of technology and whatever innovations it has introduced. In the context of these issues, technology can be described as reducing the things that inhibit the empowerment of marginal groups and prevents society from becoming as equal and fair as possible. While innovations that might make life *too easy* are rejected, they can be described as particularly suited for people with the mentioned qualities.

Traditionally in Finland society has taken great responsibility for people with disabilities. It seems that technology is indeed seen as a potential answer to the increasing pressures on social welfare. It is also possible to

account for technology as resolving some issues that virtually anybody may experience with their habituses one way or another: the online interaction enables users to interact beyond the burdens related to physical appearance and other such issues. This is described as benefiting intellectual and rewarding correspondence in online arenas, as one is able to concentrate on the subject instead of the distractions that one's physical presence inevitably introduces.

Another way that technology is accounted for takes place in a broad societal context. The interviewees look beyond the user applications and products at the industry producing them as well as at the societal outcomes of this industry. The development of technology can be accounted for as replacing jobs in various areas, such as services. On the other hand the industry can be accounted for as being a rather powerful societal actor. This raises at least two kinds of concerns over the management and development of the corporations. First, there is a description in the data where the integrity of the corporations was questioned: will they produce neutral news or will they somehow promote their own agenda? On the other hand the data described how the sheer volume that these corporations have in the gross national product of Finland means that the success or a failure of a single company may have too large an effect on the national economy. Thus, even successful media and technology can be seen as producing threats due to the wealth and power accumulated in the corporations.

Individual autonomy and the ability to control one's free time, being considerate and polite to other people as well as having good manners, transparency and integrity of society and mass communication, also equality between people were all important elements in the argumentative logic of the accounts that deal with the perceived "impact" of technology on a societal and cultural level. As to the individual effects,

basic life skills and ability to maintain a secure and satisfactory existence independent of the use of technological devices, maintaining physical fitness and autonomy, hardworking and enterprising mentality and equality are all reflected on in the accounts. These are ideals about how people and society should be.

Although often described as versatile and useful, technology was also accounted for as potentially robbing people of some of these virtues or eroding the basis on which these values are built. As the benefits introduced by the uses of technology are accounted for, they are presented against a large set of cultural values and their impact on these is evaluated. As discussed in the introduction, the language related to moralities can be said to be in disorder (MacIntyre 1987; 1988), yet the everyday practical moral and social order is played out in the conduct of everyday life (Jayyusi 1991, Bergmann 1998; also Billig et al. 1988; Garfinkel 1984; Heritage 1984) as people mobilise the cultural categories reflexively available to them via the use of language (Alasuutari 2004). In and through these accounts the practico-moral order (Jayyusi 1991) is negotiated and sustained in the continuities of language and culture (including everyday action and e.g. placement of artefacts that they are closely related to).

Despite all the numerous ways to describe technology in a rather critical way people still talk about it very casually and describe uses that they are fond of. The conclusion of this chapter is that the relatively new and emerging technologies are somewhat more actively evaluated since they are perceived as exotic, unpredictable or risky just as is discussed in earlier research (e.g. Nieminen-Sundell 1998, Norman 1999, Pantzar 1996 & 2000, Suominen 2003). Due to its young age and the wide range of options it presents, the latest technology has not been widely adopted into daily routines and has not proven its reliability and worth in practice. Thus, people retain their

apprehensiveness until the technology becomes commonplace and a part of mundane daily activities. As technology matures it becomes increasingly “invisible” through routinised use and lack of reflection.

The experience of everyday life is characteristically routinised (see Alasuutari 2004; also Felski 2000; Heller 1984; Jokinen 2005) as it would be impossible to constantly reflect on every single function that we engage in. Most of the time people use their cars, bicycles and refrigerators without giving them a second thought. As the above quote about the technotoaster vividly illustrates, even a piece of technology that has already vanished from being an “active” cultural consciousness into a taken-for-granted commodity may suddenly become a topic of reflection as its characteristics change.

What, then, are the similarities and differences between these contemporary critiques and historical ones? The similarities between the ways in which people describe the present day technological development and how it has been seen in earlier decades are significant. However, while there is similar apprehensiveness regarding, for instance, the Internet as there was about television and videos during earlier times, there are also notable differences. While according to the data gender and religion have less impact on people’s attitudes these days, technology has assumed such an important role in present day society that even though people may have their reservations about new technology, they may also describe a danger of becoming excluded without it.

While this was to a large extent true of television and radio, modern communication technology introduces new elements into this equation. The Internet, for example, offers various means for social interaction and communication. Secondly, modern communication technology is so complex, that even the very basic use can be much more complicated than operating a television or a VCR, thus requiring a specific

set of skills even from an ordinary user. Thus, a possibility is accounted for that while technology keeps developing, the gap between the skills of the users and the requirements of the developing technology might grow too wide.

Unlike fifty or so years ago (e.g. Pantzar 1996) in the data there were no indications that either women or men are especially vulnerable to the negative effects of technology. Also, the significance of religious references regarding the pitfalls of new technology seem to have grown smaller. Many of the concerns are still similar to those of earlier times: erosion of social interaction, loss of traditions and addiction to new technology.

Fashioning the descriptions about uses and meanings of technology so that the speaker establishes a position as someone who is aware of the pitfalls of technology is common to the accounts in the data. This implies an awareness of the values and elements of “good life”, which, according to the analysis is not about making life easier but making it better in ways that are in harmony with the shared values of contemporary society. These accounts effectively reject any inferences regarding vanity or being naive in one’s relation to technology. This does not imply that there is one major discourse, a universal language system consisting of descriptions that are unproblematic in this sense. Instead, people utilise various discursive resources regarding technology to account for their actions and opinions. Thus, various discursive means are used in order render the described activity understandable in a particular situation.

Awareness of the potential pitfalls of technology can be accounted on the individual level, but just as well regarding other peoples’ uses, the level of society and even globally. Accounting for the causes of technology related apprehension results in a subject position that is firmly rooted in critical awareness, and thus in concordance with the surrounding

moral sphere of contemporary society. Some devices have become familiar and consequently invisible, some of the latest ones are subjected to heavy criticism and some are in a transitional phase, on the borderline of cultural awareness, perhaps occasionally coming into the view. Internet related applications, for instance, probably fall into all of these categories, as new applications and opportunities are constantly developed while some of them have become so familiar as to become mundane, largely unproblematic and consequently indistinguishable in the everyday mesh of routines and activities that forms the totality of day-to-day life.

5 MANAGING MORALITIES – ACCOUNTING FOR MEDIA USES

5.1 Introduction

Members of a culture value some media uses more than others. However, even though some uses are not particularly appreciated, this does not mean that people do not have such uses or that they totally refuse to discuss them. Instead, they are described in a multitude of ways and their cultural place is rendered understandable by various discursive means. According to the data, some examples of potentially debatable uses are watching soap operas or “aimless” surfing on the Internet. In order to legitimate such uses people may provide justifications for them. Sometimes “extra accounting” (Nikander 2002) is provided in order to describe these uses in understandable and legitimate ways.

This chapter studies the discursive means utilised when debatable uses of the media are accounted for. It will be seen throughout the analysis that as people engage in moral accounting of their media use, there are various “strategies” for fashioning the accounts so that a legitimate position can be established.

The extract from an interview below provides an example of one of the ways in which people justify their media habits.

Before this excerpt both the interviewee and the interviewer have shared their experiences of gathering together with friends to watch a certain TV series.

Interview #06. Woman 21-30 years.

Interviewer: Let's see [.] tell me about the entertaining uses of the Internet.

Interviewee: Well, It's pretty seldom that I really sort of [.] I do check – well even email can, on the other hand, be a kind of an entertaining use if you only mail your friends. But [.] then when I – actually I used to live [.] before I moved here around New Year – when I lived [.] err, in a sort of a student dorm where there was an Internet connection. So that's when I had it at home. And then I, well [.] at least once a week [.] went and read *Iltasanomat* [afternoon tabloid] [.] and I followed the, the letters or a sort of a discussion there anyway where they have various topics and then anyone can write about them and I followed that. [.] I don't really use it in such [.] [groans] Well it's always like pretty random. I don't [.] usually use it [.] for anything other than in case I want to look up some information.

* * * *

Interviewer: Tota [.] kerro tosta internetin huvikäytöstä.

Interviewee: Nooh, aika harvoin mää sieltä tosiaan niinku [.] katon – no kyllä sähköpostikin voi o-olla toisaalta olla sillee huvikäyttöä jos vaan kavereille lähettelee. Mutta [.] sillon kun mä – itse asiassa mä asuin tota [.] ennen ku mä muutin tohon vuoden vaihteessa – niin asuin [.] hmm, semmosessa opiskelijatalossa missä oli niinku internetyhteys eli sillon mulla oli kotona se. Ja sillon mää tota [.] ainaki kerran viikossa ni [.] kävin lukemas ton *Iltasanomat* siellä [.] ja niit- seurasin sitä, sitä yleisön tai semmonen keskustelu kumminkin siellä on niitä aiheita ja sitten niihin voi kuka tahansa kirjoittaa niin niitä seurasin. [.] En mä sitä oikeastaan silleen [.] [ähisee] No se on aina ni- n- niinku miten sattuu. Em mää [.] sieltä yleensä kyllä [.] katso muuta kun semmosta jos mä haluan niinku etsiä jonkun tiedon sitten.

In the excerpt above the question about “entertaining uses” of the Internet is perhaps interpreted as a reproach (Billig 1989, 218-219, Suoninen 1992, Nikander 2002) as the interviewee begins by uttering an emphatic and sustained “Well” and then goes on to explain that entertaining uses are in fact not so common for her. As such of uses are described as rare and sporadic the interviewee rejects the imputation of a debatable habit. After describing her uses of a certain popular message board she again states that she did not “really” get into it and that visiting the site was more or less random. Furthermore, she remarks that such uses are not common for her and that she mainly uses the Internet for gathering necessary information. In this account, the entertainment uses of the Internet are contrasted against important information so that the entertaining uses emerge as being of a lesser value and, perhaps, not necessarily worth the time spent. This can be seen as evidence of an overall debatable cultural status of entertainment which, in turn, is likely to cause the interviewee to explain this type of descriptions further.

Expressing uncertainty – producing a somewhat ambiguous description of one’s uses of a medium – is one strategy for presenting these practices as something that is not so important as to have a significant place in one’s life. This way the imputation is rejected that entertaining media use is somehow particularly important to the person. Hence, she establishes a position of a person who uses the medium appropriately. Accounts of media uses often include such justifications and management of morality regarding the nature of the uses in question.

The word strategy is not used here to denote “conscious” or “manipulative” use of language, but, rather, discursive means that are available to members of the culture. As such, there is a nexus between these “strategies” and the way the specific category of hobbies was utilised in the extracts

presented in an earlier chapter. To recognize moral accounting in the data does not necessarily mean that the participants of the interview were aware that they were managing morality as they talked about the media. Such is the nature of everyday moralities: being embedded in the taken for granted everyday moral order they are constitutive of ordinary talk of ordinary events and practices (Garfinkel 1984; Jayyusi 1991; Heritage 1984). The challenge is to understand the contextual logic of the discursive means and to recognize what cultural values are being utilised.

According to the analysis, there are three clearly distinguishable ways of accounting on one's media uses.

1. First, a person may simply describe using a certain service or using the internet in a particular way without hastening to give a justification for it.
2. Second, a person may describe uses and preferences so that some particular types of media use are completely rejected.
3. Third, a person may describe his or her media uses so that the accounts are fashioned with discursive elements geared to rationalise or to produce morally acceptable standpoints that serve the purpose of justifying the description.

Assuming and negotiating various moral standpoints and issues is an essential part of discussing media uses that are – for whatever reason – perceived to have the potential of implying something negative or questionable about interviewee as he or she describes them. The ability of humans to use language and to shape their accounts with great sensitivity to the context allows for the management of the position from which they speak. Moral positions are accomplished by the use of language and this allows people to discuss their responsibilities and characteristics as media users with flexibility, allowing for verbal displays of moral adequacy.

There are media uses that are culturally valued or “unproblematic” and thus discussed without any perturbation or effort to justify them. These are media practices that are “obviously” used for a reason as they are useful and necessary: timetables for public transport, online bank services, work related information searches and watching news on television are among such widely accepted uses. On the other hand, as people account for their media habits, several uses can be immediately and resolutely described as useless, void of any real value or harmful even. Depending on the person, these uses might include various online chats, some TV series, frivolous and entertaining surfing or the pornography available in the Internet. By utilising various discursive means people are able to maintain a legitimate position and also manage their accountability regarding these media practices that are deemed prone to unwanted inferences by the listener.

The local production of moral order has been studied in many contexts. Silverman (1997), for example, studied the construction of “delicate objects” in social interaction in HIV counselling. As he puts it: “As speakers modify and embellish each other’s accounts, the moral universe they inhabit is both locally and sequentially established” (ibid. 82). Baruch (1981) analysed how parents accomplish a status of moral adequacy as they account for the healthcare of their children and Stokoe & Wallwork (2003) the production of moral order in neighbour dispute data. Kurri & Wahlström (2005 and forthcoming) studied how people manage their moral positions during therapeutic conversations. They studied the moral order, agency, accountability and responsibility in therapy talk by analysing the discourses that the participants of therapy discussions utilised in order to explain their actions. While Kurri & Wahlström’s study examines client – therapist interaction it also provides examples and analysis of managing individual responsibility purely as a discursive

accomplishment (ibid.). Sneijder & Molder (2005) also point out that responsibility can be attributed by various discursive means.

Furthermore, Nikander (2002) studied the morality of age claims as a discursive phenomenon. Her analysis is structured around what can be called “moral accounting” especially in contexts where some preconceived notions of age were challenged and some sort of perturbation and “extra accounting” took place. For example, Nikander (2002, 186-189) analyses how a 49 year old interviewee describes how she still feels she has this “little girl inside” who would like to seek comfort and security from an older person. The interviewee then manages to provide the listener with seemingly logical explanations for feeling like this, mainly based on her childhood family and upbringing that lacked the emotional warmth she felt should have been there. Nikander notes that such explanations consist of discursive work that results in moral insulation, i.e. repels any potential moral reproach that people might otherwise be susceptible to.

Even though the subject matter seems far less intimate in the media and everyday life interviews, the accounts regarding problematic media uses are nonetheless complex and intricate as people engage in the process of managing their moral position in various contexts. As people account for their media uses there are instances where they readily provide explanations somewhat similarly to those in Nikander’s example, rejecting any imputations of deviance. This chapter studies such accomplishing in contexts related to media use.

Describing uses of the media warrants displays of moral adequacy since media use takes time and there is a variety of content available. Moral issues revolving around TV have been studied in great detail. (see e.g. Alasuutari 1992 and 1996, Ang 1996). Alasuutari (1992) points out that evincing legitimations and discussing moral issues is in fact a dominant feature in

media related talk. Alasuutari (1992; 2004, 49) notes that people have several ways of accounting for watching less valued programmes. They would admit watching such a programme but would also hasten to give an account of their reasons for doing so and their attitudes towards it. While earlier research has dealt extensively with the morality pertaining to the issues of “high” versus “low” culture, the discursive management of moralities and speaker positions as well as taking and placing responsibility, that are specifically in the focus of this study have not yet been studied to the same extent. As a relatively new addition to the domestic media environment the Internet in particular has been studied, from this viewpoint, to a lesser extent.

The researcher need not and, quite obviously, cannot be the judge of whether the uses described are legitimate or not. Instead, the talk about media uses – the confusion and management of moral positions whenever it takes place – and the corresponding responsibilities that the interviewees attribute in their accounts are examined. When people use expressions that serve to save their moral face they also mark certain uses as sensitive or morally debatable. Clearly, these issues and giving accounts of them are a part of the everyday moral order and the way these accounts are fashioned serves to position people among the shared values that are available to them within the surrounding culture.

Consequently, even though people may even heavily criticise various media uses or state that they personally find some types of uses devoid of any serious meaning, it does not mean that they refuse to discuss them altogether. In the data the interviewees explain and elaborate the reasons behind such media practices, what they think about them and what sort of a role they have in their lives. The focus is on ways in which people – while utilising the category of hobbies as was seen earlier in this dissertation – account for and seek to justify

some of the potentially questionable media uses they talk about.

The analysis focuses on the descriptions of straightforward rejection as well as the discursive strategies and argumentative logic designed to legitimate the uses described. These strategies are:

1. Expression of uncertainty
2. Description of habits
3. Context of the described activity
4. Description of personal characteristics

5.2 Describing the total exclusion of a media use

In the interviews people sometimes reject various descriptions of media use that were discussed or asked about. For example, there are accounts of certain TV viewing habits or Internet uses that are deemed to be of little value and thus not worth spending one's time on. These rejections occur both spontaneously and in reply to a question. Sometimes (as also illustrated in the Chapter 3) the interviewer's question can be interpreted as a reproach – or to elaborate this a little further, a perceived unwelcome imputation on the interviewer's part – and the interviewee wants to repel any such assumptions (see e.g. Billig 1989, 218-219; about morally “insulated accounts” see Nikander 2002, 202). Below is an excerpt of such a situation.

Interview #08. Man 41-50 years.

Interviewer: But then, if we are to think about a situation, where you, or let's first ask whether you browse any papers? Their online versions?

Interviewee: No, I don't. Hardly at all. Sometimes I have used *Iltalehti* and *err*, *Iltasanomat* [popular tabloids]. I didn't use them. I... I haven't got the time to read them.

* * * *

Interviewer: Mutt tota, jos ajatellaan sitt semmosta tilannetta, että sie, tai kysytään nyt ekana, että käytsie lukemassa lehtiä? Niitten verkkoversioita?

Interviewee: En, en käy. En juurkaan. Joskus mä oon käyttäny Iltalehtee ja tota, Iltasanomia. En mä käyttäny niitä. Mä... mulla oo aikaa niitä kattella.

Although it is admitted that the service, in this case the online versions of two popular tabloids, media content or application in question might have been used at some point – perhaps just tried out in order to know what it is all about – any further use is denied in the description. Thus, there is little need to explain the matter any further. Yet even in a short reply as the one above a noticeable discursive effort may be made in order to reach this conclusion: first there is the denial, then hesitation and some ambivalence whether the media in question were actually used or not. Here the media use does not warrant admitting spending time on it at all without marked hesitation. Finally, a reason for the exclusion is provided: the speaker says he does not have enough time for such media. This accounting provides – in this particular interview context – a sensible and a culturally sound reason for the described opinion of the medium in question. The media use described is rejected and no further elaboration is provided by the interviewee. Of course, we do not know how much or how often he uses the medium, but in this context the account provided was ultimately one of rejection. The speaker positioned himself as a person who prioritises other things.

Descriptions of rejecting certain uses may also occur spontaneously. In the excerpt below the interviewee summarises the discussion on his not watching television even though there is a television in the household:

Interview #10. Man 31-40 years.

Interviewer: So, what is the biggest reason for you, that you watch so little television?

Interviewee: There is nothing to... watch [laughs]. It is a clear reason, that... there's nothing interesting.

* * * *

Interviewer: Tota, mikä siulla vaikuttaa siihen, että televisiota tulee seurattua niin vähän?

Interviewee: Siellä ei oo mitään... kattomista (naurahten). Se on selvä syy, että... ei oo mitään kiinnostavaa.

The described rejection does not necessarily have to be totally absolute to be effective insofar as to have marked consequences in the interaction. Here the interviewee states that there is nothing to watch, nothing interesting on TV. In this account the television is described as an almost complete failure to stimulate the speaker, to kindle his interest. By this statement the interviewee effectively reduces the need for any further accounting regarding his description of television use. After this the man says that he does tend to watch the news but other than that it is mostly sporadic. It is not necessary to totally negate the use of a certain media technology on the whole, but just some aspect or parts of it or, alternatively, to emphasize the time spent with it.

These accounts are related to the implicit notion of the proper use of any particular medium. As well as the samples in this chapter, excerpts of data used in the section “proper use of the Internet” in the chapter about Internet and hobbies illustrate this theme in conjunction with the Internet. This is an efficient way of accounting for a media use that is described to be of little personal or cultural value. After such a rejection has been accounted for there is little need to justify and explain the use of the medium further. A position as a person who is critical of media content has been established.

The way people assess and account for various media uses is a context-bound phenomenon. For example, email can be described as an essential, legitimate and useful application, but it may even be criticized for being too addictive or binding. People may say they accept it or like it as such but still point out that some of its characteristics are objectionable. Another particularly valued form of media use is listening, watching or reading news be it on TV or in newspapers. Valued content such as news may actually attract seemingly contradictory accounts: even though a problematic notion as such it is not uncommon to hear people say they are news freaks or addicts. The notion of addiction does have strong negative connotations, but in a context like this it becomes rather a virtue than a vice.

Not all media uses whose value may be questioned are automatically described as useless or are immediately rejected. People may admit that they watch “bad” television or that they do use the Internet in other ways than strictly for necessary information searches, work related matters or other such, rather obviously non-controversial issues. Obviously, there are great numbers of such programmes as well as online content and applications. To manage the discussion on such topics people utilise various discursive means that allow them to describe the topic and the related uses in a sensible way, thus aligning themselves with shared cultural values.

5.3 Managing moral positions in media use descriptions

5.3.1 Expression of uncertainty

If people admit to using the media in a morally questionable way, they use expressions that serve to save their (moral) face.

On the other hand, by using these expressions they also mark certain uses as sensitive or morally questionable.

The first of these is the expression of uncertainty, a certain ambiguity in the description regarding one's use of a particular medium. The following excerpt illustrates this discursive means.

Interview #04. Woman 41-50 years.

Interviewer: Where does the Internet belong?

Interviewee: Well, the Internet is a rather small part of my life.

If I need some information, I don't surf there, I don't sort of, I don't browse away, and I don't – it's very restricted, what I use. So during the last months probably [...] only email.

* * * *

Interviewer: Mihin se internet kuuluu?

Interviewee: No, internet kuuluuuh aika pienenä osana mun elämään. Että jos mä tarvin jotain tietoo, mä en surffaile siellä, mä en niinku, mä en selaile, enkä mä – se on hyvin rajattua, mitä mä käytän, mitä. Et varmaan viimesten kuukausien aikana [...] pelkästään sähköposti.

The interviewee gives a detailed account of what she does not do with the Internet. Emphasising the strictly controlled nature of using the Internet is carried out by describing some uses that are considered of little value. The terms surfing and random browsing emerge as little valued uses of the medium and, by implication, a waste of time. As it is, this description does contrast the random uses with more appropriate, considerate and more important ways (email, searching for necessary information) and thus positions the person as someone who subscribes to this kind of criteria regarding her actual uses of the Internet. Accomplished through these discursive moves, the use is very controlled, so some slight leeway is then achieved by stating that “during the last months probably only email”. The need for further accounting is drastically lessened

through the initial description of rejecting some uses that are considered vulnerable to moral accusations.

In the interview discussions rejections of some media uses may be very strict but they may also make way for a more detailed account of the uses of the medium. The initial total rejection may be elaborated with descriptions of the “actual use” of the media. In the above excerpt the way of producing a somewhat ambiguous description of the uses of the Internet is very subtle but in that context it helps the interviewee not to assume a totally rigid, absolute standpoint on the matter.

The next sample provides an example where an interviewee manages some more latitude than in the sample above.

Interview #03. Woman 41-50 years.

Interviewer: Do the events that are public fuel your discussions in any way?

Interviewee: You mean like informally?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Of course absolutely. Myself I don't ever buy the *Iltasanomat*, or *Iltalehti* (popular tabloids), nothing like these. Or maybe ever I have, but nearly never. I also don't, for example sitting in the corner pub, or pub terrace or someplace, and they have *Iltasanomat*, I don't read it almost ever. Maybe I'll browse or check up the front page. I don't understand really, err I have always been like that I can't stand those tabloids, and I don't get why. I even used to (inhales) be so daft, that I could not stand people who read them. (laughter by both parties).

* * * *

Interviewer: Virittäkö julkisuudessa e-olevat tapahtumat niintein keskustelua millään tavalla?

Interviewee: Niin tämmöessä vapaamuotoisissa olo-muodoissa?

Interviewer: Niin.

Interviewee: Tottakai tottakai. Mä ite en osta ikänä Iltasanomia, enkä Iltalehtee, en mitään tälläsiä näin. Tai ikänä nyt oon ostanu, mutta en juurikaan koskaan. Enkä myöskään esimerkiksi istutaan omassa korttelipubissa, tai terassilla tai jossakin, siel on Iltasanomat, mä en lue sitä juurikaan koskaan. Ehkä selaan tai katon sen etusivun. Mä en ymmärrä oikein, mmmä oon aina ollu semmonen et mää en voi sietää niitä lehtiä, mä en tajuu minkä takia. Joskus mä jopa (vetää henkeä) olin niin torvi, että mä en sietänyt ihmisiä jotka luki niitä (naurua molemmilta tahoilta).

When a description is flavoured with pronounced ambivalence such as in this sample, the individual does not position herself in a totally rigid way in relation to the medium in question. Instead, the description of using the medium can be crafted with a great deal of flexibility while still managing to portray oneself as a person who is critical of the media use described. The interviewee continues to account for a time when she not only could not stand that type of tabloids but also despised the people who read them. A straightforward relation is made between the tabloids and the characteristics of people who read them. Having admitted in her description that despite this she sometimes browses these afternoon papers herself, she points out that she was a bit “goofy” to think like this. A tension is created between the described value of the paper and the fact that she has nevertheless sometimes read these papers herself. Thus, she manages to position herself as a reader who is exceedingly critical of such papers and does not really deviate from this position as she only samples these contents sporadically if at all.

The fact that a seemingly simple matter of discussing the use of a medium can invite accounting like this, in order to avoid any unwanted inferences and not to fall victim to a cultural pitfall during the course of interaction, reflects the contemporary values people assign to the media environment.

Critical accounts position the speaker as a culturally sound and conscious person who uses the medium in a critical and responsible way, thus reflecting the ability to differentiate between good and bad taste. Furthermore, such “undecided” accounts regarding a particular use of a medium can also serve as a consolidating factor for the critical attitudes – one has to, after all, demonstrate having knowledge of what one is talking about when making strong statements one way or another.

The ambiguity of the account is also supported by laughter. At the end of the sample both the interviewer and the interviewee laugh. Laughter is not uncommon when people engage in moral accounting, as is evident from the samples presented in this chapter. Earlier studies (e.g. Glenn 1991; Soilevuo-Grønnerød 2004; Haakana, 2002) have shown how laughter has interactional consequences and may serve to create affiliation between the participants, problem revelation, sharing of an equal status and acceptance. Glenn (1991) notes, that laughter can serve to mark laughable utterances as “not-serious”. In the sample above laughter marks the mutual understanding, marks the utterances as not-so-serious and thus alleviates the interactional consequences of the remarks as opposed to their literal meaning (e.g. that she could not stand other people who read tabloids).

5.3.2 Description of habits

Another way of achieving a preferred moral position is to describe the media use as habitual and thus less of a determined and pre-planned activity. Such accounts are used to illustrate the fact that the media use in question is something that can be done occasionally in a very casual way while still not necessarily strongly subscribing to the values represented by or inscribed into the medium.

Interview #14. Man 31-40 years (interviewee 1) and woman 31-40 years (interviewee 2).

Interviewer: What about now, since this broadband access, as you use quite a bit of Internet while abroad, then... So did it make living abroad feel like any different?

Interviewee 2: Yes.

Interviewee 1: Well, it... you don't feel like being so isolated from Finnish issues. For example [in a city in Great Britain] it was really much harder for me, I didn't know nearly as well, as well, so, I mean [in Great Britain], about what's going on in Finland. But now that I had the broadband access, I would indeed read *Hesari* (nickname for the biggest newspaper in Finland), every morning, just as if I had been in Finland, except that I read it online. Every now and then I actually read the afternoon papers, to see what they had of this...

* * * *

Interviewer: Mitä nyt, sitten tän laajakaistayhteyden, kun te käytätte paljon nettiä ulkomailla ollessanne, niin... niin tekikö se sitten ulkomailla asumisesta mitenkään niinku eri tuntusta?

Interviewee 2: Joo.

Interviewee 1: No se,... ei tunne olevansa niin eristyksissä Suomen asioista. Esimerkiksi [in a city in Great Britain] mulla oli paljo vaikeempaa, mä en tienny läheskään hyvin, yhtä hyvin, että niinku, tai siis [in Great Britain], että mitä Suomessa tapahtuu. Mutta nyt kun oli laajakaista, niin tuli luettua tosiaa *Hesari*, joka aamu, niinku olis Suomessa ollu, paitsi luki sen netistä. Tuli luettua jopa iltapäivälehtiä silloin tällöin, ett mitä niissä oli tämmöstä...

In this account the nuisance of being isolated from the daily news of the home country is relieved by a broadband access to the Internet. The interviewee describes having read *Helsingin Sanomat* (the largest Finnish newspaper) every morning just as he would have done had he been in Finland but while abroad he simply did it online (the contextual significance that

is created by accessing these online publications while being abroad is further discussed later in the following section).

As he continues the description he notes that “every now and then I actually read the afternoon papers”. An element of confession is built in into the statement. However, the expression “I might even read” [in Finnish: *tuli luettua*] also conveys the idea of a habit that is not something particularly important but nevertheless might sometimes happen. This renders the described media use as something that does not include any strong attachment or need, rather just an occasional glance at what is going on so as to stay in touch with as wide a spectrum of current affairs as possible. In the data the afternoon papers seem to be something of an exception in the field of newspapers as they are often contrasted against other publications.

Not only actually using a medium – watching television for instance – can be described as something superficial or devoid of any serious meaning to the interviewee, but also the mere act of talking about media may become a subject of similar accounting. The next excerpt provides an example of this. Metaphorically speaking, the interviewee invites the interviewer into the “trusted” circle of friends as she explains who she can talk about television series with and what considerations she takes into account in doing this. The excerpt follows a discussion where the woman interviewed talks about the TV series *The Bold and the Beautiful* and “admitted” that in a way it is ridiculous, but on the other hand it is a good thing that programmes like this are produced anyway (the interviewee also points out that she has an elderly mother who is very keen of the show). Just before the excerpt she has come to the conclusion that at least some people think the show is “trash”.

Interview #40. Woman 51-60 years (interviewee 1) & man 51-60 years (interviewee 2).

Interviewer: Yes but does one really always have to.

Interviewee 1: Just so. But then again there are people who, and then, with people who you already know, as you learn to know your workmates and know what they usually watch. Well, you wouldn't do it with people, even talk about such programmes, who regard them as little like [.] well, I wouldn't bother. So they th-, so a person like that thinks that "I wouldn't even bother to put the telly on for a programme like that". ...even try to talk about it with them.

Interviewer: Well of course not, yes.

Interviewee 1: And you would rarely discuss any television programme with them.

Interviewer: Just so.

Interviewee 1: So [.] But then again sometimes, so- sometimes we really go through Brooke's (laughs:) latest antics and you're in the mood that you can have a really good laugh and it is really nice to see what has happened, so it's really nice to do it sometimes [.] but-

* * * *

Interviewer: Niin mutta tarviiko sitä aina niin.

Interviewee 1: Niin, niin. Mut että on tietenkin semmosia, ja sitten, semmosten ihmisten kans tietenkin jotka, ku on oppii työkavereitaki jo tuntee ja tietää että mitä, mitä ne niinkun kattoo ylleensä. No eihän semmosten kans mee, ees jutteleen tommosista ohjelmista jotka pitää vähän niitä semmosina että [.] no, mie en ees viittis. Nii että se ajat-, että semmonen ihminen ajattelee että "mie en ees viittis vaivautua avaamaan televisiota sen ohjelman takia". ... kaa ala keskustelleenkaan.

Interviewer: No ei tietenkään joo.

Interviewee 1: Ja sillon harvemmin tulee semmosten kaa keskustelua mistään televisio-ohjelmasta.

Interviewer: Just, joo.

Interviewee 1: Että [.] Mutta sitten kyllä taas, jos o- to- joskus oikeenki käyvään läpi että mitä Rooket on (nauraen:)

teheny ja nii on sillä päällä että voi nyt tosissaan nauraa ja on tosi kiva sitä setviä että mitä on niin, ihan mukavaha se on joskus on että [...] mutta-

The interviewer encourages the discussion by implying that perhaps a strict critical attitude is not always necessary [in Finnish: Tarviiko sitä aina niin...]. The Interviewee then discusses her perception of some people taking a very critical view of TV series like this. She describes how her talking about soap operas such as *The Bold and the Beautiful* is not an everyday affair but sometimes it is good fun to talk about it with likeminded friends. It is noteworthy that she describes the matter as something that cannot be shared with everybody: some people will not find the series worth their time, let alone discussing in depth the intricacies and the humour of the series. In a broader sense, the need to relax occasionally is discussed here. Thus, an awareness concerning matters of good taste is demonstrated and a preferred moral position is established by the woman.

In the next sample a woman describes the role of the TV series *The Bold and the Beautiful* in the daily rhythm of her family. Prior to this discussion she describes their overall television viewing habits that consist of mainly her watching news and some documentaries while her husband is described to be less selective in his viewing habits.

Interview #42. Woman 51-60 years.

Interviewer: So, there are no series whatsoever or such?

Interviewee: Well, you know there are. I do, now, quite often watch, er, *The Bold and the Beautiful*.

Interviewer: Oh, OK.

Interviewee: You see, it happens to be just when, oh good, one always has to explain, if he or she watches *The Bold and the Beautiful*. When you come home tired from work, it happens to be just that spot, when you can lie down on the sofa and

unwind as you watch *The Bold and the Beautiful*. At home we always have it like, that we would call out each other that: “Evening devotions! Evening devotions begin! (laughs).

Interviewer: Exactly, yes (laughs). It’s a bit like, a real nice... you don’t have to sort of go through work related issues in your head. There’s a kind of a passage.

Interviewee: Indeed, yes. Yes, there’s a rite of passage of sorts.

Interviewer: Yes, yes.

Interviewee: You kind of have to, from work... from work to leisure.

* * * *

Interviewer: Tuota, elikkä siellä ei oo sitten niinku mitään sarjoja ja sellasia?

Interviewee: No, kuule joo. Kyll mä tota, mä katson aika useesti ton, tota Kauniit ja rohkeat.

Interviewer: Ai jaa.

Interviewee: Kato kun se on just silloin kun, hyvä, aina pitää selitellä, jos katsoo Kauniit ja rohkeet. Kun tulee väsyneenä töistä, niin se sattuu just siihen saumaan, että silloin rötkähtää sohvalle ja katsoo Kauniit ja rohkeet. Meillä on kotona aina niin, että aina huudellaan toisillemme, että: Iltahartaus! Iltahartaus alkaa! (nauraen).

Interviewer: Aivan, kyllä (nauraen). Se on vähän semmonen, tosiaan mukava... ei tarvii niinku sillä lailla ajatella työasioita. Että siinä niinku siirtyy.

Interviewee: Niin, joo. Joo siinä on semmonen siirtymisriitti.

Interviewer: Niin, joo.

Interviewee: Pitää niinku työstä... työstä vapaa-aikaan.

Again, there is an element of confession (see also Alasuutari 1992) as the interviewer assumes that the woman does not watch any TV series but the interviewee then explains that actually she does watch *The Bold and the Beautiful* quite often. To this the interviewer says “oh, OK” which is likely interpreted as an inquiry as the description she just gave earlier seems to contradict this. The interviewee then reflects on the situation and says how “one always has to explain” why a person would

watch a series like it. Thus, she acknowledges that this is not a unique situation and that she understands how a series like this generally warrants some further explanation.

An explanation is then given: watching the series is described as a cherished habit that she has with her husband. It is noteworthy that this habit is also described as particularly suited to that time of the day: having just come home from work. The interviewer recognizes this and in turn describes watching the show as a pleasant rite that marks the transition from work to home. This interpretation is agreed upon by both participants of the discussion and any negative inferences regarding the interviewee's character or the described media uses are thus banished. The sample is an example of the kind of reflection that is produced when people become "actively" aware of the morality that is produced and negotiated in the discussion.

5.3.3 *The context of the described activity*

Along with the discursive means illustrated above, a third way to accomplish a preferred moral position regarding the described media uses is to attach the description to a particular context or situation that prompts and, consequently, justifies the otherwise debatable way of using the media. Below is an excerpt that illustrates this as the interviewee explains her use of the computer during her free time which, she points out, she ultimately wants to keep "as computer free as possible". Prior to the sample she has said that during her free time she needs a specific reason (such as waiting for a particular message or having to pay a bill) to open the computer.

Interview #67. Woman 21-30 years.

Interviewee: Somehow opening the computer has become an issue for me in the sense that I would rather spend my free

time in other ways than surfing. Unless there is something, er, special, er, either something specific that you search for or it occurs to you while you're on it. So, when I'm taking care of, say, paying bills and then I realize that I happen to have a bit of time, let's say half an hour or so. So, in that case I might, well OK, I usually buy clothes from H&M-Rowells online shop and online in general. And then actually there are bookstores which I tend to check out. And then, well it was all, in a way the most atypical thing that I have or most atypical use of the net personally, when they had this pop idol contest that began on Channel Three. So, at that time I, the first round of eliminations, I really looked them up so as to see what's up with that (laughter). Or a bit in the sense that, had I, I had probably seen the first episode on TV and then missed a few so I thought that blimey, I can see it in here. And then I just like, a few moments rolled by, and then I have just...

* * * *

Interviewee: Jotenki mulla on vähä niinku tullu yleensä koneen avaamisesta vähän semmonen että et e mä käytän vapaa-aikani muuten kuin surffailemalla. Jollei sitten oo ihan jotain niinku semmosta eeöää erityistä er joko erityistä jotain mitä hakee tai tai sitten ne tulee mieleen siinä samalla. Et ku mä hoidan just maksan jonku laskun ja sit mulle tulee niinku et mulla nyt sattuu olemaan siinä niin aikaa, vaikka sanotaanko joku puol tuntia tai näin. Niin sitten mä saatan et no joo että no mä ostan sit aina jonkun verran vaatteita tuolta H&M-Rowellsin joo sivuilta ja sit ja sit ihan siis siis netistä. Ja tota ja sit tosiaan ne kirjakaupat et niitä mä käyn kattomassa. Ja sitten no se oli kaikki sillai epätyypillisin mun tai epätyypillisintä mun netin käyttämistäni silloin kun oli nää pop i tää idols idolsi kilpailu mikä oo alko ja tota kolmosella. Nii silloin mä joitain niit alkukarsintajuttuja ni niin mä ihan katoin sielt sitte et niinku mitä mitä (naurua). Tai vähän sillä lailla että et oliko niin et mä olin vissiin ensimmäisen kattonu telkkarista ja sit ne muutama oli jääny siinä välissä niinku pois nii sit mä ajattelin et no hitsi et no täälthän mä sen nään. Ja sit mä

niinku et siin sit vierähti jokunen tovi sitte on vaan niinku sitä...

In the excerpt above there is an elaborate description of coinciding factors facilitating Internet surfing during leisure time. The interviewee describes how in conjunction with paying the bills online there might be a half an hour or so to spend, which then results in surfing in the Internet – an act that probably would not otherwise happen as she wants to spend her leisure “in other ways than surfing”. She continues to describe what has been her most atypical way of using the Internet, placing further emphasis on the unusual nature of the uses in question. In the account there is an abundance of expressions such as “specific, atypical, must” that are used to describe the strictly controlled nature of using the Internet. Another use of a specific context is provided in the description of watching some episodes from the TV series *Idols* on the Internet. In the account this is linked to a situation where a couple of episodes have been missed; she in a way “surprised herself” by watching the episodes online, although, on the other hand, it was logical to catch up to be able to see the complete series. The described use of the Internet is thus contrasted against the normal use of one’s free time that is “usually” reserved for other kinds of activities, constructing the interviewee as a very active and critical person aware of the choices she makes regarding her free time. Again, with these discursive means a preferred moral position is established.

Accounts about various media uses are not always strictly about the media content or the use itself but equally about the time spent on it (Alasuutari, 1996a, also noted time use as a factor contributing to the moral characteristic of the media). In either case, a way of accomplishing a preferred position regarding moral responsibility in relation to the described media uses, clearly, is to attach the use to a specific context

which then kindles the use. The context or a situation is a set of conditions that all favour media use either by facilitating it or inhibiting other, perhaps more valued, activities. These in turn serve to justify the time spent on the medium or contents in question. The importance of time use is a central topic in the next excerpt where the described use of the medium is also linked to a specific situation.

Interview #02. Man 31-40 years (interviewee 1) & woman 31-40 years (interviewee 2).

Interviewer: Do we have like any inverse situations, sort of something that you may have seen as having spent too much time on some medium?

Interviewee 1: Well, sometimes the television, if you watch a stupid movie on some, sometimes it is fun to watch a stupid movie, but that [...] you start to watch a movie that you think that this could be a good movie, so you watch it for an hour and a half, and then realise that this is, you just can't watch it. And then you realize that you've watched it all.

* * * *

Interviewer: On-onks tässä sitte niinku päinvastoin jotain semmosta niinku mitä on ku liikaa ajatellut käyttäneensä aikaa jonkun tämmösen tiedotusvälineen seuraamiseen?

Interviewee 1: No joskus sen televisiota niin että, jos katsoo jonkun typerän elokuvan jollakin, joskus on hauska katsoa typerä elokuva, mutta että [...] katsoo rupee katsoon sellasta elokuvaa mistä ajattelee, että täst- tähän vois voiski olla hyvä elokuva, et sitä katsoo sen puoltoista tuntii, et tää on ihan eihän tää eihän tätä voi katsoa. Sitte huomaa katsoneensa sen kokonaan.

In this account the importance of the context is created by referring to the initial uncertainty regarding the quality of the unfamiliar film that is being shown on television. The logic in this description is twofold: even though the film might not obviously be great judged by the title and description, the

initial reason for watching it is said to be curiosity (as it really could be a good film after all) instead of a clear-cut decision to watch the film although it may prove very poor. When after a while the film does indeed turn out to be so poor as to be almost unbearable, it is then “too late” to stop watching and the next thing is that the informant has watched the whole movie. Thus, the context is used to explain the time spent with the medium and a preferred moral position is established as the account clearly leaves latitude for the interviewee to be seen as someone well in command of the general attributes of good taste and also of his time use.

But there is also room for the listener to see the interviewee being aware of the cultural notion of camp and having the related ability to assess and discuss various aspects of “bad” films in a personally rewarding manner: “sometimes it is fun to watch a stupid film”. Expressing the awareness of the medium or content in question being “trash” or “silly” or in some other way low in value contributes to moral positioning. It is often utilised in conjunction with the strategies presented in this chapter.

So far, the examples and related discursive strategies have been about describing the media uses for which the interviewee provides moral accounting. However, there are also cases where *not* using a medium is elaborately accounted for as is illustrated by the next excerpt where a well-known Finnish magazine that deals with culture and politics is the topic of the discussion.

Interview #30. Man 31-40 years.

Interviewer: So, do you subscribe to any magazines with-?

Interviewee: No, I used to subscribe to *Suomen Kuvalehti* [...] for a couple of years but I cancelled it due to the fact that [...] I got a guilty conscience as it has so many interesting stories and I used to always be a little stressed out since [...] one

would love to read it but there is no time. Then you would see those, magazine lying on the table and [...] this story would be interesting but as, you only managed to, to read like every other line.

Interviewer: There is no time or you are too tired.

Interviewee: Yes I suppose you are, just as [...] I, I've had some calls where they [...] offer me the subscription, but I have told them that I don't have the time for the magazine. It's a good magazine but I just don't have the time [...] to read it in the way it is supposed to be read.

Interviewer: Yes.

* * * *

Interviewer: Niin, tuleeks teille sitte aikakauslehtiä tämän?

Interviewee: Ei tule, mulle tuli Suomen Kuvalehti [...]muutaman vuoden mutta mää lopetin sen takia että [...] tuli huono omatunto ku siin oli niin paljon mielenkiintosa artikkeleita ja sit oli aina vähän stressi että [...] haluais lukee mutta ku ei ehi. Sitte ku näki ne, lehti loju pöyväällä että [...] tuo juttu kiinnostas mutta ko, eh- ehti, ehti lusia niinko joka toisen rivin.

Interviewer: Ei ehi tai ei jaksa.

Interviewee: Nii ei taia jaksaa, justiisa että [...] mää, mulle on soitellukki siitä että niin [...] tilata mutta mä oon sanonu että ku mää en kerkiä sitä. Hyvä lehti mutta kun ei ehi niinkun [...] lusia sitä sillä tavalla niinku sen pitäs lusia.

Interviewer: joo.

Describing having a guilty conscience about something usually means that the person knows that he or she has done something wrong or at least against his or her personal beliefs. In the sample above the notion of guilty conscience is used to describe a situation where the man was unable to find enough time to read a magazine that he had subscribed to for quite some time. The account is further elaborated by a description that there was always a slight feeling of stress and knowing that he did not read the magazine in the way it was supposed

to be read. An ideal way of reading an important magazine is constructed: one should have plenty of time to truly be able to become immersed in and savour the contents. The interviewee clearly demonstrates his awareness of this ideal. At the same time a reason for failing to follow this ideal is provided: leading such a busy life that leaves little time to read magazines no matter how important or interesting they might be. Thus, if a medium is deemed particularly valuable, *not using* it might call for justifications and explanations just as well as accounts about using media that are not immune to moral reproach. Accounts such as the one above help to understand how a line is drawn between uses of high and low cultural appreciation. By pointing out that there simply is not enough time for a particular media use the interviewee simultaneously indicates his awareness of the importance of the media use but also manages his individual accountability for the lack of using the media. Responsibility is placed on external factors rather than individual agency (see also Kurri & Wahlström 2005 and forthcoming).

Some of the other excerpts above also utilise the strategy of pointing out the specific context of media use. The excerpt in which the interviewee was accessing online newspapers from abroad, and was “even” browsing the pages of afternoon papers every now and then as it also served the purpose of gaining a broader view on the daily homeland matters. Furthermore, the woman who emphasised her critical attitude towards tabloid papers made a remark about sometimes allowing herself to glance them in the pub or other such place. Obviously, these discursive strategies do not occur in isolation from each other and they are not always clear-cut.

5.3.4 *Description of personal characteristics*

The fourth strategy identified in this chapter, describing a connection between media use and personal characteristics can also be used in conjunction with the others. The next excerpt illustrates this strategy, where media uses are accounted for in the context of individual traits.

Interview #39. Man 21-30 years (Interviewee 1), woman 21-30 years (interviewee 2) & woman 21-30 years (interviewee 3).

Interviewer: Er, what is it with the tabloid headlines, that you?

Interviewee 3: I'm such a fool.

Interviewee 1: (giggles)

Interviewee 3: I suppose I have browsed gossip magazines and women's magazines all my life. And I mean [...] it's not really an obsession but it's nice to [...] nice to see what's going on in the world, or what's going on in Finland. That stuff can pretty much be seen through the headlines. Or certain kinds of [...] things can be seen.

* * * *

Interviewer: Ööö, minkätakia sä niitä lööppejä?

Interviewee 3: Mä oon niin hölmö.

Interviewee 1: (hihittää)

Interviewee 3: Kai mä oon ikäni juorulehtiä vilkuillu ja naistenlehtiä. Ja siis [...] ei se nyt mikään pakkomielle oo mut niit on mukava [...] mukava kattella että mitä maailmassa nyt, tai mitä Suomessa nyt tapahtuu. Kyllä ne aika paljon tulee ilmi lööppien kautta. Tai se tietyn tason [...] asiat tulee sieltä esin.

The interviewee describes herself as “foolish enough” to read gossip magazines and such although she says that it is not really a compulsive thing. The remark is meant as a humorous one and results in some giggles. What significance, then, does attributing some media uses to one's own personal

characteristics hold in establishing a legitimate moral position? Attributing things to one's own personality in this manner lowers the individual accountability as it communicates that the individual is aware of the potential reproach related to the media use. A description like this shifts the nature of the use from deliberate case by case decisions (to use a medium) to a larger scheme of routines and playful nature that goes in some respects beyond the particular activities talked about.

Pointing out a character "flaw" also means that the described interest in tabloids and women's magazines can be seen as a trait. Thus, in these accounts the media uses in question are not naively described as casual, non-debatable activities but as something that the individual can play around with while still controlling his or her position as a person in good command of cultural values regarding the medium in question. Furthermore, the description leaves room for the listener to see the interviewee as a person who, while realising the cultural values related to the medium in question, enjoys the wider availability of contemporary culture that she is able to critically observe through these magazines and headlines.

Pointing out individual characteristics not only introduces an element of critical media consumption into the description by illustrating the awareness of some things being "silly" and some others not. It also underlines the fact that since the person is aware of the issues – and engages in moral accounting – regarding a particular media use description, the use in question is also under control. In other words, the awareness implies the will and ability to assess the use and a legitimate moral standpoint is simultaneously accomplished. In a similar vein, Alasuutari (2005, 6-7) points out that in discussing sensitive topics defining oneself as "crazy or a freak" is an efficient way of portraying the cultural awareness of the matter and of reducing one's own responsibility.

Prior to the next sample there was discussion in the interview about the most entertaining and amusing medium available. The interviewee stresses his boyish and facetious attitude towards the media, specifically the Internet, and the way he regards various media as a source of entertainment.

Interview #01. Male 31-40 years.

Interviewer: Well, which one of those would be the one that most stirs the emotions? For instance have you, for example, when you're online, er, or browse through the Internet, laughed at something, or?

Interviewee: ...I have, yes, yes. And that is like, of course, so that, if one does it even that much. This too needs to be sort of clarified, since, well it is so, well, well, well, twisted, my err (laughs). Or I have sort of a need for something skewed and, and. Well, the whole, the, the grotesque and absurd and like the sort of pornographic category in the Internet as a sort of a (breaths out). So that too in a way satisfies my, sort of a category of needs in a way. So that, that, and in a way it erodes this kind of a normal citizenship that one, however, represents. And well [...] well well [...] but then again it is, it's not, it still is somehow so [...] sort of temporary.

* * * *

Interviewer: Tota mikäs noista sitte olis sellanen joka eniten niinkuu herättää tunteita? Et ooks sä esimerkiks, ku sä oot internetissä niin tota tai selaillut internetis-nettisivuja niin tota joskus nauranu tai?

Interviewee: ...Oon, joo joo. Ja siis se niinku siis tottakai sit sillä lailla et jos niinku senkin verran. Se tääkin pitää sillä lailla niinkun valottaa, että tota, et niin paljon siis semmonen tota, tuota tuota, kieroutunut tää mun mun niinku (naurahdus). Tai mulla on siis niinku tarvetta semmoselle kieroutuneelle ja ja. Siis koko että tuota, et se se se internetin se koko groteski ja ja absurdi ja ja ja siis semmonen niinku pornografinen osasto siis sillä lailla tämmösenä (henkäys). Et sekin niinkun tyydyttää mun niinkun jotakin tarve-osastossa sillä lailla mmm. Että tuota

tuota tuota ja ikään kuin niinku lyö lyö sit semmosta kiilaa sitte tämmöseen niinku normaali kansalaisuuteen mitä sitä kuitenkin sillä lailla edustaa. Ja ja tuota [...] tuota tuota [...] mut siis se et se siis se, ei se se on kuitenkin jotenkin niin semmosta [...] niinku ohimenevää.

While still maintaining the notion of “normal citizenship” as it was put in the excerpt above, a media use description can be related to a “twisted need” to explore some of the extreme content readily available in the Internet. The curiosity regarding what can be found is associated with adverse individual characteristics, which again illustrates the interviewee’s ability to distinguish and judge this kind of content in relation to others. While it could be thought that browsing contents that are generally deemed grotesque or pornographic somehow erodes the notion of normal citizenship, in this account the described interim nature of this kind of media use – along with interviewee’s morally aware outlook on such content – serves to strongly push the moral position towards cultural legitimacy.

Awareness of the potential hazards of media use means that they are recognized and controlled. Labelling these contents grotesque categorises them as a morally complicated phenomenon that he not only recognises but which reveals something about the very nature of the Internet itself. As a result, this kind of media use can be interpreted as an attempt to understand all the dimensions there are to the Internet. On the other hand, the willingness to spontaneously discuss a sensitive topic such as this also creates a position for the interviewee as an educated person who feels comfortable discussing a topic such as this in a casual manner.

According to Kuipers (2006) there are global differences in the way online pornography is constructed as dangerous or harmful. In the United States it has ignited a widespread moral panic whereas in the Netherlands, for example, it is more or

less accepted (with some misgivings) and the Dutch debate tends to stress individual responsibility in dealing with such content online. On the other hand ethnic humour is readily available on the Anglophone Internet whereas in the Dutch Internet is very difficult to find due to self-regulation (*ibid.*). The sample above deals with individual accountability, the self-regulation in and through which the account is aligned with surrounding values.

5.4 Conclusions

This chapter has proposed that people construct moral positions with various discursive strategies and thus build legitimate subjectivity as they account for media uses. It is argued that establishing a moral position is done by utilising discursive means that enable people to express awareness of morally sensitive issues regarding their media uses and connect the uses into specific states of affairs and situations. As a result, a preferred moral position for the speaker is constructed which in part legitimates the uses or at least significantly undermines individual accountability.

Along with casual descriptions of media uses, where people do not rush to provide justifications, as well as descriptions of preferences where a particular media use might simply be rejected, four different strategies of accounting for debatable media uses are identified. These are:

1. Expression of uncertainty
2. Description of habits
3. Context of the described activity
4. Description of personal characteristics

They are discursive means for managing the position from which one speaks about various uses. Hence, the uses can

be rendered intelligible and the way they make sense in the context can be communicated.

The implication of an account where a particular media use is more or less rejected is that the interviewee assumes total personal responsibility and ultimate control regarding media use. Such an account supports the interviewee's position as a person who clearly is aware of the low value of the media or some related pitfalls and simply acts accordingly without compromise.

The other discursive strategies can be seen as ways of acquiring some leeway in a discussion regarding these matters while not only maintaining an adequate moral position but presenting oneself as an individual who is aware of his or her media uses and their moral as well as other cultural implications. It is socially more acceptable to account for these uses in elaborate ways such as these instead of bluntly stating (without any further accounting) that "this (such as watching soap operas on TV or surfing the pornographic or grotesque contents in the Internet) is something that I do and will go on doing in the future". By addressing the issues that are involved and the factors that facilitate or lead to the media use it is possible to discuss the use in question in other than absolute terms, thus displaying awareness of the medium's cultural place and accomplishing a legitimate moral position.

According to the analysis, people utilise these discursive "strategies" to establish context-bound moral positions that are aligned with cultural values. Certainly media are not the only context in which people will manage their moral positions as undoubtedly there is a vast range of other areas of social reality that are morally sensitive. On the other hand, the media provide a practically ubiquitous context where these other areas can be represented. It is therefore hardly surprising that numerous cultural categories are deeply entangled with the accounts about the media. Television is certainly a household

standard and Internet is quickly becoming one (on the nature of television as a research object see e.g. Allen 1992, 1-2). Expressing uncertainty, pointing out specific situations, habits and personal characteristics are all used as discursive strategies to achieve a contextual standpoint that enables sensible discussion on the topics instead of resulting in a loss of face. These means are utilised to explain a speaker's accounts about uses as well as the lack of use of a particular medium, as seen in the case of some magazines and newspapers.

The topic of Internet produces elaborate accounts regarding moral positions. This is perhaps due to the vast variety of content available on the Internet, the speed at which it develops as well as the relatively short time that it has been a widely accessible medium. People are in the process of grasping the Internet as a part of their everyday lives. The moral issues are evaluated and discussed in order to better control the nature of the medium. The active role of the user required by the Internet is also a factor that influences the accounts. Still, there is also similar talk about the use of television regarding the quality of content as well as the time spent watching it.

Radio on the other hand appears a rather neutral medium in this sense, as it did not raise such discussions or similar accounting to that on the other media discussed in this chapter. As has been noted in earlier research (Alasuutari 1997a), radio is a relatively unproblematic medium as it allows the listener to do something else all the time – it does not require the same amount of attention as television or Internet. Good examples of this are listening to the radio in the car or while doing housework. Instead of taking time from something more “useful” radio in fact can make people feel more efficient as they are listening to it at the same time they do something else. This is not possible when watching television or surfing Internet. Thus, describing the use of those

media is more susceptible to moral reprobation. Peteri (2006) has also studied accounts of listening to radio and concluded that these descriptions may also serve the purpose of being an instrument with which to criticize other people's (for instance family members') uses of the media.

Newspapers are described in other ways than the other media analysed in this chapter: instead of feeling the need to provide moral accounting about why they read them, people evince ways of lowering their personal accountability for *not having enough* time to read newspapers. Newspapers as well as some of the more established magazines are described as important and highly appreciated. Their use symbolises an active and legitimate position. Thus, it is in some contexts obvious that describing a lack of this kind of media use requires explanation as to why exactly things stand as they do. The resulting accounts are connected to a wide variety of things as these evaluations do not happen in isolation but rather draw their logic from shared cultural categories of everyday life.

However, there are passages in the data where there is no moral accounting even though the subject matter might suggest otherwise. Or there are a few cases where the media are accounted for in an opposite way to the "mainstream" of the data. For example, in the data there is a girl (10-20 years) who describes newspapers as annoying and uninteresting. To find such "exceptions" tells about the dominant characteristics of the mainstream of the data. Obviously there are some groups that account for the media in different ways. For example, children account for the media in ways that are radically different from those of adults. Other studies indicate that including children in the data would have yielded different kinds of results (e.g. Davies & Buckingham & Kelley 2000) and that widening the research sample would also widen the variation that exists in the phenomena (Liebes & Katz

1993, 156). In this study, however, the emphasis is not on the individual characteristics of the interviewees but, rather, on the ways accounts about media use are managed.

As is illustrated in this chapter, context-bound moral reasoning may arise from medium specific content or the perceived cultural appreciation or the lack thereof as well as from the time spent with the medium. Obviously, with Internet as well as other media there are uses that people describe with particular attention: the contents or the time spent that are not obviously necessary or culturally appreciated, hence the need to provide verbal displays of moral adequacy. This talk is geared to construct legitimate subjectivity through which the individual emerges as a person who is in command of some of the attributes of good taste as well as aware of the moral dilemmas regarding the described media use. These dilemmas are managed by introducing preferred viewpoints to the matter, expressing awareness of the issues and managing individual responsibility. Through these discursive means, interviewees are able to legitimately describe and discuss media uses that might otherwise have been a potential threat to their character due to their morally loaded nature.

Positioning oneself in the sphere of cultural values as discursive work, fashioning the accounts and managing one's accountability regarding the media uses described in the particular context bear a resemblance to earlier work with a focus on discursive morality (particularly Kurri & Wahlström 2005; Nikander 2002; also, on a general level, see Burr 1995, 120) and supports the findings in earlier research on the media as a moral issue (e.g. Alasuutari 1992 and 1996a; Ang 1985; also see Morley 1999). The contribution of this chapter has been in defining the discursive strategies used to gain preferred moral positions in the accounts of media use. While people portray awareness of the debatable cultural value of certain media

uses, they may still admit having done so themselves. This allows one to maintain a socially sustainable posture while still admitting subscribing to – at least to some extent – some of these uses.

As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation the practical social order, played out in the day-to-day social interactions is bound together with strong moralities (Jayyusi 1991; Garfinkel 1985; Heritage 1984). The media makes for an interesting element of everyday life as it is such a significant part of the totality of everyday life (Lefebvre 1991). Talk that accompanies the descriptions of media uses is necessarily about producing coherent accounts and constructing legitimate subjectivity within this totality. Through such discursive means with which the accounts are fashioned people can in different contexts emerge as persons who acknowledge the shared cultural values, the attributes of good taste and thus display moral adequacy concerning media uses while still being able to express their individual inclinations.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

This study presented how accounts of the use of technology are produced in various contexts and how morality is managed by discursive means. The themes of individual autonomy and social responsibility were examined in order to elucidate the cultural place of the mobile phone. This research has illustrated how developing technology and good life are accounted for and how the criticism of technology is premised. Furthermore, discursive means that can be utilised to legitimate media uses, for example Internet use, were analysed. These themes were elucidated through analysis of qualitative interview data. By analysing the accounts related to various media in various contexts this research shed light on moralities as a discursive phenomenon. Thus, the study has provided information on the cultural premises and moralities relevant to media and communication technologies that are a significant part of practically all individuals' lives in contemporary society.

The analysis was based on social constructionist assumptions about the nature of language and human reality. Discourse analysis was used as the method. The study does not claim to reveal how people use the media and what their inner feelings about it are. Instead, based on the analysis of the data, various discursive means that enable people to account about

media and technology were identified. The analysis was not guided by any specific theories about media use, but rather, the data grounded observations were discussed in light of earlier research. The aim in this study was to elucidate technology and media related morality as a discursive phenomenon and thus to contribute to the understanding of the roles of media and technology in Finnish society. Through the analysis a discursive map was drawn which helps to understand what actions people are likely to take with media and technology.

The limitations of the data were discussed and it was conceded that including various specific groups, such as children, in the data would have yielded different results. Hence, the results can be seen as representing a “mainstream” among the interviewees. On the other hand, the data used are so extensive that it is impossible to exhaustively analyse it in one study. Peteri (2006) and Aro 2003 analysed the same data set from another perspective and produced analyses of gendered roles of technology, thus contributing to a fuller understanding of the data.

This chapter brings together the main findings of this study and discusses the shared cultural values utilised in the data. At the end suggestions are made concerning future research.

6.2 Cultural choreographies

This study started with a set of theoretical guide-posts to outline the research subject. The everyday life and characteristics of human day-to-day experience, linked to the nature of language, provided means to understanding language-centred research on technology and audiences. Furthermore, the introduction discussed the social order of everyday life and moralities as a discursive phenomenon. As

a result of the analysis it was shown how people fashion their accounts in order to cogently describe their activities and that a plurality of parallel descriptions may exist, each being coherent in a particular context. Instead of one, people have many ways to think about and use media and technology. Hence, this study did not categorize people into groups defined by some “common” characteristic (such as “early adopter”, “enthusiast” or “passive user”) as users of technology. We all may have or exhibit any of these characteristics at some point. Instead of such categorisations, the focus of the inquiry was on language use.

Before discussing the empirical findings further in the conclusion, I revert briefly to the nature of the research interest outlined in the introduction. To begin, consider the word choreography:

Choreography (literally “dance-writing”, also known as “dance composition”), is the art of making structures in which movement occurs. The term composition may also refer to the navigation or connection of these movement structures. The resulting movement structure may also be referred to as the choreography. People who create choreographies are called choreographers. (Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Choreography>)

We all have a commonsensical understanding of dancing. Most of us have danced, too. If you are a good dancer, you might have heard compliments about your moves and ability to express something. The best professional dancers are able to express themselves with a staggering range of moves and gestures, drawing on their knowledge of styles and the dance culture. During an improvised performance, they may blend styles together and make references to those and other issues of contemporary living. They spontaneously “write” their dance for the audience to read. To reach that high a level of skill obviously takes a huge amount of training and dedication.

Like skilled dancers we are extremely well versed in using our own language and can express ourselves in a virtually infinite number of ways. We are mostly able to eloquently draw on our knowledge of culture and experiences with other people to produce elaborate accounts of whatever we want to talk about. We can talk about our opinions and elaborate them with great plurality, adeptly injecting doses of meaning into our verbal accounts. As members of society, we acquire this ability and it comes “naturally”, not necessarily requiring any conscious effort as, indeed, language is at the heart of the knowledge and “common sense” we have internalised during our lifetimes. With this ability, we can make sense of the world around us and navigate through the everyday experience. We are able to “write” our language choreographies with the skill of the finest dancer and express our thoughts so that they are original, but can still be understood by others. Language choreographies are constantly being rewritten and negotiated in interaction. Lakoff & Johnson (1980), Suoninen (2000) and Gergen (1999) used the metaphor of dance in order to illustrate social interaction so the idea is not a novel one. However, this study emphasizes the role of culturally shared choreographies of language.

As discussed in the introduction, some cultural choreographies that are available to us through language and culture are widely shared and easily recognized. They are not etched in stone but more or less open to improvisation. Many of them, however, have become routine. As Garfinkel’s (1984; also Heritage 1984) experiments discussed in the introduction have shown, the everyday social order is dependent on the assumption that we know some of these choreographies. They go without saying. Hence, they are sustained with strong moralities. For the most of the time, we are not even aware that we are engaging in discursive morality management as we simply talk about things around us as we see fit.

This study explored what kind of discursive resources are deployed in interview talk so as to cogently describe use of the media and communications devices. Discursive management of morality was paid special attention. The study also set out to understand these means in their cultural context, the values that various discursive means are premised with. While the study analysed language use, it cannot escape it: to paraphrase Burr (1995, 10), this study contributes to what can be called the social construction of the media, technology and everyday life. This contribution is not isolated from the “real world” though. Rather, it elucidates the factors shaping everyday actions and uses of the media.

6.3 Accounting for legitimate uses of media and technology

6.3.1 *Managing individual autonomy and social responsibility*

Displaying autonomous and “proper” use of technology is a central element in the data. For example, descriptions of mobile phone use deal with the nature of various relationships and the management of mobile phones. Tensions between privacy, autonomy and various responsibilities, particularly of a social nature, are produced and managed in the interviews. The analysis on the discourse of autonomy and social responsibility encompassed these tensions and presented the discursive means with which the interviewees are able to fashion their accounts appropriately in each context.

Mobile phone use is not isolated from all the activities and social interactions that the stuff of everyday life is made of. Rather, it is deeply entangled into it. The mobile phone emerges as a device that is very convenient and helpful yet

it causes significant tensions. The tensions emerge between opposite values such as individual autonomy (and privacy) and being within easy reach to friends and family or between efficient and good use of the communication devices and being enslaved by technology. For example, leaving the phone unanswered or shut off is described as potentially impolite or selfish. Such tensions are managed by describing places and situations where the phone can “acceptably” be left ignored. Thus, it was concluded that these accounts draw on a cultural image of a “communication cocoon” that subsumes various situations, places and moments where it is justified to mute or shut off the phone. On the other hand, to cope with the moral obligations especially in close relationships, the descriptions constitute morally acceptable ways of providing care in ways which serve to maintain the relationships but also, at times, provide discreet means of control over the actual live communication.

Whether people actually keep their phones on or off depending on the situation of course cannot be answered for certain without carrying out observations over sufficiently long periods of time if even then. What the analysis of the interview data enables is an understanding of the premises of the culturally legitimate ways to account for uses and decisions that might conflict with some other interests. For example, “normal use” is accounted for with reference to the ability to cope without technology or at least without being excessively dependent on it. There are samples in the data of how some people may lose the ability to enjoy their privacy due to the excessive need to be reachable at all times. In other words, in those accounts the poor ability to control technology threatens people’s quality of life. However, accounting for normal use depends on the context and “excessive” use of the technology is described as understandable or particularly useful e.g. for handicapped people or in emergency situations. These

language systems not only constitute “normal” uses of the device but also normal users and normal behaviour. As such, they are building blocks for a “discursive map” of the ways in which people relate to the technology. Such a map predicts how people evaluate and behave with their phones outside (the realm of) the interview situation.

The mobile phone can also be accounted for as a threat that blurs the boundaries between work and leisure in undesirable ways. It is evident in the data that people describe their free time as worthy of careful protection. If the use of the mobile phone is not an obligatory part of the job, people account for the importance of safeguarding their free time from work related communication. On the other hand work related uses and issues of social responsibility may sometimes be related, as people may describe their work related relationships as warranting considerable loyalty.

However, according to the data it is a strong norm that the family is prioritised high if not highest of all issues regarding the use of mobile phone. Friends are also described as important and people account for their responsibilities to explain – at least to some extent – why at times they are not reachable. The ability to totally detach oneself from being accessible by mobile phone is also described as important: even significant others need not always reach one straight away. Obvious exceptions to this, such as health related crises and other such times when constant availability is deemed absolutely necessary can be described so as to avoid any suggestions of the speaker’s moral deviance regarding close relationships. In these accounts the perceivedly normal order of things (Garfinkel 1984, Heritage 1984), the practical moral order (Jayyusi 1991) is played out in and through social interaction as speakers fashion their accounts and, thus, manage their position to dismiss any charges of moral deviance.

Privacy is important both because people do not want to be enslaved by technology but also want to have control over it and maintain an autonomous identity and the ability to enjoy private time. As a device the mobile phone itself is also described as a rather private device. This is demonstrated when advertising via mobile phone is discussed – people who have received unsolicited advertising over their cell phones describe it as particularly offensive. This adds yet another dimension to the way in which mobile phone defines boundaries between private and public in contemporary Finnish society. When people discuss the ways they use their phones they also describe boundaries between private and public, likewise norms regarding the proper use of the phone across these boundaries.

The fact that the topic of the mobile phone yields such descriptions in the data is due to the fact that as a device it was still somewhat visible (in terms of Norman 1999) and on trial (Lehtonen 2003). The reason for this visibility is the way the mobile phone creates tensions between core western values of individual freedom and social responsibilities (Billig et al. 1988, also see Sulkinen 2009). These values act as countervalues to each other thereby providing members of a culture with endless ways of accounting for their actions in various contexts.

6.3.2 *Discursive elevation of activities*

The accounts for the use of the mobile phone were not the only occasions where descriptions of the use of technology were shaped through elaborate discursive management of morality. The ways in which people described their uses of the Internet are another example: typically it was far from the virtual adventures and fathomless depths of exotic sites and wondrous experiences that are sometimes depicted in

advertising and public discourse. Rather, people fashion their descriptions so as to leave latitude for the listener to perceive the speaker as someone who controls the use of the Internet and does not necessarily surf randomly, if indeed at all.

Furthermore, the descriptions of the use of the Internet vary depending upon the context in which it is discussed. Some uses such as searches for timetables, work related information or using online banking services were accounted for without any haste to provide good reasons or otherwise justify these uses. On the other hand, many other type of uses, particularly those not related to work or some other context of obvious importance but ranking as entertainment, were accounted for with attention to the acceptability and reasons for use. The context of hobbies in particular is interesting, as it is something that can be used in the descriptions in order to elevate a particular use and contrast it against certain other, somehow less worthy uses.

Thus, the interest was in how people talk about hobbies and what the context of hobbies implies for the accounts of Internet use. The meaning and cultural relevance of hobbies was explored in relation to the ways in which people deploy discursive means that enable them to manage their accounts. From the analysis the category of hobbies emerged as a resource that can be used to describe some Internet uses favourably.

The word hobby is used in several different ways in the data. When people account for their uses of the Internet hobbies are likened to work-related issues and contrasted against trivial online entertainment. In descriptions of online interaction the specificity of hobby talk is contrasted with general discussions which were often described as a waste of time and questionable in their faceless, trivial and potentially dishonest social exchange (also see Ling 2000). In one account, hobbies are described as potentially adding an

important element to personal websites, transforming them from personal accounts to sites of wider interest. Furthermore, surfing the web and “hanging around” various sites is not considered a useless activity in the hobby context: instead, it exemplifies the dedication and the desire to develop one’s skills and knowledge through hobby related pursuits. Hobbies are described as serious activities requiring long-term effort and true commitment.

The history of hobbies and the ways in which the category of hobby is used in research supports the observation about the cultural weight of hobbies made in this study (Gelber 1991; Stebbins 2001; Yoder 1997; Baldwin & Norris 1999; Wolfradt & Pretz 2001; Trenberth & Dave 2002). Due to this cultural weight the use of the category of hobbies has significant effects in the descriptions of Internet use. Hobbies are described as a central element in people’s lives and as something that one is expected to have in his or her life. If asked about it, people spontaneously gave reasons as to why they – at least currently – had no active hobby. Instead of being content with reporting no hobbies people rather justify this somehow. In our present society absence of hobbies is considered unhealthy and easily interpreted as a sign of a poor life.

According to the data, introducing the category of hobbies into media use descriptions emerges as a basic tool for describing an activity in a serious, purposeful manner. By accounting for Internet uses in association with a hobby related interest, interviewees are able to justify or even ennoble their Internet use thereby dispelling any implicit reproaches of using the medium simply for the lowbrow entertainment of random surfing, which in turn is described as a trivial use of the medium as well as a waste of time in general. Alasuutari (1991 and 1992) identified a moral hierarchy in television programmes. The way people account for their Internet uses is not unlike Alasuutari’s observations regarding people’s

descriptions of their television viewing habits. He noted that people are adept at describing the reasons for their viewing habits (Alasuutari 1992, 577-579). Just as people account for their viewing habits and emphasise critical attitudes so as to express awareness of the cultural location of the TV programme in question, they describe their Internet uses and related opinions in a similar manner.

Thus, in the Internet there appears to be content that are considered to be of a lowbrow status and branded as “bad culture” in Ien Ang’s (1985, 92-96) terms. However, in the context of hobbies many uses that might otherwise require extra accounting are described without hastening to provide further justifications. Alasuutari (1996a) points out that watching television is a time consuming habit which affects the way people describe it. This observation is equally relevant in the context of Internet use. Instead of simply absorbing media content, people use and evaluate it in various ways, assigning to them a variety of meanings.

The discursive elevation described in this section utilises shared cultural values recognized among the members of the culture. As technologies change and the media content changes so also do the “audiences”. As a result of these processes, perhaps moral generations are born, each with their own set of ideas about legitimate media use and content.

6.3.3 Moralities of technology and good life

People may criticise technology and describe a wide spectrum of its adverse effects while some technologies are accounted for without hastening to provide any particularly critical viewpoints. The values reflected upon as people express their views and experiences with technology and the overall landscape of developing technology are important: they are the premises of the argumentative logic in the accounts. As a result

this study presented the ways in which the critical accounts are constructed and how the moralities draw on shared cultural categories. The implications of new technology are described to impact not only the users of new gadgets and services but more or less the whole society and culture.

However, while people effortlessly produce critical accounts of new technology they may also describe some technologies and their uses in neutral or enthusiastic tones. The premises of the criticism were studied in order to better understand what they are all about. The erosion of social interaction, decline of language, vulnerability of technology based systems, loss of jobs, high risks to the national economy and social exclusion are among the unwanted effects described in the data. Ideas of making life *too* easy via technological appliances were also rejected as the underlying assumption is that making life easier does not necessarily make it better in quality. In this context, technology is accounted for as something that can make people less capable in various ways, potentially impairing their overall physical and mental ability and their understanding of culture. Traditions, too, are described as being vulnerable to the ill effects of new technology. Among the potential consequences of spending too much time with various devices, isolation from other people and lack of face-to-face communication were also frequently talked about.

The cultural values reflected in the accounts are numerous: individual autonomy and the ability to control one's life and free time in particular are depicted something to be preserved against any ill effects of technology. Taking other people's feelings into account and having good manners are at the core of such descriptions. The integrity of society and the mass communication industry as well as their transparency was also talked about as such a value. Furthermore, equality between people, also on a global scale, is an important element in the

logic of the accounts that deal with the impact of technology on a societal and cultural level. The value of basic life skills and the ability to lead a good life independent of the use of technological devices and to maintain physical fitness are reflected in the accounts. Thus, no idealistic references to cyborg abilities were made in the data, although it can be argued that humans have always been using and exploiting technology (e.g. Verbeek 2008). High value was attached to hardworking mentality and initiative. Consistent with the values above, diversity of social interaction as well as other activities is described as essential to people in order to develop and maintain a balanced set of physical, mental and social abilities. Furthermore, exclusion and addiction are issues with strong negative connotations in the culture. Consequently the critical accounts describing technology as the cause for such outcomes are consistent with the moral atmosphere in which they are produced. These accounts rely on shared ideals about good life and society.

However, the way people talk about technology and assign attributes of proper use to themselves and others, as discussed above, has one notable exception. People with disabilities or other challenges in the sense that they can legitimately be seen to lack some abilities compared to the majority of “others” are often described as benefiting most from the development of technology. Innovations that would make life too easy for the majority of people may be described as particularly well suited to people with disabilities. For others, life must not be *too* easy.

The relatively new and emerging technologies are talked about critically as they have yet to have been adopted into daily practices long enough to have proven their reliability and worth in practice. It is in this process that the technologies establish their position among the cultural values that people will reflect upon as they evaluate these technologies. As discussed in earlier research (e.g. Nieminen-Sundell

1998, Norman 1999, Pantzar 1996 & 2000, Suominen 2003) it is particularly the new technology that is considered to be "technology" as the older technologies become increasingly invisible and taken-for-granted, their uses routinised, requiring little reflection in the mesh of everyday activities. Thus, people maintain their apprehensive stances until the technology becomes commonplace and a part of mundane daily activities.

However, despite the critical accounts people may still welcome new technology and describe uses that they are fond of. The technology that people use themselves is often described in a casual way and on a general level. It is often other people who are seen as vulnerable to the ill effects of technology. Technology that has become an integral part of everyday activities is seldom discussed in these terms while the new technologies are met with pronounced reservations. Describing the uses and meanings of technology so that the account produced allows the listener to see the person as someone who is aware of the pitfalls of technology is a typical feature in the data.

The results are consistent with the general observation made by Vivien Burr (1995, 120) that when interpretative repertoires are studied, it is often found that people seek to justify their actions and manage their location in the surrounding sphere of cultural values and expectations. As people talk about new technology, they express their competence in matters related to cultural values and their understanding of the generally shared views and elements of "good life". Accounting for the causes of technology related apprehension produces a subject position rooted in critical awareness of the surrounding moral spheres of the contemporary society.

6.3 Discursive management of individual accountability

Using the category of hobbies to elevate particular Internet uses is, in fact, a part of a greater need to rationalise Internet use and render it purposeful. To understand the occurrences of discursive morality management in the data the discursive strategies utilised when people talk about culturally problematic media uses were studied. The focus of the inquiry was on the ways in which people manage their moral positions when they producing accounts of their media related uses or opinions, for example. On being asked about certain media uses people may describe them as somehow questionable. This, however, does not automatically mean that they totally decline to discuss them. Hence, “proper” use of the media is once again at stake.

The discursive resources used in order to manage one’s position in the sphere of cultural values can also be seen as means of managing one’s accountability regarding the media uses described (Burr 1995, 120, Kurri & Wahlström, forthcoming). In the data there are descriptions that, given the language-centred viewpoint adopted in the study, are regarded as tools for establishing a legitimate and culturally acceptable position regarding media related practices. With these people are able to build legitimate subjectivity as they account for their media uses.

Establishing a preferred moral position is done utilising discursive means that enable people to express awareness of the morally sensitive issues regarding their media uses and to connect these uses to specific states of affairs and situations. Thus, when a preferred moral position is constructed the accounts are shaped in order to legitimate the uses or at least undermine the individual accountability regarding the media use descriptions in question. Apart from the casual descriptions

of media uses for which people do not hasten to provide justifications, as well as descriptions of preferences where a particular media use might simply be rejected, four different strategies of accounting for media uses were identified:

1. Expression of uncertainty
2. Description of habits
3. Context of described activity
4. Description of personal characteristics

These are all used as discursive strategies to establish a preferred moral standpoint in relation to debatable media use descriptions. These strategies are deployed as people describe media uses that for some reason are perceived as morally complicated enough to warrant this type of “extra accounting” (on extra accounting, see Nikander 2002).

Newspapers, however, are accounted for differently: instead of providing accounts of why they read them, people evince ways of diminishing their personal accountability to manage their descriptions regarding why they *do not* read newspapers. The newspapers described in this way have such high cultural values attached to them that the mere act of reading them appears to symbolise valued membership of society.

The implication of these accounts is that the interviewee, should he or she describe a total rejection of a media use, assumes total personal responsibility and control regarding the use of the medium. The other discursive strategies can be seen as ways of acquiring sufficient latitude in a discussion and presenting oneself as an individual who is aware of his or her media uses and both their moral and cultural implications, thus exhibiting an awareness of the medium’s cultural values and establishing a legitimate moral position.

In a similar way, Nikander (2002) observed how people produce morally insulated accounts that are formulated so as

to dispel any accusations of moral deviance. In her study the moralities are treated as empirical issues that can be analysed as discursive formations. From largely the same methodological viewpoint this study explored the ways people account for their media uses. Clearly, people account for their media uses in a manner that is sensitive to the cultural expectations and thus rejects any implications of deviance. Particular attention was paid to the ways in which people deploy discursive elements aimed at managing their individual accountability regarding media uses that are culturally debatable. This questionability is not, of course, judged by the researcher but marked in the data by the speakers in the form of accounting geared to justify the described activities. The four strategies identified make the actions justifiable by utilising cultural resources that render the described activities understandable and any unwanted assumptions are dismissed.

The media uses discussed do not constitute the only context in which people manage their moral positions as obviously there are an endless areas in the totality of everyday life that are morally sensitive. Indeed, as discussed in the introduction, the practical social order, played out in the everyday social interactions is bound together with strong moralities (Jayyusi 1991; Garfinkel 1985; Heritage 1984). The media is an interesting element of everyday life as it permeates the totality of everyday down to the most recurrent, mundane residuals (Lefebvre 1991) to which numerous intricate cultural values and hierarchies are connected. The talk accompanying the descriptions of media uses is then about constructing legitimate subjectivity within this totality, available to us as human reality via language (Alasuutari 2004). By such discursive means with which the accounts are fashioned people can in varying contexts present themselves as being in command of the cultural values, the attributes of good taste

and thus aware of the moralities regarding the media uses described.

6.4 Social construction of media and technology in interaction

What are the cultural places of the media and technology? Where do these technological artefacts and contents reside in the practico-moral order (Jayyusi 1991) of everyday life? The human experience of everyday life is an interplay between reflexivity and routine (Alasuutari 2004; Heller 1984; Felski 2000), an existence where the totality of everyday life (Lefebvre 1991) is available to us via language and culture, a perceivedly normal course of events, a social order that is bound together with strong moralities (Garfinkel 1984; Heritage 1984) yet still continuously subject to negotiation, intervention and renewal in the mundane social processes. Due to the nature of the human use of language the world is available to us as social constructs and can be accounted for in a plurality of parallel and often conflicting language systems or interpretative repertoires (see the sections on social constructionism and discourse analysis in the introduction). Thus, people do not only have “one voice” in which they speak about the media and technology with but, rather, a plurality of ways in which they can cogently account for various objects and topics in the world around them. Hence, an anti-essential perspective to identity (e.g. Burr 2003) is adopted: identity emerges as an accounting strategy (Alasuutari 2004, 110-119) and as a result of a variety of discursive means people can position themselves in a great number of ways depending on the context. The premises, the argumentative logic for this kind of positioning draw on shared cultural categories, a sphere of

values (e.g. Burr 1995, 120) and enable elaborate management and attribution of individual accountability and responsibility as via various discursive means the speaker may accomplish a preferred position amongst these shared categories (Kurri & Wahlström, forthcoming; also see Sneijder & Molder 2005).

The everyday practico-moral order, the mundane morality played out in casual interaction is usually invisible to us as we do not recognise our doings as moral business: like eyeglasses moralities provide as with a clear view of the world although they themselves remain unseen (Bergmann 1998). In everyday thinking the world appears “naturally” to us as sufficiently static to allow for disengagement through routines (Felski 2000; Heller 1984) but it is not totally static: even though many aspects of day-to-day living and use of language are routinised, there still is room for questioning, negotiating and renewing habits, activities and meanings. Thus, in this research Lefebvre’s totality of everyday life, from the most insignificant recurring events to the grandest and most specialised, is seen as available to humans as social constructions. Media and technology are an integral part of this totality, approached in this study from the viewpoint of the individual user of artefacts and contents. Thus, this research contributes to constructionist studies of technology (Lie & Sørensen 1996) and the “third generation” of audience studies (Alasuutari 1999a).

When people account for their activities and uses of media and technology, they have at their disposal a wide range of language tools and cultural resources through which things can be described. Contextually each of the parallel and sometimes conflicting language systems used make sense to the listeners and enable management of the speaker’s position within and among the cultural premises of the account. It follows that, importantly, people are not seen as members of “passive” audiences or as “empty slates” that receive technological artefacts and content assuming whatever characteristics they

may have without any creative input. Instead, out of the totality of everyday life, out of the thoroughly permeating residual (Lefebvre 1991) comes innovation: the media and technology available to people assume their significance as people appropriate them into their lives in the process of domestication (Haddon 2007; Peteri 2006; Lie & Sørensen 1996; Pantzar 1996; also Lehtonen 2003; Katz & Sugiyama 2005). This innovation, the meaning making takes place in the culture, takes its shape and form in the social processes and interactions of everyday life, often making it difficult to predict what technologies will prosper in the marketplace and how and which will become popular or even “killer applications”.

As to the everyday morality discussed above and in the introduction, media and technology obviously reside within the same reality, the same practico-moral order (Jayyusi 1991) constitutive of reflexivity and routines. Lefebvre (1991) saw cultivated forms of leisure (such as television) as means to gain a feeling of “presence”, thus providing a necessary escape from the oppression and “alienation” of everyday life. Earlier research has identified the media as a moral issue (e.g. Alasuutari 1992; 1996a) and throughout this study we have seen how people align their accounts with shared cultural categories in order to be understood in each context and to position themselves as legitimate users of the media and technology, building the argumentative logic in each context on the values and hierarchies reflexively available in the surrounding culture. Hence, gaining the feeling of “presence”, the way one chooses to use the media and technology still is very much a moral issue. This is underlined by the observation in this study how any deviance from cultural norms creates accounts where the reasons and the contextual logic behind the described deviance is brought to the fore, justified or shaped in a way that is geared to manage individual accountability or to dismiss any accusations of deviance.

The use of the media is related to the content and value hierarchies of the cultural products consumed, but it is also a time consuming habit (Alasuutari 1996a). Alasuutari (2005) discusses how the prioritisation of factual programmes and “quality films” over serials and fiction is linked to moral questions of media use and leisure time in everyday life. According to him media use is weighed against other potential uses of leisure. It follows that people accounting for their media uses in certain ways is not only about wanting to portray themselves as informed and cultivated individuals with a good sense of what is high and what is low brow for example. It is also about reflecting on a fundamental question about what one should do in his or her life as it is a question of free will to decide. Thus, Alasuutari considers that accounts in which media uses are justified or described self-critically actually reflect a civic religion that is about constantly developing oneself and taking care of significant others and related duties (*ibid.*). Such reasoning resonates with this study: the argumentative currency accomplished with the use of the category of hobbies, the premises of “proper” mobile phone use, management of individual accountability in the context of some media uses as well as the premises observed in the verbal accounts about developing technology. These things are a part of the surrounding culture, constantly subject to change, and yet, it appears, based on earlier research, also renewed (specifically insofar as the morality of the topic is concerned) even as new technologies are introduced since the premises for their appropriation do not always change quite as fast as the technology itself changes. The social innovation based on these premises is very quick, but the premises, too, do change. Like continental ice they may appear static and impervious to any change, but upon closer inspection there is movement, a change in shape, a slow creeping forwards or backwards, observed with the elapse of a sufficient amount of time.

Burr (2003, 4-5) provided examples of how the categories of childhood and alcoholism have changed over time. Surely, our understanding of the media and technology, too, will change and make way for a renewed range of culturally legitimate variation in the language systems we use to describe them.

6.5 Suggestions for future research

Uses of media and communication devices by no means constitute an isolated area among the routine activities that people go about in their day-to-day lives. As people are asked about some of these uses or about their opinions regarding them, the result (from the researcher's point of view) is a description of the activities and issues that are accounted for in such a manner that the reply (as well as the rest of the ensuing discussion) is formulated in accordance with various cultural resources available to both parties to the discussion and is thus understandable. This study analysed these accounts and presented the ways in which it is possible to account for various media uses. However, there is hardly reason for complacency. For example, the uses of the Internet are developing rapidly and it will be interesting to study the new ways of understanding and accounting for these uses and perhaps the new cultural resources utilised as people appropriate the uses. As technology changes, the totality of everyday life enables social innovation premised on the categories, values and expectations available in the culture.

Recent years have witnessed a burgeoning of Internet sites where users produce and share content in a great plurality of ways, especially as the social media develop quickly. Producing and sharing content over various online sites and applications as well as participating communities have diversified rapidly.

Surely, then, the ways in which people understand and make use of the Internet have also evolved. For example, the various forms of present day online interaction, the nature and sharing of contents that make these activities attractive to people warrant further research based on the results of this study. People in Finland, for example, are also rapidly getting to know digital television and the use of multi-featured PVRs and living room computers. Ubiquitous technology and diversifying communications of today and tomorrow also warrant further inquiry. The analysis presented in this study serves as a good starting point for such future research. It will be particularly interesting to study the premises of use and the related social innovation. The management of morality and the meanings people attach to these new forms of media use and communication will make for an interesting research topic. Also, further studies with emphasis on gendered sense making are necessary (Peteri 2006 studied gendered uses of technology using the same data set as in this study). Increasingly people are able to craft their domestic media experiences, making it necessary to understand any particular medium among other forms of the media and technology (Alasuutari & Luomanen & Peteri 2010).

The talk about individual autonomy will also change as the devices and the functionalities change. As new applications such as social media and VoIP calls are introduced to mobile phones they will no doubt activate and perhaps change the accounts of personal privacy as well as social responsibilities. Tracking this change in future research is important and would help us to understand the history of culture as well as technological devices as a continuum of changes occurring as the users and the related cultural values change just as the devices themselves change. It is noteworthy that what is considered new technology is in a constant state of change. As discussed in this dissertation, today's new technology

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will often become tomorrow's taken for granted and thus invisible commodity. Will there be changes to the cultural ideals reflected by people as they formulate their critical accounts of new technology? Will the changing technologies along with the changing culture, then, warrant new ways of managing individual accountability regarding the use of various devices? What kinds of moral generations of users and audiences are being born? Tracking this change, this "moving target" (Livingstone 2004) is a continuous challenge for the sociological research of technology.

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