UNDERSTANDING DIGITAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH SMARTPHONES: A PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

With the latest data informing us that 78% of UK adults now own a smartphone and that most young people report accessing digital media through a smartphone themselves it is evident that the smartphone as a digital device has become a ubiquitous everyday object. With the rate of growth of digital technologies, it is difficult to research the impact of smartphones on our way of relating to ourselves and others without a constant feeling of playing catch-up. The author uses a mixed methodology design to gain a better understanding of the nature of the human-smartphone relationship which might allow us to think more about what underpins our relationship with digital media rather than how we use it at any given point in time. This paper reviews the literature from both non-psychoanalytic and psychoanalytic perspectives to explore the more unconscious aspects of the relationship that are being actively engaged. The author then undertakes a short autoethnographic study of his own relationship with his smartphone and conducts a focus group of training child psychotherapist to gather personal experience of the human-smartphone relationship and the implications of how the presence of the smartphone in the consulting room impacts upon the practice of child and adolescent psychoanalytic psychotherapy. Findings suggest that all smartphone users, children and adults, are being encouraged to develop an unconscious intimate attachment with the smartphone which is reflective of the mother-infant relationship and it proposes that the smartphone is experienced as a digital pseudo-breast which is designed to not be given up.

Key words: smartphones, psychoanalysis, human-smartphone relationship, mother-infant dyad, autoethnography, focus group, digital relationships, digital breast.

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Chapter 1

The Home Screen: a background and introduction

The video begins, showing a baby sitting on a carpeted floor in a house. The baby falls backwards onto its back and begins to cry. Its arms are held stiff towards the ceiling and its legs are stretched out kicking up and down. The video is speeded up in a cartoon style, making the baby's movements and cries appear comical and the voice of the adults on the video sound amusing also. The baby is left crying and frustrated as it kicks and stretches, shaking with frustration and distress as the adults laugh. Adult hands enter the screen, they reach out and pick the baby up to a sitting position by its hands. The baby continues to cry. The adult gives the baby a smartphone and the baby grabs it with both hands and stops crying. The baby's face lights up from the screen and it begins to laugh. The baby's body visibly relaxes, and the frustration and distress seem relieved. The baby looks up at the adult and then down at the screen a number of times before fixing finally on the screen. The baby laughs again as it looks at the smartphone and begins to tap its fingers onto the screen. A different adult hand enters from the left of screen and snatches the smartphone from the baby's hands. The baby falls backwards and immediately resumes crying uncontrollably and physically shakes as it rolls on the floor again with all limbs extended out. The adults laugh at this sight. After a few speeded-up moments the smartphone is thrown back to the baby and it lands by its legs. The baby does not see this and continues to cry, and shake. The phone is retrieve, and the baby is helped up to a sitting position again and then handed the phone. The baby again stops crying, begins to smile and then begins to laugh again. The adults laugh.

Context

You do not have to look far to notice that digital media has changed the world and the way that we interact with it and each other. PCs, laptops, smartphones, tablets and smart televisions running on super-fast broadband and 4G mobile data networks are now firmly embedded in our daily activities and shape the expectations of our experiences. The Ofcom Communications Market Report of 2014 indicated for the first time that, on average, people in the UK spent more time using digital media (8hours 41 mins) than they

did sleeping (8hours 21 mins)-over half of their waking hours. This represented a significant moment in the story of digital technology and the manner in which it has come to dominate our lives. In the Ofcom *Communications Market Report* of August 2016 the figure for the average time spent on digital media grew again to 8h 45mins but what was also noticeable was that smartphones and tablets were, for the first time, the preferred way of accessing the internet over the previously dominant laptop. The 2018 Ofcom *Communications Market Report* showed that 78% of UK adults have a smartphone and that it is the preferred device to access the internet (62% of online activity is accessed through Smart devices). The 2018 report also indicated that 7 out of 10 commuters use their smartphone on their journey and that 1 in 5 UK households now have a wearable Smart device such as a Smartwatch.

By 2016, users of digital media were squeezing on average 11 hours of digital time into the previously indicated 8h 45m through 'multi-tasking' across multiple devices (Ofcom, 2016). It is not uncommon to see people using the same device for a number of different but simultaneous activities such as listening to music on a smartphone whilst also looking at the screen reading or playing a game. This behaviour is called 'media stacking' (Ofcom 2013). It is also common to see people using multiple devices for the same purpose such as writing on a laptop and searching information on their smartphone and reading a journal from their tablet or texting friends and tweeting about what is being watched on the television, all while listening to music via headphones. This behaviour is called 'media meshing' (Ofcom 2013).

The most recent 2019 Ofcom *Children's Media Lives Wave 5* report indicated that children are increasingly consuming digital media in a solitary manner and that there has been a decrease in co-present family viewing. Children have stated that they watch alone in order to be in control of what they can do. In addition, children access most of their digital media on their smartphones as they find this the easiest device to use and navigate and, as we shall see, the smartphone is a device which encourages isolated use.

The 2016 Ofcom Communications Market Report indicated that smartphones and Tablets were the most popular devices, and this has remained constant through to 2018. Smartphones are the most used device among 12-15-year olds and Tablets most popular with 6-11-year olds. Young people between the ages of 16-24 were reportedly spending 3 ½ hours each day using smartphones with 77% of this time spent engaging with Social Media. In addition, it was noticed that the average 6-year-old was indicating the same

understanding of communications technology as 45-year olds, suggesting a widening gap in digital use across the ages. The 2016 report also suggested that the over 55s are the largest growing demographic of users of digital communications since 2014 (Ofcom, 2016).

The recent guidance report on screen time completed by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (2019) engages in a healthy debate between screen time volume and screen time content, strongly advising clinicians and parents to encourage differences in allowed screen times across different age groups whilst recognising the difficulties in negotiating a world increasingly dominated by digital media and the struggle to establish a strong evidence base for the negative effects of screen time (Stiglic and Viner, 2019). This study recognises but will not be engaging with this debate about the impact of screen time upon children which seeks to find a healthy level of screen time for children within a growing culture that competes for their attention and where even homework is now an App based system within many schools.

Background to the research

I became interested in the human-smartphone relationship when I began to notice the changes being brought about in my own life as a direct result of my digital relationship with my smartphone. I began to notice that I daydreamed less, I tolerated less boredom and I felt like I was always switched on. I noticed that I read fewer books, that my attention seemed constantly compromised and my brain often felt over-stimulated. I did not want to admit that my new device (toy) was becoming all-consuming but it soon became clear that in most of my free time and in the time between things where boredom used to occur, it is my smartphone that I turn to. My smartphone's new functions alerted me to things that needed my attention- new emails, new messages, news feed etc. I noticed that the relationship went both ways as my smartphone became high maintenance and demanding of me and my attention until the warmth of my smartphone in my pocket became a thing of comfort and containment.

It became too obvious to ignore that my relationship with digital media – mainly through my smartphone - had changed me and continues to change me, the way I think, the depth of my thinking and the way I interact, connect and disconnect with the world around me. Indeed, much of the preparation for this project has been conducted on my smartphone alone, which has helped due to its accessibility, but which has also hindered by it being a source of constant distraction. In his paper *Digital Melancholy* Richard Frankel (2013)

wrote that he sensed there was 'an incredibly subtle existential dimension of our experiences with digital technology that lies concealed in our everyday usage'. Such a subtle and concealed everyday experience reflected my observations of my own relationship with digital media, something which took some time for me to notice and bring into greater awareness in myself. It was much easier to observe this in the behaviour of others, but it was not until I was sitting in a small café in a rather picturesque rural setting one summer morning when I recognised that every one of the 20 or so customers were facing their screens in total absorption, and nobody spoke to anyone, including those who were there physically together but who appeared alone in their activity and experience. When I realised, much to my own dismay, that up until that moment that I looked up I was included in this scene and just like everyone else, I found it unsettling, disturbing and quite surreal. I found myself wondering what it was that we were all actually doing and what was driving this apparent all-consuming behaviour.

Nicholas Carr (2010) has also given a lot of thought to his observations of his own relationship with digital media and wondered what drives this relationship. Much like Frankel, he notices that we 'are too busy being dazzled or disturbed by the programming to notice what is going on inside our heads' (p. 3). I certainly did feel dazzled by my smartphone, almost anaesthetised at times, and I was left wondering if this was something that I was being encouraged to feel by my interactions with my smartphone. Being in the profession of child and adolescent psychoanalytic psychotherapy (herein referred to a child psychotherapy), where one is trained to observe oneself and to think about thoughts, I found myself wanting to understand just what is going on inside my head - to search behind the dazzle in my relationship with my smartphone.

Rationale

The evidence that smartphone use has become so ubiquitous is taken as an accepted truth for the purpose of this study (The UK is now a smartphone Society, Ofcom, 2015). This study does not seek to document the statistics but attempts to understand the unconscious dynamics of why so many people find themselves in an increasingly demanding relationship with the smartphone as a digital object. The term 'unconscious' is approached in this study from the psychoanalytic perspective to describe that which is prevented from becoming conscious in order to avoid any negative impact upon our daily conscious life and experiences. One part of this 'unconscious' consists of those ideas, which represent instincts, that are actively denied and kept from becoming conscious

through the process of repression (Freud, 1915) but which can actively influence our day-to-day thoughts and motivations. In this study the term is therefore applied to reference the aspects of our relationship with smartphones that we are not actively aware of or necessarily able to know or want to know, but which can actively influence our day-to-day life. However, there are occasions where the term 'unconscious' is more loosely used to describe those dynamic actions and experiences which bypass our conscious mind, which happen 'subconsciously', and are therefore not actively experienced and evade the process of thinking. Where it is intended to have a variant meaning within the text I will clarify such distinction.

I chose to focus solely on smartphones, as a digital device, for a number of reasons. Firstly, smartphones have developed into digital devices that incorporate the multi-functionality of all other digital media devices combined. The latest smartphones such as the Apple iPhone X or Samsung S10 are designed to be used as a telephone, computer, internet portal, television, camera, games console, workstation, digital reader, GPS, satellite navigator, music player, clock, radio to name some of its possible uses. It is worth noting that in the first half of the year in 2017 the number of calls made from smartphones in the UK dropped by 7% per month for the first time in a decade (Ofcom, 2018) as consumers shifted to online, web-based communication platforms such as WhatsApp, Messenger, Instagram and Snapchat. This data suggests that whilst the functional use of the smartphone as a telephone is reducing it remains a dominant device in users' attempts to achieve and sustain a connected presence with other people, particularly within the day-to-day family experience of being separate but also together (Christensen, 2009). Second, the size of the smartphone makes it possible to be hand-held and kept in a pocket – close to hand, readily available and in contact with the person. In this regard the relationship with a smartphone can be seen to be much more intimate and accessible to the user – it can be with you at all times and has also, importantly, become a socially acceptable digital device like no other. It can be seen that smartphones are becoming extensions of the self in many ways – becoming our eyes on the world as we record it more than ever and allowing us to see multiple visual dimensions through augmented realities used in such recent games as Pokémon Go where users search for, view and collect cartoon characters which are superimposed onto their screens against the backdrop of real life as seen by the camera. Third, smartphones offer us opportunities to manage our day to day activities away from the laptop and the increasing functionality of the smartphone encourages us to be more and more dependent on them. Smartphones are now

also able to represent an aspect of an individual's self-expression and identity in a way that is more comprehensive than any other single digital device. It will be seen, in line with Carr's concerns, that the research and design that is invested by smartphone manufacturers into learning how to increase our dependency on smartphones is directly aimed at increasing multiple aspects of our biological attachment experiences (Thorsteinsson and Page, 2014).

The capacity for the smartphone to change the way that we behave and relate to each other is likely to have an impact upon the way that patients engage in child & adolescent psychoanalytic psychotherapy. This will need further understanding in order for child psychotherapy, as a body of knowledge and practice, to keep up with the changes taking place in the internal and external lives of our patients. All of the patients of child psychotherapy have now been born into a digital era, they are *Digital Natives* as described by Palfrey and Gasser (2008). It would seem essential that the phenomenon of the digital relationship with smartphones be better understood from a psychoanalytic perspective so that we might be better informed to help patients immersed in such relationships from birth and how they might impact upon their development and their capacity to access a psychoanalytic relationship. In this study the term 'psychoanalytic' is used to describe the exploration of unconscious material and the process of translating and transforming unconscious material into consciousness.

I recognise that the rapid rate of change in the development of digital technology will inevitably bring about additional changes during the research period and make the project seem dated very quickly. In his 2014 book *The Psychodynamics of Social Networking: Connected-Up Instantaneous Culture and the Self* Aaron Balick grapples with the dilemma that researching human relationships with technology presents with regard to this rate of change. In his study of social networking, Balick recognises that a content-orientated approach to such an undertaking would only capture a moment in time description of how the subject currently exists. With the rate of technological change being so rapid any researcher will inevitably find themselves playing catch up 'as we find ourselves engaging with and adopting new technology without fully understanding the nature of the relationship being cultivated' (Hinchliffe, 2017). Instead, Balick promotes a process-orientated approach which aims to reveal the underlying dynamics of how we relate with digital devices. It would seem that the rate of change of smartphone technology is dictated by the major players as a two-yearly cycle with much commercial hype and anticipation built in as to the newest and latest features on offer. Perhaps it is no

coincidence that the majority of mobile phone contracts are now a 24-month contract to coincide with the rate of new smartphone models being marketed so that the consumer is constantly encouraged to be looking forward towards their next model.

In light of this we may see that a process-orientated approach to studying our relationship with smartphones might be the most appropriate aim rather than describing a snapshot of a point-in-time. However, the rate of change of digital technology is not only rapid but also unpredictable so it may be unavoidable that an element of a content-orientated approach will creep into any point-in-time research. It is my hope that through gaining a better understanding of the underlying dynamic processes that drive our relationship with smartphones we may stand a better chance of keeping pace with the rate of change not only in smartphone technology but also with the way we relate to and are mediated by our interactions with them. If we can come to understand the very nature of this relationship, then a foundation from which to think about future developments might be established.

In his foreword to the 2014 publication by The New Library of Psychoanalysis titled *Psychoanalysis in the Technoculture Era* (Lemma & Caparrotta, eds), Peter Fonagy proposed that inquiry into the 'relationship of person and machine from a point of view of subjective experience…is perhaps the most important intellectual journey to be undertaken this decade' (p. xix). It is in the spirit of this journey that this project is approached. Fonagy also sees that the internet's sensitivity to our needs is possibly 'far greater than the most caring and concerned adult could possibly be' (p. xix) and, as a portal to the internet, so might the smartphone also be a vehicle through which we seek the meeting of our needs and wishes, including our emotional needs. If the smartphone has such potential, then what might the impact upon the practice of child psychotherapy be? In his paper *TMI in the transference Lol* Balick (2012) explores the impact of digital relationships upon the therapeutic relationship and therapeutic space by the 'virtual impingements' that are an unconsciously embedded in the digital relationship. This suggests that the impact of digital relationships upon the psychotherapeutic process might be evidenced beyond the physical act of bringing a smartphone into the consulting room or talking about a digital life. It suggests that the engagement with digital objects might have an impact upon a person's capacity to relate to others in the external world and this would include patient contribution to the therapeutic relationship. The clinical implications of digital relationships with smartphones upon the practice of child psychotherapy could be numerous and needs further investigation.

Research aims and questions

The figures outlined at the start of this chapter may not be overly surprising to anyone with a smartphone, but in combination with my curiosity into this subject they raise a number of questions about the changing nature of our relationships with digital media and technological devices - our digital relationships as we might think of such phenomena - and the impact of these digital relationships upon how we relate to ourselves, other individuals and the wider world. Are digital devices such as smartphones merely technological objects which combine a number of previous stand-alone objects or are they being utilised as extensions of the user? Do they offer an immersion in a relationship that meets a number of different, more hidden needs, than the practical and functional tasks and activities that they allow or are they simply the most up to date technoscial personal assistants? It is a common sight to see large numbers of people staring at smartphone screens in public spaces – Turkle (2011) recognises that such public spaces as no longer communal spaces but places of social collection. She sees that people may 'come together but do not speak to each other… each is tethered to a mobile device that serves as a portal' to somewhere else (p. 155). If this is true, then it may suggest that the notion of community has shifted from a dominant physical offline experience to an increasingly online experience. If our use of digital media can be seen as relational to varying depths, then how might we better understand the processes involved from a psychoanalytic point of view?

With these considerations in mind I proposed the following research questions:
- What is the nature of our relationship with the smartphone?
- What unconscious aspects of this relationship may we come to better understand from a psychoanalytic perspective?
- How are smartphones being experienced in the consulting room?
- What are the implications of this relationship with smartphones for the theory and practice of child & adolescent psychoanalytic psychotherapy?

Methodology and approach

In this section I will first outline the design and then explain the rationale behind why I considered this approach to be appropriate to address the research questions. In order to address these research questions, I devised the following methodological design for this project.

1. A review of the literature from non-psychoanalytic fields relating to how smartphones, as a form of digital media, are adopted and embraced by individuals, what functions they embody, how they are used and what has been explored about the human-smartphone relationship already.

2. A review of the literature from the field of psychoanalysis that attempts to explore the more unconscious aspects of the human-smartphone relationship and the nature of this relationship.

3. An auto-ethnographic study of my own digital relationship with my smartphone over a specified period (two days). This will be presented as a written narrative of the material with a subsequent thematic analysis.

4. A focus group of eight trainee child psychotherapists will be convened to gather their first-hand experiences of how smartphones impact upon the clinical setting: through patient use of smartphones in sessions. This material will then be examined through a thematic analysis.

Literature reviews

I propose to use literature reviews in order to provide learning and understanding of what ideas and knowledge have already been established within the fields indicated. Literature reviews can provide the reader with a context of what research and ideas have already been described by summarizing and evaluating the literature. In addition, they determine if any of my research questions have already been explored and locate this research within a current body of knowledge as well as reveal the gaps in the literature. A review of the literature will also help provide a theoretical foundation upon which the auto-ethnography and focus group can add to the wider understanding and knowledge in this area.

For both literature reviews I propose to undertake a search of the literature with relevant search terms. For the first literature review I anticipate using initial terms such as 'digital relationships' and 'smartphone' and for the second literature review I will use the additional search term 'psychoanalysis'. I will undertake these searches across a number of research databases such as PEP, EBSCOhost, Pubpsych, Ingentaconnect, Jstor, Pubmed etc. Due to the rapid growth of smartphone technology and other digital media I may also need to develop additional search terms that included previous descriptors of mobile technologies. For example, there may be a number of synonyms for digital media including 'digital devices', 'digital objects', 'digital technologies' which may also be

employed in any wider search. Related terms included 'internet', 'social media', 'social networking', which are also freely used to describe smartphone use may also be needed. Relevant online journals such as *Cyberpsychology* will also searched and manual searching of references in publications will also be used to expand my awareness of relevant and available literature.

The abstracts of the literature gathered in the first stages will be read with a view to ascertaining their relevance to the research questions. All literature which meets the research terms will be evaluated further for its strength of evidence and limitations. For the second literature review I will also draw upon wider psychoanalytic theory and concepts which were seen to be drawn up in the review in order to expound concepts and ideas which may be unfamiliar to the reader. The central issues revealed by each literature review will be discussed and explored in the final chapter rather than integrated as a combined literature review. Findings from the auto-ethnographic study and focus group will then be discussed alongside the conclusions from the literature reviews

Auto-ethnographic study

As the initial motivation for this study came from my curiosity into my own use of my smartphone I felt that a research approach that was able to capture and reveal my own relationship would provide an interesting empirical insight into the nature of my relationship with my smartphone as well as make possible links to the findings from the literature reviews. As a smartphone user I am a member of a wider group of smartphone users, so I wanted to find a way to capture this experience from within the culture of smartphone users rather than from a position of observation. An auto-ethnographic approach felt a more appropriate methodology to utilise than a reflexive approach because, whereas a reflexive approach takes a position of a critical gaze upon a subject and makes commentary on what reflexions can be made, an auto-ethnographic approach is more able to capture the here and now experience by being immersed in a specific culture. In addition, the use of rigorous field notes would help me reach a subjective understanding of the culture. Auto-ethnography, first introduced by David Hayano in 1979, is a methodology that according to Anderson (2006) builds upon 'a traditional ethnographic agenda of seeking to understand the topic under study by placing it within a social analytic context' (p. 378), which, with regard to this study can be seen to be the social context of an increasingly dominant experience of digital interaction with increasingly wider activities of everyday life.

With regard to the scope of the auto-ethnographic aspect of this study I designed an approach that captured my relationship with my smartphone over one average workday and one average leisure day. It was anticipated that this would capture not only the functional activities of this relationship – the 'what' is done on the smartphone (content)– but also capture the emotional experiences that these functions engender – the 'how' I felt in response to the content of these experiences. I believe that as a child psychotherapist I was in a good position to observe and notice the emotional impact and anxieties generated by such an absence. It is hoped that this empirical undertaking will also throw some light on the patient experience of their relationship with their own smartphone and what unconscious aspects of this relationship may be brought into the therapy room.

The data from the two-day study will then be analysed using the thematic analysis process as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006): (1) familiarising oneself with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. Braun and Clarke also advise that certain decisions need to be made from the start in order to determine the form of the thematic analysis being undertaken. For this particular study I made the following initial decisions with regard to the form of the thematic analysis for both the auto-ethnography and focus group studies. First, that the keyness and relevance of any identified theme not necessarily be dependent upon quantifiable measures but rather more flexibly by the theme's capacity to capture something important to the overall research questions. Second, that the thematic analysis be a rich description of the data set rather than a detailed account of any one particular data aspect – as this is an under-researched area it seems important to provide a rich description of the entire data set. Third, I propose that the analysis be an inductive, bottom up, data driven thematic analysis rather than a theoretical top down analysis. This will allow for the thematic structure to be drawn from the data rather than any dictated theoretical restrictions. Fourth, I propose that for this study the themes were identified at a latent rather than an explicit level. This would aim to identify the underlying assumptions and ideas of the data set and provide a richer understanding of the data rather than provide a mere description.

Focus group

In order to gain a better understanding of how Smartphones are being experienced in the consulting room I felt that the best approach would be to gather first-hand experiences from child psychotherapists. It was anticipated that this would also provide valuable

insight into the implications of smartphone use for the practice of child psychotherapy. With this in mind I felt that a focus group would be an appropriate method of research. A focus group is a group discussion convened to explore a specified issue or set of issues (Kitzinger, 1994). As a research method, the focus group has been described as a way to facilitate a group process in which people's knowledge and experiences can be revealed and 'reach the parts that other methods cannot reach, revealing dimensions of understanding that often remain untapped by more conventional data collection techniques' (Kitzinger, 1995). I felt that the capacity to generate understanding would be less accessible in a one to one interviews and therefore felt that it would better to convene and facilitate a focus group to discuss and explore the impact of digital relationships with smartphones upon the work of child psychotherapy.

It is hoped that these two empirical components of the study will, in combination, allow the experiences of both the smartphone user and the therapist to be captured in a way that facilitates greater understanding of the impact of the relationship with smartphones upon both the user (patient) experience and the experience of the therapist in the room.

Ethical considerations

As the focus group aspect of the study involved interviewing NHS staff, who were also Child Psychotherapy Trainees at the Tavistock, no NHS ethical application was required as this was covered by my application to the University of East London's University Research Ethic Committee (see appendix 2). There were, however, some additional ethical considerations that needed to be address and considered. First, I needed to be clear with participants of the focus group about how I intended to manage any data that they contributed to the focus group discussion. Whilst this was already set out in the information and consent letter (see appendix 4) this needed to be restated following the focus group session once participants had come to know what they had said and needed clarity and reassurance about the process of anonymisation within the management of the data. There was also a need to make the group aware of the need for confidentiality within the focus group as they were among people they knew to varying degrees. This may limit or benefit the material depending on how such familiarity affects their level of engagement. While various stages of anonymisation were taken there remained a possibility of any participant remembering what they had said and then later come to recognise any use of their material in the text. I was confident, however, that the principles of up-front honesty about the process, privacy and confidentiality were robust and that I

had taken diligent steps in the transcribing process to limit misrepresenting any participant's material within the research design.

There was also a need for further ethical considerations about my own story telling and narrative within the autoethnography chapter. It was difficult to know how to balance the need to speak personally about my experiences within the narrative and the need to protect my own privacy and those who may be included in the narrative. This is something that was helpfully grappled with by Wall (2008) who recognised the legitimacy of such anxiety and tension for the researcher telling their own story. In the end I decided to take out any reference to others in the narrative in order to protect their privacy and kept my own narrative despite ongoing anxieties and tension about feeling exposed and the need to expose by the very nature of autoethnography.

Scope

For the purpose of keeping this research focussed and within a manageable range I will not be drawing upon research into other specific digital devices such as tablets, smart televisions and other internet based smart technology. I may, where appropriate include thoughts about digital devices which support smartphone use as peripheral devices such as the smartwatch.

Content

The study is structed into six chapters. The first chapter provides a background and introduction to the research. The second chapter is a literature review of research into smartphone use from fields of study outside of psychoanalysis, such as psychology, smartphone design, neuroscience and computer-human relationships. The third chapter is a literature review of research into smartphones, as a digital device, from the field of psychoanalysis. Chapter four is an auto-ethnographic study of my own relationship with my smartphone over two different days which is then explored sing a thematic analysis. Chapter five provides the findings from a focus group of child psychotherapy trainees which is also explored through a thematic analysis of the focus group discussion transcript. Chapter six is a concluding chapter that draws together the findings from the other chapters and also provides thoughts on future research.

Chapter 2

The wider picture: understanding new media

As stated in chapter one, any research into digital media runs the risk of becoming out of date extremely quickly. The history of online digital media is, according to Baym, (2010) 'also a story of changing users' (p. 17) in that the user's capacity to develop how it is used greatly influences its future within the framework of commercial interests of the suppliers. With this in mind this literature review acknowledges that I can only work with data I have available to me at this point whilst recognising that there is still much to know and learn.

The evolution of the smartphone can be seen to be a meeting of two lines of technological development, the telephone and internet, at a nexus which provided users with a sense of unlimited potential to improve their lives. Much of the earlier writing on mobile phone use before this conjunction was restricted to descriptions of the development of the underpinning technology (see Jonscher, 1999) and had yet to reach a point at which the less predictable aspects of what mobile phones could offer the masses was being imagined. Writing at the turn of the century when the mobile phone was still in its limited use but was becoming cheaper and more accessible, Margolis (2000) tapped into something very important about the future of mobile phone use when he wrote:

> the reason that small, pocket communicators have captured the world's imagination like no invention since television is clear. The cell phone does what very little of the past few decades potentially brain enhancing gadgetry does: unlike videophones or even palmtop computers, the mobile phone addresses itself to the fundamental things we look for - happiness, love, company, security. (p. 150)

Here Margolis is looking beyond the development of the technology and the function of mobile phones to merely make phone calls towards its latent potential to make increased social and business connections which, although remaining mobile based, could offer something more intimate and akin to face to face contact.

As the potential for mobile phone technology to share data as well as voices became more evident the opportunity for increased social connections became more apparent. Joinson

(2003), in a study of the psychology of internet use, points out that the telephone started to be marketed as a technology for 'socialising as well as for practical uses' as far back as the 1920s when adverts first emphasised its potential to 'keep in touch with friends and family in a more intimate manner' (p. 13). Later, Agar (2004), writing at a time on the cusp of 3G mobile data technology becoming more prevalent, recognised that the future again held great things for internet-based mobile phones and that such mobility would be used as an extension of the fixed computer and increase social opportunities.

As the opportunities for social interactions via home computers connected to the internet increased through email, chat rooms, mailing lists, newsgroups and instant messaging, user experiences of a new way of connecting and socialising laid the foundations for the massive uptake of mobile messaging beyond the fixed computer at home as predicted by Agar. This led to the development of wider digital media and whilst this was initially accessible through the increased mobility of the laptop computer and early personal communicators it was not until the 'smart' mobile phone (internet based and having the ability to upload new software) became more freely available to the average user – particularly the later developments with larger screens – that the nexus of both technologies came into the manifestation of the smartphone that we see today and the ubiquitousness of the smartphone achieved to the state reported in chapter one.

Much of the literature revealed through the literature search related to how the functionality of the smartphone can be utilised, particularly within the medical professions. However, there is far less literature that focuses specifically on our relationship with smartphones and the underlying aspects of such a relationship. Despite this there is a growing body of literature that explores our digital relationship with smartphones. Some studies focus upon the habit-forming behaviours of smartphone use (Oulasvirta et al, 2011) drawing on models of habit formation (Woods and Neal, 2007) and how this can lead to extreme and problematic smartphone use (Bianchi and Phillips, 2005; Lee et al., 2014; Billieux et al., 2014; Ohly and Latour, 2014; Lee et al., 2016; Elhai et al., 2016). While these studies emphasise the potential pitfalls of excessive smartphone use, others extend this perspective to explore descriptors of smartphone use addiction or nomophobia - [no mobile phone phobia] (Choliz, 2012; Kwon et al., 2013; Kwon et al., 2013; Mok et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2014; Demirci et al., 2014; Cho et al., 2015; Kuss et al., 2014; Kuss et al., 2012; Emanuel et al., 2015).

Studies into the ways that our digital relationships with smartphones are manipulated by design to encourage habit-forming behaviours and increase usage through the creation of dependency, attachment processes and separation anxiety (Thorsteinsson and Page, 2014; Hartanto and Yang, 2016; Montag et al., 2014) seem to be particularly important to any study that attempts to understand the reasons why smartphone use has become so ubiquitous and acceptable. Some studies have paid close attention to the way that smartphones might be used to supplant thinking (Barr et al, 2015) while others have suggested that smartphone users' motivations might also be seen to be a strategy to avoid difficult emotional experiences or to avoid feelings of boredom (Panova and Lleras, 2016; Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas, 2016) both of which impinge upon and greatly decrease our capacity to hold sustained attention (Stothart et al., 2015).

While these studies attempt to seek greater understanding of our relationships with smartphones from a perspective of design and functional use, others attempt to broaden the scope to investigate the meaning behind these relationships. McLuhan (1964) first proposed that new media and technology become extensions of our senses and thus extensions of ourselves. Belk's 1988 research into the notion of an extended self, proposed that possessions may come to be part of our identity as extensions of our sense of self. Some have used this notion of an extended self to show that the absence of a smartphone, as a possession, increases levels of anxiety and discomfort in users (Clayton et al., 2015). Belk (2013) has also updated his original proposition to take into account the technological possibilities that the smartphone facilitates and, as will be explored in more detail later, suggests a number of additions to the formulation of the extended self which offers valuable insight into understanding the motivations and dynamics of our digital relationships with smartphones.

It is clear from the review of the literature that there is the potential for some misunderstanding of relevant terms as there were some terms which appeared to be used interchangeably throughout, but which may have slightly different meanings to each reader. In light of this it would be helpful for me to clarify the terms I intend to use throughout this thesis. A number of the terms were used to describe the non-physical realm of the internet but there are some subtle differences. *Virtual* is a common term used to suggest something that is not physically in existence, but which has been designed to appear like it is. *Virtual Reality* is a term that has been used widely to suggest an experience that appears to be real and which designers seek to be immersive enough to

fool the mind and body to believe it is having an experience in reality. Less specifically, *Virtual* is also used to imply something that is online, on the internet, and has become synonymous with the domain of the online and *virtual* internet space. *Cyberspace*, whilst also virtual, is a term more commonly used in relation to the communicative aspects of our online experiences and is indicative of the way technologies are interconnected. In the early years of the Internet-or 'World Wide Web'-*Cyberspace* was a term used to capture the growing idea and developing phenomena of communication technologies and their capacities to create an interactive *virtual* domain. *Online* is a term commonly used to describe the state of being when interacting through the internet. It is a term that has come to describe a sense of connectedness and an experience of being always switched on. *Offline* is a term used to describe the state of not being connected online. However, it could be argued that with the developments of 'smart' technologies one can be online (through constant connected presence and the attention this demands) whilst one is also off-line (not actively connecting). *Augmented* is a term that is at risk of being confused with virtual. Where the goal of the *virtual* is to be so immersive that it is experienced as real, *augmentation* is a process that seeks to add layers on top of reality so that the user knows that they are physically present whilst experiencing *virtual* aspects on top of the external. A more recent example of augmented reality was seen in the Pokémon Go craze in July 2016 which enabled users to view cartoon characters within and on top of what they viewed through the camera of their smartphones. Augmented reality links to a hallucinatory experience for the user. This is a growing area of technology which offers a multi-layered reality-based experience which is also being used in a number of game applications and utilised in the development of digital eyeglass technologies.

Human-technology relationship

Perhaps one of the most influential books on this subject, *Understanding media: the extensions of man* by Marshall McLuhan (1964) is an important and fundamental starting point for any study into how we relate to and are mediated by our digital devices. McLuhan controversially suggested that technology is used to extend our physical senses and should not merely be viewed as something neutral (that it is what is done with it, the content, that is important) but that 'the medium' itself is 'the message' which we should pay closer attention to. McLuhan states that:

> Our conventional response to all media, namely that it is how they are used
> that counts, is the numb stance of the technological idiot. For the 'content' of

a medium is like the juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the watchdog of the mind. . .The effects of technology do not occur at the level of opinions or concepts but alter sense ratios or patterns of perception steadily and without any resistance. (p. 18)

This position suggests that unconscious processes may be present in our relationships with digital media; that there are aspects of our digital interactions which are unknown, but which might come to be understood from a perspective that explores our unconscious drives and desires, from the perspective of psychoanalysis. This is something that McLuhan also alludes to when he writes that:

The age of anxiety and of electric media is also the age of the unconscious and of apathy. But it is strikingly the age of consciousness of the unconscious, in addition. (p. 47)

This notion of unconscious influences is something which Mander (1978) later explored with regard to television and its capacity to blur and confuse the distinction between images that are the product of our own mind, those that represent the real world and those which are put inside us by machines. It might be argued that the increasing amount of time spent engaging with smartphones in a digital relationship might intensify this confusion between internal (online) and external (offline) realities. Greenfield's (2014) suggestion that, with regards to digital media including smartphones, 'the screen is the message' makes links to both McLuhan and Mander's argument that digital media is used as an extension of ourselves through the manner in which the 'screen', including the smartphone, has become the dominant medium of interaction.

The internet

It could be seen that, as a medium, the internet is a virtual extension of our minds. McLuhan was writing about a time when new media and technology had been dominated by physical and external extensions of our bodies such as the wheel extending our legs and feet. In the vein of McLuhan's 'the medium is the message' it is not the content of the internet that should be focussed upon but the provision that it allows to the user through the human-internet relationship. Our early relationship with the Internet has been well documented (Margolis, 2000; Jonscher, 1999; Joinson, 2003) however, many of these studies predate the development of smartphones and describe a time before the

internet had become such a ubiquitous entity. Indeed, it might be argued that the development of the smartphone has provided a vehicle for our relationship with the Internet to become more mobile and personalised by allowing us to take it with us on our person all the time. But what is it about our relationship with the internet and its provisions that might help us understand its influence in our digital relationship with smartphones? What are the possible underlying dynamics of our behaviour within this relationship? Are there particular aspects of this relationship that steadily impact upon our 'sense ratios and patterns of perception' as suggested by McLuhan?

Although already 15 years old Suler's (2004) seminal paper titled *The Online Disinhibition Effect* (ODE) describes a constellation of attractive online behaviours which combine in a variety of organisations to result in the disinhibition of behaviours that are usually more robust and secure offline. According to Suler there are two forms of online disinhibition; *benign disinhibition* and *toxic disinhibition. Benign disinhibition* describes online behaviour in which people share their personal information with others. This information may include their feelings, hopes, wishes and aspects of their lives which promote aspects of their personality which they want others to recognise and validate. In contrast, *toxic disinhibition* refers to behaviours which express hatred, anger, intolerance, criticism and threats, including the exploration of the darker areas of the internet to explore fantasies. These expressions give voice to aspects of the personality that people are less keen to openly share publicly. Whilst the former may be a vehicle to self-development and understanding the latter can be seen to be indicative of acts of compulsion and acting out in an uncontained way.

Suler explores the aspects of our relationship with the Internet which encourage users to drop their usual social restraint. He suggests that there are six contributing factors: *dissociative anonymity*, *invisibility, asynchronicity, solipsistic introjection, dissociative imagination* and *minimisation of status and authority. Dissociative anonymity* is a principle factor of ODE and describes how people hide behind a sense of averted responsibility from their online activity which they perceive as separate from their offline identity. It is as if superego restrictions and moral cognitive processes have been temporarily suspended from the online psyche.

Invisibility overlaps with *dissociative anonymity* and can empower people to explore, do and say things they would not normally feel confident to do offline. The knowledge that

other people cannot see them, in arenas that are text based, appears to remove an anxiety in users about how they look and what they sound like and excludes aspects of communication such as body language that might communicate the impact of their actions and important social inhibiting cues. The freedom of invisibility is something which Suler links to traditional psychoanalytic practice where the analyst sits out of view of the patient to minimise the visual perception of the analyst's responses to what is being said.

Asynchronicity is term used by Suler to describe how online communication does not always take place in real time in the way that it does in face-to-face or voice-to-voice communication. The absence of the immediate consequences of our actions online through the responses of others can make users less cautious about what they might say or do. In face-to-face communication the constant feedback from others, often on an unconscious non-verbal level, shapes our degree of self-disclosure through a perception of how such sharing may be received. In this way social norms are promoted and policed. In the post-Facebook and Web 2.0 era of social networking and smart mobile technologies, *asynchronicity* can be seen to play a role in the increased expectations of user responses and an accelerated demand for immediate recognition through likes, comments and retweets. The speeded-up instantaneous culture of social networking makes the delay of *asynchronicity* unbearable to some and can be seen to be a design feature of social networking sites.

Solipsistic introjection is the notion that the absence of face-to-face communication alters our inhibitions through a sense of being directly connected to another person's online mind. This direct access can lead to the perception that another person is present inside one's mind and has been introjected into one's psyche. This aspect of ODE is rife with exploration of fantasies that blur the boundary of what is real and what is a perceived reality within fantasy. In 2004, Suler was describing online communication when it was a heavily text-based medium and although there has been a significant move towards a more visual online presence there are aspects of *solipsistic introjection* which exist now in the ubiquitous nature of smartphone technology and the pervasiveness of the emotional attachments being made to smartphones as attachment figures (Thorsteinsson and Page, 2014).

Suler describes *dissociative imagination* as the action of separating 'online fiction from offline fact'. This is commonly experienced through the creation of online characters

(avatars) or persona which are then emotionally invested in by the user. This is often expressed through gaming and the perception that our 'avatar' actually exists in another space. Both the online space and its inhabitants live beyond the restrictions and responsibilities of the real world and its endless demands. This is something which is being challenged by contemporary technologies and the move for 'augmented reality' and 'virtual reality'. The difference here is that whilst a virtual reality seeks to simulate a multi-sensory reality that is hard to distinguish from real life, augmented reality seeks to add layers to the real world to create an experience that is *enhanced* rather than *transformed*. The release of the Pokémon Go application in July 2016 revealed the demand for and fascination with augmented reality and its possibilities but it may also have changed the nature of reality-testing within the human-computer relationship.

Minimisation of status and authority is the aspect of online disinhibition which engenders users to feel more confident to challenge authority and say what they really think to others which in real life they would feel too afraid of doing. This is done within a philosophy and atmosphere of an online environment in which everyone is equal but may also be vulnerable to more *toxic disinhibition*.

These underlying dynamics that exist within our human-internet relationship can be seen to afford an experience of our senses being extended in a less tangible way. Offline our lives are more real, the extensions of our senses more physical and limited. However, our use of the internet can be seen to have afforded us a more internalised experience, one that can be seen to have extended our central nervous system (McLuhan, 1964) and given us a greater sense of intimacy with the online world.

Whilst these dynamics might describe a vulnerability to disinhibited behaviours so might they represent a description of our relationship with the internet that is powerfully attractive and pleasure producing. The annual Ofcom Communications Market Report has shown an increase both in the numbers of people getting online and internet accessibility year on year to a point where it has become ubiquitous and essential to day-to-day living. The smartphone is called 'smart' to describe its capacity to provide its user with a constant connection to the internet and in doing so pulls up the roots of the desktop-based internet and the more portable laptop to be placed in the pocket and taken everywhere. But what has this new human-smartphone relationship itself afforded to the

user? What is 'the message' of this medium and what are the underlying dynamics of this relationship?

It has been suggested by Oulasvirta and colleagues, (2011) that 'habit formation' has increased the pervasiveness of smartphone use. Woods and Neal (2007) redefined the model of habit formation by recognising that habits are not only dispositions that are learned in a search for repeated past responses but that they can be triggered by context through an 'automaticity' that is built upon patterns of covariation between contexts and responses. In other words, habits are typically the result of past goal pursuits, that is, people using their experiences and repeated actions in certain contexts in their attempts to achieve a goal. Using this model of how habits are formed, Oulasvirta and colleagues studied the automatised behaviours linked to smartphone use and the triggers to such behaviours to explore how they are made to become natural and invisible. This may be suggestive of behaviours that have become unconscious actions. Oulasvirta et al. recognise one such habit seen in smartphone use as the 'checking' habit - also known as a 'pickup' - when a user picks up, looks at or responds to a stimulus from their smartphone. This 5-year longitudinal study also sought to understand both the user's experiences of habitual smartphone use as well as explore the design features which might actively encourage and strengthen habit formation. They found brief usage sessions (checking) to be a major component of smartphone interactions. In other words, the habit of picking up one's phone to check it or respond is a dominant aspect of our relationship with our smartphone. This is something which is supported through statistical data which reports that in the UK users check their smartphone every 12 minutes when awake (Ofcom, 2018).

So, what is going on in this relationship in order for such dominant habitual use to be so easily formed? Oulasvirta et al, recognise that when we interact with our smartphone, we might receive an informational reward such as an email, a text message, a push notification or other interaction invitations from other people to the smartphone itself. Our propensity to follow this information reward onto a secondary action increases overall usage as we are subsequently rewarded with an additional information treat. This chance to receive an informational reward has led Daniel Greenfield to describe smartphones as 'the world's smallest slot machine' (why am I addicted to my smartphone? video accessed at (www.virtual-addiction.com). He proposes that the habit of smartphone checking operates on a variable ratio reinforcement schedule that provides

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the information reward every once in a while, which then validates the checking action. Reinforcement is a concept well known in the field of behavioural psychology, but Greenfield is emphasising how an unpredictable experience of reinforcement comes into play with a smartphone in a manner similarly found in gambling. Greenfield goes on to explain how, from a neuroscience perspective, this variable ratio reinforcement schedule leads to increased neurochemicals in the brain through elevated dopamine levels. In other words, the information rewards are a hit of pleasure. Levitin (2014) also describes how this schedule leads to dopamine-addiction feedback loops which rewards the brain for being distracted and drives us to seek even faster and more powerful digital-highs through an increased sense of multi-tasking in the user. However, Levitan also suggests that, in addition, multi-tasking increases the release of the stress hormone cortisol and the fight-or-flight hormone adrenaline leading to an overstimulation of the brain. This is turn has a metabolic cost as the rapid shifting of attention between activities burns up the oxygenated glucose in the brain, which we need to concentrate, leaving us feeling exhausted very quickly. It could be suggested that multi-tasking is in fact a description of a heightened state of distraction and distractibility.

Lee and colleagues (2013) support the view that smartphones have moved beyond being cutting-edge personal technology to become a necessity in our lives, something that gets checked first thing in the morning and last thing at night, even being with us throughout the night. This is reflective of the opinion that excessive use of smartphones can be problematic and lead to what is considered as smartphone addiction or *Nomophobia* (see Choliz, 2012; Kwon et al., 2013; Kwon et al., 2013; Mok et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2014; Demirci et al., 2014; Cho et al., 2015; Kuss et al., 2014; Kuss et al., 2012; Emanuel et al., 2015; Bianchi and Phillips, 2005). *Nomophobia* is a term coined to describe an irrational fear of being without the capacity to use one's smartphone through a lack of network signal, low or no battery or lack of Wi-fi. It might be argued that this is not an irrational fear in light of the discussed dependency on smartphone presence and its full capacities that have been bestowed upon it as an 'all in one' device/possession. More recent efforts to develop and validate assessment tools for smartphone addiction have been well documented (Kwon et al, 2013a; 2013b; Kim et al, 2014; Demirci et al, 2014). More than just habitual, as shown earlier, the need to check one's smartphone is a compulsive behaviour that can lead to users experiencing increased stress both biologically and psychologically. This notion of technostress was first coined by Brod (1984) and describes the impact upon an individual of receiving an excessive bombardment of

information and communication from technologies. Lee and colleagues (2013) foresee that increased smartphone use and technostress will increase overall stress levels in individuals.

The extended mind

Barr and colleagues (2015) have suggested that smartphones can be viewed as a representation of an extended mind. This notion of an extended mind in relation to human-computer interaction was first explored by Clarke and Chalmers (1998). Building upon the work of McLuhan's and later the work of Putnam (1975) and Burge (1979), Clarke and Chalmers suggested that humans use the environment to drive cognitive processes through an active externalism. For instance, writing down notes on paper is not only a way of externalising thoughts and assisting with memory recall but it is also part of the process of thinking. They propose that the human organism interacts with an external entity to co-create a coupled system that is also a cognitive system. When considering the human-smartphone relationship as a coupled system, Barr and colleagues, (2015) view smartphone use as 'an instantation of the extended mind' and suggest that users are likely to forego the effort involved in analytic thinking in favour of fast and easy intuition. This creates a situation where individuals allow their smartphones to do their thinking for them.

This notion of an extended mind can be linked to the broader concept of an extended self. This concept was first introduced by Belk (1988) as a model for investigating our relationship with the environment and how we consciously and unconsciously utilise possessions as a construct of how we want those around us to perceive and experience us. This model took McLuhan's earlier extensions of man into the arena of individuality and personal identity. Belk recognised that each person has a number of constructs of self, including the individual self, an inner-core self and a variety of representations of self which might be shown to wider circles of associations ranging from family and community to our sense of self within our nation. Belk posited that we enhance these constructs of self through possessions with varying degrees of significance. These possessions are not always physical objects, they might be an idea or an experience, but physical object possessions are the most externally evident possessions to become embodied by an individual. These object possessions also act as historical memories of an individual or group's experience of change and Belk suggests that they also become imbued with emotional memories and representations. In light of this it could also be

suggested that object possessions can form powerful emotional links between individuals or come to be embodied within a family history or story.

Belk (2014) revised his original theory to explore the major changes that the digital world has had upon our expression of our extended selves and views the relationship between our offline and online personas as the most important definition of self in a digital era. Belk suggests five additional considerations of an extended self in the digital age: *dematerialisation, reembodiment, sharing, co-construction of self* and *distributed memory*. Of these additional considerations, the most pertinent to understanding our relationship with smartphones is the notion of *dematerialisation*. Belk views the capacity for our possessions to be digitalised as a significant influence upon our sense of a digitally extended self and the smartphone's capacity to embody the defining functions of so many previous stand-alone objects into one object is remarkable. The notion of *dematerialisation* relates to the manner in which possessions disappear and become invisible. So much of our information has made the transition from physical existence to a digitised existence where it can be stored in waiting for us to call it into the present. This can be seen in the way that music collections now exist in a *cloud*, the way that letters have become emails, the way that maps have become interactive photographic guides and how our photo albums have become massive online libraries of our personal and collective histories. The smartphone, as an object, acts as a portal and retrieval tool of a wide-ranging number of previously physical object possessions.

In his 2014 revision, Belk also questions whether the drive towards *dematerialisation* has changed the level of attachment that we experience to our extended selves and whether we can become as attached to virtual possessions as we have previously with material possessions. This distinction may not be definitive as it could be argued that the smartphone can be viewed as a material possession which is imbued with the content of the non-material and virtual possessions that it can conjure up on demand. If the smartphone can be seen to represent a growing number of digital possessions, then the threat of its loss or absence might become a greater preoccupation of its users. If the extent of attachment to a possession/object can be seen through a capacity to both fear its absence and mourn its loss, then the existence of anxiety produced by the fear of being disconnected from or apart from our smartphone should be evident.

In their 2015 study into the impact of smartphone separation upon users, Clayton and colleagues found that the inability to respond to a notification or demand from their smartphone during a given task produced significant physiological anxiety in users through an increased heart rate and feelings of unpleasantness. They also reported that psychologically the situation activated aversive motivational systems in users and resulted in a decline of cognitive performance. Interestingly, alongside these physiological and psychological experiences, smartphone users also reported feeling a 'loss of self' during separation and increased feelings of an extended self when it was in their possession. When thought about alongside Greenfield's (www.virtual-addiction.com) description of how the habit of checking our smartphones is based upon a variable ratio reinforcement schedule then it would suggest that the smartphone user could run the risk of reaching a constant state of alertness to their smartphone which could significantly impact upon their capacity to stay on any task and concentrate for an extended period of time. This is something that has been explored by Linda Stone (https://lindastone.net/qa/continuous-partial-attention/) who has coined the phrase 'continuous partial attention' to describe the distinction between being connected at all times and multi-tasking:

> to pay continuous partial attention is to pay partial attention — CONTINUOUSLY [sic]. It is motivated by a desire to be a LIVE [sic] node on the network. Another way of saying this is that we want to connect and be connected. We want to effectively scan for opportunity and optimize for the best opportunities, activities, and contacts, in any given moment. To be busy, to be connected, is to be alive, to be recognized, and to matter.

The impact of high levels of smartphone use upon user capacity to concentrate and sustain attention on a task has also been studied by Stohart and colleagues (2015). They report that smartphone notifications (informational rewards) prompt task-irrelevant thoughts, or mind wandering, which has been shown to damage task performance - even when the smartphone is not in sight. Sustaining attention on other people has also been shown to be affected by smartphone use. Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas (2010) have shown how phubbing (the act of snubbing another person by looking at one's phone) has now become normative but has negative implications for face to face social interactions.

Barr and colleagues (2015) also recognised that smartphone users tend to rely on intuitive thinking over analytic thinking due to a perceived cognitive miserliness. For example, smartphone users might look something up online that they already know or could easily learn because of an unwillingness to exert their cognitive energies. When considering the findings of Clayton and colleagues above, it could be seen that Greenfield's 'slot machine' motivation toward information rewards is intrinsically connected to Belk's recognition of dematerialisation and virtual possessions, and the reliance upon the smartphone to recall them into existence, and that the user is vulnerable to offsetting the thinking involved due to Barr and colleagues' 'cognitive miserliness'.

The emotional aspects of the human-smartphone relationship are an area that remains relatively unexplored. Some studies such as Vincent (2013) have attempted to make sense of how individuals use their smartphones to meet their emotional needs to such an extent that they turn to it as a primary source of emotional regulation. She describes how 'constant interactions' with smartphones allows users to experience their emotions through their relationship to it. Vincent calls these emotions 'electronic emotions' and perceives them as being imbued with the user's feelings and emotions which come into existence only when the user interacts with the smartphone and they re-materialise. The capacity to personalise so many aspects of the smartphone experience, from the background picture, ringtone and phone case to the way that the messages are written, or photographs organised, results in the device becoming specific to each user. Smartphones are not designed to be shared but are part of a shared experience.

With so many features of the smartphone mediating our experiences of the world around us, and our relationship to it and other people, they become companions of these experiences as a shared other (as the extended self). One additional aspect of this relationship is that when users share and recall these memories and experiences they turn to their smartphone as the primary source to mediate their emotional experience. This is due in part to Belk's notion of *dematerialisation*, but it also brings to light the fact that so many of these recorded experiences are directly created on the smartphone itself. In this way the smartphone becomes both the emotional archivist of users' lives and the primary means to recall and bring into existence their virtual representations. Vincent sees the scope for this as follows:

the interactions of the [smartphone] and its user has co-constructed a new personalised social robot; a machine imbued with our unique electronic emotions that we turn to in moments of loneliness, happiness, crisis, boredom and daily life for comfort, solace, assistance and guidance. (p. 68)

If the smartphone is being used in this way, then there are far reaching implications for its increasing significance as the most important single possession to the user due to a reliance upon it to act as a portal through which the user can access and call into existence a multitude of virtual possessions. Vincent is clear here that it is not necessarily the physical device that users build a relationship to but the transferable data that it contains and has a relationship with.

The long-term implications of using smartphones for emotional management has also been explored. Panova and Lleras (2016) found that individuals who use their smartphones as an emotional coping strategy to manage difficult emotional states are at greater risk of negative mental health than those who turn to their smartphones as a means to relieve boredom. However, as it has also been shown that habitual smartphone use elevates pleasurable neurochemicals so user motivation may not be of particular importance if both using the smartphone to avoid difficult feelings or to relieve boredom both result in increased habitual use and emotional dependency.

If, as this suggests, smartphones are being used to regulate emotions and an increasing dependency and intimacy is being encouraged within the human-smartphone relationship, is there any evidence of McLuhan's proposal that the 'content' is merely an exciting and juicy distraction from what is really happening behind the back of the 'watchdogs of the mind' that is our attention? Are Smartphones, as a commercial interest, designed to distract and create a dependency or addiction?

In a fascinating piece of research by Thorsteinsson and Page (2014) the authors sought to understand how user attachments to their smartphone is formed and encouraged in order to make recommendations to phone designers as to how they might increase user attachment to their smartphones even further. Using descriptors from attachment theory, they made the suggestion that smartphones could be viewed as attachment figures. Pulling on earlier research by Hong and Townes (1976), who showed that in the absence of physical contact infants have been shown to form emotional attachments to inanimate

objects, Thorsteinsson and Page drew correlations to the nature of the smartphones as a device that is capable of facilitating social interactions without a direct physical contact to another. Whilst this is not unique to smartphones as objects – non-face-to-face contact over telephone is another example – smartphones can be kept in close proximity to the body in a comforting way. This might suggest that the warmth of an in-use smartphone close to one's body is experienced as physical contact – a hug. Thorsteinsson and Page sent out questionnaires to 255 participants between the ages of 16 and 64 in 7 different countries to gather basic personal information about themselves and their phone. A second questionnaire aimed to ascertain the degree of attachment that users felt to their smartphones and which aspects of using smartphones formed, sustained and grew this attachment. One further aspect of this research methodology involved one participant downgrading their smartphone to a non-smartphone for a period of 5 days and for them to keep a journal of their emotional response to such an undertaking. This deprivation proved too much, and the single participant withdrew from the study after less than 2 days.

The findings from this study made further links to attachment theory and strengthened their hypothesis that smartphones act as attachment figures. There was little or no difference in the level of attachment experienced across all ages and across gender. This suggests a greater sense of a human proclivity to emotionally attach to a smartphone. Users reported experiencing significant levels of distress even at the thought of their smartphone being out of proximity or lost. These findings also confirmed previous findings by Balakrishnan and Raj (2012) and supported claims by Dresler-Hawke and Mansvelt (2008) as well as Belk (1988) that among younger people smartphones were viewed as an extension of the self and an essential medium of communication.

Thorsteinsson and Page also emphasise the importance of proximity in attachment processes; the behaviour shown where a child feels comfortable to play at increasing distances from their caregiver as long as they can 'check-in' with them by looking up or a brief reconnection. This also supported Oulasvirta and colleagues (2012) in their description of how smartphone users engage in repeated brief interactions with their phone as a way of 'checking in' much like the exploring child with a safe base. This behaviour increases phone use overall and this in turn reinforces the emotional attachment.

The findings from the study by Thorsteinsson and Page indicate three behaviours which further support their suggestion that smartphone users engage in attachment behaviours towards their phone. First, they found that 87.3% of participants reported that they used their smartphones at times when they found themselves waiting for something or for someone. This may be indicative of a need to relieve the anxiety of absence and supports the findings of Panova and Lleras (2016). Second, 76% agreed to some degree that they would check their smartphones even without receiving a notification. Third, 60% of participants admitted that they felt a need to frequently touch or confirm the location of their phone. This may be suggestive of the need for the safety of physical contact with an attachment figure. Thorsteinsson and Page viewed these checking habits as 'the incubator of a desire to maintain proximity to the device' (p. 7). They also made a distinction that the attachment is to the technology offered by their device rather than a loyalty to a particular brand of smartphone which supports Vincent's (2013) view that it is the transferable data that users are loyal to. This sense of loyalty to data and available tasks was one of the main reasons reported for the single case study that failed to manage day-to-day with a downgraded non-smartphone for more than 2 days.

When asked what emotions their smartphones made them experience 86.5% of participants reported positive feelings, with satisfaction the highest rated single emotion. Thorsteinsson and Page link the experiences of positive emotions in smartphone users to an increase in the emotional investment in the smartphone as an object and emotional attachment. This may also be indicative of Greenfield's view of the smartphone as a slot machine that rewards users with informational treats on a variable ratio reinforcement schedule that increases invested attachment.

In contrast the case study participant experienced the deprivation of smartphone technology as an inconvenience in their life and it became unbearable leaving them feeling hopeless. It could be seen that the participant experienced a degree of loss akin to the unwelcomed loss of an attachment figure. Although the case study was not completed it did reveal some interesting data that suggested that there are a number of appealing aspects of smartphone technology which might contribute towards an emotional attachment to it.

It is interesting to note in Thorsteinsson and Page's report that whilst participants felt it was acceptable to display an attachment to their own smartphone the experience of seeing

other people engaging in a relationship with their smartphone provoked more negative emotional responses in them. Such intolerance of other people's attachments to smartphones may be seen as an expression of jealousy towards the intimacy of digital attachments in others and could be seen to be reflective of the experience of phubbing as described earlier by Chotpitayasunondh and Douglas (2010). Thorsteinsson and Page make recommendations with some sense of alarm that increased emotional attachment to smartphones may significantly impact upon a user's capacity to interact with other people in face-to-face situations. Thorsteinsson and Page's study into the underlying dynamics of smartphone attachments in order to make suggestions as to how this emotional attachment can be increased by design appears to have reached the conclusion that this might not be socially desirable. The increased emotional attachment to the inanimate object of a smartphone may lead to greater isolation which in turn could inevitably impact upon our emotional attachments to other people which in turn may lead us to seek out emotional security from our smartphones as a substitute.

Conclusions

It can be seen from this review of the literature relating to our relationships with our smartphones, from outside of psychoanalysis, that there is a complex constellation of contributing factors which, when combined, facilitate a multifaceted experience of an intimate relationship with a digital device. The smartphone's 'Smartness', which is a description of its capacity to invoke the abilities of the internet, has been seen to also bring with it the perspectives and states of mind which can manipulate our usual day-to-day social inhibitions that serve to maintain highly developed aspects of community and civility.

It has been seen that the design of smartphone hardware and software are purposefully intended to increase a sense of attachment and dependency upon it as a device that can replace an increasing number of functions and cognitive abilities by the user outsourcing these functions in a way that appeals to its ease of use in the name of making life easier. McLuhan's notion that technology extends our physical senses still holds true and has been shown to increase such possible extensions by smartphones. However, it has become clearer that the smartphone is able to intensify the blurring of boundaries between internal (online) and external (offline) realities and the ways in which we interact with others both online and face-to-face. This blurring helps the formation of a sense that a user's relationship with their smartphone comes to be a coupled cognitive system which serves

to forego the harder work of analytic thinking for entertainment and interactions which are less demanding of precious cognitive energy and less stressful. Such a coupled system is supported by the perception that the smartphone is a possession over which the user has complete control; that the smartphone serves the user when in fact this may just be an illusionary aspect of the relationship which is promoted and also hidden in a parasitic way. This illusion of the smartphone being a possession is supported through its functional capacities to store, in a virtual manner, increased amounts of personal information and representations of life experienced, which become further possessions in their own right, and also be able to call these virtual possessions back into existence at the whim of the user. However, in order for this to be sustained the user needs to put a lot of effort, and money, into sustaining the relationship and possible existence of these virtual possessions by continuing their relationship with their smartphone and smartphone provider. This feels like an additional binding aspect of the relationship.

The potential for users to develop pathological use and dependency upon their relationship with their smartphone, both through an increasingly purposeful encouragement to outsource our cognitive abilities to it as a device, and the emotional dependency that is engendered in it as an object of attachment, has been shown to be a commercial goal of smartphone design. However, what is less obvious is this appears to be possible because it preys upon our human vulnerabilities of our need to seek out and make connections with others, form predictable habits, avoid difficult emotional states and manage our fears of being excluded and disconnected. The shallowing of levels of concentration and the sense that users need to be always on in a state of continuous partial attention only adds to these vulnerabilities. This leaves users susceptible to the manipulation of intentional design whilst, as Carr described (2010), being dazzled and disturbed by the programming. This also reflects McLuhan's (1964) notion that the content of technology is likened to 'the juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the watchdog of the mind' and suggests that users are being purposefully manipulated into creating a relationship with their smartphone that is as dependent as possible and one which the user cannot imagine or indeed bear being without. In this sense it does not necessarily matter what you are engaging with on the screen but that you are looking at the screen that is the most important thing. This reflects Greenfield's (2014) conclusion, as a revision of McLuhan's, that 'the screen is the message' and not what is on the screen. This is particularly effective if the actions of interacting with the smartphone can be made to be as natural and invisible, from the user, as possible, by

becoming, as shown by Oulasvirta et al (2012), unconscious actions which are further encouraged by creating dopamine-addiction feedback loops.

This chapter has thrown light on the underlying mechanics of the human-smartphone relationship and has made suggestions as to how this relationship is encouraged and maintained both by design, through the evolution of the smartphone as a technological crucible of individual technological developments, and by the capitalisation and manipulation of the human desires to seek out connection, extend our senses and our minds and to make day-to-day living and functioning easier.

Chapter 3

The smartphone as digital object: the psychoanalytic contribution

Psychoanalysis, culture and psychosocial perspectives.

It is important to recognise that there is a long scholarly tradition exploring the relationship between psychoanalysis and culture and that the influence of psychoanalytic ideas upon wider culture, such as the power of the unconscious, has often been limited outside of mental health due to its long-standing clinical application within the consulting room (Rustin, 2007). This has led to separate discourses about the unconscious by clinicians and academics which have only been mediated by individuals attempting to work in the space between the two disciplines. Within this space, however, between either dominant discipline, writers and artists have approached the unconscious in a way that acknowledges the 'disruptive and disturbing aspects of unconscious mental life in their experience and creative practice' (p. 2). This exploration of our digital relationship with smartphones is situated as a development of this long scholarly tradition which has more recently also considered the place of the unconscious in our relationships with digital media from a psychocultural perspective (Bainbridge et al, 2007).

This study also recognises that there is also a growing field of study of psychoanalytic ideas within a sociological framework known as psychosocial studies, (Clarke, 2006). Within this field the smartphone can be seen to be an object with individual, social and cultural significance through our individual and collective relationships to it as a digital media device and object with cultural influence that has also been shown in the previous chapter to engage us on an emotional and unconscious level. This perspective is echoed by Yates (2007) in her study of psychoanalysis and television in which she proposes that the television can be seen to be an object that holds cultural, social and psychological significance. It could be suggested that the smartphone screen, much like the television screen, has the capacity to be utilised as 'an object of unconscious fantasy and emotional experience' and indicates a need for the development of a 'psycho-cultural approach' (p. 1) to the study of the smartphone. Although this is not an aim of this study, it is hoped that this study makes some contribution to such an undertaking.

In comparison to the amount of literature available from the fields outlined above and in the previous chapter there is a relatively small body of literature from a purely psychoanalytic perspective focussing upon our digital relationship with smartphones. Whilst there is a growing amount of writing debating the impact of digital media, communication technologies and smart devices upon social change, individual behaviour, relationships within family life and beyond into the wider connected world (Carr, 2010; Balick, 2013; Lanier, 2010; Turkle, 2012; Greenfield, 2014, etc.) there has been less consideration of what Fonagy (2014) recognises as 'the association between human instincts and information technology' (p. xix) that takes into account the more unconscious aspects of this relationship from a psychoanalytic perspective.

It is evident from the available literature that there is a dilemma being grappled with: how can the smartphone be positioned within a psychoanalytic context and what language of psychoanalytic concepts can be employed to further explore and express any clarity? This is, perhaps, reflective of a wider struggle which is present in any discourse on our relationship with technology and the constant sense that one is 'playing catch up' with phenomena that is likely to be already out of date.

Despite this small body of research, the psychoanalytic writers who have explored the associations between 'human instinct and information technology', as suggested by Fonagy, including the human-smartphone relationship, have drawn on a number of key psychoanalytic concepts in their attempts to make sense of and position the smartphone within the body of knowledge that is psychoanalysis. I will briefly outline these key psychoanalytic concepts at the start.

Object relations

Developing mainly from Melanie Klein's early analysis of children and their play (1998), object relations theory is a body of thinking which assumes that we primarily seek out relationships with other people - which at an early stage are experienced and internalised as objects. These internal objects can be representations of people (whole objects), parts of people (part objects) or combined parts of different people who have been experienced, particularly in our early life. In this respect the mind can be thought of as a construct of our internalised objects. These internal objects can become blueprints for our relationship with ourselves and others and the expectations that we may unconsciously project into all of our relationships. These blueprints can also be seen to be powerful motivating forces

and unconscious scripts which we expect others to act out in order to confirm that the world is the way we see it. In this respect, the infant's attempts to make sense of their relationship to the world can be thought of as an internal theatre upon which various characters (objects) play out expected roles.

Container-Contained and Alpha-Function

Bion (1962) developed a theory of thinking based on the transformation of raw unmetabolized psychic and bodily sense-data experiences of the infant, which he later called beta-elements, into alpha-elements (thoughts) through the alpha-function of the maternal object. This process is facilitated by the maternal object being used as a receptacle (container) into which the child projects these unprocessed beta-elements in search of a thinking object so that they can be contained, digested and given back to them in a manner that they can bear. This is achieved through the capacity of the maternal object to survive, bear and detoxify these chaotic elements in a way that helps the infant to find meaning in their communication and experience.

Transitional objects and transitional phenomena

Winnicott (1951) proposed that during the development of the child's move to subjectivity and separation from the maternal object it utilises transitional phenomena and transitional objects as a first 'not me' object with which the child can explore the 'intermediate area of experience, between the thumb and the teddy bear' (p. 230). These transitional objects, usually the breast in the first instance, may be a specific object but are not experienced by the child as being part of their body, or as 'me', yet nor do they belong to external reality as external objects for the child. Transitional objects provide the child with a first possession which not only serves to provide a sense of security and reassurance, but which also needs to be ruthlessly loved, hated and devoured; it needs to survive the expressions of frustration of the child as they move to separation and subjectivity and are faced which the reality that the maternal object is a not-me object. According to Winnicott the transitional object may come to indirectly represent an 'external' breast by representing the 'internal' breast to the child.

Potential space

Winnicott (1971) also recognised a:

hypothetical area that exists (but cannot exist) between the baby and the object (mother or part of mother) during the phase of repudiation of the object as not-me, that is, at the end of being merged in with the object. (p. 107)

Winnicott called this area 'a potential space' in which the mother and infant attempt to gain subjectivity and separation. He further describes how, developmentally:

from a state of being merged in with the mother the baby is at a stage of separating out the mother from the self, and the mother is lowering the degree of her adaptation to the baby's needs (both because of her own recovery from a high degree of identification with her baby and because of her perception of the baby's new need, the need for her to be a separate phenomenon. (p. 107)

Winnicott explains this more by suggesting that potential space is a third area of 'human living' which is neither inside the individual nor outside in the shared world of reality (p. 110). Through occupying this intermediate potential space, the mother-infant dyad works towards an initial stage of separation and subjectivity through the child being able to trust the experience of a consistent good enough mother over a period of time.

Ogden (1992) suggests that within a potential space the mother-infant dyad attempts to move the infant towards subjectivity and separation through a 'dialectical process' within which two conflicting concepts engage in a dynamic relationship to move towards, but never complete, integration. Each attempt at integration creates a new dialectical conflict and a fresh tension in the dynamic. The varying degrees of self-awareness in the infant are reliant upon subjectivity, and subjectivity is created through a dialectical process where integration and differentiation of 'symbol, symbolised and interpreting subject' are grappled with (p. 209). In this respect, Ogden is suggesting that the dialectic of potential space for the infant is between reality and fantasy.

Ogden goes on to describe four distinct 'characteristic pathologies' in which the potential space occupied by the mother-infant dyad fails to 'create or adequately maintain the psychological dialectical process':

1/ the dialectic of reality and fantasy collapses in the direction of fantasy (i.e. reality is subsumed by fantasy) so that fantasy becomes a thing in itself as

tangible, as powerful, as dangerous and as gratifying as the external reality from which it cannot be differentiated.

2/ The dialectic of reality and fantasy may become limited or collapses in the direction of reality when reality is used predominantly as a defense against fantasy. Under such circumstances, reality robs fantasy of its vitality. Imagination if foreclosed.

3/ The dialectic of reality and fantasy becomes restricted when reality and fantasy are dissociated in such a way as to avoid a specific set of meanings e.g. the 'splitting of the ego' in fetishism.

4/ When the mother and infant encounter serious and sustained difficulty in being a mother-infant, the infant's premature and traumatic awareness of his separateness makes experience so unbearable that extreme defence measures are instituted that take the form of a cessation of the attribution of meaning to perception. Experience is foreclosed. It is not so much that fantasy or reality is derived, rather, neither is created. (p. 205)

Psychoanalytic literature

Graham (2013) has proposed that devices such smartphones can be thought of as digital 'objects' in the language of psychoanalytic object relations theory - as representations of relational drives and dynamics - which can be located in the digital world and within digital relationships. In his paper, exploring the impact of the relationship with 'digital objects' upon the mental lives of adolescents and young people, Graham emphasises a pressing need for a greater exploration and understanding of the intense relationship we have with such 'digital objects' in order to keep apace and get alongside the experiences of young people and their explorations of the digital world. Graham recognises that:

a psychoanalytic perspective has often played a key part in the examination of contemporary issues, not just providing insight from the consulting room, but also a means of analysing cultural phenomena and can enable thinking about the digital era (p. 269).

This appears to be a helpful statement in support of this thesis through its endorsement of a psychoanalytic perspective from which to think about and analyse our relationship with digital devices such as the smartphone. Graham gives a sense of being in touch with the adolescent experience of the digital world. He views a young person's digital world as a new neighbourhood in that it has an environmental influence upon a child's development. It might be seen, however, that whereas a physical neighbourhood has physical boundaries, a digital neighbourhood can be potentially more intrusive and move beyond the school gates to transcend physical boundaries which may have previously acted as protective factors of their private lives. Graham also recognises that the smartphone is not only indispensable for many young people but might also be seen to be a part of the psyche, 'as an auxiliary ego.' In this he is suggesting that the smartphone has the capacity to be used as a supplementary 'extended self' and that 'critical mental functions are devolved to them' (p. 272). Graham's suggestion that digital devices such as smartphones can be thought of as digital 'objects' also suggests that smartphones themselves can be viewed as active agents in our human-smartphone relationships.

Further, Graham also recognises a trend within the development of social networking platforms of a movement towards a greater visual user experience, where visual imaging such as photographs, videos and augmented images dominate the user experience. This is evident in the way that social networking organisations such as Facebook appear to be evolving by absorbing video and photography applications and developments into the everyday user experience. He suggests that this not only enhances the sense of a shared connectedness but that this form of communication 'is also closer to our early mental processes, before the development of verbal thought' (p. 273). This primitive state of sense-making may increase a user's sense of connection through the search for intimate objects to connect with and is suggestive of the presence of more conscious drives to search for an 'other' mind to connect to our own in order to provide an experience of being and a sense of existence. The more publicly visible experience on social network sites of being left out, excluded and not seen by others, exacerbated by the fear of missing out, can be felt even more powerfully in the face of the visual evidence on other people's posts that so many others are able to be seen and noticed. Graham also explores the added dangers of a visually dominant experience and recognises that the way that we process images in our minds leaves us vulnerable to being traumatised by shocking visual images before we necessarily have time to process what we are seeing and make a choice 'not' to see it. It is worth noting here that the nature of how social networking sites are designed

and presented, as a platform, increases the chances of users seeing unwelcomed visual imagery provided by other users/friends, for example, via an uncontrolled 'news feed' on Facebook and not being able to necessarily control what other people post. This can be particularly traumatic for users who experience cyberbullying where the threat of an image of something humiliating being exposed or being used as a point of ridicule, attack and criticism dominates, particularly when one is the subject/object in the image. When things cannot be unseen, they can be experienced as traumatic, piercing the unprepared mind in an intrusive manner leaving it unable to process the content.

In a paper which moves closer to exploring the more unconscious aspects of the human-smartphone relationship, Sweet (2014), puts forward the idea that digital technologies and 'digital objects' are being used as 'receptacles for and transmitters of projected aspects of the self'. He suggests that 'an intra-psychic representation of the self, the "mediated self", may evolve based on a blurring of the lines of demarcation between projected/introjected elements of the self and its objects' (p. 4). Sweet further proposes that this 'mediated self' may represent a 'third object' as discussed by Ogden (1994) and may have additional links to the Winnicottian concept of a 'potential space' as outlined earlier.

Sweet's approach to thinking about these 'digital objects' emphasises the active role of the unconscious more and he recognises that throughout our engagement in our digital relationships it might be hypothesised 'that a range of complex unconscious phantasies are stimulated'. In this respect, digital objects become 'receptacles for projected parts of the self that then become identified with a range of technologically generated objects' (p. 177). It is through this process that Sweet proposes a third intermediary object is created which he terms the 'mediated self'. He uses the term 'mediated' to describe a self-structure built upon new technologies and digital forms of communication upon which the self becomes objectified in itself. This 'mediated self' is intricately connected to a range of 'technologically generated objects' upon which one can develop a pathological dependency (p. 178). In this he also means our online personas and online profiles which we create and then leave to the mercy of the internet to caretake whilst convincing ourselves that we are in control of how our mediated self is recognised, perceived and looked after in our absence. This state of mind is something which is actively promoted by social networking sites through its provocation of envious states, status anxiety and activation of the fear of missing out. Balick (2014) in his exploration of the psychodynamics of social networking has also considered aspects of our online persona

and 'mediated self' through his suggestion that we engage online through a false self which in essence is an outward facing social representation of ourselves as a subject and individual. This false self is evident the status updates and selfies that we share online in an attempt to outwardly present the aspects of our 'self' that we desire other to recognise through their validation and 'likes'.

Sweet describes how this mediated self:

> must continually return to a scene in order to find again or to re-find both its deposited image and the mediated self…what is also of considerable interest is just what has been going on in the phantasy of the individual, in relation to those aspects of the self that have been projected and deposited into the world of cyberspace, when there is a separation, or division, between the self and its technologically mediated images.' (p. 177)

This statement supports the need, identified in the previous chapter, for users to constantly check their smartphones to seek out evidence of recognition and validation of their mediated self over and over at the whim of what Greenfield described as the 'variable ratio reinforcement schedule'. This drive is then made even more potent by the fear of being separated from one's smartphone and subsequently one's capacity to monitor and maintain the mediated self and online persona through the constant motivation to pick-up and check-in.

However, Sweet warns of the dangers of a reliance upon the mediated self:

> enmeshment of the self within computer-based technological environments [smartphones] may also provide temporary relief from both anxious and depressive states… [but] in states of confusion, anxiety, depression or trauma, an inability to distinguish between the actual self and the mediated self may then lead to a profound collapse of the reality testing abilities and a retreat to a sealed-over narcissistic and schizoid self-state. (p. 177)

He later adds that:

a compulsion to retreat to computer-based technologies [smartphones] appears redolent with attempts to both disavow reality in the service of anaesthetising the fragile self, whilst in addition manically and narcissistically inflating the ego. Ultimately, the true cost of such a strategy may be measured by the erosion and destruction of real relationships with others in the external world (p. 190).

These appear to be quite stark outcomes for the mediated self, and it leads to the question of what happens when this 'temporary' relief from anxious and depressive states become a more constant source of relief from anxiety? This seems more pertinent in light of the previous revelations that part of the design of smartphones includes purposefully provoking and sustaining a state of anxiety in the user. The inability to distinguish between the actual self and the mediated self is reminiscent of more infantile states of omnipotence and a reluctance to move towards separation and subjectivity within the mother-infant dyad. The suggestion that the smartphone is used to anaesthetise one's sense of fragility and vulnerability would support this rather infantile narcissistic fantasy and might also be verification of the influence of Suler's (2004) online disinhibition effect, in particular the way that asynchronicity blurs the sense of time and feeds into the fantasy of immediate gratification and the intolerance of a frustrating and persecuting reality.

On a similar vein, Frankel (2013) proposes that the virtual worlds in which digital relationships take place have strong links to Freud's (1917) *Mourning and melancholia.* He sees the potential for the virtual space to be used as a 'melancholic project' to preserve the lost object and to create conditions which encourage 'a regression to a narcissistic stage of object relating'. This may add further evidence that the threat of separation from one's smartphone represents a fear of the lost object. Frankel also explores the possible distortions between psychic reality and virtual reality that digital relationships may produce and how difficult it might be to distinguish between the two through over-use and the potential danger that virtual reality may 'collapse the space of psychic reality'.

Frankel acknowledges that the 'digital revolution' and our growing human-computer relationship is seen as either a cathartic and freeing aspect of our evolution or a corrupting crusade that vitiates our human experience. His main argument is that our greater

absorption in 'virtual modes of object relations' is leading to a weakening of our ability to exist at the nexus between mourning and melancholia:

> digital life shelters us from certain kinds of psychic pain, especially the boredom and drudgery of everyday living. It protects us from small losses and everyday disappointments. It shields us from the reality of contingency and death… if there is a psychoanalytically based critique to be made of internet culture, it could be described in the following manner: it prevents melancholy from being transformed into mourning. (p. 14)

Perhaps Frankel here is also expressing Sweet's concept of the 'mediated self' as existing in a suspended state between mourning and melancholia, a state that moves to protect something idealised in its absence, something which needs to be metabolised, but which gets left floundering in the 'shallows' of digital experience to avoid the psychic pain of acknowledging loss. It may also relate to the aspects of the mediated self that develop pathological dependences with online experiences. In this paper, Frankel proposes that the virtualisation of the self into a mediated self has the potential to degrade the necessary alpha-function needed to digest the psychic pain of coming to realise the limits of our own omnipotence, a crucial component to the process of transforming the psychic pain of loss. If, as Frankel suggests, alpha-function is potentially compromised by virtualisation, via the mediated self, then the vulnerability to 'act out what cannot be metabolized' (p. 14) increases and, alongside the online disinhibition effect, may lead to concerning online behaviours and emotional distress as the user struggles to find meaning and containment.

MacRury and Yates (2016), apply object relations theory to explore the unconscious attachments that develop in our relationships with material and technological objects, in particular the smartphone. They use the term 'mobile phone' throughout their paper to emphasise its portability rather than its 'smart' capacities but for the purpose of this paper I feel that it is an interchangeable word. MacRury and Yates propose that:

> object relations psychoanalysis provides a highly evocative set of concepts to explore the contemporary experience of the [smartphone], which is bound up in the unconscious processes of object relating as a mode of experiencing the self and of engaging with the world. (p. 42)

As outlined earlier, object relations theory suggests that humans primarily seek out relationships with other objects and it suggests that the mind can be thought of as a construct of internalised part or whole objects which become blueprints for our relationship with ourselves and any form of relationship. It is within this framework of object relating that MacRury and Yates suggest that the smartphone can be experienced as an 'object' through our everyday relationship with it. In their view object relations theory can 'capture the complexities of networked intersubjective life' whilst maintaining 'an account of interior experience in a unique way' (p. 45). Such a proposal appears to promote a more accessible approach towards a psychoanalytic perspective on our relationship with the smartphone.

MacRury and Yates go on to propose that the smartphone, as a relating object, takes on transitional and intermediary characteristics as it is 'linked to and embedded within an interplay of both external and inner spaces of the self' (p. 51). This 'paradoxical' object has the capacity to be used imaginatively and pathologically. It can be used as part of a wide array of creative connecting devices and objects as well as used as a disrupting unconscious retreat from the more challenging experiences of relating with the world. They recognise that being disrupted is a normal and socially accepted experience within a 'clickbait' culture (the notion that describes the invitation to compulsively 'click' on a teasing on-screen link, photo or webpage with the promise of something rewarding) and that the smartphone 'provokes some disruptions in the patterning of psychosocial and cultural life' which 'shakes the psychosocial boundaries of experience in everyday life' (pp. 41-42). In this way they are reflecting Stone's notion of a continuous partial attention and the understanding that only having half a mind on our face-to-face interactions is now a socially accepted allowance (lindastone.net).

In light of this, MacRury and Yates recognise that the smartphone holds 'powerful unconscious representations of connection and disconnection' (p. 44) which create a confusion between the notions of being present and being absent; what is me and what is not me; subject and object and that this muddling up is capable of provoking great concern and anxiety in the user. It is within this me/not me turmoil that MacRury and Yates expand the idea that the smartphone takes on the characteristic role of a Winnicottian transitional object. This is something which Balick (2014) also recognises in his proposal that the social networking sites embody transition phenomena and act as a transitional space. It is

within this transitional space that is the wider social network that Balick believes the 'representation of *self* (sic) online operates like a transitional object' (p. 111). In this he is suggesting that the false self-presentation online is both a 'me', or a representation of 'me-ness', and a 'not-me' because it exists as separate from me in a virtual space and beyond my control in my absence.

It could be seen that MacRury and Yates are suggesting that the relationship with the smartphone is not only representative of an agent of transitional phenomena but that it can also represent a potential space in itself, setting up a new dialectic between reality and fantasy for the user within the human-smartphone dyad. Drawing on Ogden's (1992) description of characteristic pathologies of disrupted dialectics within the potential space, MacRury and Yates position the smartphone as a transitional object to describe how it gets used as a resource and device within the collapsing dialectic of the potential space. Within a 'healthy' resolution of the potential space, where imagination can develop through symbolisation, the smartphone is utilised as a 'creative component' of communication (both vital and creative) and becomes one of many tools within a constellation of connecting and communicating devices. This might be a reflection of a more evidently 'healthy' relationship with the smartphone; one that is balanced and not used in pathological ways.

Where Ogden describes the disruption when the dialectic of fantasy and reality either gets restricted or collapses towards reality (characteristic pathology no. 2 as described earlier), MacRury and Yates suggest that the smartphone becomes used as a tool of reality only and not a creative toy. In this way it serves as a functional device only which undertakes tasks rather than a device that offers potential 'communicative play.' It may be seen that the mobile phone, in its early manifestations, was simply a functional phone and that it is only through its development to a smartphone that this collapse to reality seems to stifle its potential functions for the user. In contrast to this, where Ogden describes a dialectic that collapses towards a position where reality is absorbed by fantasy (characteristic pathology no.1), MacRury and Yates suggest that the smartphone becomes an 'absorbing cocoon and resource for immediate gratification brought at the expense of other, more challenging, complex and reality-based modes of social communication, experience and relationship' (p. 55). This resolution to the dialectic has greater resonance for those who have experienced the absorbing nature of the smartphone or observed this in others.

This latter description makes perhaps the closest link to Sweet's mediated self and the notion of the smartphone becoming assimilated as a vehicle and component of the extended mind and the extended self. It may also reflect Sweet's concern that the inability to delineate the real self and the mediated self may restrict reality-testing and result in a retreat to a 'sealed-over narcissistic and schizoid self-state' (p. 177). When considering the purposeful use of attachment theory and attachment behaviours, alongside human behaviour research, to manipulate the design of the human-smartphone relationship, it might be suggested that the collapse of the dialectic of reality and fantasy towards fantasy not only has commercial benefits to suppliers (through the development of pathological dependency) but may also seek to perpetuate the smartphone's use as a transitional object. What feels different here, however, is that the smartphone as 'transitional object' does not fit the criteria of transitional phenomena set out by Winnicott (1971) where 'its fate is to be gradually allowed to be decathected...not so much forgotten as relegated to limbo' (p. 5). Transitional objects are meant to lose meaning and for the transitional phenomena to be diffused and given up. However, as stated by Turkle (2012) 'when our current digital devices take on the power of transitional objects [they] are never meant to be abandoned' (http://edge.org/response-detail/10471).

This then challenges the idea of the smartphone as a true transitional object but perhaps it represents a new aspect of transitional phenomena; one which the user can no longer give up. The smartphone may represent to the user the possibility of moving towards a healthy relationship and become one of many devices, but the reality is that they are designed to be the *one* object, encouraged to become the *one* essential device to meet our needs. When faced with the everyday anxieties that provoke a tension within our day to day potential space of fantasy and reality, users may be enticed to turning away (collapsing the potential space), from the demanding and stressful realities of life towards the safer, validating, welcoming and loving fantasy cocoon of their smartphone screen. This is something which MacRury and Yates recognise in the complexity of the relationship between human and smartphone:

> our relationship to the [smartphone] is shaped continually by the experience
> of potential space and of coming into being and the process of imagination,
> fantasy, emotion and identification. As an object of both pleasure and
> frustration, the symbolism of the [smartphone] is significant because it is

evocative of a deeply held wish for meaningful connection within the precarious setting of the late modern world. (p. 63)

In this respect, according to MacRury and Yates, the smartphone can be viewed as the poster device for the representation of our 'ongoing experience of connection and disconnection within a social world' (p. 53). As such it is a provocative object within our 'psychosocial and technological' relationships; an object which challenges previous 'vertical structures of selfhood and communication' and which instead enables 'horizontal modes of relating where the dialectic of potential space can operate' (p. 62). The notion of vertical and horizontal modes of relating are not further explained in the paper but perhaps they are suggesting that an older, more established vertical structure of selfhood and communication is one that develops and grows through different levels of experience, reality testing and learning, whereas a horizontal mode of relating may be more suggestive of the way that the human-smartphone communication does not work to move towards separation but promotes a mode of relating that is symptomatic of a more self-indulged relationship across one's own shallows on the screen. Such horizontal modes of relating may be indicative of how smartphones are designed to monopolise the attention economy of the individual through engendering immediate, if shallow, interactions designed to be a dominant and more attractive response to the anxiety-provoking demands of an external reality. If this is true, then such horizontal modes of relating may be another description of a collapsing dialectic towards fantasy and the 'absorbing cocoon' at the expense of more complex and challenging social communications.

Within much of the contemporary literature discussed here there is an underlying theme of smartphone users attempting to seek a sense of connection through their relationship with their smartphone. In the previous chapter it was also recognised that the smartphone is being used as an object of emotional regulation by the user through their attempts to avoid the discomforts of feeling alone or of being with oneself and the anxieties this may bring. The capacity to bear being with oneself and to be alone is a complex developmental state which has significant implications for an individual's emotional development. Winnicott, in his 1958 work *The capacity to be alone* describes this as follows:

The capacity to be alone is a highly sophisticated phenomenon and has many contributing factors. It is closely related to emotional maturity… the basis of

the capacity to be alone is the experience of being alone in the presence of someone. (p. 418)

Here Winnicott is defining the paradoxically intricate developmental achievement of being able to bear the emotional experience of feeling and being on one's own whilst being in a present connection to another person. This might be indicated in a child's ability to play on their own whilst a parent is present but engaged in something else that distracts their mind from the child and for the child to be able to bear the evidence that the parent is not actively engaged with them and not be reduced to anxiously seeking reassurance that they are not out of mind and abandoned. In the therapy room this might be noticed when a child shows a capacity to play on their own in a manner which does not need to actively engage or grab at the therapist's mind yet does not also feel to the therapist as if the child is withdrawing and hiding from their gaze. In this way both the child and therapist may be alone, or at least one, but they are alone because they are sharing solitude rather than withdrawing from the relationship.

Winnicott recognises that there are distinctions between the fear of being alone, the wish to be alone and the capacity to be alone. In the previous chapter it was recognised that it is the fear of being without one's smartphone which can cause considerable stress to the user. It could be seen that this fear relates to a fear of the lost object (mother) and the sense of connection and connectedness that this maternal object (smartphone) can provide in a containing and reassuring way to the user. But is the smartphone user fearful of being alone or fearful of being lonely? Klein (1963), suggests that loneliness is not the 'situation of being deprived of companionship' but rather:

the inner sense of loneliness – the sense of being alone regardless of external circumstances, of feeling lonely even when among friends or receiving love. (p. 300)

Klein implies that this sense of loneliness derives from an early experience of feeling completely alone in the presence of the bad destructive parts of the self, rather than a good enough maternal object. Such persecutory anxiety makes integration even more painful for the child and this may impact upon their ability to achieve the capacity to be alone if bad persecuting parts of the self are present. This is something which may be evident in

the therapy room when children cannot let themselves play in the presence of the therapist.

This leads us to the question of whether the smartphone's capacity to provide a sense of connection to others also affords the user the experience of being alone in the presence of this sense of connection to another object via the smartphone. In other words, is the smartphone capable of representing and enabling a connection to a good object in a way that facilitates the user's capacity to feel alone without persecutory anxiety or an inner sense of loneliness even when another person is not physically present? Balick supports this notion in his recognition that online 'one is alone, but virtually one is with others' (p. 110).

In addition, if the smartphone paradoxically facilitates the capacity to be alone, through embodying a proxy 'other', as well as be, as discussed earlier, a form of transitional phenomenon that is not designed to be given up, then how might this relationship restrict the working through of the anxiety of separation towards individuation through the reality of the loss of the object? If, as stated by Quinodoz (1993), 'separation anxiety constitutes the foundation of our sense of identity as well as of our knowledge of the other – that "other" whom we psychoanalysts are accustomed to call the "object" in order to distinguish him or her from the "subject"' (p. 5), then how might the ability of the smartphone to negate and protect against such a separation anxiety impact upon an individual's sense of identity in relation to other people? If the smartphone is capable of functioning as a proxy 'other' and facilitate a tolerable sense of being alone, then it may also be capable of unconsciously affording its user a wide range of addition functions in place of the maternal object.

Conclusions

This review of the psychoanalytic literature relating to our relationship with digital media, including smartphones, has drawn on a number of psychoanalytic concepts that have been shown to be helpful in trying to reveal and make sense of the more unconscious aspects of our human-smartphone relationship from a psychoanalytic perspective. In drawing some conclusions from this review, it can be seen that the smartphone affords the user the illusion of investing emotionally in an object relationship with an object that takes in projected aspects of the self. These projections, be it an expression of the false self,

extension of self or mind or as an auxiliary ego- have the potential to create a third object, a mediated self, which offers a sense of recognition and validation. However, it also promotes a regression to infantile ways of relating, possibly in an attempt to avoid what is sensed to be the more persecutory and anxiety provoking aspects of reality-based communication. Furthermore, it has been suggested that this object relationship can lead to the development of pathological dependency upon the smartphone as an object of relation. However, this runs the risk of leading to a blurring of the experience of the self between psychic reality and virtual reality and the actual self and the mediated self.

It can also be seen that the relationship with the smartphone, as a digital object, creates a potential space, as transitional phenomena, in which the mediated self acts as a transitional object and sets up a dialectic between reality and fantasy. This dialectic has the potential to collapse the potential space towards fantasy and restrict reality-testing which may be what users are being encouraged to do through the attraction of non-thinking narcissistic ways of relating offered though the relationship with the smartphone.

What is noticeable is that these descriptions can be seen to be indicative of the object relationship of the mother-infant dyad in which the infant seeks to make a connection with a maternal thinking and containing object into which it can project unwanted parts of the self for digestion. However, if the potential space created by the relationship with the smartphone impacts upon alpha-functioning, as suggested by Frankel, then there is a danger that the way the user copes with potential loss gets modified and their ability to bear uncertainty and exist between a state of digestion/indigestion of everyday loss, psychic pain and boredom becomes compromised. In addition, within this object relationship there is a danger of the smartphone, as a digital object, and the mediated self, being used as transitional objects without any intention of them being given up. This may impact upon the user's abilities to develop an expansive sense of self within a bearable reality of complex and challenging social communications that can be tolerated, survived and worked through.

Further consideration should also be given to the suggestion that the smartphone is capable of facilitating an experience of a proxy other or a pseudo-maternal presence and shift the user's capacity to bear being alone in isolation from a physical other without this being a developmentally significant achievement in reaching separation and subjectivity and the working through or tolerance of separation anxiety. This is particularly pertinent

in infant use of smartphones as described in the opening vignette where the potential for the smartphone to act as an emotional regulator was evident.

It might be seen the if the smartphone user is being encouraged to become as dependant as possible upon the smartphone relationship, by it becoming the 'one' object, then a degree of idealisation must also be engendered and reinforced. This is evocative of Klein's (1946) description of the infantile relationship to the breast as an object:

> Idealisation is bound up with the splitting of the object, for the good aspects of the breast are exaggerated as a safeguard against the fear of the persecuting breast. While idealisation is thus the corollary of persecuting fear, it also springs from the power of the instinctual desires which aim at unlimited gratification and therefore create the picture of an inexhaustible and always bountiful breast – an ideal breast. (p. 7)

In this statement, we can see possible links to the smartphone being promoted and exaggerated as the 'one' object; the all-encompassing bountiful object that is capable of delivering sanctuary from the persecutory threats of being disconnected and more complex modes of communication with oneself and other people in reality and which offers an inexhaustible supply of reward and validation, in short, an ideal 'digital' breast. If the smartphone can be thought of as a digital pseudo-breast, let alone an 'ideal' digital breast, and has also been seen to be a transitional object that is not to be relinquished, then it may have significant implications for the capacity of the user to ever achieve subjectivity and separation from this object relationship as the relationship develops and grows ever more towards enmeshment and co-dependency.

Chapter 4

The face in the screen: an autoethnographic study

The inspiration for this research was my curiosity about my own relationship with my smartphone and the opportunity to capture and explore my individual experience of a digital relationship would be a significant aspect of this study. As a smartphone user I consider myself to be a member of a group of smartphone users – recently estimated to represent 78% of the adult UK population (Ofcom, 2018) – and, as an internal member of this group I felt that a justifiable method of research would be an auto-ethnographic approach. As stated in chapter one, I felt that an autoethnographic approach would be better suited to capturing a here and now experience by immersing myself in the specific culture of smartphone users and, through the use of rigorous field notes, I would be able to document a subjective understanding of this culture. Auto-ethnography, in its original term, as stated by Wolcott (2004), is a way of 'conducting a study among those who share a common activity in which one is himself or herself engaged' (p. 98). Whilst I recognise that this 'group' (who share the common activity of engaging in a digital relationship with their smartphones) is now in a majority I was also, from experience, able to recognize that the common activity of using a smartphone is intrinsically a solo undertaking. In this regard, an auto-ethnographic study of my own digital relationship would not necessarily be conducted 'among' others of this common group in a common shared experience of collective events, but it would be alongside others in this group who, to quote the title of Sherry Turkle's 2011 book are 'alone together' in the experience. This facility of smartphones that enables its group of users to be physically apart and yet remain part of a group might present a contemporary challenge to the use of auto-ethnography as a methodology in this instance. In addition, the work of Foulkes (1973) describing the matrix of connections between group psychology and individual psychology is worthy of note here. Foulkes describes how, from a group analytic perspective, the network (the context of interacting individuals) of a group consists of a 'unified mental field of which the individuals composing it are a part' and that the network is a 'psychic system' that is beyond the individual (p. 214).

Methodology

Auto-ethnography, first introduced by David Hayano in 1979, is a methodology that builds upon what Anderson (2006) sees as 'a traditional ethnographic agenda of seeking

to understand the topic under study by placing it within a social analytic context' (p. 378), which with regard to this study can be seen to be the social context of an increasingly dominant experience of digital interaction with increasingly wider activities of everyday life.

Balaam (2011) suggests that auto-ethnography can be approached from different perspectives. While some auto-ethnographies aim to be emotionally evocative or blur the lines between fiction and real life, others produce analytic auto-ethnographies. Anderson (2006) outlines five key features of analytic auto-ethnography which include, (1) to be that the researcher has Complete Member Researcher status (CMR), (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) narrative visibility of the researcher's self, (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and (5) commitment to theoretical analysis. Adler and Adler (1987) distinguish two main types of complete member researchers (CMRs), namely the 'opportunistic' and the 'convert'. In brief, the opportunistic CMR's membership of a group 'precedes the decision to undertake research on the group as a subject. Opportunistic CMRs may have been brought up living within a group or may have gained an intimate familiarity with a certain lifestyle or recreational interest. The opportunistic CMR has the task of creating space to take on the role of researcher rather than take their researcher role into a group and carve out a membership role in a way that 'convert' CMRs need to. As stated earlier, I recognise that my own interest in conducting research into my own digital relationship with my smartphone originated from my observations of myself engaging in this relationship as a member of a group of smartphone users. In this regard I identify myself as an opportunistic CMR type and that this recognition supports the proposed auto-ethnographic aspect of the research design as a justifiable method of study to undertake in this instance. With regard to the role of the researcher within this group Strathern (1987) highlights that the researcher diverges from the other members of the group being studied due to the fact that they are not only members of the group being studied but also have the status of being a social scientist. One aspect of this difference is that the research demands that the auto-ethnographer focus - for specific periods of time - upon documenting and analysing action as well as purposefully engage in it. Such demands create additional work, something which Anderson (2006) sees as possibly 'diverting the researcher's attention from the embodied phenomenological experience' (p. 380).

With regard to analytic reflexivity, it is important that any auto-ethnographic study recognise that the ethnographic data is situated within the personal experience and sense making of the researcher (Atkinson, Coffey and Delamont, 2003). In addition, Anderson (2006) states that the presence of the researcher in the 'storytelling' is essential as 'the researcher's own feelings and experiences are incorporated in the story and considered as vital data for understanding the social world being observed' (p. 384). Auto-ethnographers should show analytic insights into their own experiences and in this regard the Child Psychotherapist as auto-ethnographer is in a good position owing to their lengthy training analysis and self-observation skills.

The study of an individual's experience of their relationship with a digital object is limited by the absence of a dialogic engagement with other members of the group which is an imperative of ethnographic studies. However, according to Davies (1999) the newness of the phenomenon of digital relationships with smartphones urges us to 'seek to develop forms of research that fully acknowledge and utilise subjective experiences as an intrinsic part of research' (p. 5).

With regard to the scope of the auto-ethnographic aspect of this study I designed an approach that captured my relationship with my smartphone over one average workday and one average leisure day. It was anticipated that this would capture not only the functional activities of this relationship – the 'what' is done on the smartphone – but also capture the emotional experiences that these functions engender – how I feel in response to the content of these experiences. To seek a contrasting experience, I initially wanted to experience the impact of the absence of this relationship also by living without my smartphone for both one average workday and one average leisure day. It was anticipated that being without a smartphone would reveal specific dependencies upon the digital relationship by highlighting the anxieties that its absence engendered. However, this contrasting experience would not be a natural experience of a smartphone user and would be an artificially created scenario. In light of this I omitted this part of the study with the intention of noticing when during the natural experience of being a smartphone user I experienced such an absence. I believed that as a child psychotherapist I was in a good position to notice the emotional impact and anxieties generated by such an absence.

To record the auto-ethnographic study I made notes at the end of each hour on each day of study. In addition, I used an Application on my smartphone called Moment to capture

quantitative data on my usage. Moment remains open as a background application and records a variety of data including the number of times I pick up or look at my smartphone, the number of minutes per day that I am using my smartphone and it also records the time of each interaction on a timeline. This data allowed me to more accurately record my activity.

The entries in my recording aimed to capture *what* I was doing, *when* I was doing it and *how* I was interacting (see appendix 1 for data recording example). Once the two days of data were documented I used the information to transform it into a narrative of that day's activity. I tried to refrain from analysing or interpreting within the narrative and simply record the experience as I might write up the process notes of a child psychotherapy session.

User Profile

In order to provide the reader with some sense of what sort of member of this identified group of smartphone users I consider myself to be it would be helpful to outline some details about my profile. I have been a loyal Apple iPhone user between the iPhone 3s model and my current iPhone 8s model over a period of 10 years. For the past 2 years I have been using an Application called *Moment* to track background data about my user profile. Incidentally, in line with the absorbing nature of smartphone design, the features of this Application have now been copied and incorporated as a promoted feature of the lasted Apple IOS operating system. From the data I have to date – from December 2016 – October 2018 – I am someone who uses his smartphone (Screen Time) for an average of 4 hours and 21 minutes per day. This represents 28% of my waking life. I make an average of 41 'pick-ups' per day and my most used Application is the Home Screen. In addition to this it informs me that I sleep an average of 9 hours and 55 minutes per night. These averages have interesting ranges also. The smallest amount of screen time in any single day over this 2-year period is 28 minutes and the most recorded is 15 hours and 11 minutes. In addition, the most 'pick-ups' I have made in any single day is 114 and the fewest is 3. *Moment* informs me that I touch my smartphone every 21 minutes and that at this rate I will spend a total of 11.5 years on my smartphone throughout my entire life. With regards to my trends it can be seen that over the past quarter (3 months) my average use has increased to 5 hour and 17 minutes per day (35% of waking life) and that my average number of 'pick-ups' has increased to 55. *Moment* informs me that, compared with all 7 million other users of the *Moment* Application, I am an above average user with

regard to my Screen Time each day (averages are 3 hours and 57 minutes and 23% of waking life) and that I am an under-average user with regard to the average number of 'pick-ups' made by *Moment* users (average 52 'pick-ups'). In addition, I have recently purchased an Apple Watch (Series 3) which connects to my smartphone via Bluetooth. I can receive notifications on my watch, make and receive phone calls and a myriad of other applications. In this sense the Apple Watch is an extension of my smartphone's capabilities and works in conjunction with my smartphone. In addition, the Watch had sensors to track my heart rate.

With this profile in mind it is worth noting here the cultural specificity of this autoethnographic undertaking. This chapter reports on material from a male digital immigrant who is interested in understanding more about his relationship with his smartphone, so I have already brought into awareness (consciousness) some level of curiosity and therefore knowledge or the more hidden and unconscious aspects of such a relationship. It should be acknowledged that this is merely an empirical perspective that may not be a common perspective or one that can necessarily represent general experiences of the culture of the group. However, there will be some cultural similarities, such as shared access to content and applications available to me and others within my country. This cultural specificity may not reflect or represent the experiences of digital natives and those who have never known anything other than having access to mobile phones. It is also worth noting the cultural differences in smartphone use, for example, a rural farmer may use their smartphone differently to an inner-city banker. In addition, different cultures will arrive at different stages and ways of using smartphones at different times, for instance, older people may be slower to adopt smartphones or access to networks and devices may significantly hamper even those who wish to engage with smartphones. In light of this, the findings may reveal some shared experiences across cultures of users but will undoubtedly be limited to some and irrelevant to others.

Thematic analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that a number of decisions need to be made before undertaking a thematic analysis. These relate to the structing of the analysis before the data is gathered or looked at and consider how the researcher will approach and handle data. Before I undertook the thematic analysis and data gathering, I made the following decisions. First, that the decision as to the keyness of any code not necessarily be dependent upon any quantifiable measures but rather, more flexibly, on its capacity to

capture something important to the overall research question and that it represent a degree of 'patterned response or meaning within the data set' (p. 10). In other words, if it appeared to me that an aspect of the data (code) captured something relating to the research questions it would be gathered, particularly if it was one of a number of codes with similar or contrasting elements. Second, that the thematic analysis be a rich description of the data set rather than a detailed account of any one particular data aspect – as this is an under-researched area it seems important to provide a rich description of the entire data set. In other words, the analysis would work to gather a set of codes from the data which would then be analysed for themes from across the whole set of codes rather than reducing or being selective of particular codes. Third, that the analysis be an inductive, bottom-up, data-driven thematic analysis rather than a theoretical top-down analysis. By this I mean that the codes and subsequent themes would be generated from the data rather than from a theoretical proposition or hypothesis. Fourth, I propose that for this study the themes were identified at a latent, interpretative level rather than at a semantic explicit level. This aimed to identify the underlying assumptions and ideas that shape the semantic content of the data. It was recognised that psychoanalytic modes of interpretation would be compatible with a latent thematic analysis framework and would seem appropriate for this particular study.

Once these decisions had been made, I then approached the thematic analysis of the data using the analytic structure outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Braun and Clarke suggest using a six-phase approach to thematic analysis:

1. Familiarising yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re- reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking in the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic map" of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

(Table 1: Thematic analysis structure)

I will provide the full narrative of the data at this point in order to help inform my discussion of the thematic analysis process as well as familiarising the reader with the material for later discussion on findings.

An intrusion of silence - A narrative

October 17th, 2016 (Workday)

I am woken by an alert. My phone vibrates – I forgot to put it on silent last night. The phone is under my pillow, so I feel the vibration more. I worry that it has not charged and move my hand to check that the charging cable is still connected. As I move I realise that I have an earphone in my ear that is not on the pillow. Did I fall asleep listening to something? At 6:15 the alarm goes off and my pillow vibrates again. I turn off the alarm. When I look at the screen, I see the time and the notifications that have come in through the night. I see an email notification on the home screen – a confirmation of a payment which came in at 4:54am. What did I buy at 4:54am? I am left wondering if this is a genuine email or a scam to get my attention and then my details. I do not recall making a purchase. I settle for it being a late notification as I see that the notice email was sent 2 days ago but I have only just received it. I get up with the headphone still in my ear and I feel a need for sound, a distraction, maybe it is a need for a sense of companionship? I put on a Podcast – a comedy show and wonder if it is the same one that I went to sleep listening to. I am under the impression that I cannot remember listening to it but as it plays again, I feel disappointed to recognise it.

As I wait for the kettle to boil (6:20) I open the Facebook App on my Homescreen. I scroll through my timeline (where my 'friends' have Posted) without really thinking about it. I feel an urge to know things but what things I am not sure – what is it that I am looking for or hoping to find on my timeline? I feel anxious and I know that I should stop scrolling to stop the anxiety, but something speeds up my scrolling – it is as if I am trying to get every last drop before I stop…becoming desperate to find the unnamed and elusive 'something' that I seek…then I wonder if what I am really searching for is confirmation that I am not missing out on anything – that nobody has posted anything that will make me feel envious. I close down the Facebook App at this uncomfortable thought and feel a tightening in my head – a mild dizziness.

I follow an urge to find something lighter (less emotional?) and I open the iPlayer App. I look for a comedy show and see that it is a 'best bits' episode so I will have heard it all before over the year. I notice a new film by a writer I like– the

title is written in bright pink to grab my attention. I watch a few minutes, but it is too serious for what I am looking for – or looking to avoid. I switch to the iPlayer Radio App – no new shows on my following list. I open Podcasts again and find my favourites list of subscribed podcasts. I get fed up with my favourite list and scroll with annoyance before searching the new podcasts for something new in the charts. I try something – there is an initial excitement about the possibility of something new or a change in my routine.

I listen without listening as I get ready for work. The headphone cord snags on a cupboard door and yanks the earphone out of my ear – it feels like a violent interruption as there is an intrusion of silence – the unexpected disconnect is unwelcome and irritating. I curse the cupboard and then curse my own awkwardness. I feel physically disconnected all of a sudden. I frantically try to pause the podcast – I hate having to skip back in 15 second intervals. I remove the headphones from the phone and switch to its loudspeaker (7:15).

Other get up and I am brought into a new connection. Someone is fretting about a homework assignment – they need to know descriptors of components of unicellular organisms. I search the internet on my phone and find some useful pages – I copy the webpage link and send it to the iPad via the WhatsApp App so that they can follow it up on the iPad independently. I continue to listen to the podcast on speaker as I get ready. Using the internet leads me to follow an anxious thought/urge to check a website for news of a sports team this year (7:40). Have they made the team this year? – I find myself looking to see if any friends have got into the team – they also haven't, and I feel strangely relieved at this. What was I worried about? That if someone else got in then it would leave me feeling envious? The shared feeling of exclusion feels somehow more manageable– there is something about the public posting of the team that feels irritating – that I had to search for it to find out rather than them letting us know.

I have an intrusive thought (8:05) about needing to rearrange a meeting today – I send text messages out to those involved. I also email another profession for a client. I feel a sense of relief when their replies fit my plans and confirm that it has not caused more difficulties. I also feel impatient that one recipient has not

replied within 5 minutes of me sending a text. I send out a group text– 6 of the 12 people reply within 5 minutes.

I check Facebook while in the bathroom – a comedian I like has posted a new video about the US election- I notice on my timeline feed that it is someone's wedding anniversary. I get into the car and the stereo opens a connection to my phone via Bluetooth and plays the remainder of the video by audio through the car speakers. It feels good that this transition has been made for me. A traffic notification comes on my Homescreen that tells me how long it will take me to drive to my usual place of work. I am informed that traffic is light. I feel a sense of satisfaction that I am going to a different office location this morning - so it is wrong. I park the car and as I walk away, I get a notification that my phone has marked the location of where I parked the car on Apple Map App – just in case I forget.

Back in the car (9:55) I get a new traffic notification for the route to my usual office base. I stop and get a coffee. I stand around looking at my phone as I wait by the till for the coffee to be made – check BBC News website – nothing new or interesting – I notice that I keep seeing the same news over and over as the stories slowly get replaced by new stories. I feel awkward stood up in the café, so I shift about – face-to-screen – anxious that someone will want to talk to me. My mind leaves the café following threads of news and my awkwardness is relieved. A work-related email arrives, and I send a reply. This takes me to my email inbox, and I see other new emails. I delete many without reading and without much thought. I notice that my battery is already down to 35% from 100% this morning. I get a notification that the storage space on my phone is almost full and that I should delete some things to make space. There is a familiar feeling of irritation about this happening a lot – the phone lets me know that I can purchase more space in the Cloud for an annual fee if I want a lot more space. I wonder if the phone's storage is being limited and used up by the operating system to intentionally irritate me so that I pay them to stop the slow decline of functionality on my phone – it has become a daily problem that 'they' have created to which only 'they' have the solution.

I park at work and my phone sends me a map location of where I have left it again. The WIFI at work does not connect properly when I get into the building and it takes time to sort itself – when it does, I feel better that I am not using my data. I panic when I realise that I have left my charger at home - this is not good, the thought of it running out of battery is unbearable – how will people get in touch if they need me…do people even know my work telephone number? I feel a need to let people know that my battery is running low and I may have to turn it off to save the battery. I come up with a plan to turn the phone off and check it every hour for messages. This feels extreme, but I am struck by a thought that I will need my phone for my drive home just in case something happens, and I need to call for help. I am left feeling very uncomfortable about the situation and a deep uneasiness about potentially being disconnected and out of reach. I laugh with others with me about the thought of how we ever managed before we all had personal phones. The idea of someone needing to get in touch in an emergency sits badly with me – even though this rarely happens. I find myself unable to concentrate and I notice a puzzling feeling of malfunction on the horizon – like a nameless dread. I reduce the screen brightness to save power, close all Apps that are running in the background (not on screen but open and connected to network and sending information to and from my phone), and put the phone onto low battery mode as well as flight mode (emergencies only). After a few minutes the battery is down to 30% so I turn it off.

I check my phone at 12noon – there are no new messages, just new emails. I turn the phone back off. I turn it on again at 1pm – there is a message about a pending fireworks display this year – text sent to make plans for this year. I get a WhatsApp message from a friend expressing disappointment at this year's team selection – it feels better that it is a shared disappointment. Someone arrives who has a charger – I am saved, and I put my phone on charge and text my partner immediately to tell her. I experience a deep relief – a calming of the stomach and the anxiety of being out of touch is gone in a moment – it is an instant relief. I feel disappointed in myself for having felt so anxious and a sense of shame at being so stupid. I am left wondering if I would I ever be able to manage without my phone again. I also feel embarrassed about the fuss I felt I made, and the level of dependency I have on my phone that I showed to others and then to myself

once I felt safe again. It is as if the world felt uncertain, out of focus for a while and I could not function properly.

The phone rings – it is an unknown caller – I do not answer it as I don't want to speak to anyone 'unknown'. I then see an email from a fellow student regarding an opportunity to teach a one-off session on attachment. There is also a notification from my bank of a payment in – I feel satisfied at this information. There is a text from about a pending delivery and I reply confirming the delivery time. My phone is on 60% when I leave work, and this feels more manageable to me. There is still a niggling worry remaining that I do not having a charging lead in case I needed to charge my phone for some reason. I get a notification from Twitter about an article posted by someone I follow – I follow the link to see the tweet – I give it a glancing read and I am then drawn to their other tweets over the past weeks. I am quickly at a great distance from my starting point as I follow threads and links – I feel like I am being led by the nose.

I listen to Podcasts via Bluetooth in the car on the way home – I realise that I am not actually listening to what is being said so I turn over to use a Music App to let some music wash over me which I don't have to concentrate on. Once home I listen to the iPlayer Radio App whilst making dinner and then check my emails - they are mostly promotions and advertising. I open Facebook to check – but I still don't know what for. I am attracted to a number of craft-making videos embedded in my timeline. I follow further links to more videos on YouTube and before I realise it an hour has passed. I notice that my breathing has slowed, and I am almost physically asleep but that my mind is very alert. I go back on Facebook and see that a friend has posted that they are in Rio de Janeiro and that they recommend a studio that they are staying in whenever their friends are next in Rio. I feel a degree of envy at her capacity to make such a post – which I would like to do – I also feel annoyed that she is in Rio doing what looks like amazing things and being very successful at it. I recognise that I would like to make this post myself and make other people feel envious of me.

I listen to more BBC iPlayer before I go to bed (22:14). I feel that I am trying to manage a need in me to be 'doing' something – I wonder what is it that I am NOT doing by doing this instead. I notice that my focal point and visual range is

reduced to the distance between my eyes and my phone held in front of me– I frown as I make a link to this being the visual range of a newborn baby. Before I turn in, I check my Moment App for data on my phone use today– I have made 71 pick-ups and my total screen time (active use of phone) was 5 hours and 53 minutes.

Saturday 7 July 2018 (non-workday)

I wake up and look at my phone which is under my pillow but still connected to the charger. I feel relieved that is it still early (6:44) and I return to sleep. When I wake and get up, I put on the BBC iPlayer Radio App and listen on my headphones while I make coffee. I check the emails that have come in overnight as I listen (8:14) and after a few minutes I begin to realise that my attention has shifted from what I am listening to in favour of what I am reading– It feels like I am going through the motion of responding to notifications as and when they come in. I would not have 'refreshed' my email inbox if the notifications settings were not set to notify me of new emails. When I have finished, I notice that none of the emails were of any worth to me – I make mental note – again – to unsubscribe from these mailing lists.

I turn off the radio and I look for new 'news' on the BBC News app. This also feels like a routine check and yet I still keep going back to the same app – what is it that I am looking for? I wonder how this App is responding to my reading habits and preferences and notice that it has made itself the primary (and possibly only) source of news for me each day. I check Facebook looking for new posts from friends – but what exactly I am looking for I still do not know. I again feel irritated by seeing the same posts by friends - they are mostly self-promoting posts that stir envy in me as well as feelings of inadequacy and underperformance in comparison to them. I realise that this what I am hoping to achieve when I post something on Facebook - I feel slightly ashamed. I make my 'likes' begrudgingly but don't want to appear dismissive if I don't express a like - this feels like a strange revelation – does everyone begrudgingly press the 'like' button? I leave a comment on a friend's post.

During a face-to-face conversation with another person - where I am learning something new about a subject – I automatically take out my phone and search

online for an image of the thing in question. I realise that I do this openly as we talk as if it is an acceptable thing to do. I imagine that this makes it easier for me to understand the subject and enables me to participate and contribute to the conversation more than if I was not able to have a visual reference by a photo online.

I share a photo via the WhatsApp App with a contact of something that happened last night which I knew they would be interested it. I feel like I am bringing them into a connection with me around a particular topic. A text message comes in and I read the summary of the notification on my watch (which is connected via Bluetooth to my smartphone).

I play music from smartphone through the Amazon Echo device via Bluetooth. There is an immediate gratification of my wish to listen to a particular song through a particular device other than my smartphone. I send another Photo and wonder if I'm I trying to create a sense of connection with another person around the activity I am undertaking at that moment. I send the same photo to another contact– I wonder to myself if I did this is in response to not getting a reply to the first person quickly enough.

I get a notification on my watch from an App that I use to track my cycling activity. I follow it up on the smartphone and see it has sent me the statistics of my cycling activity for the month of June – it is an email with a link to open the App on my smartphone and I am shown a number of achievements which I then feel excited to explore more so I then open the App on my smartphone via the email link. The App has found a way to get me to open it on my smartphone quickly. Strava (the App) invites me to see even more analysis of my activity data– but only if I subscribe to the premium services – I am offered a 14 day free trial if I do not want to sign up straight away (this involves providing my payment details so that they can begin charging me after 14 days) – I sign up for the trial and set a reminder on the Calendar App on my phone for 13 days' time to cancel the trial before I get charged. I am left feeling good about my achievements and also feel pleased that I have seen through the invitation to pay and have the ability to set a reminder to cancel.

There is an incoming telephone call– someone is calling to say that they are not at the location where we had agreed to meet. I feel irritated at the call but also pleased that they have been able to contact me quickly from their own phone.

I get an incoming text message. I feel a sense of nostalgia and importance as this person has reached out to me out of the blue. I feel happy that they are thinking of me. I exchange a number of text messages with them. I get a notification from the Sky Sports App letting me know that the team line-ups for today's World Cup match have been announced. The App sends me information based on the teams I like which it asked me to indicate when I signed up for the App – this makes it feel more personalised to me. It leaves me feeling connected and important. I get a photo sent through via WhatsApp – it is from someone in America - I get a pleasant feeling of being connected to them and a feeling of importance that they are thinking of me. We exchange of number of messages.

During the football match that I am watching on the TV I make 13 pick-ups. At half-time I follow a number of questions I have via internet searches to find out information. I make a further 5 pick-ups during the second half. After the match I look on the Twitter App for reactions to the football match.

I take a photo on my smartphone camera. I get a text message from a friend who I have not seen for a while – I feel a sense of connection through a shared love of football – I feel they have been thinking of me and wonder if they too are searching for a way to connect to a wider collective happiness about the win. We exchange a number of text messages as we reminisce about previous World Cups we have seen together.

Whilst checking Facebook I am notified that someone else has commented on a photo that I commented on earlier. I get an incoming message from other friends I America – I am left feeling good about them thinking of me whilst they are away. We exchange a number of messages about general gossip and it feels good to offload. I find myself engaging in a series of text message conversations with 3 different people at the same time throughout the evening.

I watch music videos related to what I am watching on the TV. I find myself trying to manage a sense of boredom and an uncomfortable sense of not 'doing' anything. Will I ever be able to just relax again? I go to sleep with earphones in listening to a comedy Podcast- I am aware of a sense of needing to feel that I am staying connected to something and an anxiety about the silence without it… I set an alarm on my smartphone for the morning. From the Moment App data I can see that my screen time today was 4 hours and 55 minutes and I made 85 pickups.

Thematic analysis process

As I read through the narrative, I underlined material which I felt was interesting, in line with the research question and which appeared to be a pattern response or similar. During this initial phase particular patterns of interactions with my smartphone became evident and I was able to begin noting a number of codes. After a number of readings, I arrived at 10 key codes. Below I will briefly outline each initial code and make some preliminary comments about the material which I felt identified with each code.

1. External invitations to interact from my smartphone. This describes instances when I felt I was invited to interact with my smartphone which had initiated contact with me. The majority of these external invitations came from Notification Alerts requesting that I respond in a number of ways. These instances included email, text alerts, phone calls etc – where the smartphone acted as a vehicle of communication from another subject – and instances where Applications on my smartphone wanted to draw my attention to something in order to encourage me to open their Application. In addition, this coding highlighted instances where pre-installed software on the smartphone (hidden) made itself known through the provision of unsolicited information – such as letting me know the traffic on a route that it has predicted I am taking through the capturing and analysis of data related to my movements in time and space. These instances can be seen to represent the aspect of my relationship with my smartphone where the smartphone makes demands or initiates contact or communication with me.

2. Internal impulse to interact with my smartphone. This describes instances where I felt that I was the one who initiated an interaction with my smartphone. These instances include the times that I made a 'pick-up' to check if I missed an attempt

from the smartphone to notify me of incoming information (this would be more likely if the smartphone was on silent). This code also includes those instances where it was evident that I was turning to my smartphone in the hope that it held something rewarding for me, where I sought out an informational reward, and when I was using the smartphone as a distraction or for unknown reasons.

3. Emotional responses to External Invitations (1) and Internal Impulses (2). This code describes those instances where I was able to recognise that an interaction with my smartphone had produced an emotional response in me. The material indicated over 30 different emotional responses.

4. Motivations – either towards or away from something. This code tried to make the distinction between Internal Impulses (2) and those instances where I felt that it was clear that I was using my smartphone to either move towards or away from an identified state. For example, using my smartphone to maintain a feeling of being connected or where I attempted to change my emotional state.

5. Secondary actions. This code describes those instances where External Invitations (1) or Internal Impulses (2) lead to another secondary interaction. It could be argued that each subsequent interaction is secondary to the previous interaction rather than being in relation to the original interaction and reflects the nature of the user experience of shallow tangents. These instances tended to be the occasions when I was taken to a different Application upon invitation or when I was automatically transferred by the smartphone.

6. Functional activity. This code describes those instances where the smartphone facilitates a practical application. For example, when I listened to music, made an entry in my calendar or when the smartphone anticipated my next move and did the 'thinking' for me without my asking. This code also includes instances where I was able to 'use' the smartphone as a practical device such as a clock, camera etc.

7. Observations made of the nature of my relationship with my smartphone. This code describes those instances where I was able to notice aspects of my relationship with my smartphone that were worthy of note. For example, where I was able to notice that I was dependent on the smartphone for certain aspects of my daily living or when the relationship reflected similar relational aspects with other humans.

8. Relationship with smartphone alongside face to face interactions. This code describes the instances where I engaged in both a face to face interaction with another human alongside my interactions with my smartphone.

9. Extension of self. This code identifies those instances where it is evident that my smartphone offers me an extension of my physical senses and intellectual capabilities. For example, when my smartphone alerted me to the traffic on my journey ahead so that I could 'see' across a greater geographical distance.

10. Physical reactions. This code describes those instances where I had a physical response to an interaction with my smartphone rather than a solely emotional response.

These 10 identified codes from the narrative material each had numerous instances across the text. Certain codes were more prominent than others with a greater frequency and range of variation. For example, the code 'emotional response' (3) had 36 different samples across the text whilst the code 'relationship with smartphone alongside face to face interactions' (8) proved to be a code of single occurrence. Reading through the coding extracted from the narrative certain key themes became apparent.
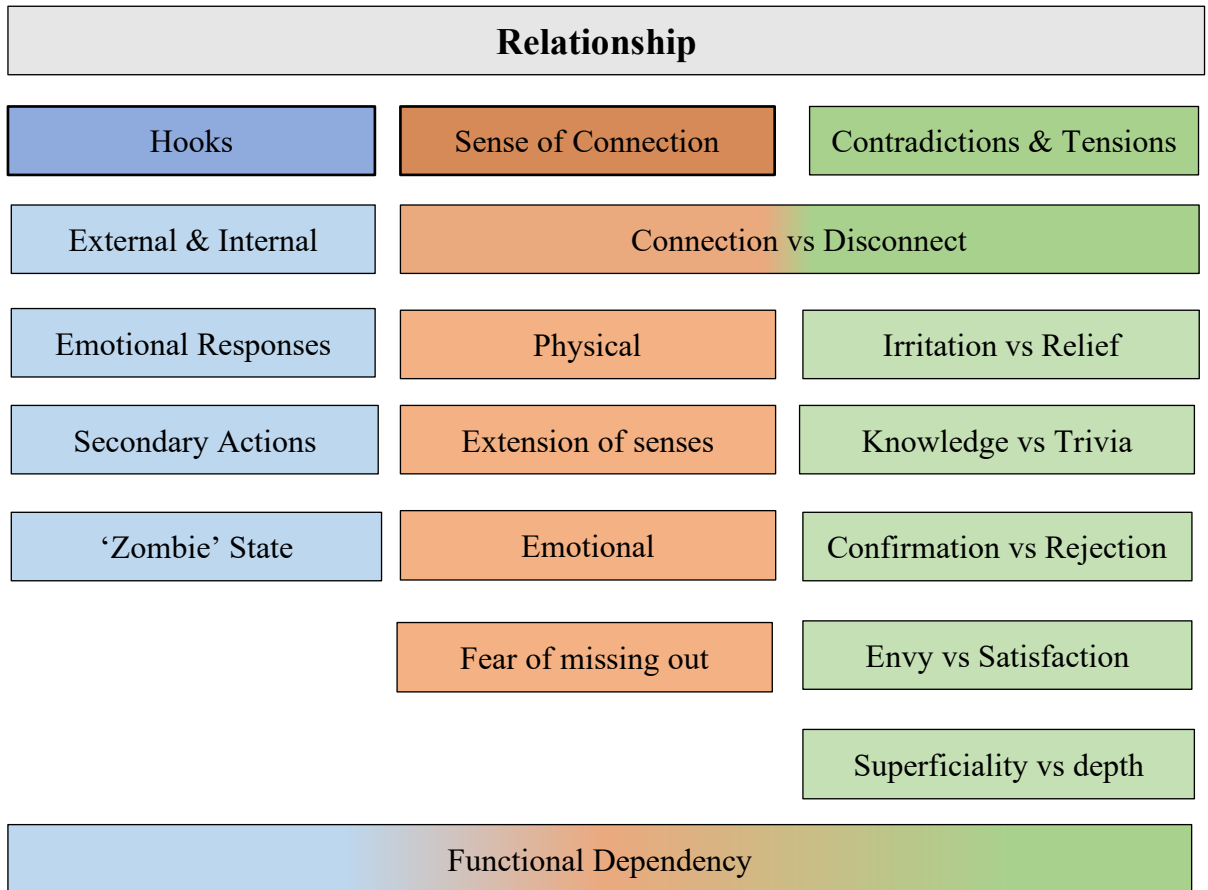
Unsurprisingly an overriding key theme in the text was the nature of my relationship to my smartphone, which could be seen throughout. This key theme can be seen include three main themes each containing a number of sub-themes. I have called the first main theme 'hooks' to describe the way that interactions dynamically sustain and promote the continued relationship between me and my smartphone. These 'hooks' can be seen in the 'external invitations' to interact from the smartphone and when I follow an 'internal impulse' to interact. These 'hooks' provoke 'emotional responses' and provide me with occasional informational rewards which more often than not lead on to multiple 'secondary actions' which keep me engaged or which keep my attention hooked to the smartphone as I go about my business. This repeated dynamic can be seen to create a 'functional dependency' within the relationship and that is some indication that I can become a 'passive partner'' in the relationship as there is evidence that I outsource my thinking, my attention and unconscious activity to the safe hands of the smartphone. This may also be indicative of the ways that this relationship is used as an 'extension of my senses'.

What was also of interest was that there appeared to be a key theme of 'contradictions' or contradictory pairings of coding examples which could be seen to represent certain 'tensions' within my relationship with my smartphone. These tensions were evident where I attempted to find some resolution either towards or away from particular states of mind, such as when I am seeking validation in the face of potential anxiety of a text not being answered in time. Other tensions exist between my emotional responses of irritation and relief to particular interactions and also in the tension between the recognised aspects of my sense of self within what I perceived my relationship with my smartphone to be able to offer me or provide, for example, when I am getting frustrated with a lack of functionality in my phone and what I want it to do, or when there is a threat to my sense of connection by a low battery.

In addition to the key themes of hooks and contradictions and tensions, a key theme of a 'sense of connection' and a sense of being connected was in play throughout the narrative material including the fear of this connectivity being threatened. Connections to the smartphone, connections to the internet, my own physical connection, connection to other people, a fear of disconnect and missing out and the wider sense of constant connection is a main motivation within the relationship and could be seen to be the central, if not essential, foundation of the relationship between me and my smartphone.

Certain sub-themes have links across more than one key theme. For instance, the idea of being in a 'zombie state', which will be explored further, can be seen to relate to hooks as well as a sense of a connection. This is also true of the potential debate of whether my partnership with my smartphone is actually a 'partnership illusion' that I try to ignore as I possibly place more importance on the relationship than it might really be.

With these key themes and sub-themes in mind I drew up the following initial thematic structure:

Relationship		
Hooks	Sense of Connection	Contradictions & Tensions
External & Internal	Connection vs Disconnect	
Emotional Responses	Physical	Irritation vs Relief
Secondary Actions	Extension of senses	Knowledge vs Trivia
'Zombie' State	Emotional	Confirmation vs Rejection
	Fear of missing out	Envy vs Satisfaction
		Superficiality vs depth
Functional Dependency		

(Table 2: Autoethnography thematic structure)

Analysis of themes

It is worth noting at this stage that although this component of the overall study aims to explore the unconscious dynamics of my relationship with my smartphone it is not achieved through the process of psychoanalysis. In other words, these aspects are not being brought into my awareness with the support of an analyst but through my own exploration of the material. In this respect, the narrative may be said to contain 'pre-conscious' material (Freud, 1915) in that it is unconscious material that is available to being brought into consciousness with deliberate and careful attention.

Using this thematic structure, it is possible to analyse the thematic content of the narrative material in order to make some general findings. As suggested earlier, it is the relationship between me and my smartphone which is the overriding theme throughout and in a study exploring this theme this would be expected. What was clearer from the coding and theme making, however, was the complexity of this relationship. Within this theme of the 'relationship' the narrative coding has revealed 3 key themes that make up this

relationship. I have called these 3 key themes 'hooks', 'sense of connection' and 'contradictions and tensions. I will now explore each key theme, and their sub-themes, further drawing attention to particular aspects of the narrative material to expand the discussion.

Hooks

The first key theme of my relationship with my smartphone relates to the way that we communicate. The narrative material is full of instances of either the smartphone or me initiating an interaction. This can be seen to be conversation starters from either party such as when the phone vibrates under my pillow or when I look at the Homescreen to check the time. The external hooks, the sole aim of which is to grab my attention and get me to engage and interact by making a noise or vibrating, are shown to be either on behalf of someone else, through text and email message alerts or the internal software content and applications on the smartphone offering me information which it deems relevant to me. The hooks on behalf of someone else put the smartphone in the role of a facilitator of communication and require an external third party. This give the experience of the smartphone being the portal through which others attempt to get my attention and, in this role, places the smartphone at the very epicentre of a large amount of my distant communication with others – a middleman as it were – and gives me the illusion that it is the smartphone that I am in relation with during such communications. The hooks that are initiated through internal applications and software, however, do not always depend upon a third party (some apps do provide information updates like news bulletins and are in many ways similar to incoming texts or messages) but appear to be dependent on pre-determined preferential notifications, both known and unknown to me. These are usually well-informed invitations based on the analysis of my user patterns and data, such as the maps application predicting where I am travelling to, based on its recording and understanding of the data from my past journeys, current GPS location, day and time. These hooks make the smartphone appear to offer gratification to my specific needs at that time and impress upon me an experience of personalisation to which in the narrative I react with a degree of contempt. On reflection I can remember feeling incredibly excited when this happened the first time but over time, I appear to have come to find it irritating and indicative of the way my information is being processed. Other invitations based on analysis of that data of my smartphone use can be seen through my use of Facebook and the information or 'news feed' on my 'timeline' which gives the impression of giving me

personalised information without any sense of what it is that I am *not* being shown in order to be able to make an informed choice.

These external hooks illustrate the invitations and notifications made by or through the smartphone to get my attention. The instances where I felt that I initiated an interaction based on an internal impulse can also be seen through the narrative. Overall there is an impression of me turning to make a pick-up on the smartphone multiple times throughout the day (85 on the second day) and it is not always clear why I do so. The narrative shows instances where I turn to the smartphone as a way to distract or occupy my time – such as when I am trying to find music or radio to accompany me – and these often appear linked to an emotional motivation such as when I feel an urge to know something (even when this is an unknown thing) - or when I need to use the smartphone in some functional capacity such as when I realise that I need to send a message. It can be seen that at times I am looking to the smartphone either in hope that it will give me something that will confirm my connection to someone or when I am anxious that I might be disconnected and therefore missing out. It is also clear that there are times when I cannot explain why I pick up the phone. This feels more in line with the notion of a variable ratio reinforcement schedule as discussed by Greenfield (www.virtual-addiction.com) and the instances when the smartphone does not reward me with information but reinforces the possibility of a reward if I look next time. It could be argued that the instances where I use the smartphone for a distraction could also be seen to be instances where I feel I am able to take control of the variable ratio reinforcement schedule by using the smartphone for what I want rather than relying on the smartphone for information feeds. However, this feeling of being in control may be an illusionary perception and I may just be reacting to a previous hook that has been reinforced multiple times through the smartphone positioning itself as the primary container of my emotional needs. This may be an example of the smartphone as a pseudo digital breast as suggested in the previous chapter.

There is some sense that these small initial interactions, either through an external invite from the smartphone or from an internal impulse in me, act as hooks which not only draw me into an interaction – for it is me the validates each interaction – but can also be seen to work diligently to sustain my attention once it has been engaged by leading on to multiple secondary actions. This makes me think more about Tristan Harris' (2016) concept of the attention economy and the powers working hard to maximise their share of mine. However, it is evident that there is a process in play between the hook and the

secondary action which involves the hook producing an emotional response which then motivates the secondary action. These emotional responses are hard to notice in practice, but the narrative illustrated 36 different emotions produced through my relationship with my smartphone over the period it captures. This was surprising as they were not immediately evident at the time and some were only revealed through the expansion and analysis of the coding structure. The emotional responses fall into both positive and negative categories with very few ambiguous feelings in between. However, each emotional response led to either a secondary action or a further emotional response. It is interesting to note that the secondary actions were exclusively internal impulse interactions, although, it could be claimed that the information being provided by the smartphone to sustain my attention and provoke a secondary action are in themselves additional external invitations to interact, albeit more subtle feeds rather than the more obvious alerts and notification that initially grabbed my attention.

I would like to make a distinction here between 'multiple subsequent' actions and 'multiple secondary' actions. Multiple subsequent actions would suggest that the succeeding groups of actions are a collective of actions which all relate to the initial action. However, it is evident in the material that it is my experience that each subsequent action provokes a further emotional response which then leads to a secondary action relating to that emotional response which may be unrelated to the initial action and emotional response and that this can happen multiple times. This is more suggestive of a linear mode of thinking that is reflective of the way that we are encouraged to use the internet by following a stream of thoughts in a shallow way, with little conscious decision making and in a state of distracted 'continuous partial attention'.

This dynamic interactive sequence of hook - emotional response - secondary action can be seen to create and promote a 'functional dependency' upon my sense of being in a relationship with my smartphone. As can be seen in the suggested thematic structure this functional dependency spans a number of themes and appears to be an essential component to the sense of this relationship. But is the relationship a partnership or does it just produce the illusion of a partnership? As noted earlier, there are times in the narrative where it could be seen that I become a passive partner within the relationship. One example, where 'I listen without listening' is a good illustration of this as it suggests that I am outsourcing my attention to a listening activity without any sense that I am actually listening so I experience a passive engagement with the subject and yet I am

connected to the smartphone via my headphones as I undertake another task that requires my conscious attention. This somehow feels different to just listening to the radio as it is more immersive as an experience due to the headphones. When the cord snags and I experience 'an intrusion of silence' it is felt as a violent interruption to this relationship and connection. In reality I am being shocked back into reality through a disconnection from my smartphone. This state of passive engagement can be seen throughout the narrative. The instances where I rely on the smartphone to think for me or where I am going through the motions. For example, when I first open the Facebook app I note describe how I scroll through the timeline 'without really thinking about it'. This is more suggestive of a pattern of behaviour that is habitual and therefore based upon a repeated search for historic informational rewards and may be indicative of unconscious mental activity. Such instances may also be present in those instances where I am not able to identify why I am doing something. In another instance I note that 'an hour has passed before I realise'. This is during a period where I note I am following 'further links to more videos on YouTube' – which would support the shallow linear thinking as suggested earlier – and this sequence started from opening the Facebook App to 'check' for some unknown thing. This is a fascinating part of the narrative that describes the function and success of the 'hook' particularly clearly. My sense of a loss of time or of having been in a timeless state is also worth noting here as it is also suggestive of unconscious mental activity and passive engagement. This state has been called a 'zombie' state of mind as from the outside I must have appeared to have had a mentally inactive external presentation without a sense of connection to the world around me. This is something which I observe in others every day when they are immersed in their own relationships with their smartphones – and may also account for a number of accidental deaths each year as people attempt to navigate their environment in this 'zombie' state (Paton, 2017). The realisation of this passive state of mind makes me think that within this relationship I am being encouraged to not only be a passive partner but also a submissive one.

Sense of connection

The second key theme I have called my 'sense of connection'. This describes the apparent pervasive need in me to feel connected to 'some-thing' or 'some-one' and to feel prepared and available to receive the potential future connection to something or someone. The state of being in a constant connection to possible external invitations for communication is undeniable and can be seen to act as a heartbeat to the narrative. If there was no connection, there would be no narrative. The expected need in me for an uninterrupted

state of constant connection is brought sharply into my attention when I am threatened with a potential disconnection – this is shown in the narrative when I am faced with the possible loss of battery power – and the amount of anxiety and stress this produced in me.

There are different types of connection revealed through the narrative. There is the physical connection between me and the smartphone, sometimes via headphones and sometimes through active use. Although it is not made explicit in the narrative my smartphone is on my person or within arm's reach at all times apart from when I'm in a clinical appointment. This physical connection is made even more secure by the second day of the narrative when I then have an Apple Watch as an extension of my smartphone and upon which I can be alerted by external hooks without needing to undertake a 'pick-up' of my smartphone – more recently, I have also now noticed that I receive notification alerts on my Watch when I am in session in a clinical room that is within Bluetooth connection distance from me smartphone in the office. This extension of the smartphone is an interesting notion in light of the discussion in previous chapters around the way that smartphones can be seen as extensions of the self. If the Watch is an extension of the smartphone, then what does this make the smartphone now? Is it a separate object with its own senses to extend? Or is the Watch a replication of the smartphone? What this extension of the smartphone does offer me is the opportunity to receive notifications of external hooks with greater ease. In the narrative where I note that 'a text message comes in and I read the summary of the notification on my watch' it feels convenient to be able to read the message and judge the need for me to respond simply by the action of tilting my arm towards my face. In this manner the Watch acts as a satellite of the smartphone and invites me to make another pick-up. Does the reduction in the demand for physical action on my part leave me feeling that I am more connected? Does my sense of connection increase with each degree of extension of myself?

My physical connection to my smartphone may be more tangible but it can also be seen to be only one component of my wider my sense of connection. There is also an emotional component to my sense of connection that is fuelled by the emotional responses to the interactions described earlier and which impacts upon my sense of happiness and well-being and my relationships with other people through my smartphone. Throughout the narrative there are examples where I turn to my smartphone to meet an emotional need in me. For example, when I found myself 'trying to manage a sense of boredom and a discomfort in not doing anything' by watching music videos on my smartphone it could

be seen that I am investing emotionally in the potential of the smartphone to meet my emotional needs immediately and upon demand. When did a state of doing 'nothing' become so unbearable that it needed to be transformed into an illusion of doing 'something' on my smartphone in order to distract from difficult feelings? Another example of my emotional connection can be seen when I turn to my smartphone to hide in plain sight when in the queue to get a coffee in a café – 'I feel awkward stood up in the café, so I shift about – face to screen – anxious that someone will want to talk to me. My mind leaves the café following threads of news – awkwardness relieved'. We might ask what felt so awkward at that moment and whether it was the threat of someone interacting with me face-to-face that led me to seek out a state of face-to-screen but it might also be seen that what I was seeking was the relief of this feeling of awkwardness and that I believed that the smartphone could provide this for me. This is a very powerful role for the smartphone – as emotional container – but there is something about its immediacy which I find intriguing. My smartphone's capacity to transform my emotional experiences by bringing relief to difficult emotional states puts it in the position of a maternal object which receives, contains, detoxifies and regulates my emotional projections. This could be seen to be the most addictive aspect of the relationship and places me in the role of infant to my smartphone maternal object. This might also be evident in the instances where I could be seen to be a passive partner in the relationship as discussed earlier.

One further aspect of the emotional component of my sense of connection can be seen in the narrative text at times when I attempt to connect with other people by seeking out a shared experience, something which provides evidence to me that my emotional states can be recognised and validated by others. After the football match I find myself searching online for other people's happiness about the score in an attempt to prolong and enhance my own sense of happiness through it being validated by other people's experiences and by me feeling that I am providing them with validation of their own happiness. This implies that I have an expectation that the validation of my emotional experiences by other people will increase my wider 'sense of connection' and therefore my sense of well-being.

This poses the question, what is the meaning of my sense of connection to me? What is this sense of connection that has developed to a position where the fear of its absence and loss brought about a 'puzzling sense of malfunction' in me 'like a nameless dread'. This could suggest that the meaning of my sense of connection is something greater than being

physically and emotionally connected. The deep relief and calming of the stomach that obliterated the nameless dread of disconnection might imply that I experience my sense of connection as a safe and containing presence which could be seen to underpin, at its core, my own sense of 'being'.

Dynamic tensions and conflicts

The third key theme of the thematic analysis relates to notable contradictory experiences within the narrative and the dynamic tensions that exist between them. These include conflicting emotional responses to interactions and ambiguous motivations. It can be seen that I try to move towards one thing and away from another in my attempts to resolve these conflicts. For example, on occasion it can be seen in the narrative that I am left feeling irritated and awkward by particular interactions with my smartphone and that this creates a conflict and anxiety in me which is unsettling. This anxiety is later resolved through interactions which dispel the conflict, if only for a short period before the tension is recharged by another emotional response that leaves me unsettled or anxious. This would imply that there is an ongoing tension and conflict between a state of feeling anxious and a state of feeling 'not-anxious'– often described as relief in the narrative - which I am persistently struggling to reconcile and resolve within my relationship with my smartphone. I call this conflict a tension because it feels impossible to resolve it permanently because once the tension has been resolved it is then dynamically revived in another manifestation.

From the very start of the narrative, when I check that my smartphone has been charging through the night, I appear to be managing a tension between being connected and being disconnected. It could be seen that my sense of connection constantly exists within this tension in a dynamic way; it requires ongoing action on my part to sustain a connection (to avoid disconnection) by keeping the battery charged, the phone safe and working and by paying the monthly charges. It is my responsibility to maintain the possibility of my connection as the device itself works against me through an inevitable pull towards zero power and a state of disconnection. This creates a conflict which has no solution beyond the daily caretaking of the functional capacities of the smartphone in order to allow for the potential of my relationship with it to be kept alive. This dynamic tension to remain connected can be seen to act as a scaffold upon which other aspects of my relationship can be explored and potential offered.

It is apparent in the narrative that I am also struggling with a tension between a search for confirmation and a fear of rejection. This conflict is a reflection of the emotional outcomes of being connected and being disconnected; confirmation or rejection. At times it may not be apparent what confirmation I am seeking or experiencing – do I feel a sense of confirmation of my actions or decisions when I receive a response or reply that validates such actions? On one occasion in the narrative I wonder if what I am searching for on Facebook (in quite a desperate manner) 'is confirmation that I am not missing out on anything and that nobody has posted anything that will make me feel envious'. This feels like I am trying to mediate a tension between feeling that my online persona is being accepted by others (not attacked) and the sense of failure which may arise from my own competitive responses to people's envy-provoking and self-promoting 'posts'. The fact that I feel I am 'trying to get every last drop out before I stop' could suggest that the absence of rejection and conflict, in itself, is felt by me as confirmation. This might also imply that my search for the absence of rejection may be a more powerful drive than the search for confirmation (although not noted in the narrative, I do not post many things on Facebook myself as an act of seeking confirmation). This conflict may also be evident in the number of pick-ups that I undertake as it could be seen that when a pick-up is rewarded with information, I feel it as validating and a confirmation. However, when there is no reward, I remain in a state of potential rejection and exclusion and a more abstract sense of being disconnected.

There are instances in the narrative where I experience a dissatisfaction with the weight or depth of my engagement. On one occasion 'I follow an urge to find something lighter, and on another I let some music wash over me that I don't have to concentrate on'. These examples may imply a wish in me for a more superficial engagement within the relationship at times. Throughout the narrative there is a lack of depth of engagement within my interactions with my smartphone. It may be difficult to get a sense of what a 'deep' interaction may look like and perhaps the 'lightness' that I was seeking was a vehicle for non-thinking activities which I could experience as less demanding of my attention and therefore lighter in engagement. It is interesting that despite this wish I still pursue this level of engagement through my smartphone instead of turning away from it all together which may in itself provide the sought-after break from the relationship. It is as if I have a perception that the smartphone is able to meet all of my needs, however, it may be that in reality I settle for what it can offer that is closest to what I seek rather than what something else may be able to provide me instead.

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This tension between the weight and depth of an experience is also evident in the narrative where I actively seek information via my smartphone. There are instances where I seek out information where it could be seen that I am in fact seeking only trivia or entertainment. This has a sense of being lighter experiences with regard to the emotional cost and investment. This is apparent when using the BBC News App where I experience frustration at being shown the same things and not offered anything new or being rewarded for my efforts with new information. Across the narrative there appears to be a lack of depth of engagement and this could be directly related to the amount of effort and attention I am willing to use in any interaction; it could be that unless I am rewarded quickly, I will move on to another interaction until I am rewarded. When considering if this is an avoidance of information that requires me to work harder or demands more of my attention, I am struck that the majority, if not all interactions within the narrative are fleeting and not overly demanding of thinking. Even when I find myself looking at videos on YouTube for an hour, I am not concentrating on one thing but clicking through a series of videos, almost like a stream of consciousness but passively receiving information. It is as if I am being trained to not use my own mind to imagine in a more creative way, that is more linked to being bored perhaps, but instead to be a receiver of shallow superficial information only.

Conclusions

What can we conclude from this auto-ethnographic study in relation to the overall research question and how might this potentially thrown some light on what experiences of their own digital relationship with smartphones patients might bring into the therapy room? It can be safely stated that my relationship with my smartphone is a rather demanding one. It is clear that I spend a lot of time interacting with it and have restructured my day-to-day to a point of domestication of it; it is embedded into my interactions with my environment to the point where I feel a high degree of anxiety at the prospect of being separated from it. It is safe to say that I can experience a separation anxiety about my smartphone with regard to my attachment style to it and in its position as an object of relation. It is noticeable that this current state of relationship has grown slowly as more aspects of my life have come to adopt and accommodate the functional offerings of the smartphone as a primary source of relation – that it has become the first thing I turn to in order to meet a variety of needs. It may be safe to assume that the current

state of this relationship continues to be in transition and that it is by no means a final destination.

The notion of hooks can be seen to be an expression of a need to seek out a container that can offer a validation of existence and a sense of being connected to an 'other', or perhaps, even the *possibility* of confirmation of a connection, and therefore an emotional containment. Hooks seek to sustain and monopolise my attention and dominate as ruthlessly as possible. The ultimate goal of which appears to be a complete absorption of my attention economy, or, even further, to create more time through an illusion of multi-tasking. Hooks also encourage a state of distracted 'continuous partial attention' in order for me to be open to receive possible additional hooks and interactions through my anticipation of them. This passive and submissive state, a zombie-state, is evident all around us and is one that honest smartphone using readers will recognise. This zombie-state also affects our sense of time as our attention gets hijacked.

It is clear that I have a need for a sense of a constant connection with my smartphone as a representation of and a portal to, my sense of connection to other people and the possibility of a connection to others which is reflective of Greenfield's 'variable ratio reinforcement schedule' (www.virtual-addiction.com). It may also be seen that this drive to maintain the possibility of connection has become a primary preoccupation of mine that influences my interactions with my relationship to the external virtual world. This has been made even more accessible through the introduction of satellite devices of my smartphone such as my Apple watch. This sense of connection taps directly into my need for emotional connection and is fuelled by my emotional responses to my interactions and motivations to avoid the more difficult and unwelcomed emotional states such as boredom, insecurity, anxiety and of a fear of 'doing nothing'. This is supported by my perception that my smartphone can bring such emotional relief through its capacity to be an emotional container and provide a safe and containing presence which essentially underpins my own core sense of 'being'.

The dynamic tensions and conflicts might be seen to be analogous to the dialectical tensions between fantasy and reality in the potential space created by the human-smartphone relationship as described my MacRury and Yates. The constant re-charging of these tensions, such as connection/disconnection, was evident in the narrative and findings and appear to not be experienced as resolved until I have reached a state of relief

or, as I described, a state of feeling 'not anxious'. This may be more reflective of MacRury and Yates' description of the way that the potential space can collapse, or be resolved, by moving toward fantasy in the face of the reality where emotional discomfort is felt as heavy, unbearable, intolerable, or just too much hard work cognitively. In this way it also makes a link to Barr and colleague's (2015) sense of being reduced to a 'cognitive miserliness'.

What this aspect of the research has also shown is that through relationship with my smartphone the world has become smaller. By this I mean that it is evident that the information I receive, such as news, has been refined to small number of applications and webpages which I turn to routinely in a non-thinking and mindless way; although my experience is that I unconsciously expect to find all available news on my chosen and reduced sources of information with the illusion that it is comprehensive. This may be evidence of the way that particular apps and webpages have capitalised and exploited branches of my attention economy in a way that provides me with an illusion of choice without me being in control of the options available. If this reduced and refined stream of information is evident in the way I receive news, then it is very likely that this is replicated in other aspects of my relationship with my smartphone. Perhaps then, this is also evidence of the suggestion, made in the previous chapter, that the smartphone can be viewed as a maternal object which is engaging me in a relationship that is working towards total dependency and reliance upon it to meet my emotional needs and emotional regulation in a way that is reflective of an essential aspect of the early stages of the maternal-infant relationship.

Whilst these findings are only a representation of my own digital relationship with my smartphone, and in that respect may not offer generalisations to describe other users experiences, the theoretical concepts that it has generated may be relevant to other user experiences, including those of child psychotherapy patients.

Chapter 5

The smartphone in the consulting room: a focus group

The consulting room in child psychotherapy is a space that the therapist works hard to protect from outside influences. It is the therapist's responsibility to provide a safe space in which the patient can feel sheltered from outside intrusions and offer a reliable presence capable of adapting the environment to the needs of the patient. The external world is left behind in the waiting room and kept at a distance to encourage the patient to explore their internal world and fantasies, including those about the therapist. When items or objects cross the boundary and are brought into the room, they can sometimes impinge upon the therapeutic dyad in an intrusive way but almost always represent an important communication from the patient.

The presence of smartphones has become a social norm to a degree where it is a common and understood experience to be met aphonically and put on pause during conversation by another as they attend to the demands of their smartphone. I have had the experience of a patient bringing a smartphone into the room a number of times but the first time it happened was striking. I did not think that this patient perceived their smartphone as something separate from them – it was an extension of their being - and I was quite thrown as to how to respond. What I did notice was that I felt it intruded into the therapeutic space in a way that was beyond my control and it reduced my capacity to provide a safe space and a reliable presence. In many ways I felt that the patient was trying to adapt the space themselves in a way that felt controlling. By bringing the smartphone into the room they introduced a third party with whom they interacted more than with me. This undermined my identity as a therapist but also offered me some clear communication from the patient about their fear of making contact with me and eventually their anger at an absent father. I was also struck by their anxiety about being on their own with me and the discomfort they shared about possibly being alone with themselves.

I suspected that if I was having this experience in my clinical work then it was likely that other child psychotherapists would be also. I was curious to know what their experiences were, how the smartphone was being used by the patient and how the presence of a smartphone in the room impacted upon their practice. I felt that the best way to answer these questions was to bring together a group of child psychotherapists as a focus group to discuss the effect of smartphones being brought into the consulting room.

Methodology

Kitzinger (1994) states that a focus group is a group discussion convened to explore a specified issue or set of issues. In a later work, Kitzinger (1995) also proposes that, as a research method, the focus group facilitates a group process in which people's knowledge and experiences can be revealed and 'reach the parts that other methods cannot reach, revealing dimensions of understanding that often remain untapped by more conventional data collection techniques' (pp. 299-300). This capacity to generate discussion and insight - which would be less accessible in a one-to-one interview - was an attraction of this research method.

With regard to sampling I felt that in order to promote 'enough diversity…to stimulate discussion' and 'sufficient homogeneity to facilitate comparison' between participants with the group (Barbour, 2005), a group of four to eight child psychotherapy trainees - across the four clinical years – would be an appropriate sample.

I approached the child psychotherapy course director at the Tavistock Clinic to discuss my proposal and to seek permission for the outline of my focus group to be emailed out to all child psychotherapy trainees across all year groups asking for participants. Once this permission was granted, I then sent out an email to all child psychotherapy trainees at the Tavistock Clinic asking for expressions of interest. In addition, I put up posters around the common room (see appendix 3). I had 8 students express an interest from across all year groups. I provided them with additional information about the research and participant consent forms to complete (see appendix 4 and 5). The focus group took place on May 4th, 2016 at the Tavistock Clinic with 8 participants and me acting as a mediator. The discussion was recorded on a digital dictaphone which I then transcribed verbatim and protected the identity of the participants by assigning each a number (P1-P8 & M for mediator) in the transcript.

Focus group discussion

The discussion within the focus group was unstructured but facilitated by me as mediator. Part of the criteria of being selected was that each participant had to have had the experience, as a therapist, of a patient bringing a smartphone into their session or a number of sessions. I opened the discussion by recognising this and used it as an opening question about how many patients have brought their smartphones into sessions. The discussion was

free-flowing and conversational. Each participant took an active role and contributions were rich. Some of the discussions stirred up strong feelings in participants as they recalled difficult experiences and states of mind.

Thematic Analysis

I approached the thematic analysis of the data from the focus group using the same analytic structure suggested by Braun & Clarke (2006) and outlined in the previous chapter. The data for this part of the research was very different from the Narrative produced in the autoethnographic aspect of the research. The focus group produced a transcript of a discussion between 8 participants and me as a mediator, so the data was a record of a conversation and therefore generated more data and material than the autoethnographic narrative. As a result, there was a larger set of initial codes to record and analyse for themes.

Process of analysis

I transcribed the digital recording of the focus group myself and in doing so familiarised myself with the data as I wrote (phase 1). Once this was completed, I allocated a number to each sentence and began a systematic coding of the transcript. As I read through the transcript (data) I extracted sentences or phrases that I felt related to the research question of the focus group. In addition, I also extracted sentences or phrases that I felt were interesting or worth noting. Each extract was recorded on a separate table, given an allocated number and I also noted the sentence number where the extract began on the transcript. After each extract, in a separate box, I wrote down single words or phrases relating to what I felt was being discussed or suggested in the extract. This word or phrase was recorded as a code (phase 2). On another table I kept a record of each identified code and kept a running tally of the frequency each code was identified in the extracts. Where a similar code was found I noted when it was evident that the code was located in the experience of the patient or the therapist.

From this first reading of the data I drew out 83 extracts and identified 130 possible codes. This was a much larger set of codes than the previous chapter. In order to more efficiently manage the codes, they were then indexed in alphabetical order with the number of the allocated extracts in which they appeared listed next to them. This was then followed by the total number of times they appeared across the data. Through this process a number of

initial codes were amalgamated with other codes due to their similarity of expression. The total number of codes at the end of this phase was 118 (see appendix 6 for extract examples).

From these records I was able to clearly see the codes that had been recorded the most frequently across the data. There were also a large number of codes that had only been recorded once. I then sorted the most frequent codes into potential minor themes and began to look at how they related to each other. The initial minor themes were 'boundaries', 'anxiety in the therapist', 'act of aggression', 'control', 'communication', 'exposure', 'recording', 'safety', 'policy', 'humiliation', 'intrusion', 'inability to disconnect', ''parental function, 'sharing vs taking', 'unprepared', 'unwelcome', 'third object'.

On further examination of the context of the extracts, from which these minor themes were coded, it was evident that there were major themes and sub themes. For instance, some of the 'anxiety in therapist' extracts were related to the potential for and the act of a patient 'recording' the therapist with their smartphone. Another example included the concern for a policy clarification around the 'boundaries' of a smartphone being allowed into the therapeutic space.

Further revision provided the following initial thematic structure:

smartphone present in the therapy room		
Therapist	Patient	smartphone
Boundaries		
Intrusion	Inability to disconnect	Third Object
Unwelcomed/Unprepar	Communication	Safety
Anxiety in the	Control	Parental Function
Recording	Fear of missing out	Containment
Exposure	Act of aggression	Recording
Humiliation	Sharing vs Taking	Policy
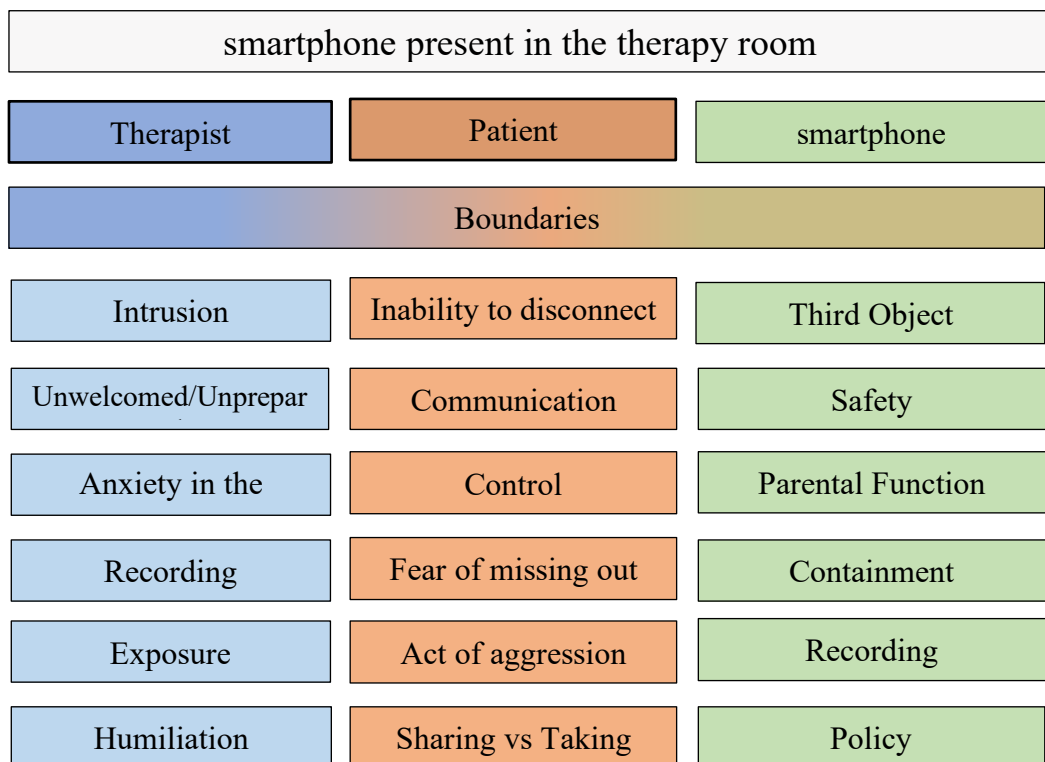
(Table 3: Focus Group thematic structure)

Findings

Thematic Analysis

This thematic structure allowed me to see two major themes that directed and underpinned the Focus Group discussion. I have named these themes 'object management' and 'content provider'. Object management, as a theme, relates to the data that focussed upon the management of the smartphone coming into the therapy room. Object management, as a major theme has been divided into 2 sub-themes called 'the uninvited guest' and 'the companion'. These themes relate to the presence of the smartphone from the perspective of the therapist's experience and the perspective of the patient bringing it into the therapy room respectively.

The theme of content provider relates to the manner in which the presence and use of the smartphone enabled the therapist to engage with it as a provider of clinical material. Content provider, as a major theme had 3 sub-themes called 'third object', 'on the record' and 'just another toy?' As a sub-theme, 'third object' relates to the way that the presence of the smartphone in the therapy room can be seen to represent an analytic third. 'On the record' relates to the anxiety in the therapist about being recorded and how this might challenge their role as therapist in the room. 'Just another toy?' discusses whether the smartphone can be seen to be a device to facilitate play in the way that other objects are used in the therapy room by child and adolescent patients to communicate. Each of these major themes - and their sub-themes - will now be reported on.

Object Management

It was clear from the coding of the data that the presence of the smartphone as an object in the therapy room and how to manage it was a major theme throughout the discussion. This is perhaps not surprising given that the initiation of the research and focus group focused upon the presence of the smartphone in the therapy room and the implications for this upon the practice of Child Psychotherapy.

The Uninvited Guest

As stated earlier, the Child Psychotherapist works hard to maintain the boundary between the internal world of the therapy room and the external world and the act of the smartphone moving through this boundary from the external world into the internal world of the therapy room presented a challenge to the reporting participants. Early in the data it could be seen

that participants struggled to know what to do in the face of this challenge and their awareness that something had changed in the room:

> I find that boundary a bit tricky…it can very quickly slip into something that could put you into trouble. (P5)

This statement suggests that this participant perceived that there was something potentially dangerous about the smartphone being in the room that was difficult to manage. In many instances this was presented through a sense of a therapist struggling to manage the 'Intrusion' of the smartphone breaking the boundary into the therapeutic space.

The speed with which smartphones have become an accepted extension of an individual presents child psychotherapists with a dilemma about how to keep up to date with the lives of their patients and their attitudes towards their relationship with their smartphone and the experience to know how to manage when this boundary is broken. What is the long-term impact of the expectation that the smartphone can and should go everywhere with the user in light of the purposeful boundary between the private and public?

Another participant found this boundary much clearer to preserve:

> there are times when I have had to say no…and had to ban it…there is a rule that you can't record me or you can't take a photo of me, in fact at this point I'm not allowing the phone right now. (P4)

It was not clear whether this rule was devised by the individual participant or on behalf of their organisation as a blanket way of minimising the impact of smartphones in the therapy room upon the therapeutic work itself. However, there was clear evidence that most of the participants had received no guidance through policy:

> I certainly haven't started off at the beginning of any treatment with any kind of discussion about it all and it's come up with most patients who have (brought a smartphone into session). (P7)

One participant had found clear guidance from their supervisor:

My supervisor said, 'you can't let her use the phone in the room…you need to be really cautious about that…she could be taking pictures and you don't realise'. (P1)

However, this was inconsistent as another participant had a different response from their supervisor:

I spoke to my supervisor about it and she said it is just something to use rather than feel threatened by. (P6)

It could be seen that the smartphone breaching a boundary by entering the therapy room is closely linked to the participants' experiences of the perceived potential dangers that such an intrusion presents. What is also interesting in the data is the degree to which the participants felt unprepared to know how to manage the presence of the smartphone in the room, with some finding it an unacceptable and unwelcome presence: 'I just want to get rid of it really' said one participant (P7).

The companion

Whilst it may be seen that the participants shared concerns about how to manage boundaries around smartphones being brought into the therapy room it was less clear that the patients being discussed understood this as a breach of boundaries. In other words, there was no evidence that any of the patients being discussed had consciously and purposefully brought a smartphone into the therapy room with the expressed intention of intruding upon and disrupting the therapeutic space. It might be suggested that the management of the smartphone as an object was not always engaged with once it was understood to be present. What also might be active here is a general perspective held by the participants - conscious or not - that the smartphone is viewed as a benign object no more intrusive than a watch or a wallet. If this is the case, then the participants may be active in a collusion supporting a social norm of the smartphone's position as a constant companion. The notion of the smartphone as an uninvited guest recognises that - whilst as an object it has clearly not been invited it has breached the therapeutic boundary - it has been tolerated with politeness. It is also not known if any of the participants have ever had their smartphone present on them themselves during a session.

This notion of a constant companion was recognised by the participants through a growing sense of their patients being unable to disconnect from their smartphone and the perceived connections it afforded them beyond the room.

One participant described an experience of a patient being unable to disconnect:

> She plugs herself in, she has one earphone in and the other ear free so she's not completely disengaging… but it is only half of her there. (P3)

This presentation of the patient being 'only half there' is interesting as it begs the question of where the other half of her is when she is fully physically present in the room. The idea of her attention being only partially with the therapist suggests that the patient felt able to be in a partial state of presence. Whilst it was not clear what the patient was plugging in to through the earphones it could be seen that the patient existed in an in-between state that she could be partially in control of. It might also suggest a partial openness to the possibilities of the therapy but one which can be closed off completely at her will. This sense of being only half there feels different to a less obvious experience of being with a patient who is staring into space or out of a window in a state of disengagement or partial attention. The earphone connected to the smartphone is a statement which might be worded as 'I am here but I am also not here, and I want to be in control of my capacity to move between the two states'. It might also be suggested that the earphones connected to the smartphone represent a separate relationship in the room through the smartphone as a third object; a relationship that the therapist is not being invited into and is being asked to bear being excluded from.

But what is this state of inability to disconnect? What are the drives behind it? One participant wondered about a patient's connection to their phone:

> It's a funny sort of contact…you are either glued to a contact with someone somewhere else with a phone… or is it that you can't bear to miss out?... or is it to avoid the contact you have in the room? (P4)

This firstly suggests that a patient experienced a fear of missing out (FOMO) on things during the session and may be linked to the patient expressing a sense of potential loss in the idea of disconnection in session. Another participant described this further:

Last week she was having a group chat with 20 odd people… during the session and she was explaining how she couldn't possibly follow the conversation she had 300 messages in 10 minutes, if she left the phone for five minutes she would come back to hundreds of messages and how could you possibly follow what everyone was saying? (P3)

If one aspect of the patient's anxiety resides in the thought of disconnection and a fear of missing out, then what are the perceived benefits of a sense of connection in session? As shown above the patient's partial attention created a separate relationship in the therapy room that at times left the therapist feeling excluded. It also afforded the patient the option to connect and disconnect at will not only with the smartphone but with the therapist and the therapeutic dyad. It could be seen that the relationship to the smartphone through a constant connection somehow made it easier for the patient to manage the awkwardness of being in the therapy room and the anxieties that this stirs up.

Other participants described this evasion of contact as a way of making the relationship more manageable through an observation of:

the eye contact, the screen, she can make eye contact and then her eyes go back to the screen and I think to make it less 'hot' in a way, less intense, (P3),

and

He really needs always something with him to be able to be with me. (P5)

This expression of an inability to disconnect from the smartphone might, from the patient's perspective, make it easier to be present by providing an option to disconnect from the therapeutic relationship should it become too intense or stir up too much anxiety - an anaesthetic of sorts. However, from the therapist's perspective, the smartphone could be experienced as a third object in the room, a genuine companion as it were – 'It also almost brings another person into the room, it becomes another object'. What feels important from the therapist's perspective is how this third object is being unconsciously used by the patient through the transference relationship.

Content provider

The themes reported on so far all relate to managing the act of the smartphone breaking the boundary of the therapy room both in its role as a constant companion for the patient as well as an uninvited guest intruding into the therapeutic space for the therapist. These themes can be categorised under the major theme of object management - how the mere presence of the smartphone gets managed by the patient, the therapist and both of them together as a therapeutic dyad. The thematic analysis also suggests that once the smartphone was in a session it also acted as a content provider for the patient's internal states and the therapist's clinical observations and interpretations. A number of themes related to the experiences of the participants in their clinical practice that felt unprocessed as they found themselves in unfamiliar territory and trying to understand challenges to their clinical practice in the room as they happened.

Third object

One of the child psychotherapist's goals is to gently encourage a state of anxiety in the patient to see how they respond in order to provide information about their internal models and expectations of the world and relationships. This begs the question about the potential for the smartphone to relieve the patient of such anxiety if it can be turned to at any point in the session. It could also be argued that some patients might not bear being in the room if it were not for the smartphone acting as a mediator to engagement in the therapeutic relationship - much like some younger patients need a parent to be present in their sessions from time to time.

One participant experienced the smartphone being used as a third object in a more aggressive way by the patient:

> A teenager, who not only wanted me to feel blocked out and excluded but wanted me to know that he could have a good relationship with an object and that was not going to happen with me and it was used in a very aggressive, almost Oedipal way, with me being made to feel I am being left out of this and being made to bear watching him in absolute ecstasy with his phone. (M)

In this example it could be seen that the smartphone as an object was being used in a more active way within the therapeutic relationship through its symbolic representation as an

object of desire to be envied in order to communicate to the therapist a powerful transference experience of powerful feelings of exclusion and impotence. In this manner the smartphone became something more than an object-present distraction and available relief from anxiety- it became a symbolic tool of power within the room, something more totemic and potent. It could be seen that the patient's way of relating to the smartphone in this instance brought about the opportunity for the therapist to experience something important in the transference that may not have been possible if the smartphone had been disallowed. Where the therapist might hope to facilitate a third in the room through the creation of a therapeutic dyad that tries to make sense of things in the space between patient and therapist, as described by Ogden (1994), the smartphone presents the therapeutic dyad with a dilemma; whether with the presence of the smartphone in the room becomes something concrete and controlled by the patient rather than a more reciprocal creative third object in the therapeutic dyad.

Some participants felt that their patient's relationship with their smartphone acted as a new communication tool. It could be argued that relationships with the smartphones have come to dominate many people's experiences of relating to others so would be an entirely expected vehicle for communication for many:

> the only way she could let me in was through the phone because I think it is so…part of their life…it has become so…fundamental in how they communicate. (P8)

The participant in this example appeared quite in touch with the patient's experience of their digital relationship and was able to think about their interactions with the smartphone as a vehicle or portal to communication with the therapist. With regard to clinical practice this would seem to be an important perspective that understands that all child psychotherapy patients will now be 'digital natives' as described by Palfrey & Gasser (2008) and steps should be taken to be able to understand and describe the patient experience as such.

However, it was also evident that many of the participants found this new communication to be challenging in ways that threatened their identity as a therapist and their potential to be a useful container of anxiety for the patient. Participants reported feeling a common sense of feeling blocked out by patients interacting with their smartphone in a way that felt

excluding. One participant described an experience of a patient communicating feelings around a break in the therapy:

> he came into the room and took the phone and just put his hand up and I just had to wait for him to have a conversation… it was quite interesting to think about it coming after the break… shutting me out, maybe bit of retaliation. (P3)

This example could be seen to show the patient being able to communicate strong feelings of anger by being in identification with an uninterested and rejecting therapist who blocked him out during a break. It also may relate to the common experience of having an interaction disturbed by a smartphone notification and being put on hold while the user attends to the notification or call - something Balick (2014) describes as relationship-lite.

The therapist's relationship with their own smartphones was also present in the room for one participant:

> Sometimes when I'm in a session I think 'Oh I really want to check my phone' and if I can bear it, I can sometimes think 'hang on' what has just happened just at that point…and not to be concentrating on whatever just happened. (P4)

This brings into our awareness the therapist's subjective experience of their own relationship with their smartphone in such a way that, through a countertransference experience with their patient, they are able to gain a working insight into their patient's need to connect and check in with their smartphone - also known as pick-ups. The potential for the patient's engagement with their smartphone to be observed and thought about as part of the clinical material of a session was picked up by one participant's supervisor as something that should be treated as part of the room and part of what the patient was bringing into the room to be observed as any other object:

> if he brings in the phone, he brings in the phone, if he is on the phone…listen to what he is saying…then talk about it afterwards because obviously he is aware that I am listening in too…make use of the phone and see what he is bringing with it. (P6)

This position should feel familiar to child psychotherapists and we are reminded here to hold our identity as a therapist bringing their analysed minds into session rather than an individual who might be easily thrown by the intrusion of the smartphone.

On the record

This rather ideal position held by the child psychotherapist does however on occasion get shifted in a way that leaves the child psychotherapist feeling vulnerable and unable to sustain a therapeutic stance - the capacity to think amid powerful projections. Smartphones have become devices that have incorporated a multitude of previously stand-alone devices. The average smartphone is now a telephone but also a camera, a video recorder, a map, an encyclopaedia, a dictaphone, personal computer, media player to name a few. These functional properties make the presence of the smartphone in the therapy room even more interesting. Some participants reported patients using their smartphone to make notes of their appointments, some talked about the games they play and others played music. Each function presented participants with different challenges and opportunities. However, it was the potential use of the camera and video recording that presented the greatest challenge to the participants of the focus group.

Many participants reported feeling anxious not only about the smartphone being present in the room but the potential for a patient to record them on it:

> I feel anxious when there is a phone in the room…. I feel anxious I am being recorded. (P7)

The unknown aspect of whether this was taking place was something that unsettled participants also:

> are they recording me? are they taking photos? you know in quite a worrying way that makes me feel very much on the edge. (P4)

Knowing how to respond to a suspicion that a patient was recording in session caused some worry amongst the participants who rightly considered the potential impact of an intervention upon the patient:

I had an intensive patient which I suspected was recording, I didn't fully know, and it was hard to kind of ask, are you recording? Because it felt like if she wasn't then I would be accusing her of something she wasn't doing. I found it quite complicated in the end. Could I end up being someone that was attacking, I felt a bit attacking. (P2)

When it became evident that a patient had or was recording them some participants were unsure what to do. What was clear was that they felt worried about the potential for them and the therapy room to be exposed to viewers beyond the room if recordings were uploaded to the internet:

I immediately started feeling 'where will this go?'…I felt…tomorrow I'm going to be on YouTube which is something that happened to him [the patient]…I felt really exposed…it is just really quite shocking…it is really scary as well to think 'oh, where is this going?'…the idea that once it's on the internet it's not really your property, its gone, it's out of your hands really and you can't really do… very much about it, it's quite frightening. (P5)

Those who had been recorded spoke of feeling shifted out of their identity as a therapist in in the room to a person who might be exposed as themselves. This came with a degree of feeling humiliated. One participant worried about the public understanding of what happens in the therapy room - something which child psychotherapists work hard to protect:

Some of the things that you might say in session are a bit odd in the external world and you are sort of wondering 'well I'm going to be absolutely shamed with this'… well outside of the room it sounds so bizarre…we're more worried about what it looks like from the everyone else's perspective they are seeing us doing this weird thing that we do in the room. (P4)

It can be seen from these examples that the participants spoke of a variety of experiences of either being concerned about being recorded or actually being recorded. This feels like a complicated thing to understand as it is tinged with a many different threats and emotions. The threat of being recorded and exposed generated a high degree of fear about the therapy room and their practice being exposed to the general public and this in turn leading to the humiliation of the therapist. The anxiety of the unknown also left many participants feeling

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suspicious, unsettled and impotent when a smartphone was present. A number of participants were able to contain their own anxieties to sufficiently consider if this was a counter-transference experience in a helpful way for the patient to give an experience of being understood despite a perceived attack on thinking:

> a number of patients I am working with have got themselves into real trouble on the internet…taking pictures of themselves…some of them aren't allowed access to phones or the internet so that's a really live issue…I was thinking about boundaries and what you should protect them from as well as what the communication is if they are making you feel like that, exposed, and giving you a sort of experience of that and whether or not some thoughts need to go into between each patient about sort of what boundary you help them with as well, about what you are prepared to be exposed to…if you keep yourself safe that helps them keep themselves safe as well. (P7)

This naturally raises questions of safety and the invitation from the patient for the therapist to discharge a parental function in the setting of boundaries and a clarity of what is safe to do within the session.

Just another toy?

For most patients the child psychotherapist prepares a box of toys and materials for the patient to play with and use as a vehicle to communication and symbolic representations of their internal objects. Some participants questioned whether the smartphone and the use of a smartphone to record the therapist was just another form of communication, particularly around the idea of taking a recording of the therapist in order to take it home with them or outside of the therapy room. Child psychotherapists, as a practice, stress the importance to their patients of things staying in their box as a product of their work to be thought about with the therapist. When this is challenged it can be difficult for the therapist to manage the notion of the patient taking a part of them home and how this representation of them is treated beyond the therapy room:

> it's quite interesting…taking a picture of you and taking it with him…it's a little bit like we do with the drawings that they make, they are not allowed to take them out, we try to think with them about why would they want to take something from the room at [sic] home…it's a bit like with the picture, trying to

understand why does he want to take a picture or a voice of you with him home…what is the child then feeling when they're seeing you when they're at home and they're thinking 'where is this person?', she's not around but I've still got the video of her and I can imagine it might be a bit sad for them and their way of trying to hold onto us when they are not with us. (P8)

The importance of maintaining the boundary about toys and drawings remaining in the room relates to the patient's experience of the therapist as someone who can hold onto their anxieties for them and provide firm boundaries in a manner that leaves the patient with the experience of feeling contained. Many patient difficulties relate to a lack of such an experience in their early years and is a central aspect of the early stages of any psychotherapy. In this way the therapist models a capacity to keep themselves safe within firm boundaries as a means of providing the same for the patient:

it is frightening for them if you can't keep the boundaries of the session and you can't keep yourself safe and them safe in the room…what kind of person are they internalising if it's not someone who can say 'actually there are some rules'. (P4)

In this respect it could be suggested that the smartphone should be treated as just another toy in the box if it has been brought into the therapy room by the patient as 'a toy from home'.

Conclusions

The findings from the thematic analysis have provided valuable insight into the discussion held by the focus group of child psychotherapy trainees. The large number of codes itself provided a wide range of reported experiences from the participants about their patients bringing smartphones into the therapy room. The thematic analysis indicated two major themes from this discussion, each with a number of sub-themes that were explored in greater depth. It is not surprising that these two major themes related to the management of the smartphone as an object in the therapy room and the ways that it allowed patients to communicate their internal models to a sensitive child psychotherapist.

There was a sense, on the part of the child psychotherapy trainee participants, that the smartphone entering the room was initially felt to be an act of intrusion into the protected and safe arena of the therapeutic space. This was often an unexpected event which left the

child psychotherapy trainees feeling that it was unwelcomed and that they were unprepared in knowing how to manage and respond. There was no sense that this experience was particular to the participants as less experienced trainees, but it may be argued that more experienced child psychotherapists may have a wider knowledge of experience to call upon in order to respond more confidently to the unexpected presence of any object in the therapy room. For the participants, however, it may be that this initial experience may perhaps be restricted to a first instance and that the child psychotherapist may develop a working knowledge of how to manage or respond through a repeated experience over time. Part of this sense of unexpected intrusion was shown to be the fear in the participant that the use of the smartphone may expose the protected therapeutic space and, in doing so, damage a vital component of the psychoanalytic process. It also posed the child psychotherapist with the experience of being shifted out of their identity as a therapist into a more personal presence amid a threat of the smartphone being used as a camera and the exposure this may lead to. The act of bringing the smartphone into a therapeutic space, however, is intrusive and as such should be thought about directly and challenged by the therapist.

What was clear was that the participants observed that their patients treated the smartphone as an extension of themselves which was not only ever-present but was a constant companion. This is not surprising in light of the findings from the previous chapters. It was also evident that this constant companion was perceived by their patients as being able to provide them with a sense of an ongoing connection to the world outside of the therapy room. What was perhaps more striking was the extent to which the smartphone was used by the patients as vehicle of emotional regulation and containment instead of the child psychotherapist as would be desired in the psychoanalytic process. The use of the smartphone to create a third object in the room negated, for some participants, the opportunity for the creation of an analytic third between the patient and therapist through which both parties may observe and digest unconscious material. However, there were some instances where the child psychotherapist was able to treat the smartphone as an object of communication, like any other toy/object that can be utilised in the therapy room and bring into awareness the unconscious communication from the patient of difficult internal emotional states. As may be expected this was very much dependent upon the individual patient and their perceived defences.

It is worth recognising here both the particular size of the sample and the grouping of the participants. These eight participants were not strangers and have all been engaging in the

same training at the same educational establishment and as such will have some similarity of experience with regard to the staff and specific approaches of both the overseeing professional organisation and the educational organisation. These shared experiences may have influenced their supervision around the material they discussed and therefore their lens and reactions to their experiences of patients bringing smartphones into the therapy room. The findings therefore may not necessarily be transferrable outside of this group of participants and it should be acknowledged that a different eight participants from different schools who may not have known each other might have brought very different material to think about. In addition, the mediator (me) also had similar training experiences to the participants and may therefore have brought assumptions to the focus group that may have hindered a focus group with eight strangers from a different school. It may be that a different eight trainees from different school may have brought similar experiences but participants from a different therapeutic discipline, such as clinical psychology may have brought significantly different material and perspectives.

So, what, if anything, can be learned from this thematic analysis that might help inform future practice of child psychotherapy? With regard to the object management of the smartphone it was unclear how policy could or should be considered with regard to the presence of smartphones coming into the therapy room. If there was a clinic policy that prohibited the patient from bringing their smartphone into sessions would this make it harder for some patients to access psychotherapy or would it send out a clear message that the therapeutic dyad is sacrosanct to the practice of child psychotherapy? It seems that this is something that has presented itself to the therapist before any real research into the evident and potential impact upon practice can be undertaken. This reflects many aspects of the way that smartphones have become so ubiquitous so quickly in wider society. There is an argument that the Association of Children Psychotherapists might consider practice guidelines about smartphones in sessions at some point in the future and whether wider policy within CAMHS clinics needs to be developed to address this. It may also be the case that smartphone presence in clinical sessions is not of sufficient concern to warrant discussion or there is not enough clinical evidence to suggest otherwise.

Perhaps it is also necessary to further the discussion of smartphone presence in the clinic by recognising the wider societal impact of smartphones upon adults as well as children in order to contextualise the patient experience. This was alluded to by two participants during the focus group:

I have also had the experience of returning lots of patients to the waiting room to be met by a mother or father who is looking at their phone and the welcome back often gets compromised, (M)…some not [sic] even notice…I had one patient who, I would have to get to his dad to say 'we are here' because he would be completely cut off. (P8)

What this shows us is that we cannot assume that digital relationships with smartphones is only something that belongs in the realm of childhood and adolescence but that how the adults around them also relate to their smartphones should also be more widely understand.

In addition, the consulting room is not the only space where the presence of a smartphone might be considered to be a hinderance or intrusive in a way that disrupts the aims and practice of the therapist. Across the UK schools have a wide range of policies around the presence and use of smartphones within the school or classroom setting and there is an ongoing debate about what official guidance can and should be given to such a complex issue where the absence of a mobile phone in a school setting may also represent safety concerns for pupils who may need to have one at all times (Adams and Stewart, 2019). Within the context of the consulting room, where a parent or carer is encouraged to be present in the waiting room, a patient needing to have a phone in the room for safety reasons may be less relevant, but is does raise a wider question about how chid psychotherapy as a practice and profession may also need to engage in this debate about whose decision it should be as to whether a smartphone is allowed in the consulting room or not: should there be guidance from the ACP? Is this an individual CAMHS clinic policy decision? Or should this be left to the individual therapist?

Chapter 6

The home button: what have we learned?

The previous chapters have offered some insights into the nature of our relationship with smartphones from a number of different perspectives and experiences and sought to address and answer the identified research aims and questions. The main aim of this enquiry has been to gain awareness of the more unconscious aspects of this relationship in order to inform the practice of child psychotherapy and the implications of a changing experience of a patient group of smartphone users and those growing up with relationships with multiple screens. With this in mind this chapter will draw together some concluding thoughts about the human-smartphone relationship and how an increased awareness of its more unconscious aspects may inform and benefit the field of child & adolescent psychoanalytic psychotherapy.

The human-smartphone relationship

With regard to the research question about the nature of our relationship with the smartphone, the literature has revealed that there are number of aspects of our relationship with our smartphones, the internet and the online world which, because of our need to relate to and make sense of our world and ourselves, make us vulnerable to the invitation to engage in a relationship with our smartphone in the ways that we are being encouraged to. There was some evidence that the smartphone is being used as an extension of the self as the smartphone's capacity to store information, including emotional investment, holds great importance for the user's sense of intimacy with it and advances McLuhan's (1964) notion of media being extensions of man into the arena of individuality and personal identity. Whilst it was shown, through the ideas of Belk (1988, 2013), that we extend our sense of individual self by acquiring possessions and affiliations as representations of expressive aspects of our identity, the smartphone offers a further extension of this through its capacity to store vast amounts of virtual information which has been imbued with emotional representations and memories and dematerialised into a virtual space. This information may have no physical existence anywhere at all, nor have ever been a physical entity, but can be recalled into existence at any time through the smartphone's ability to re-materialise information at the touch of a screen.

It has also been shown that the smartphone, within its increasing dominance in becoming the 'one' device which we use for an ever-widening range of functions, is used as an extension of the mind by allowing the user to outsource the slower, more challenging and deeper analytic thinking to the smartphone in order for the user to be able to pay reduced active attention to the faster, simpler and shallow mental activities. In other words, we let the smartphone do all the boring hard work of time-consuming activities which use up brain power and energy so we can immerse ourselves in the *non-thinking,* rewarding, exciting and attractive activities. However, one of the dangers of outsourcing the more mindful activities to the smartphone is that it not only leads to what Barr and colleagues (2015) see as a cognitive miserliness and an increased dependency on the smartphone for the functions of memory and information recall, but it also nudges us gently but repeatedly away from face-to-face, human-to-human relationships. This could have powerful implications for the future practice of child psychotherapy which places demands upon patients to be mindful, present and engaged in a face-to-face, human-to-human relationship where *non-thinking* activities are often experienced as a defence mechanism to manage a fear of intimacy which require courage to work through.

Such affordances, the extension of self and of mind, may simply be part of what McLuhan (1964) saw as the exciting and juicy distraction of content which we celebrate, consume and mindlessly receive under the radar of the more attentive watchdogs of the mind. Perhaps the handing over of functions of the mind to the smartphone (often a powerful advertising component of the latest model which can do even more amazing things), is in fact a loss of function for the user, as it discourages the user from developing their own thinking capacities and the once prized capacity to recall information and memories by *remembering* them. Therefore, without the smartphone, the smartphone user's capacity to function long term might be greatly compromised. This was something evidenced in the narrative of the auto-ethnography when I experienced a profound loss of mental function and sensed a puzzling feeling of malfunction on the horizon – like a nameless dread in the presence of a potential loss of battery. However, I am a smartphone user who is of an age which means that I did not have a relationship with a smartphone during my childhood and my experience is that of losing functions as I outsource to the smartphone. The implications for those children who are growing up with a relationship with a smartphone from birth – if not through direct use then as an extension of their experience of their parents as users- need further consideration as they are likely to become children

who have been encouraged to become dependent upon a relationship with smartphones in order to function day-to-day and ultimately to regulate their emotions.

The habit of picking up one's smartphone, either to respond to an invitation to interact by a notification or alert from the smartphone or as a means to check-in to see if anything has been missed, has been shown to be a dominant characteristic of our human-smartphone relationship. The experience of the variable ratio reinforcement schedule, as described by Greenfield, (www.virtual-adiction.com) which provides rewards by creating dopamine addiction feedback loops, leaves users searching for even greater digital highs through the illusion of multi-tasking. However, this increases the amount of technostress experienced and increases the overall levels of stress experienced by the user. In addition, the pick-up or checking habit has been shown by Thorsteinsson and Page (2014) to act as an 'incubator of a desire to maintain proximity' to the smartphone as a source of attachment. This was something which was clearly evidenced in the autoethnography chapter where it was shown that users are hooked into interactions through invites to pick-up, check and then check again, which in turn increases the overall use of the smartphone and reinforces emotional attachment and dependency.

Through the constant sense of connection and the interactive hooks with the smartphone, users are coming to increasingly experience their emotional lives through this human-smartphone relationship. These electronic emotions are also outsourced and stored virtually, waiting to be recalled upon request. Smartphones have become the object that we turn to in order to enhance or manage an increasing variety of emotional experiences including loneliness and boredom, happiness and joy, crisis and panic as well as when we need information immediately and without delay. One additional aspect of this relationship is that when users share and recall these memories and experiences they turn to their smartphone as the primary source to mediate their emotional experience. One downside of this is that the smartphone is so heavily invested in by the user that it is too precious to lose due to its essential role in everyday life. If smartphones are being used to regulate emotions and an increased dependency and intimacy is being encouraged and fostered by design within the human-smartphone relationship, then the increased technostress experienced within a speeded-up instantaneous culture may create the situation where the user turns for stress-relief to the object that is creating the stress. This is more reflective of a fluctuating disorganised attachment style where the primary care giver is also the source of fear leaving the child unable to find relief from their fears.

It is also worth noting here that although there was a distinction made between the two bodies of literature being reviewed, the non-psychoanalytic and the psychoanalytic, there were suggestions of the more unconscious aspects of the human-smartphone evident in the language of the concepts found within the non-psychoanalytic literature, such as the extended mind, attachment and electronic emotions, which linked in well with the learning gained form the psychoanalytic literature.

The mother-infant dyad and the digital breast

With regard to the research question into the more unconscious aspects of our digital relationship with smartphones it has been shown that, when considering the smartphone as an extension of self and mind from a psychoanalytic perspective it could be seen that there is a link to the dynamics of the relationship cultivated within the mother-infant dyad. It was evident from that the review of the psychoanalytic literature that the human smartphone user is being encouraged to establish and nurture a way of interacting and relating with their smartphone which is reflective of an infant's attempts to establish and nurture an attachment to a maternal object. They are being encouraged to do this in a manner which is presented as being in their best interests and with clear and nourishing benefits to them as individuals. It is also evident that users, as humans, are susceptible to such encouragement due to their primary need to relate to others in order to feel safe and as social beings searching for a sense of identity, value and worth. What appears less obvious to the smartphone user, however, is the level of unconscious activity that this involves and the gradual acquisition and absorption of their attention and time towards the smartphone as a primary device capable of meeting a growing number of needs, including their emotional needs. This is also reminiscent of how the infant attempts to acquire and absorb the attention and time of the maternal object as the primary source (device) to meet their needs. What seems more complicated in this, however, is the suggestion that the smartphone user is encouraged to become the infant and the smartphone the maternal object rather than the smartphone being seen as the infant demanding of our time and attention. This might challenge users' perception that they are in control of the object but perhaps it can also be seen that the user has a confusing experience of fluctuating roles: both are the infant; both are the maternal object at various times.

The notion of hooks and sense of connection, as discussed in the autoethnography chapter, might help us understand this from an empirical perspective as it showed that there are both external and internal invitations to interact and that an interdependency is created and reinforced by each interaction. Whilst the majority of the invitations came externally from the smartphone through notifications and alerts, once the initial hook takes hold there is a dependency upon internal impulses and secondary actions to perpetuate and sustain the interactions. So, although there may be a confusing blurring of roles within the relationship, with regard to infant and maternal roles, the user is given the illusion of being the maternal provider through being hooked into action by a needy infant smartphone but then the role switches seamlessly to the smartphone becoming the provider as the user follows secondary action upon secondary action to a state of becoming the receiving infant. The illusion of being the in-control maternal object remains present into the dependency. This is more akin to the infantile fantasy of omnipotence in the face of a reality that the maternal object can turn on and off the function of provider at any point.

It has also been shown that the smartphone acts as an archive of the user's life through its capacity to be used as a portal and vehicle to recall and bring back, into the present, past experiences, possessions and affiliations. This is done in a way that conjures up the past immediately and minimises the reality of loss. The illusion of the infant to conjure up the good breast to satiate immediate need in a gratifying way is perhaps re-created through this process. However, what is absent in the human-smartphone relationship, is the move to the harshness of reality and subjectivity in a manner that challenges the omnipotent fantasy of the infant and its capacity for magical conjuring-up of gratifying objects which develops a tolerance of frustrations. The presence of the bad, persecutory, withholding and attacking breast is not tolerated as it gets banished by the bountiful ideal digital pseudo-breast that the smartphone can become. The greater the absorption of the user's attention and time within the human-smartphone relationship the more the infantile needs can be met. Thus, the threat of being frustrated by more demanding and difficult ways of relating presented by reality is perceived more harshly and the dependency upon the available ideal digital pseudo-breast is subsequently increased as a way of avoiding frustrations. The collapse of potential space towards fantasy in light of this conflict can be seen to be a much more attractive resolution to relieve the dialectic tension between the harsh, anxiety-producing adult world of frustrating reality and the infantile fantasy of an unlimited and bountiful digital pseudo-breast. It can be seen that the smartphone has

the capacity to recall and bring into existence a pseudo-maternal object, pseudo-maternal function and a pseudo-maternal experience whenever the user requires or desires. The smartphone, therefore, can be seen as an augmentation of a portable ideal digital breast.

If we are to consider the notion of the smartphone as an ideal digital pseudo-breast, then we must also consider the purpose and evolution of the infantile relationship to the breast and the intention to move toward subjectivity and separation from the maternal object, which in reality is exhaustible and of limited bounty. If the user is encouraged to develop a relationship with the smartphone that is characterised by an increasing dependency and absorption of its capacity to be a primary source of emotional nourishment and protection, then it would suggest that, ideally, it would move towards total consumption and maximum absorption of primacy for the user - this is a notion that is reinforced by the absorbing and acquiring nature of smartphone development and design as new functions evolve. However, when drawing comparison to the mother-infant dyad, it can be seen that the ultimate goal is for the infant to become disillusioned and move towards independence and separation. This begs the question, if this comparison is upheld, of what happens to the infant who fails to achieve separation and subjectivity? This would require a maternal object that blurs the mother-infant roles which then confuses and supports the infant's fantasy of its capacity to meet her needs. This, as suggested above, is something which the smartphone, as a pseudo-maternal object encourages as ultimately it is a parasitic maternal object that feeds off the omnipotent illusion of the infant user in order to prevent separation and a state of subjectivity. It invites the user to regress to a world of experience where immediate gratification can be achieved again – not just in fantasy this time however – and where the user is discouraged from becoming disillusioned by subjectivity and separation and spared of intolerable frustration. This would support MacRury and Yates' (2016) suggestion that the disruption of potential space towards a position where reality is consumed by fantasy results in the smartphone becoming an 'absorbing cocoon and resource for immediate gratification brought at the expense of other, more challenging, complex and reality-based modes of social communication, experience and relationship' (p. 55). It can also be seen that the smartphone offers up opportunities to feed an insatiable greed for material or maternal comforts and as stated by Bion (1964) 'to be rid of the emotional complications of awareness of life' (p. 11)

The architecture of the smartphone user experience promotes an attraction towards anaesthetising the emotional difficulties associated with the fragile and vulnerable

infantile experience in the face of reality whilst simultaneously rewarding and inflating the user's sense of importance and worth. This feels more like a move away from the developmental functions of the mother-infant dyad and confirms the infantile fantasy of being at the centre of the world – or the object of the maternal adoration and reverie – which can be seen to be a narcissistic phase of object relating. This mechanism appears to bind the users into placing greater importance on their relationship with their smartphone and the fear of it being physically and emotionally lost which could lead to a collapse of mental functioning and a piercing through of a reality that has yet to be effectively tested, realised and survived.

Frankel's (2013) suggestion that virtualisation (of a mediated self) may act to degrade the necessary alpha-function required to metabolise the psychic pain and acknowledgment of the loss of one's omnipotence, also raises the question of whether the mediated self, via the smartphone in this instance, is able to provide a pseudo-experience of maternal alpha-function for the user through its capacity to be both a receptacle and transmitter of what Sweet (2014) saw as projected aspects of the self. This may be possible if these unwanted aspects of the self can be seen to represent the psychic pain and discomfort of feeling disconnected or overwhelmed which feel unbearable and persecutory (beta elements) and therefore need to be eliminated into the mediated self as electronic emotions.

If we are to consider the smartphone as a vehicle to a mediated self through its capacity to receive projections, then we must also consider the notion that it also acts as a container for these projections. If we are able to think about the smartphone as a receptacle and transmitter of projected aspects of the self, then it also might be possible to link the visible dream-like state where users look captivated in adoration of their smartphone to Bion's (1962) notion of reverie, in that it might represent a:

> state of mind which is open to the reception of any "objects" from the loved
> object and is therefore capable of the reception of the infant's projective
> identifications whether they are felt … to be good or bad. In short, reverie is
> a factor of the mother's alpha function'. (p. 36)

If, in this regard, the loved object can be seen to be the smartphone then it might support a notion that it can provide a pseudo alpha-function in that it does not necessarily process beta-elements into alpha-elements but does provide an experience of reverie for the user

in which the user can move towards a state of non-thinking and passive reception as discussed in the autoethnography chapter. This may also be evidence of the smartphone having the potential to provide additional unconscious pseudo-maternal functions for the user.

The smartphone in the consulting room and the implications for child and adolescent psychoanalytic psychotherapy

The focus group proved to be a useful approach to gathering some understanding of how smartphones are being experienced by child psychotherapists in the consulting room. As noted earlier the focus group participants were profession specific and all were trainees from the same educational establishment where the mediator (me) was also training. Whilst it is recognised that the purpose for bringing this group together was related to specific experiences within their professional roles which could not necessarily be replicated in all professions, it could not be a group of eight fishmongers for instance, it may be that eight different trainees from different schools may have brought different experiences, as might have eight qualified child psychotherapists with more experience. It may also have been a different experience in either a smaller or larger group. Whilst this does not diminish the relevance of the findings it may indicate that the learning might be more limited in application and relevance to the fields of child psychotherapy and psychoanalysis.

The findings from the focus group suggested that those child psychotherapy patients who took their smartphone into sessions may have used it in a variety of ways to manage the discomforts and demands that child psychotherapy may stir up in them. The focus group also revealed that child psychotherapy as a profession may need to give further consideration about how to manage the smartphone in the consulting room. The findings revealed that the participating child psychotherapy trainees showed both intrigue about its possible use as a vehicle for engagement as well as a powerful sense of persecution in the light of not knowing how to manage its intrusion into their space depending on how the patient was using the smartphone in the room. What was very evident was a lack of collective thought about how to manage the smartphone being present in the consulting room from a position of policy and practice guidelines. It could be debated that a blanket ban across the practice would avoid any of the difficulties thrown up in the focus group, but this would run the risk of new learning being missed as well as possibly increasing

levels of anxiety in some patients to a degree where they felt unable to access child psychotherapy. The focus group findings did recognise the context of the smartphone as an increasingly prevalent and constant companion to users as was shown to be being actively encouraged by design in the literature reviews. This also makes a direct empirical link to the autoethnography through the concept of hooks and the constant need for a sense of connection. However, the clinical implications of the smartphone's capacity to be just another toy in the playroom did not seem to have sufficient space for further discussion amid the more dominant expressions of concern and anxiety in the therapists about being exposed or having the contents of the playroom exposed to a public audience.

The focus group also represented a point-in-time snapshot of a group of child psychotherapists' experiences of a new clinical phenomenon. This, on the one hand, put them at a disadvantage in knowing how to respond from a more informed, digested and considered clinical perspective but, on the other, it allowed the discussion to capture the raw emotional impact of their attempts to function in the face of such surprising and unknown clinical experiences. The theoretical concepts generated from the autoethnographic study may have supported these clinicians by offering a framework within which to digest the experience on behalf of the patient and offer insight into the relational experience of the patient at that time.

The autoethnographic study appeared successful in its attempt to capture the experience of the human-smartphone relationship from an empirical perspective in a way that expanded the findings of the literature reviews, documented evidence of these findings and offered insight into the possible relational experiences of child psychotherapy patients to their own smartphones. The cultural specificity of this empirical study may impact upon the transferability of the findings to the wider culture of smartphone users. However, the aim of the study was to develop theoretical concepts within which our relationships with smartphones may be thought about and not to form generalizations about the subject. In light of this distinction I feel this has been broadly achieved.

On further reflection, it is interesting to notice that my design included gathering data from a workday and a leisure day, indicating that I expected them to reveal different or contrasting data. However, what was clearer from the data was that despite there being quantitative periods of difference during the days due to my work involving episodes without my smartphone, the themes drawn out in the thematic analysis could be tracked

across both days. This showed that, despite my initial thoughts, that data from both days complimented each other more than they contrasted. This aspect of the study also aimed to gain insight into the potential experiences of the child psychotherapy patient who feels a need to take their smartphone into the consulting room in a manner that sought to understand the motivations and drives of the human-smartphone relationship. With this in mind, it confirmed, as has been suggested, that users are being encouraged to unconsciously turn to their smartphones, and other screens, to emotionally regulate their frustrations and anxieties in a way that anaesthetises and emotionally medicates. It is worth noting that, in addition, younger children might also be having an experience of a blank-faced maternal or parental object who is outsourcing their own parental function of emotional digestion of their child's frustration by handing them a smartphone or screen whilst they are also themselves being absorbed and anaesthetised from this or potentially difficult emotions by the glowing screen of their own smartphones on their own faces. If this is to be an increasingly common experience for children throughout their childhood, then we could expect that the more traditional aspects of the practice of child psychotherapy may be affected in ways that will stretch and challenge its efficacy as a helpful profession. It would be interesting to see how, over the next 10 years or so, smartphones either prevent young people from effectively engaging in this form of therapy by reducing their capacities to bear being in a room and in a relationship with a child psychotherapist or whether there is some surprising shift to a greater capacity to engage due to some as yet unknown aspect of their relationship with their smartphones.

It can already be seen that attempts to mediate how to therapeutically keep up with the changing modes of communication have led to the development of a number of applications, approaches and online services that offer psychological support via a computer-mediated therapy (teletherapy) rather than co-presence therapies such as child psychotherapy - a simple online search will bring up a multitude of options. The efficacy of such services remains to be evaluated but writers such as Gillian Issacs Russell (2015) have highlighted the aspects of co-presence therapies which can get lost via computer-mediated therapies, for both the therapist and the patient. In particular, the management of a containing and controlled therapeutic environment shifts from being solely a therapist's responsibility to that also of the patient. Computer-mediated therapy may also, as highlighted by Hinchliffe (2016) bypass 'the working through of the early characteristics of co-present therapy such as the setting of appointment times, the discovery of the safe space and the combination of intimacy and limitation that foster the

transference–countertransference' (p. 91). For child psychotherapy, teletherapy would remove the very important opportunity for children to play in the presence of the psychotherapist and for the therapist to also engage in play with them in the consulting room. If we were to adapt and change to forms of teletherapy with our patient group, who may have engaged with smart technologies and smartphones since birth, then we may lose important characteristics of co-presence therapy and limit the possibility of working through unconscious material in light of the reality that the patient could end the link at any moment, at the touch of a button, if it became too much.

One thing that can be said about the smartphone is that is has provided its users with a seemingly endless supply of entertainment, distraction and ways of communicating that has moved well beyond its original use of making and receiving telephone calls. As has been seen, however, the capacity to be bored is something that is increasingly being experienced as intolerable due to the fact that allowing oneself to be bored requires a capacity to be alone and of not knowing what to do while one waits for something else to happen. This was evidenced in both my own narrative and the observations of the focus group participants. It is in these moments that users are encouraged to turn to their smartphones but this repeated reinforcement in turn increases the number of instances where users feel a pending sense of boredom. As was seen through my own experience, my smartphone appeared to allow me to turn away from the possibility of getting anywhere near an experience of feeling bored. It was only on reflection that this was noticed but at the time it was experienced as an unconscious impulse to interact with the smartphone and to resolve any tension that such boredom may have threatened. Phillips (1993) relates boredom to the child's experiences of learning to be alone in the presence of the mother and views boredom as a developmental achievement for the child. If a child does not develop the capacity to be bored, then what are the implications for their demands upon the smartphone if it is an object that can provide an endless supply of distraction and entertainment? It is as if the smartphone recreates a pseudo-maternal object as an inexhaustible provider of feel-good experiences for the user but, as has been shown, this only increases the dependency upon it as an object of relating. Phillips also sees boredom as a precursor to creativity but perhaps a child's boredom is something that can be felt as dangerous and fearful to some parents, who are themselves fearful of their own potential boredom. This may encourage parents to allow their children to turn to the screen as a form of outsourced containment. However, if boredom leads to creativity, then what is the impact upon a child's creative potential if boredom has been obliterated by the

smartphone? Perhaps boredom can still be experienced in some ways through the mediated self, perhaps the notion of creativity needs to also adapt to this changing world to allow us to see how children and young people are going to use their smartphones and technology to be creative. A patient's capacity to play within the consulting room is an important component of the work of child psychotherapy and is a developmental achievement for those who initially cannot play in the presence of the therapist. If, as Phillips suggests, boredom is a precursor of creativity and play then it might be seen that a patient's relationship with their smartphone has the potential to restrict their capacity or desire to play within the consulting room if they have managed to banish the more difficult experiences of being bored by repeatedly turning to their smartphone for relief. This may also affect their tolerance to bear having a therapist think about them in a closed setting without their smartphone if the smartphone has been used to provide them with a capacity to be alone in the presence of a pseudo-other rather than in the presence of another person.

In the long-term, if child psychotherapy patients find it increasingly more difficult to engage in normal and expected forms of play then the shifting concept of what play has come to mean for current patients, outside of the consulting room, may need to be taken into wider consideration. For many, their experiences of play will be dominated by screen-based gaming, whether on the smartphone or games console. Playing games on a smartphone is an isolated experience, a solo undertaking even when playing online with others. Many smartphone games are designed to be played repeatedly in brief stints of time, like snack food, during which time users are rewarded with the illusion of a seeming simple game, but which quickly demands that the user checks in on their progress multiple times throughout the day or they will lose out and eventually creates a significant degree of frustration which can be relieved instantly with the purchasing of the game's currency with real money. Playing on a smartphone in the consulting room would not be a sharing experience so would present a challenge for a co-operative and creative play. It would also be difficult for a child psychotherapist to track and put into words a child's playing experience on a smartphone as this would require the therapist to sit next to them learning over their shoulder to see the screen as well as a degree of understanding and knowledge of the game, its rule and its goals. Recent statistics from the website Gamesradar.com (Loveridge and James, 2019) indicate that there are now 250 million players of the game Fortnite across all platforms including smartphones, 53% of which are aged between 10-25 and there are over 90 million Roblox players (Roblox.com, 2019) which is aimed at children aged 7 and above. These numbers are hard to fathom and may reflect a current

trend but the practice of child psychotherapy may need to revisit the concept of play and what therapists expect patients to play with in order to better understand and possibly respond to the shifting nature of what play is, or can be, in the face of the dominating commercial interests to capture and sustain a child's shallow attention. After all, play is play and we cannot necessarily predict what the impact of this changing play experience will be from our historical clinical perspective. What this does demand however, is again, a deeper understanding of the patient experience of digital media and play as a whole from a position of curiosity rather than alarm. Something which child & adolescent psychoanalytic psychotherapists are well trained to do.

Implications for further research

As a research design I feel that this mixed methodological approach has been appropriate to addressing the research questions and aims and has been successful in gathering the relevant and necessary information and data for this purpose. It can be seen that there is a need for further understanding of the impact of smartphone use upon children and adolescent's capacity to access and benefit from child psychotherapy. Although the focus group study provided some insight into the therapists' perspective on the impact of smartphones being brought into the therapy room, this research has been limited in the amount of clinical material provided into how smartphones are being used in the therapy room from the perspective of the patient. This would be a helpful perspective to build on what has been learned from this study. In addition, the focus group study was limited in its scope of 8 trainees. It would be helpful to gather information from a wider population of child psychotherapists about the scale of patient use of smartphones in the therapy room to get a clearer perspective on the degree of impact and concern there is, or is not, among the wider profession as a whole. There will also be a time in the near future when there will be more qualified child psychotherapists who are digital natives and it would be interesting to learn if this affects the level of understanding of our digital relationship with smartphones from a psychoanalytic perspective.

With regard to the auto-ethnographic study it would be interesting to learn how other child psychotherapists experience their own relationship with their smartphone through its replication and how this might change over time as the smartphone relationship evolves further.

With regard to the contribution to psychoanalytic theory it would be interesting to gain clinical examples of the smartphone being experienced as a digital breast within the consulting room and whether this is something that can be thought about with patients in a helpful way and develop this idea further.

This study has shown that the human-smartphone relationship has complex unconscious dynamic foundations which directly influence our degree of investment in the relationship. The activation of these unconscious dynamics is as much a product of the drive towards increased automation and the conscious design of commercial interests as it is a window onto the vulnerabilities at play in our relationship with ourselves and our primitive search for a sense of connection. The study has also highlighted that the long-term impact of the human-smartphone relationship upon the practice of child psychotherapy remains largely unconsidered. However, it should provoke a debate that requires immediate engagement from the profession if it hopes to meet its digital native patients with an educated and compassionate understanding of their evolving emotional lives and relational experiences. Their screen-based day-to-day reality may, over time, radically shift or compromise their capacity and willingness to engage in a therapeutic practice that demands their presence and ability to think, tolerate and work through difficult feelings. This need for presence is essential and is something that child psychotherapists battle through every day with patients who find it overwhelming to be in a room with them. However, we will allow the smartphone to work against us if it promotes and encourages a way of relating that moves inward and away from being present in the consulting room rather than outwards in the search for a bearable face-to-face connection.

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Appendix 1 – Data recording example - Autoethnography

October 17th 2016 – WORK DAY

Time	Action	Secondary Action	Details
4:54am	Vibrating phone		Awoken by an alert – I forgot to silence my phone at night – phone vibrating under my pillow.
4:54am	Headphones		I realise I have slept with one of my headphones in my ear
6:15am	Alarm	Email notice	When turning off the alarm I see an email notification of the home screen- confirmation of a payment to Amazon @ 4:54am *I am left wondering if this is a genuine or fake email as I do not recall making a purchase on Amazon – I settle for it being a late notification as the notice was sent 2 days ago. I get up and feel the need for a sound distraction/companion*
6:15	Podcast		*Listen to the podcast I went to sleep listening to. I am under the impression that I do not remember it but as it plays again **I am disappointed** to recognise it all – did I hear it in my sleep?* I make coffee
6:20	App – Facebook	BBC iPlayer	***I scroll through my timeline as I have coffee without really thinking about it** – I feel an urge to know things but what things I am not sure – what is it that I am looking for or hoping to find on my timeline (where my 'friends' posts show up in chronological order). **I feel anxious** and know I should stop but I speed up my scrolling – as if becoming more desperate to find the 'something' that I seek. I close down the App following an urge for something 'lighter' (less emotional?). I open the BBC iPlayer App and look for the Friday Night Comedy show. I see that it is a 'best bits' episode so I will have heard it all before. I notice an interesting new film by AC – it has NEW written in bright pink to **grab my attention**. I watch a few minutes, but it is too serious for what I am looking for.*
		iPlayer Radio	*I switch to BBC iPlayer Radio – no new comedy shows in my 'following' list.*
		Podcasts	*No new podcasts in my Subscribed list. **I get fed up with my favourites list** and search the charts for new podcasts. I try out something new – there is initial excitement about the possibility of something new/change in my routine. **I listen without listening as I get ready for work.** The headphone cord snags on a cupboard door and pulls the earpiece out of my ear – it feels like violent interruption as **there is an intrusion of silence** - the unexpected disconnect is unwelcome and irritating. I curse the cupboard and then my awkwardness.*

Appendix 2 – UEL UREC Forms – Focus Group

17 June 2015

Dear David

Project Title:	**Understanding Digital Relationships with Smartphones: A Psychoanalytic Perspective**
Researcher(s):	**David Hinchliffe**
Principal Investigator:	**Professor Barbara Harrison**
Reference Number:	**UREC_1415_84**

I am writing to confirm the outcome of your application to the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), which was considered at the meeting on **Wednesday 20th May 2015**.

The decision made by members of the Committee is **Approved**. The Committee's response is based on the protocol described in the application form and supporting documentation. Your study has received ethical approval from the date of this letter. Should any significant adverse events or considerable changes occur in connection with this research project that may consequently alter relevant ethical considerations, this must be reported immediately to UREC. Subsequent to such changes an Ethical Amendment Form should be completed and submitted to UREC.

Approved Research Site

I am pleased to confirm that the approval of the proposed research applies to the following research site.

Research Site	Principal Investigator / Local Collaborator
Tavistock clinic, Gloucestershire	Professor Barbara Harrison

Approved Documents

The final list of documents reviewed and approved by the Committee is as follows:

Document	Version	Date
UREC application form	3.0	17 June 2015
Participant information sheet	3.0	17 June 2015
Consent Form	1.0	29 April 2015
Focus group discussion/interview questions	3.0	17 June 2015
Survey/Questionnaire	1.0	29 April 2015

Approval is given on the understanding that the UEL Code of Good Practice in Research is adhered to.

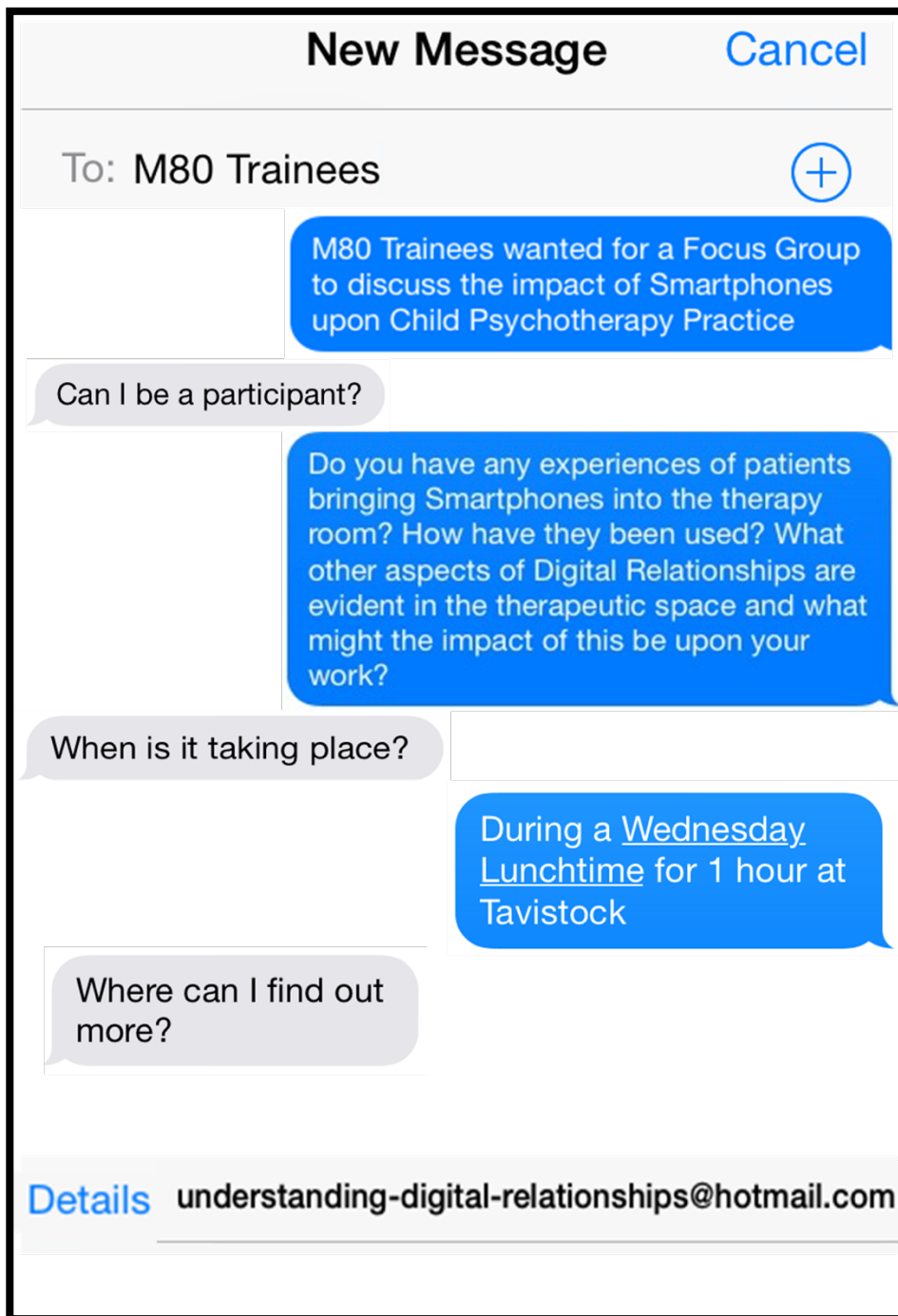**Please note, it is your responsibility to retain this letter for your records.**
With the Committee's best wishes for the success of this project.
Yours sincerely,

Catherine Fieulleteau
University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)
Research Integrity and Ethics Manager
Email: researchethics@uel.ac.uk

Appendix 3 – Advert for Focus Group

Appendix 4 – Consent forms for Focus Group

University of East London
Graduate School, EB 1.43
University of East London, Docklands Campus, London E16 2RD

The Principal Investigator
David Hinchliffe
41 Dozule Close
Leonard Stanley
Gloucestershire GL10 3NL
07815630481
understanding-digital-relationships@hotmail.com

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in this study.

Project Title
UNDERSTANDING DIGITAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH SMARTPHONES: A PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE

Project Description
The aim of this investigation is to examine the phenomenon of digital relationships with Smartphones from a psychoanalytic perspective in order to gain deeper understanding of the unconscious aspects of digital relationships within the current Technoculture and explore how this understanding may be beneficial to the clinical practice of Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy

The use of smartphones and other digital devices has become a dominant feature within contemporary culture, particularly with younger people, over a relatively short period of time. There is little research into the use of smartphones and other digital devices from the perspective of psychoanalytic theories and the implication of such digital relationships upon clinical psychoanalytic practice with children and young people.

This research proposes to undertake an Integrative literature review of relevant psychoanalytic literature with literature relating to how new media is adopted and domesticated in order to gain some understanding of the unconscious aspects of digital relationships between children and young people and smartphones. The researcher will also undertake a limited study into his own digital relationship with his smartphone over the period of a week as a way of recording empirical evidence. He will also study the absence of this relationship for a period of three days.

In addition, in order to generate thoughts about the practice implications for Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy the researcher will also convene a Focus Group made up of Training Child Psychotherapists in order to gather experiences of the impact and influence of digital relationships in the consulting room.

I am seeking Child Psychotherapy Trainees to participate in this Focus Group to discuss the impact of Smartphones upon Child Psychotherapy practice. Participants would be asked to share anonymised clinical experiences of Smartphones being brought into sessions and any observations of how patient digital relationships are brought into the therapeutic relationship and experience. The Focus Group will take place at the Tavistock Clinic during Wednesday lunchtime and will last for 60 minutes. The discussion will be audio-tape and transcribed before being analysed. It is hoped that this will be a helpful experience for participants who will be able to share their observations and learn from other practitioner's experiences. There will be the offer of further informal discussion with the investigator if any participants should wish to do so.

Confidentiality of the Data

The data generated in the course of this research will be retained in accordance with the University's data protection policy. The data that will be used in the research will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and the information stored on a computer with password protection. The tapes of the recorded interviews and meetings will be destroyed once the thesis has been examined. Participants should be aware that the confidentiality of the data they provide is subject to legal limitations in data confidentiality: i.e. the data may be subject to a subpoena or a freedom of information request.

Disclaimer

You are not obliged to take part in this study, and are free to withdraw at any time during tests. Should you choose to withdraw from the programme you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason.

University Research Ethics Committee

This research study has received the formal approval of the University Research Ethics Committee. If you have any queries regarding the conduct of the programme in which you are being asked to participate, please contact:
Catherine Fieulleteau, Research Integrity and Ethics Manager, Graduate School, EB 1.43
University of East London, Docklands Campus, London E16 2RD
(Telephone: 020 8223 6683, Email: researchethics@uel.ac.uk).

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Consent to Participate in a Programme Involving the Use of Human Participants.

Project Title
UNDERSTANDING DIGITAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH SMARTPHONES: A
PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE

I have the read the information leaflet relating to the above programme of research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what it being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researchers involved in the study will have access to the data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the programme has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me and for the information obtained to be used in relevant research publications.

Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)
………………………………………………………………….
Participant's Signature
………………………………………………………………………………
…..
Investigator's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)
…………………………………………………………………..
Investigator's Signature
………………………………………………………………………………
…

Date: ………………………….

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Appendix 5 – Additional information for participants

University of East London
Graduate School, EB 1.43
University of East London, Docklands Campus, London E16 2RD

The Principal Investigator
David Hinchliffe
41 Dozule Close
Leonard Stanley
Gloucestershire GL10 3NL
07815630481
understanding-digital-relationships@hotmail.com

Project Title
UNDERSTANDING DIGITAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH SMARTPHONES: A
PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE

Potential questions for Focus Group Discussion/interview:

o How have Smartphones been used by patients in the therapy room?
- What have patients told you and what have you observed?
o Have you been able to talk about Smartphone use in the session when this has happened?
- Has the presence of the Smartphone been acknowledged by the patient?
o How has this impacted upon you capacity to think in such sessions?
o How has this impacted upon the patient's capacity to engage in their session?
o Has the Smartphone made it easier for some patient's to engage? Has it made it harder?
o How has the use of a Smartphone impacted upon the therapeutic dyad and the psychoanalytic process?
o Is there any evidence of digital relationships impinging upon the therapeutic relationship even without the presence of a Smartphone? Is it present in the clinical material?

Appendix 6 – Coding extract – Focus Group

Coding Extracts

No.	Sent No.	Quote	Codes
1	5	*It feels like it doesn't get too much in the way of sessions.*	*#Non-intrusive* *#Not an obstacle*
2	12	*I think its being able to think about phones in relation to what they are doing*	#Thinking about phones #Relating to the 'what' they are doing
3	13	*Patient has been really interested in the data storage and how much it can hold*	#Data storage #Holding capacity of the therapist #Containment #Safety #Will I be too much? (coms)
4	14	*He brings in a portable battery and plugs it in and takes some power from the room*	#Personal resources #Distrust #Self-sufficient #Therapy resources #Recharge #Omnipotence #Connection #Sharing vs Taking #Use of power #Plugging in to therapy
5	16	*I've had quite a lot of plugging in as well…phones in the background*	#Unconscious #Presence in the room #Support #Fear of missing out (FOMO) #Unable to disconnect