

# A College Psychology Teacher's Experience of Cell Phone Addiction in the Classroom: Autoethnographic Reflections

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## Abstract

This article describes the author's auto ethnographic reflections of his experiences with college students' excessive and inappropriate use of cell phones in the classroom, from his perspective as a college psychology instructor. The article's focus is upon a combination of personal relevant experience in the context of the qualitative research method of autoethnography, its interplay with performance in the context of giving a presentation about cell phone addiction in the college classroom at a humanistic psychology conference, exposure of the negative consequences of the excessive and inappropriate use of cell phones in college classrooms, and what the author refers to as 'humanistic antidotes' to offset these negative consequences. The thrust of the article is based upon the author's personal relevant experiential reflections during his Spring, 2016 college psychology teaching, and his subsequent preparation and delivery of his related conference talk.

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*Index terms*— autoethnography, humanistic education, cell phone addiction, humanistic antidotes

## 1 Introduction

ocial media addiction in the form of the inappropriate and excessive use of cell phones is prevalent in college classrooms all across the United States . However, the lived experience of this phenomenon from the perspective of the college instructor has not been the focus of research on this topic. On the other hand, there have been a number of firsthand accounts of what it is like for college instructors to live in the world of academia ( Richardson, 1997). These firsthand accounts make considerable use of qualitative research in the form of autoethnography (Chang, 2008; Denzin, 2013; Ellis, 2004, 2009; Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013).

Autoethnography was developed in the last few decades of the 20 th century, largely through the efforts of sociologist Carolyn Ellis (2004, 2009), and focuses upon the researcher's firsthand experiential account in relation to the social dynamics and context that he or she is investigating. Unlike strict ethnographic research that does not include personal reflections of the researcher, autoethnography extends participant observation research through placing a significant reliance upon the relevant feelings, thoughts, perspectives, experiences, reflections, insights, and personal stories of the researcher, and often involves a high level of personal vulnerability in terms of revealing emotional/private aspects of oneself (Chang, 2008; Denzin, 2013; Ellis, 2004, 2009; Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013). Autoethnography has been rapidly growing in recent years in both its depth of inquiry as well as the variety of topics written about. This is evident from the combined scholarly and personal experiential essays across a wide array of topics in the 2013 Handbook of Autoethnography (Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013), which includes sexuality, family life, marriage, academic life, domestic violence, war, post-colonialism, walking, "queerness," high school reunions, reflections on writing, performance, and artful inquiry. In my own autoethnographic writings, I have written about the topics of artistic creativity, community mental health, modern religions and cults, and spirituality and an exploration of life after death (Benjamin, 2008, 2011, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2015a).

The depth and growing variety of topics included in autoethnographical research is consistent with the focus of this article on social media addiction in the form of the inappropriate and excessive use of cell phones in

44 college classrooms, from the perspective of the experience of the college instructor. More specifically, I will  
45 describe my experience as a college psychology instructor of teaching my psychology classes while dealing with  
46 the above phenomenon of social media addiction in the form of the inappropriate and excessive use of cell  
47 phones. In most of my previous articles on this topic (Benjamin, 2015b, 2016, in press), I have described the  
48 above phenomenon primarily in terms of ways of dealing with the situation to improve the classroom environment,  
49 teacher effectiveness, and students relating more personally to each other, which I have referred to as "humanistic  
50 antidotes." 2 However, in this article I explore my own experiences of the above phenomenon in far more depth  
51 and vulnerability, giving what I believe is a novel autoethnographic account of what college instructors may  
52 experience when their students engage in the inappropriate and excessive use of cell phones in the classroom.

## 53 2 II. Autoethnography, Performance, and Social Action

54 In recent years there has been a growing interest in what has been described as "performance autoethnography"  
55 (Alexander, 2013; Denzin, 2003; Pelias, 1999, 2013; Shoemaker, 2013; Spry, 2011a, 2011b). Spry (2011b) has  
56 described performance autoethnography as follows:

57 Performance autoethnography views the personal as inherently political, focuses on bodies-in-context as a  
58 co-performative agent in interpreting knowledge, and holds aesthetic craft of research as an ethical imperative  
59 or representation...[For me] it has been about dropping down out of the personal and individual to find painful  
60 and comforting connections with others in sociocultural contexts of loss and hope. (Alexander, 2013, p. 543;  
61 Spry, 2011b, p. 498) There is also a growing interest in the inclusion of performance autoethnography in a wide  
62 educational context, as described by Pineau (1994, 1998):

63 There is a commitment to a critical exploration of culture and positionality that is integrated throughout  
64 a pedagogical context (e.g., classroom, community-based activism, human services, therapeutic contexts) or  
65 even across the curriculum as a primary methodology...Autoethnography is taught as an engaged performative  
66 pedagogy [sic] that consistently interrogates the metaphor of teaching as performance. (Alexander, 2013, p. 553)  
67 Furthermore, the integration of writing and performance is a powerful means of "making the personal political"  
68 (Holman Jones, 2005 I also knew that conveying my experiences impactfully was very much related to my  
69 ability to dramatically present my experiences, which is very much at the core of performance autoethnography,  
70 as described above. However, while I needed to work through a good deal of conflicting feelings between my  
71 academic role and my desire to be authentically who I am, my goal was more than to simply convey my relevant  
72 experiences to my conference participants in an impactful way. I also wanted to raise awareness of an issue that  
73 I believe is of paramount importance in our society and the world, which is retaining our human capacities of  
74 relating to each other amidst the staggering and overwhelming technological world that we are living in, in the  
75 hopes that this raising of awareness would have some effect, small as it may be, in the lives of those attending  
76 my talk. Thus my goal III.

## 77 3 Authethnography and Ethics

78 Autoethnography shares the concerns about ethics in research with all other forms of qualitative and quantitative  
79 research, as described in the Belmont Report (United States Department of Health and Humane Services, 1979).  
80 However, autoethnography also has its own set of particular issues in the form of "relational ethics" (Ellis, 2007,  
81 2009; Tullis, 2013) that needs to be dealt with. There are a wide variety of perspectives about how to deal  
82 with the ethical issues that arise from doing autoethnographic research (Tullis, 2013). There is a built-in tension  
83 between wanting to be vulnerable and revealing one's deepest relevant thoughts and experiences, with the possible  
84 consequences of revealing "secrets" of those the autoethnographer is writing about, which may be viewed by those  
85 being written about as violating trust, friendship, and relationship bonds (Ellis, 2007, 2009; Shoemaker, 2013;  
86 Tullis, 2013). Furthermore, revealing deep vulnerable distressing aspects of oneself may have detrimental personal  
87 consequences to the autoethnographer that also needs to be dealt with (Chatham-Carpenter, 2010; Metta, 2013;  
88 Tullis, 2013).

89 In my own autoethnographic writings, I frequently had to deal with this conflict between vulnerable relevant  
90 self-revelations, and respecting the privacy and maintaining the trust of personal relationships (Benjamin, 2008,  
91 2011, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2015a). I always made the decision to reveal vulnerably as much about myself as I  
92 felt I could do without violating personal relationships that were very important to me, when I believed that  
93 this revelation was significant and relevant to what I was writing about. was to infuse autoethnography and  
94 performance social action.

95 However, this sometimes was an excruciatingly difficult process to navigate. Authoethnography is certainly  
96 not a research method for the faint-hearted.

97 Fortunately (for me) in my research on social media addiction in the form of the inappropriate and excessive  
98 use of cell phones in the college classroom, the relational ethics involved in my autoethnographic research was  
99 not very difficult to traverse. In my most recent articles, I left my university unnamed, other than including the  
100 fact that it is in Maine, and I used numerical codes to describe my students' excerpts from their project papers  
101 involving social media addiction and excessive cell phone use (Benjamin, 2016, in press). I continue to take the  
102 same safeguards in the present article, and I am confident that consequently there is no breach of relational ethics  
103 in my descriptions of my students or my university.

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104 However, I must admit that it was more difficult for me to come to terms with my own personal vulnerability  
105 and exposure in my autoethnographic descriptions that follow.

106 My writings break open whatever solid wall I tend to hide behind in academia as Dr. Benjamin with my  
107 two Ph.D's, and they describe who I am and what I experienced in regard to the phenomenon I am researching,  
108 candidly in a way that I believe gives unique insight into what this experience is like for the college instructor  
109 who encounters the excessive and inappropriate use of cell phones in his or her college classes. The process of my  
110 experiential descriptions below was largely geared toward my WAPCEPC July, 2016 conference talk in New York  
111 City (see above), which was focused on this topic. My autoethnographic writings describe my conflict between  
112 being "academically respectable" and "telling it like it is" in regard to how I really felt and what I really thought,  
113 inclusive of all my self-doubts and vulnerabilities. But this is what I believe autoethnography is all about, and  
114 I think that my accounts that follow add relevant knowledge to the phenomenon that I have been personally  
115 researching, but of course it is you the reader who will decide for yourselves if this is the case.

## 116 4 IV.

### 117 5 Social Media/Cell Phone Addiction

118 My autoethnographic descriptions reflect three developing and overlapping themes:

119 Theme 1: the social issue of the inappropriate and excessive use of cell phones in the college classroom; Theme  
120 2: personal experience and social issues; Theme 3: social issues and performance autoethnography.

121 However, before exploring these themes, it is important to place Theme 1 in the wider context of the detrimental  
122 social aspects of excessive technology use in general, along with the related detrimental consequences of widespread  
123 narcissism (Twenge & Campbell, 2009) Regularly checking the mobile or internet through some important activity  
124 like meeting (Bullas, 2010)?..In a recent poll, 22% of teenagers log on to their favorite social media site more than  
125 10 times a day?..In some cases, it is replacing other forms of communication, such as face-to-face interactions?.they  
126 are so obsessed with checking their Facebook or Twitter so much that they miss out on fun or important things  
127 in life. (Benjamin, 2016, p. 5) Volume XVI Issue VII Version I For just about everybody, their phone is their  
128 life. That is how they keep in contact with everyone; that is where all their pictures are, and so on. Now even  
129 today I do not think one could imagine life without technology and social media. Use of technology is essential  
130 to make the tasks of life easier; however, its abnormal, excessive unnecessary use leads to addiction and makes  
131 life more difficult. (Benjamin, 2016, p. 3) I previously summed up the current research on the detrimental effects  
132 of inappropriate and excessive use of cell phones as follows:

133 It is now commonly agreed upon that in spite of the beneficial effects of the appropriate use of cell phones  
134 to effectively and quickly gather academic information, inappropriate cell phone use in high school and college  
135 classrooms is a pervasive problem in our current US society. The detrimental effects reported are inclusive  
136 of distraction from schoolwork and class activities, short attention spans, diminished reading capacity, lower  
137 GPA, higher anxiety, lower satisfaction with life, cheating on tests, and rudeness. 3 (Benjamin, 2016, p. 3) I  
138 have included a number of illustrative reports and research studies that convey the detrimental effects of social  
139 media/cell phone addiction in my previous articles (Benjamin, 2015b, 2015c, 2016 Yes the previous semester was  
140 worse. I got my "cheating" cell phone in the classroom initiation when one of my Introduction to Psychology  
141 students confided in me at the end of one of my classes during the first few weeks of the semester, how disturbing  
142 it was to him that the entire last row of students were using their cell phones to cheat on their quizzes for the  
143 past 2 weeks, while he industriously put in much time and effort studying for these quizzes. This shocked me  
144 and jolted me to find a constructive and creative way to respond to the situation. The result was that in the  
145 next class I had my students engage in The Psychology of Cheating small group discussion, in which they were  
146 required to share their personal school experiences of cheating or seeing others cheat 5 .

147 After their discussions, in this same class period, I followed up on this with my stern little lecture about  
148 academic ethics, the severe school penalties for cheating, and the inappropriate use of cell phones and other  
149 technology in the classroom. This cheating/cell phone initiation certainly put me on alert to my students using  
150 their cell phones inappropriately in my classrooms.

151 In my next experiential description, I expand upon the first two themes that I have described above, giving more  
152 concrete instances of what I encountered as the inappropriate and excessive use of cell phones in my classroom, but  
153 I also explore my own internal conflicts related to my teaching in what I experienced as a difficult and disturbing  
154 social environment. This is where I changed gears and explored what I have referred to as "humanistic antidotes"  
155 2 to what I was encountering, as well as started to think about preparing for my related conference talk, which  
156 would eventually immerse me in the Theme 3 connection of this social issue with performance autoethnography.

### 157 6 Thursday 6/22

158 As I think back to some of the particularly disturbing experiences I have had with my students in regard to what  
159 I view as their cell phone addiction, one incident that comes to mind for me involves a very gregarious female  
160 student who was in my Introduction to Psychology class the previous semester. Every class period this student  
161 would not look at the board while I was lecturing, but instead would be looking intently at her desk, and it was  
162 very obvious to me that she was surreptitiously engaging in her virtual social network world on her cell phone.  
163 However, unlike the other students who would be doing this, my generic cell phone psychology classroom and

164 what I refer to as "humanistic antidotes" 2 as a constructive response, I realize how important it is that I convey  
165 my own bona fide experience of cell phone addiction in the college classroom, as a college psychology instructor.  
166 minutes after he was intermittently engaged with his cell phone throughout my psychology class. But at least  
167 in psychology class he sat in the back row and I could pretend that I didn't see him engaging in his virtual social  
168 world with his cell phone-well at least some of the time I could pretend. I gradually realized that some of my  
169 students were truly addicted to their cell phones. They were suffering the pains of separation from their cell  
170 phones when I insisted that they put them away, and it was more than some of them were able to handle. And as  
171 I prepare to give my conference talk 4 , which is focused on my students' cell phone addiction in my Spring 2016  
172 Human Growth & Development warnings to the class had no effect on her whatsoever, including when I made  
173 eye contact with her and singled her out by name. Finally out of desperation to have this not continue, I sent her  
174 an e-mail and conveyed to her in no uncertain terms that her class participation grade was being lowered because  
175 of my concerns that she was using her cell phone in the classroom, and that if she wanted to continue to attend  
176 my class then she needed to be looking at the board when I was lecturing. And at the end of the next class,  
177 as she was leaving she burst into tears and said that I had no right to pick on her when the three girls in the  
178 first row were continually using their cell phones during the whole class period. And then she emotionally added  
179 that during the last class she was checking her cell phone because she had just found out that there was a school  
180 shooting at her brother's school. Before I could respond, she slammed the door and ran out of the classroom. I  
181 was left with a mess of conflicting feelings wondering if I were too hard on this student and not relating to her  
182 "humanistically," but then remembering that her looking-at-her-desk use of her cell phone had been going on  
183 during every single class since the beginning of the semester, not just the last class. But needless to say, I got on  
184 the case of the three female students in the first row, making eye contact with them when I would give my now  
185 regular warning reminders about cell phones at the beginning of every class period. One of these three female  
186 students had blatantly been using her computer every class to do something that I knew had nothing to do with  
187 my class lectures, as she was busily buried in her computer without looking at the board during the whole time  
188 I was talking, and completely ignored my continuous reminders to the class about using their computers only to  
189 take notes when I was lecturing. I ended up conveying to her in an e-mail that this was unacceptable behavior  
190 and was resulting in her lowered class participation grade, and this ended her inappropriate use of her computer  
191 during my lectures. I also closely monitored the looking-at-the-desk cell phone syndrome of this student and her  
192 two female friends in the first row, as well as the rest of my psychology students, as I was now more willing to call  
193 students out by name when I felt it was warranted. But I was feeling more like a policeman than a teacher, and  
194 my student evaluations were the worse I had received in the 5 years in which I was teaching at this university.  
195 It was seeing my student evaluations from this previous semester after teaching Human Growth & Development  
196 for about a month this past semester, that prompted me to reduce my lectures from a half hour to 10 or 15  
197 minutes, and to require my students to be engaging in personal/academic small group discussions every class  
198 period 6 . This is the crux of what I came up with as humanistic antidotes for the inappropriate use of cell phones  
199 in the classroom accompanied by widespread narcissism, and is the basis of my upcoming conference talk 2,4 .  
200 And I do think that there is much value in requiring students to continually engage in authentic discussions and  
201 personal/academic sharing and relating to each other, while putting away their cell phones. But I know that it  
202 is also important to me that I honestly convey what this experience of cell phone addiction in the classroom has  
203 been like for me as a college psychology teacher. This is autoethnography in a nutshell 7 , and it is real and  
204 "the truth."

205 The truth is that it was "a drag" for me continuing to teach my Human Growth & Development class last  
206 semester after I saw my awful student evaluations from the previous semester, which included some students  
207 complaining about my "rude" behavior and "old-fashioned" teaching. The truth is that what enabled me to  
208 finish out the semester was knowing that I was practicing and experimenting with the humanistic antidotes that  
209 I have briefly described above, in preparation for my conference talk and article that is based upon my talk  
210 8 . However, I will not be engaging in these humanistic antidotes in college psychology classrooms anymore,  
211 as I was not asked to teach again at this university, and I am now very content being a psychology mentor  
212 and committee chair to online Ph.D psychology students at Capella University 9 . However, I feel somewhat  
213 hypocritical promoting my humanistic antidotes in the psychology classroom, that I will not be using. At the  
214 very least I should make an effort to see my student evaluations from this past semester when they are available,  
215 to learn if any of my efforts to engage my students continually in meaningful personal/ academic discussions  
216 were appreciated. And at my conference talk, I can facilitate others sharing about their experiences with social  
217 media addiction and narcissism, which is a significant part of the description of what my talk is about, as well  
218 as if the participants have found any effective humanistic antidotes to combat this. Authentically conveying my  
219 difficult experiences in response to the inappropriate cell phone use in my college psychology teaching, rather  
220 than presenting myself as an academic professional studying the "dual epidemic" of social media addiction and  
221 narcissism 10 in our society, is more honest and consequently more "humanistic." And this honest sharing of my  
222 own exp-eriences to convey firsthand something meaningful about the social phenomenon of cell phone addiction  
223 in the classroom from the perspective of the psychology teacher, is what my deepest self knows it should be  
224 doing for my conference talk. At this point in my reflections, I decide to view my student evaluations, and the  
225 disappointment and discouragement that I feel after viewing them have the effect of making me seriously consider  
226 canceling my upcoming conference talk. This internal conflict that I vulnerably share is very much at the core

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227 of my autoethnographic accounts as a college instructor caught in the web of trying to teach in the detrimental  
228 social environment of students tuning out my teaching through their inappropriate use of cell phones. However,  
229 my conflicts gradually work themselves out as I wrestle through the dilemma of wanting to be authentic in sharing  
230 my relevant teaching experiences at my upcoming conference talk (Themes 2 and 3), with also wanting to present  
231 myself in a professional academic capacity, promoting what I viewed as an important educational social issue  
232 (Theme 1).

## 233 7 Friday 6/23

234 And as it turns out, my student evaluations from this past semester were available to me. What can I say? Yes  
235 they were improved from the previous semester, but still disappointing to me. Although my overall numerical  
236 ratings appeared to be in the average vicinity, there were only one or two appreciative comments about all the  
237 social face-to-face meaningful interactions that I required of my students as part of their small group discussions  
238 every class period. And what struck me much more impactfully and has stayed with me and makes me feel sad,  
239 were the greater number of negative comments, though not as much as in the previous semester.

240 Perhaps if my lectures were more interesting and more technologically modern, then students would have been  
241 less inclined to give in to their cell phone temptations to begin with? 11 Although I don't think the following  
242 comment was representative of how most of my students felt, I can't forget the way one student described his or  
243 her experience of the personal/academic small group discussions as "being forced to remember the shitty events  
244 of my past." Yes that hurt. The truth is that I do not feel like I was successful in creating humanistic antidotes for  
245 the cell phone addiction that I witnessed in my college psychology classroom teaching. And yet I am scheduled  
246 to give a talk at a humanistic psychology conference next month that is focused on these humanistic antidotes. I  
247 feel like canceling my talk at this conference, but then I remember back to how I felt and what I decided when I  
248 saw my student evaluations from the previous semester, a month into teaching my classes last semester. I decided  
249 to revamp my conference talk description and I gave more emphasis to facilitating a group discussion about how  
250 others dealt with our society's social media addiction and narcissism 12 , and what humanistic antidotes they  
251 found effective in dealing with this. This eliminates the image of myself as a successful humanistic antidotes  
252 practitioner, and it enables me to simply describe my experiences of cell phone addiction in my classrooms, from  
253 my perspective as a college teacher. Perhaps if I were a better teacher there would have been less use of cell  
254 phones in my classroom? Perhaps this is the topic that would be most interesting and most useful to discuss in  
255 my workshop; i.e., presenting material in interesting and stimulating ways in the classroom is the most effective  
256 humanistic antidote to reduce the inappropriate use of cell phones in the classroom? Perhaps my intensive  
257 response to some of my students' inappropriate use of their cell phones was more about my own issues than it  
258 was about the reality of their inappropriate cell phone use? Well I think if I approach my conference talk in the  
259 context of facilitation of group discussion after honestly sharing my relevant experiences, this may be of value to  
260 anyone who attends my talk. So I won't cancel my talk, but rather I will go to my conference in a more humble  
261 way than I had been anticipating.

262 In my next two accounts, after re-reading my student evaluations and seeing them in a more positive  
263 light, I work through a significant personal/professional challenge directly related to my Theme 3 performance  
264 autoethnography social issue plan for my conference talk. The article I submitted based upon my conference talk  
265 is rejected by the journal connected to the conference, and it is all I could do to not cancel my talk. The relevant  
266 internal conflicts of myself as an academic professional dealing with the above Theme 1 social issue is now at the  
267 heart of my autoethnographic reflections.

## 268 8 Sunday 6/25

269 As I re-read my student evaluations from last semester, I realized that based upon their numerical ratings of my  
270 teaching in a number of categories, inclusive of the value of class time and discussions, stimulating and intellectual  
271 classroom atmosphere, and effective teaching and critical thinking skills, there were a number of students who  
272 did appreciate my teaching methods that focused upon their interactive group discussions. There were certainly  
273 more students who rated me as favorable than unfavorable, and my overall numerical ratings appear to be above  
274 average, which is certainly a significant improvement from my distressing student evaluations of the previous  
275 semester 13 . However, most of the students who chose to make personal comments were obviously not the  
276 students who rated me as favorable, and the comments of these students were hurtful to me. But what is even  
277 more hurtful to me is that I just found out that my article based upon my conference talk has been rejected  
278 by the journal affiliated with the conference. No reason given, just a statement that in spite of the merits of  
279 my article the editors decided it was not suitable for their journal, and it was recommended that I send my  
280 article to a specific other journal, with e-mail addresses of the two editors of this other journal. I suppose the  
281 suggestion of this other journal and the e-mail addresses of the editors is a positive indication that my article was  
282 appreciated, and it happens to be the case that the new journal recommended to me is one that published one of  
283 my humanistic psychology articles a number of years ago 14 . But I must honestly say that I feel like the wind has  
284 gotten knocked out of me. I wrote back to the journal editor who sent me my letter of rejection, and I asked for  
285 more feedback about why my article was rejected, and conveyed that I am thinking of canceling my conference  
286 talk that is based upon my article. Indeed, given all that I have questioned about my own responsibility for my

287 students' cell phone behavior in the classroom, both to myself and to anyone reading this present article, it may  
288 be appropriate for me to cancel my conference talk regardless of whether my article was accepted or not in the  
289 journal. But it is time for me to end this day and do some math in the morning, and hopefully I will be in a  
290 better state of mind tomorrow.

## 291 9 Tuesday 6/27

292 Yes I was in a better state of mind the next day after getting a decent night's sleep and doing my mathematics,  
293 and I had some partially satisfying communications with the conference organizer and journal editor. It seems  
294 that my article was never reviewed, but rather it was decided that it was not appropriate for this journal because  
295 of the journal's focus on psychotherapy. However, I wish this had been conveyed to me beforehand, as the  
296 conference has the same focus on psychotherapy and I therefore thought that it was appropriate submitting my  
297 article to this journal. At any rate, there is definitely now a barrier between myself and this conference, and my  
298 relationship with both the conference organizer and the journal editor has been damaged. But I have decided  
299 to keep my plans of attending the conference and giving my talk. And I sent out my article to another journal,  
300 which makes me feel empowered. I realize that I truly do believe in what I have been writing about and have  
301 experienced in the classroom; i.e., cell phone and social media addiction, and narcissism. I think these "normal"  
302 parts of modern US society should be examined from the context of humanistic psychology, and for whatever  
303 reason I have been given the opportunity to convey my concerns about these issues, and to facilitate a discussion  
304 about what can be done to offset these issues, in a humanistic context to participants at a conference with a  
305 humanistic psychology focus on psychotherapy. I think I am now at a point where I will be preparing to give my  
306 talk at the conference, and I will conclude these autoethnographic reflections after I give my conference talk.

307 There is now a 3 week break before I write again, and in my next two accounts I am in the process of going  
308 to New York City for my conference. My internal professional conflicts have been resolved to a large extent,  
309 both in my article being appreciated and seriously considered for publication by another journal 9 , and in my  
310 development of a twofold formulation for my conference talk. This twofold formulation combines the sharing of  
311 my authentic experience as a college psychology teacher dealing with the Theme 1 social issue, with professionally  
312 presenting in an academic context my humanistic antidotes to offset this Theme 1 social issue. All three themes  
313 are now coming together for me, as I prepare to make an impact giving my conference talk as a performance  
314 autoethnographer, conveying my relevant personal experience of putting into practice humanistic antidotes to  
315 offset the distressing social issue of the inappropriate and excessive use of cell phones in the college classroom.

## 316 10 Monday 7/18

317 It is now nearly 3 weeks later and tomorrow I leave for New York to attend my conference. It turns out that  
318 I got an appreciative positive response from the editor of the journal that I sent my article to, which was the  
319 journal recommended to me from the editor of the journal that initially rejected my article 15 . I was also  
320 asked to significantly shorten my article, and consequently my article is now divided into two separate articles  
321 being considered for publication by two different journals 10 . Together with this present article focused on my  
322 autoethnographic reflections, I now have three current articles pertaining to cell phone/social media addiction  
323 in the college psychology classroom. I'm feeling more confident and geared up to attend my conference and give  
324 my talk, in which I still plan on making available time for group discussion about this topic. However, it remains  
325 to be seen for how much of my talk I will use excerpts from these autoethnographic reflections, compared to  
326 excerpts from my two more professional/academic articles that are presently being considered for publication 10  
327 . At any rate, I think I will read some of these autoethnographic reflections to whomever attends my creative  
328 artists support group 16 1,12 . The second part of my message is that there are humanistic antidotes for this  
329 addiction that we as humanistic psychologists can promote. I can describe these humanistic antidotes in regard  
330 to my own college psychology teaching simplistically as a three stage process: 1) stop students from using their  
331 cell phones inappropriately in class, as much as possible; 2) structure the class so that students speak a dominant  
332 part of their class time, talking with each other in meaningful ways about personal/academic course topics; 3)  
333 promote awareness of the negative aspects of excessive and inappropriate cell phone and social media use through  
334 well-chosen discussion topics that will stimulate some students to write a term paper on this topic. This three  
335 stage process can be further simplified as 1) attentioneliminate inappropriate cell phone use in the classroom; 2)  
336 engagement-students engage in personal/ academic small group discussions every class period; 3) awareness-some  
337 students decide to learn more about cell phone and social media addiction for one of their term papers. But first  
338 I need to get back to the process of getting my two articles on this topic published 10 . So what did the people  
339 who attended my talk think about social media addiction? Well virtually everyone who spoke up during the  
340 discussion, which was about a half-dozen people, agreed that this was a problem, but some of the younger people  
341 did not think it was quite as extreme as I was conveying. The young man, who was the second person to come into  
342 the classroom, suggested that teachers be trained to deal more effectively with teaching in the technology age.  
343 However, from the smiles and attention and responsiveness that my participants displayed during my whole talk,  
344 and from the thank you's and appreciation that I received from a number of them after my talk, I feel confident  
345 that my talk had impact on virtually all who attended. I feel successful, and I am psyched to continue my efforts  
346 to increase awareness in my society about the pervasive problem of social media addiction and narcissism.

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## 11 VI.

## 12 Conclusion

349 It is now over 2 months since I gave my conference talk, and the traditional Fall 2016 college semester has started  
350 up. However, I am not teaching in the traditional Fall 2016 college semester, and the whole issue of cell phone  
351 addiction in the college classroom feels much more removed to me.

352 But what I have experienced as a college psychology teacher in regard to the excessive and inappropriate use  
353 of cell phones in the classroom is something that I think is both relevant and important to share in the world of  
354 academia. Aside from all the negative consequences of this phenomenon, as I have described above and in some  
355 of my previous articles 1 , the relevant experiences of the college instructor who is dealing with the excessive and  
356 inappropriate use of cell phones in his or her classroom is not something that has been the focus of research.  
357 Consequently it is in this context that I have engaged in autoethnographic reflections of my own experiences as  
358 a college psychology instructor dealing with this phenomenon.

359 As I worked through my conflicts of coming to terms with the mixed reactions of my students to my humanistic  
360 antidotes of dealing with their excessive and inappropriate use of cell phones in my Spring, 2016 Human Growth  
361 & Development classroom, it was the anticipation for and planning of my conference talk on this topic at a  
362 humanistic psychology conference that kept me motivated to try to effectively deal with the disturbing cell phone  
363 behaviors that I encountered in my classroom.

364 I gradually realized that the message I wanted to convey at my conference talk was twofold: I wanted to convey  
365 my relevant real experiences as a college teacher who had to deal with this phenomenon, but I also wanted to  
366 convey what I found worked at least somewhat effectively as humanistic antidotes to offset this phenomenon.  
367 This twofold perspective is consistent with the combining of autoethnography, performance, and social action,  
368 as I have described above in my three themes, and I feel satisfied that I accomplished my twofold goal in a  
369 reasonably effective way during my conference talk. However, I am not yet clear about what my future endeavors  
370 will be in this context.

371 As I have indicated above, I believe that virtually our whole US society is engaged in the excessive and  
372 inappropriate use of their cell phones, at the expense of natural human interactions and relationships, as has  
373 been frequently described. 1 However, it may be the case that the most extreme form of this phenomenon is  
374 on the college campus, and therefore I think it is important for college instructors to describe their personal  
375 relevant experiences with their students' excessive and inappropriate use of cell phones in their classrooms. For  
376 as Stacy Holman Jones (2005) has conveyed, "the personal can be made political," and this is very much at the  
377 heart of what I believe my autoethnographic reflections in this article are about: the twofold process of conveying  
378 my relevant personal experiences as a college psychology teacher dealing with the phenomenon of the excessive  
379 and , inappropriate use of cell phones in his classroom, and my desire to offer humanistic antidotes and raise  
consciousness about the negative consequences of this phenomenon. Notes 1) See Benjamin, 2015b, 2016, in

Figure 1:

). As described  
by Toyosaki & Pensoneau-Conway (2013):  
We find in autoethnography fertile ground for social  
justice projects?.It is the move towards actualizing  
hoped-for possibilities, towards world-making,  
towards social criticism, where autoethnography  
finds it [sic] thrust. (p. 571)  
It is in this context of performance auto-  
ethnography that I describe a significant part of my  
experiential process as a college psychology instructor  
in regard to the inappropriate and excessive use of cell  
phones in my Spring, 2016 Human Growth &  
Development psychology class at what I will refer to for  
anonymity reasons as simply "University." The auto-  
ethnographic research that I describe below was largely  
motivated by my upcoming (at that time) talk entitled  
"Humanistic Antidotes for a

Figure 2:

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Christopher Aanstoos (2015):

Robots and/or computers are increasingly taking care of children and the elderly, but they do not care about them?.the recipients think they are loved by machines, a shallowing out takes the place of genuine human relations?.Time spent on the Internet means less time spent with friends and even with families. Research done at the early phase of this development showed that increasing computer usage results in more loneliness and depression?.increasing

technologies [such as Facebook] can dangerously reshape one's emotional life, resulting in fewer and more superficial relationships?.the typically more narcissistic and impulsive online "personas" are dangerous because they contribute to the person becoming more impatient and grandiose in life?.The great conundrum here may be that as people now communicate more quantitatively, they may do so less qualitatively [sic]. (pp. 246-247)

In my last 2 years of teaching psychology at University, I have gathered a number of descriptions by my students that reinforce Aanstoos' above concerns about the excessive social use of technology, which I have described as follows:

Families living under the same roof and choosing to send each other text messages to communicate rather than actually "talk" to each other-including husbands and wives; students coming to class before the instructor arrives and silently being immersed in their social media world on their cell phones instead of talking to each other; young children sitting immobile in front of their computers to vicariously play their computer games or engage in their online social media communications instead of getting physical exercise playing with other children; college-age people spending 12 hours a day immersed in their social media technology, as disclosed by one of my Human Growth & Development class discussion groups; socially extroverted "online" people who avoid eye contact with others and completely lack social skills when in , as described by

reliamsach

*[Note: person; a student's roommate waiting for her to leave and then immediately texting her to convey all her complaints to her about living together; a 12year-old-girl who is continuously glued to her cell phone to the point of virtually not interacting inperson with any of her family members other than quick "yes" or "no" responses. The list goes on and on, and we haven't even scratched the surface when it comes to how all this social media technology immersion relates to family interaction, childhood obesity, unstable financial security through internet marketing, car accidents due to the use of cell phones when driving, etc.(Benjamin, 2015c, p. 2) people believe social You have more social media icons on your phone than productivity apps; You have more online friends than you do in real life; You check out Facebook or Twitter updates "after" going to bed; Abnormally excessive use of technology;]*

, in press). A good summary of these detrimental aspects was included in some of the research papers by students in my Spring, 2016 Human Growth & Development psychology class: From traditional television to iPads, social media, and cell phones, media and technology is becoming a dominant part of adolescents' lives. When one goes out into the public and they see adolescents not paying attention to anyone or anything but their cell phones, that comes from parenting. The amount of media use is becoming so unbelievable. Some teenagers send nearly 30,000 texts a month, often carrying multiple conversations simultaneously. As teenagers send that ridiculous amount of texts, they are emailing, Facetiming, playing video games, reading online books, using a computer, and watching television. One of the biggest problems in society

*[Note: today is the fact that adolescents don't know what it's like to have an actual face-to-face conversation. The social interaction in adolescents is lacking because of how caught up they are in technology. adolescents are getting involved in media and technology at a younger age. Many I enter my college psychology classroom-Human Growth & Development, and I dread once again seeing some of my students surreptitiously engaging in their cell phone social network worlds under their desks, while I am lecturing on my chosen topic of It used to be harder. For the first month of the semester I lectured for half an hour, but after I received my disappointing student evaluations for the previous semester, I knew that a half hour was much longer than I could tolerate the disturbing cell phone scenario for in my classroom. And the semester before this was even harder-in both my Introductory Psychology and College Algebra classes. I had one student who was in both my classes, and every single class period in math class he would sit right in front of me and blatantly engage in his cell phone communications, smiling sneakily at whatever he was socially engaged about. It became a regular class ritual at the beginning of class for me to tell him to put away his cell phone, with my usual warnings. He would reluctantly put away his cell phone for the moment, but then he would re-engage with his cell phone a few minutes later, instead of working out the assigned math problems using his calculator. Sometimes my anger would almost get the best of me and it would be all I could do to stop myself from screaming at him. And this was all a few]*

Figure 4:

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Tuesday 7/19

It's just about midnight as I am staying over in Sturbridge, Massachusetts on my way to New York. Last night I read the first few pages of this article, which was my initial 6/21 entry, to my creative artists support group. I received a round of applause, and my reading stimulated some lively discussion about social media addiction. My creative artists support group was very supportive to me, and this helped to boost both my confidence and enthusiasm about giving my conference talk.

I'm continuing to read the various essays in *The Handbook of Autoethnography* (Holman Jones, & Adams, 2013), and the personal experiential way of writing speaks to me deeply. However, I believe that I also have an important message to convey to the world of humanistic psychology, beyond that of my own personal experience. My message is twofold; the first part is that we are living in, as radical British psychiatrist R. D. Laing (1967) used to say in the 1960's, "an insane society." In the year that I am writing, 2016, cell phone and social media addiction, accompanied by widespread narcissism, is rampant in the United States and the whole Western world, and pervades virtually every US college classroom

Figure 5:

kind of creative combination is in order here. I want to convey my psychological/educational message about ~~social psychology~~ social psychology, accompanied by widespread narcissism, in college psychology classrooms, and I want to do this based upon what I have personally experienced as a college psychology teacher.

Finally, I conclude my autoethnographic accounts with a description of w

This same pattern happens again, and then the young man says that he was surprised that I started my workshop early, and it is explained to me that I had the wrong starting time for my talk! Yes my talk was scheduled for 15 minutes later than I had thought, and in the end I had 22 people attend my workshop. Everything went very well-people were very receptive to all that I shared, and a stimulating 20 minute discussion followed, which I had to end to allow people (including myself) to go to their/our next talk. From "down low" to "up high"-wow what a difference! People thanked me after my talk, and I felt like one of the "important" people at the conference. I was quite talkative at the next workshop I attended, and then I actively participated in a conference lunchtime discussion about starting a Ph.D graduate person-centered psychology program, which the conference organizer had expressed his desire for at our encounter group last night, and I had supported him by suggesting a lunchtime meeting. Who knows, maybe I'll apply to give a talk at their next conference in Vienna in 2018.

says that she is not, that she was just looking for someone. It is now 10 minutes after my talk is supposed to begin, and I start to accept the painful truth that no one is coming to my talk. I decide to pack up my papers, reading glasses, and watch, and put the chairs back into rows, and think about attending one of the other talks scheduled during my time slot, but nothing interests me. I know that it will take me a long time to accept this fiasco, as I have invested \$2,000 to come to this conference and have put extensive thought and preparation into my talk. I tell myself that these people are just not interested in the negative

Figure 7:



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