**Experiencing Humanity and Post-Humanity: An Introspective analysis of adventures in humanity communication technology**

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**Purpose:** This paper investigates the experience of stepping outside an order of information and communication technology, and asks if it is possible to return to a lived experience of humanity from a condition of post-humanity. Introspective accounts of the researcher’s experiences, emotions and behaviours were recorded during an experiment in which she abstaining from information and communication technology and the analysis is considered with reference to theories from Marshall McLuhan, Daniel Miller and others.

**Design/Method:** The researcher subjected herself to a two-week experiment involving stepping outside an order of information and communication technology. The experiment was recorded by daily diaries where notes about feelings, experiences, emotions and thoughts were taken down of how the experience without information and communication technology unfolded.

**Findings:** The findings of this research project indicate that the researcher experienced an increase in face-to-face communication, an increase in alternative activities with her friends and environment.

**KEY WORDS**

Technology, McLuhan, Miller, Haraway, extensions, material culture, and posthumanism.

**INTRODUCTION**

As Campbell, O’Driscoll and Saren (2010, p. 86) write, we are ‘beginning to realize that far from being a mere tool, technology, is the center of critical thought about [human] culture and about nature.’ Accordingly this paper seeks to critically think about the experience of stepping outside communication technology and to ponder the idea of a return to a lived experience of humanity as opposed to an order of post-humanity. Theories of how our lives become entangled with technologies from such authors as Miller, Harraway and McLuhan are considered before an analysis of a two-week experiment in which the author lived independently of information technology.The central interest guiding this research project revolves around the impact and consequences of abstaining from information and communication technology, the researcher’s own changing patterns of behaviour during the experiment and the new strategies adopted to re-balance social connections.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Technology: What is it?**

The field of technology can be a vast minefield of different definitions, ranging from simple, to complex and adventurous ideas. Bruce and Hogan declare that ‘as technologies embed themselves in everyday discourse and activity, a curious thing happens. The more we look, the more they slip into the background. Despite our attention, we lose sight of the way they shape our daily lives’ (1998, p.270). In the same way that natural phenomena that appear gradually, such as maze growing from seeds to plants, and small towns transform into thriving cities are considered unexceptional and unproblematic, so too is the phenomenon of how technology enters and begins to structure our lives.

To summarise one of McLuhan’s (1964) frustrations, if we understand media as extensions of a person’s active and semiotic capabilities then why, for example, should wheels, tables, money and clocks not also be contemplated together with media such as newspapers, radio and television? Technology surrounds us; lights, cookers, showers, fridges have all, arguably, faded into the background of our lives and become taken for granted technologies. They have remained fairly static in terms of practical use and primary function. Miller (2010) believes that technology has become so embedded in our lives that it can become invisible and ‘remain peripheral’ to our vision.

There are many terms that aim to identify the current generation of 15-30 year olds. Palfrey and Gasser (2008, p.1) define a ‘digital native’ as anyone born after 1980 and shows characteristics ‘of being electronically or digitally technologically minded.’ Tapscott (2008, p.16) defines the ‘net generation’ as those born between January 1977 and December 1997 as after that he believes that there is a further generation shift.

Palfrey and Gasser (2008) argue that information and communication devices such as mobile phones, the internet, tablet devices and other gadgets have not only enhanced communication and interaction with friends, family and others but they have also brought new ways of creating friendships. The fact that these new possibilities for friendship are brought about via digital means does not reduce the sincerity of the friendship, they argue. Even if communication is carried out via virtual or digital means, the capacity to create real sincere friendships is still achievable because they argue friendship grows from similarities like shared interests, emotional attachments, actions, and frequent interactions (Palfrey and Gasser, 2008). As with any friendship, digital or not, there is always a chance of sudden detachment, and a development of a drop-in drop-out approach towards the friendship to develop (Palfrey and Gasser, 2008).

Turkle (2011) by contrast believes that ‘digital connections and the sociable robot may offer the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship’ (Turkle, 2011, p.1). The consumer becomes a social robot and connects digitally with others but instead of creating nurtured friendships, it merely offers the illusion of companionship and fellowship. Miller (2011, p.14) reflects that ‘in the end there is no way one can separate out the relationships we have through Facebook and the relationships we have to Facebook.’ Miller presents a dialectical understanding of our engagement of social media and argues that our very subjectivity becomes entangled with and constructed by the various means by which we engage with networks. Fundamentally, given the extent of this entanglement and the large personal investment people make as they engage with Facebook, Miller argues that there is no real distinction between the relationships we have with people through Facebook and the relationship that we have to Facebook. Hence Miller warns against delineating between an authentic friendship that exists outside social media and any virtual relationship within social media.

As Turkle states, we are ‘overwhelmed by the volume and velocity of our lives, (and) we turn to technology to help us find time’ (2011, p.16). Yet increasingly people are finding it hard to disengage from technological devices and consequently are unable to live in the moment. As Turkle argues, consumers are often so attached to technology that it acts as a prosthetic that they are unaware of as she puts it ‘Sometimes people experience no sense of having communicated after hours of connection’ (Turkle, 2011, p.12). McLuhan (1964) argued that whilst technologies do offer the ability to extend ourselves beyond our normal capabilities they also have the power to oppress rather than serve us. For example, some consumers become unable to travel, or function during a holiday, without their camera ‘the photograph has’ McLuhan argues, ‘reversed the purpose to travel, which until now has been to encounter the strange and unfamiliar’ (McLuhan, 1964, p.267). Hence McLuhan reminds us that consumption of technologies can bring about new dependencies as certain modes of behaviour become standardized.

**Technology: The Extended Self**

Marshall McLuhan is a key theorist in the field of technology studies. In such texts as *Understanding Media* (1964), *The Medium is the Message* (1967) and *Counterblast* (1969), he highlights how media influence act as ‘extensions’ of our bodies encouraging us to look at things from a technological perspective. He discusses the ways in which a range of media, have shaped themselves, hypothetically, to our bodies as we become entangled with technology and how this increases our scope of capability. For example, a shovel is used to dig holes but can be seen as an extension of our hands, a car can be seen as an extension of our feet, even the mobile phone, which allows us to communicate over large distances, can be argued as an extension of our voice.

McLuhan (1964) argues that a medium is any extension of our body, mind and even of a sense; anything from which change emerges. The medium of language allows us to extend our thoughts, feelings, experiences and emotions. Every time we conceive or create, innovations, ideas, and discoveries some form of change occurs, thus all are McLuhan’s media. Even more broadly considered, McLuhan allows to see a camera as not just an extension of sight but also an extension of memories as it records events and gives breadth to our memories.

Through using and conjoining with various technologies we are able to elaborate human functions through these technologies, however this can lead to a numbing of senses or ‘amputation’ (McLuhan, 1964). An example of an amputation is that although cars make travel easier, quicker and more convenient, some consumers have become consequentially obese, lazy and less healthy. An amputation of the mobile phone could be that it decreases face-to-face communication and the art of penmanship, as textspeak starts to prevail.

Similarly Miller (1987) argues that material practices come to objectify and reify certain modes of life. Sometimes these objectified realities become so prevalent and fundamentally structure societies, that it becomes impossible to imagine an alternative. Consider, for example, how the rise of the automobile not only changes consumer behaviour, as we start to drive where previously we might have walked, but also the entire urban geography transforms so that city planning comes to be hugely structures by the needs of automobiles, and vice-versa. And, rather than just relating to a set of material practices, how we live our lives will be, to a large extent, determined by the outcomes. This is all to repeat Miller’s central assertion; that our relationship with technology is dialectical. McLuhan’s work reminds us that in these moments of objectifications, we encounter unexpected outcomes, which can entail loss.

According to McLuhan some medical researchers see “any extension of ourselves ... as ‘autoamputation’” (1964, p.42). Technology is capable of both extending and amputating our reach or rendering useless other bodily function or experiences. Re-visiting the camera example, one could argue that the camera is a desirable extension but, on the other hand it is an ‘autoamputation’ as the consumer becomes complacent and relies on the camera to trigger memories. As a result of the camera’s importance, the eye effectively becomes less significant. It is now not enough to merely sit and appreciate the world because capturing the image on camera becomes the default action. The camera has changed the way we look at the world; we are fascinated with the camera as an extension of ourselves, constantly searching for the photo and reiterating the obsession by becoming ‘hypnotized by the amputation and extension of his (our) own being in a new technical form’ (McLuhan & Zingrone, 1995, p.154).

Moreover, this dependence and inability to step away from such reliance’s on technology has seen us become pre-occupied with the possibilities of what technology allows us to do rather than appreciate what we are capable of doing directly without it. McLuhan (1964) hence claims that we appreciate the benefits of the extensions but dislike what happens as a result of the amputations. Arguably, we have become robotic in that we no longer choose to take photographs, it is now something that we just do.

This leads to the idea that we become what we behold: ‘to behold, use or perceive any extension of ourselves in technological form is necessarily to embrace it’ (McLuhan, 1964, p.46). Experiencing the world through photographic lens highlights the idea that the consumer becomes a camera. Similarly Miller (1987, 2010) argues that consumption often brings about a blurring, and entanglement of subject and object, of how consumers and their objects mutually create and reinforce each other. As Miller indicates ‘each stage creates a new thing outside of ourselves, and we progress to the extent that we are able to see ourselves, in this extension of ourselves, which is after all our own product’ (2010, p.58).

When using a camera there is potential for the absence of interaction with other consumers in the surrounding environment as we become engrossed in the camera and taking a picture we become a *servomechanism* to the camera. ‘Servomechanism’ is the idea that by beginning to use objects, we then begin to serve them (McLuhan, 1964). A digital native might be considered the servomechanism of Facebook as it has proven to be powerful extension in which we can become intertwined and captured by its offering of friendships, pictures, videos by extension, given that Facebook users do not financially benefit from changing their bio-data into commercial value, it has been argued (Arvidsson, 2006) that we become immaterial labourers. In such context of servomechanism, it is easy to imagine how consumers might consider their friendships on Facebook more important than those off-line and posting personal photographs is the only way to prove to everyone that they are having fun.

In his chapter entitled ‘The Gadget Lover’in *Understanding Media* (1964),McLuhan introduces and likens the consumption of technology to the myth of Narcissus. He states the ‘point of this myth is the fact that men become fascinated by any extension of themselves in any material other than themselves’ (McLuhan, 1964, p. 41). The modern day story is that beauty is intensified by being reflected back by technology, and fascination with technology mediated-beauty has taken over our lives. What we have is not enough, we are thirsty for more, striding for enhanced extensions and improvements to use and incorporate. Regrettably this leaves us blind to other matters around us, displaced by our extensions.

In his theories McLuhan refers to environments as the ‘process’ (McLuhan, 1969, p.30) within which developments occur. These environmental changes revise the ratios of senses perception, as media is an extension that alters the way we think, act and perceive the world. ‘When these ratios change, men change,’ (McLuhan, 1967, p.41) every technology extends something but as a consequence another sense becomes less significant potentially leading to an altered view of the world around us.

**Materiality**

In order to make sense of what, on reflection, could be described as the ‘alone together’ relationship that society has formed with technology, we need to ‘understand, convey and appreciate our humanity through attention to our fundamental materiality’ (Miller, 2010, p.4). Borgerson suggests that ‘consumer choice, consumer experiences, consumer products- and material objects generally- are said to express and create, emancipate, and transform the consumer self’ (2005, p.493) in different situations but also to help us project to others who we are. Miller (2010) evaluates this everyday relationship between people and commodities they consume. His theory of materiality is based on the theoretical ideal of Hegel (1991), called Dialectic, and explores the mutual constitution between a consumer as subject and a commodity as an object. Borgerson states in her article that ‘Miller’s theory of materiality calls the agency of subjects and objects into question, as agency appears to emerge in relation, not as a quality of either subjects or objects’ (Borgerson, 2005:439). Miller argues against the intuitive idea that people make ‘stuff’ that symbolises or represents them for others- a broadly semiotic idea. Instead Miller emphasises that in material culture not only are we concerned with how things make people, but also how people make things (Miller, 2010, p. 41).

Indeed a vast market of accessories for one’s technological devices has arisen. The notion of being able to personalise, for example, a mobile phone through different ring tones, phone cover, models, apps is very common. This could be a creative reflection of an overflow of subjectivity into the object itself. The phone’s blankness invites users to personalise their products and therefore embrace it further into one’s identity. Graves-Brown, acknowledges that this personalisation is because ‘technology as an extension of ourselves is part of the self’ (2000, p.158).

Miller indicates that the view of how stuff ‘drains away our humanity, as we dissolve into a sticky mess of plastic and other commodities’ (2010, p.5) is a somewhat untrue and simplistic view of a past untarnished humanity. Miller considers us human beings to be ‘stuff’ as well, and through our use and identification with material culture we begin to see that it offers the ability for developing, just as much as suppressing our humanity. Whilst offering a digitally connected world in which we can all interact continuously and blissfully, we can also see that we are being overpowered by technology. A view that McLuhan strongly shares, that although these extensions give us the ability to do more things than our body alone would be capable of, we are being suppressed by them.

Miller (2010, p.125) argues that the study of material culture requires us to step away from an overpowering ‘emphasis upon meaning, to a greater consideration of what matters.’ Facebook offers the consumer the ability to stay at home whilst still socialising virtually making friends, talking to relatives, planning events or conducting activities which can be defined as more fulfilling and less isolating than just watching television. We can see what matters here is that Facebook allows consumers to express ourselves every minute of every day, where ever we may be; one click of a button and the deed is done, the addiction is fed.

Miller believes that once ‘stuff’ objectifies how we live, the specific objects itself become obscure and overlooked, ‘a state they usually achieve by being familiar and taken for granted’ (2010, p.51). Hence we live in a material culture since it is not just through our consciousness or physical existence that we become who we are, but it is the ‘exterior environment that habituates and prompts us’ (Miller, 2010, p.51). Technology that has become embedded into our lives, that fades into the background and is ‘peripheral’ to our vision, is often fundamental to our subjectivity and behaviour. Consequently the less we notice the ‘stuff’ around us, the more commanding and determinant of us they can become.

On the whole, one could deliberate that technology can be of huge benefit as it may allow a mother to communicate with her daughter who is on the other side of the world but there is always a flip side. Hence, as Miller (2010) suggests self-alienation is fundamental to objectification. Technology might destroy our ability to communicate by encouraging laziness, such as a text sent between friends just meters away from each other.

Following this dialectical logic, Miller (2010) theorises that once technology is consumed, it becomes a part of what we are; the humanity that existed before being digital connection is not the same as that which exists after and, accordingly, all of those technologies become assumed and camouflaged into the background. As Turkle (2011, p.16) states ‘our new devices provide space for the emergence of a new state of the self, itself, split between the screen and the physical real, wired into existence through technology.’

**Posthumanism in Relation to Humanism**

Campbell, O’Driscoll and Saren, (2010) refer to the emergence of a new structure of feeling: ‘the posthuman’. The rise of this information and communication technological age, has led to the term ‘posthuman’ implicating a state where the human body is no longer bound to ‘nature’ but is exposed to technological change. Pepperell (2003) identifies ‘posthuman’ as a word used to distinguish the end of that epoch of social development known as humanism, and in this sense simply meaning ‘after humanism.’ Pepperell (2003) further claims that it is no longer possible to follow the traditional view of what embraces a human being as the humans in recent years undertaken a huge transformation, which means that we must change understanding of humans and the way they interact and consume.

In this vein, posthumanists regards us, the consumers as embodied in an extensive technological world. This idea links perfectly to the theory of materiality as throughout our lives the ‘concept of the person, the sense of the self, the experience of being an individual’ (Miller, 2010, p. 39) are all fundamentally different, dependent on the time, the place, and the other surrounding people. Technology plays a crucial and active part in experiencing, determining and defining the self. In the contemporary industrialised west we now ‘live and move and have our being in the midst of our technologies’ (Giesler & Venkatesh, 2005, p.661).

Posthumanism refuses to keep concepts of human and animal, man and machine separate as Post (2010, p. 36) states ‘posthumanists tell us that boundaries have already been crossed and that there is no road back.’ Yet, Campbell, O’Driscoll and Saren (2010, p.86) explain that consumer research often theorises technology as ‘an externalized instrument that the human creates, uses and controls.’

Norbert Weiner first coined the term ‘cybernetics’ in the 1940’s yet it was Donna Haraway who popularized the term in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1991). Although she does not specifically use the term ‘posthuman’ she draws on three boundaries that protect the purity and innocence of ‘the human’ as a self controlled organism: ‘ (1) those between human and animal’, ‘(2) animal-human (organism) and machine’, and the territories of the ‘(3) physical and non-physical’ (Haraway, 1991, p.152-153).

For Haraway these boundaries are no longer protected because collections of ‘new hybrid creatures’ or ‘cyborgs’ have blurred the boundaries. Haraway (1991, p. 149) uses the term ‘cyborg’; ‘a hybrid of machine and organism.’ She proposes that cyborg creatures are composed of two vital elements; Firstly, ‘ourselves and other organic creatures in our unchosen ‘high-technological’ guise as information systems, texts and ergonomically controlled’ and secondly, ‘machines in their guise, also as communication systems, texts, and self-acting, ergonomically designed apparatuses’ (Haraway, 1991, p.1).

Accordingly cyborgs are a creature of social reality *and* a creature of fiction; a mixture of machines and organisms. From this illustration and definition of what Haraway constitutes as a cyborg we can identify a cyborg as the posthumanist consumer; a cybernetic creature that signifies the mutually beneficial relationship that exists between machine and animal but also reflects the changing amalgamation between ‘economic priority and insatiable desire, living being and observing system’ (Giesler & Venkatesh, 2005, p.661). That is to say that consumers are cyborgs living in this condition of posthumanity due to the fundamental embedment of technology in everyday lives.

Following the work of Haraway, Hayles (1999, p.3) takes a more critical perspective on posthumanism. Hayles states that ‘although the posthuman differs in its articulations, a common theme is the union of the human with intelligent machine.’ She believes that there is no basic difference, or total separation between ‘bodily existence and computer stimulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals’ (Hayles, 1999, p.3), but that they are all blurred into one. Put simply, the focus has shifted onto the lived experience, and how contact between humans and machines has investigated and probed the traditional consideration of what it means to be human. The result of technology’s powerful and penetrating aura is that it has resulted in this posthuman state: where there is an incessant building and re-building of man and machine.

However, Hayles constructs a different reading of what she believes to be posthuman by challenging the separation of materiality from information. Hayles (1999) maintains that information will never be able to fully function without the human body because it will always need to be represented by an instance or medium in human life practices. Consequentially Hayles problematises the privileged position claimed by humans as it fails to separate human nature from technology. In such a respect, a posthuman condition sees the end of a ‘man-centered’ or ‘human-centered’ world but not the ‘end of man’.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Rationale for Subjective Personal Introspection Approach**

This paper attempts to return to the lived experience of humanity from a condition of post-humanity, by stepping outside an order of information technology, by conducting a two-week experiment. In doing so, the method of Subjective Personal Introspection is undertaken, a method previously used in a range of studies such as Holbrook (1986, 1988, 1995, 1997, 2005), Gould (1991, 1995), Patterson (1998), and Brown (1998, 2012). The method seeks to generate personal reflection that ‘sheds light on a particular aspect of humanity’ as mirrored in the general consumer’s everyday life and principally in the researcher’s everyday life implying ‘I believe that- because I am human- when I write about myself- I inevitably describe some aspect of human condition’ (Holbrook, 2005, p. 45).

Gould (1991) perceives introspection as a method that offers the researcher the opportunity to uncover otherwise unobtainable data, unobservable from other methods and that introspection is an ‘an going process of tracking, experiencing and reflecting on one’s own thoughts, mental images, feelings, sensations and behavious’ (p.719). By drawing retrospectively on his own experience, ‘through memory, rigorous self analysis and continuing thought-experiential experiments’ (Gould, 1991, p.194) he engages the reader by integrating ‘theory and experience’ to provide an interesting and illustrated portrayal of his consumption accounts.

To be sure, introspection is not without its critics. Most notably, Wallendorf and Brucks (1993) argue that introspection is unscientific, that one participant source of data is unreliable and that such a method was unnecessary due to there being various other more verifiable techniques that would work just as well. However, Hackley (2007, p. 105) contends that to view introspective writings from this simplistic view is rather untrue as far from being just fun they are ‘stimulating, engaging and thought-provoking.’ Moreover, as argued by Brown (2012), introspection can bring to life otherwise boring, supposedly scientific forms of academia and engage the reader through their fascinating, though-provoking, relevant manner in a well written and worth reading stance.

This paper presents a self-experiment through subjective personal introspection, which ‘reports events and interprets meanings in which one has experienced intimate involvement’ (Holbrook, 1995, p.209). The researcher is a digital native and a consumer who accesses and uses various forms of technology. Following Holbrook (1995), the diaries take the form of creative writing that seeks to capture the experience, not just simply stating what activities the researcher partook in during the absence of technology.

**DATA ANALYSIS & FINDINGS**

**Technology: Who am I?**

Following Palfrey & Gasser, I self-identify as a ‘digital native’ and have ‘electronically or digitally technologically- minded’ (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008, p.1). I would also fit the label that Tapscott (2008) gave to classify those of the ‘net generation’ as I was born between January 1977 and December 1997.

Throughout my life I have used and depended on technology in order to function. Admittedly, compared to friends who are extremely dependent on technology, I have always pictured myself somewhere in the middle, reliant but not to the point of obsession. My diaries reveal that primarily, I use technology in order to achieve goals or to find a solution, such as asking my mum what time dinner will be, asking a friend what time they want to meet or, looking up definitions for words or theories.

In several entries, I refer to the fact that usually I call my friends to arrange meetings or to continue socialising with them. However, this was swapped for more face-to-face exchanges in order to continue to socialise normally:

*‘My mum passed by and stopped to talk to me asking me when and what time we would have dinner as theses things needed to planned now because usually we just texted each other and called each other.’*

*‘Got home mum was slightly stressed at me about where we had been all afternoon because usually I would text her if we were going somewhere just so she didn’t worry but I forgot to pass by home and tell her before we left.’*

‘*Slightly bewildered I staggered out of the room to be greeted by ten of my mates explaining they would have called before coming but I didn’t have a phone so they couldn’t.’*

*‘Adam’s mum looked quick shocked although happy to see me, I explained I would have called before coming around as a I usually do but was it ok if took Harvey for a walk.’*

Palfrey and Gasser (2008) discuss that devices such as laptops, phones, the internet not only help for practical communication reasons but also help with creating new friendships. Pinterest is a website in which I have developed online friendships with other users. I agree with Palfrey and Gasser (2008) when they argue that these digital avenues help create ‘real life friendships’, as real as any other friendships. The new friendships still require similar interests, bonds and frequent interaction to take place. The interlinking interest is a common interest in photography and foods from around the world. We comment on each other’s pages, discuss recipes and new ideas and we congratulate each other on certain pictures or recommend their page to others.

My diaries identify how I missed these virtual friendships and engagements which led to feelings of being alone and detached. Pinterest is my only method of socializing with the majority of these people. By losing access to my ICT devices, I was unable to communicate with them thus alluding to the idea of a drop-in, drop-out attitude which Palfrey and Gasser (2008) suggested.

Turkle (2011, p.12) presents the counter argument that ‘sometimes people experience no sense of having communicated after hours of connection.’ Some times I have surfed on Pinterest for hours just going through photos and suddenly I realise that I’ve spent nearly four hours connected to the site but have not communicated with anyone. One of my diary entries illustrates another example of this argument that Turkle presents as I state:

*‘I know if I could go on Facebook I would spend hours on it and come away feeling even sadder because I would feel so disconnected and so far away from my friends which is even worse.*’

What is interesting about this comment, is that we think these devices offer the promise of constant connection and will allow us to socialise anywhere and at any time. However, its drop-in, drop-out culture can be just as lonely and make us feel detached.

**Technology: The Extended Self**

Looking back at my diaries from the experiment, it is clear to see the increased amount of face-to-face communication that occurred throughout the whole experiment, especially between my mum and me. Even though we lived together in Greece and in the UK, usually a lot of our communication takes place through the media of text, calls and emails as she may be at work whilst I’m at university, or I may be out and she’s at home. During the experiment these usual methods of communication, were substituted by regular face-to-face meetings and conversations:

*‘Mum was home when I get back and we caught up on what she done during the day and how I was getting on with my dissertation.’*

*‘Went home first to change and had a good chat with my mum about how Jess’s birthday went and how I found it without a phone.*’

*‘They wanted to eat out this evening and then we ended up getting into a massive conversation about how our camping trip went yesterday, as we haven’t had a chance to see them. With my mum in the UK, her and me are in constant contact and usually about noting vital just texting, emailing and calling because we can. Especially in Greece when I see her now we have so much to talk about and were not rooting for things to talk about.’*

It is apparent that my non-reliance on technology has increased face-to-face contact and meetings. McLuhan’s (1964) argues that extensions such as the mobile phone broaden our range and accessibility for different actions. Relating this to the use of my mobile phone, we can see that it allowed my mother and I to talk about worries, daily matters, arrange meetings or check one’s safety whenever apart from each other. There was, on the other hand, what McLuhan (1964) described as the numbing effect because the frequency of face-to-face communication decreased due to the ease of using a mobile. With the loss of the usual communication devices, there was an increase in our face-to-face communication throughout the experiment that I really enjoyed and it definitely brought my mum and me closer together; something I truly appreciate.

*‘We sat around in the kitchen talking for ages she was filling me in on some news from work, how my sister was doing in Croatia and some other sad news that she had heard from a family friend. My dynamics with my mum have changed through the course of the experiment. Now whenever we see each other we always talk a lot more. Rather than living in the same house but not really talking because by the time she or I am back at home we would have already spoken about 8- 10 times through different devices and have said everything that needs to be said. Its a lot more personal this way I feel a lot closer and less distant’*

As previously outlined, McLuhan, (1964) regarding technology as an extension of our bodies with telephones extending our ears and voices (p.289) by increasing our abilities to communicate over unlimited distances whenever we desire. This is true in my case; I use my phone constantly to communicate with people over long distances. However, even though these extensions are beneficial and valuable they come at the price of *amputation*, a price that sees the lack of face-to-face communication deteriorate. This highlights the theory of amputation as it is clear to see that my mobile phone use has become substituted for a large proportion of face-to-face communication, thus amputating me without my realization. As Miller argues, newly objectified realities have the ability to oppress us as well as extending us.

The original attractiveness of the mobile phone is that it can connect with people anywhere in the world at anytime. In addition to being small enough to carry everywhere, my Iphone is my alarm clock, pedometer, watch, diet planner, entertainment via games, sat nav, weather man, organizer, phone book, television, radio, newspaper, bible, tube map etc. It could therefore be argued, following McLuhan’s (1964) theory that we have become seduced by technology, that the phone becomes an extension of our bodies in multiple ways. In my diaries it is noticeable how I had lost more than just a communication device:

*‘Stayed out pretty late last night and because of no Iphone in order to set an alarm woke up later than I normally would.’*

*‘Annoyed I couldn’t take pictures on my Iphone I downloaded an app, which allows you to take panoramic views.’*

*‘Another good app I have on my Iphone is a pedometer which I use a lot back home when going on walks and runs.’*

This recalls McLuhan’s argument regarding how devices operate as extensions of our senses and so alter the way we act, think and perceive the world. My ‘ratio of senses’ perception has been altered by my over reliance on the camera to experience the world. McLuhan declares that technologies like the mobile phone, laptop, digital camera etc., are *extensions* of our central nervous system and believes that they can aid a person’s creative abilities, but they also have the power to *amputate* them as well. By creative abilities one refers to the activities used to enjoy life beyond those of these few technological devices that have become so embedded in peoples lives. For example, in my diaries I discuss various alternative activities such as swimming, hiking, reading, which I revisited and enjoyed whilst not performing my normal activities like talking on Skype, Facebooking my friends and adding pictures to my Pinterest scrapbook. In light of having more time, I chose to do more active things in order to keep busy and ended up really enjoying myself and the feeling of independence without my ICT devices.

McLuhan (1964) explores how, when a conversation is taking place between two people on the telephone, the full attention of both is required throughout as any lack of attention can lead to complications, misinterpretations and ambiguity (p.291). Similarly chatting via text messages can be frustrating as it does not result in an immediate response. Conversely, receiving constant messages while engaged in another task also generates frustration. Being free of such sudden demands of my attention was often liberating:

*‘It was a nice sense of freedom not always worrying if I had missed a call or receive a text just living in the moment.’*

*‘But whilst up there I really began to appreciate this whole no information or communication technology experiment the complete and utter freedom. One of the boy’s phones went off and he walked off on the phone. With a phone you’re constantly interrupted wherever you are whatever time. You just can’t escape it even in the most remote island ever at the top of a mountain.’*

**Materiality**

A further reflection concerns why I considered my mobile phone, laptop, camera etc. to be technology, but not the utensils that I used in order to prepare my food, wash my clothes or even transport me. Miller (2010) offers this theory of ‘stuff’ where he considers ‘stuff’ to work in the world by being obscure and unnoticed, ‘a state they usually achieve by being familiar and taken for granted’ (Miller, 2010, p.51). This understanding of material culture signifies that it’s our ‘exterior environment that habituates and prompts us’ (Miller, 2010, p.51) and not our bodily existence that makes us who and what we are.

Throughout my life I have been constantly surrounded by technology, but every year, more complex information and communication devices developed, which may have lead to a hierarchy of technological devices in my mind. For example, the cooker I used to cook my food may have overlooked as technology because it has faded into the background and remained ‘peripheral’ to my vision despite its influence on my subjectivity and behaviour. Due to my obliviousness to my bike or cooker as technologies, it is possible to see that I have made technology so much a part of my life that it is hard for me to even recognise them as technological devices. A further personal reflection is that Facebook has determined the way I live since my teenage years and my behaviour due to my constant consumption of it. Through-out my two-week abstinence from technology my loss of the use of Facebook clearly led to feelings of frustration:

*‘Couldn’t concentrate really wanted to go on Facebook. I wonder what was going on, what people are up to.’*

*‘Got home from the beach and my sister went off to Skype her boyfriend and go on Facebook for a bit and that’s when I first felt bored and frustrated.’*

‘*The frustration and boredom of always being the one without technology and missing out on what other are doing on the internet is high as well. Irritation at not being able to talk to my boyfriend and friends back at home is heightening’*

McLuhan (1964) agrees with Miller’s views that these products that we build and produce also have a ‘tendency to autonomous interest and the potential to oppress rather than serve us’ (2010, p.63). Accordingly, I have become oppressed by my devices, as I constantly make references and allow their absence to have an effect on me. As we can see, I have lived in an age where information and communication devices have inherently become part of who and what I am; it seems impossible to return to a humanity that existed before the current age. Over time, I feel that the experiment if continued would isolate me from my friends, family and much of society.

**Posthumanism in Relation to Humanism**

Throughout my diaries I constantly make reference to situations where the use of a particular ICT device would have been appreciated:

*‘It’s aggravating that I wont be able to text him as soon as we land but only a few more hours and I will get to see him.’*

*‘These are the times when I wish I had a phone so irritating not knowing where he is or how long he is going to be.’*

*‘Wish I had been able to take a camera out with me.’*

*‘This kind of highlights the inconvenience of not having a phone, which right now I wish I had because being able to send a text to ask where they are, would have saved a lot of time and frustration in not being able to find them.’*

*‘Today I can feel is going to be a big test against my resistance and determination not to just sack it all in and use my Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest anything to contact my friends and boyfriend back home in London.’*

Although for the purpose of the experiment I was able to go two weeks without information and communication technology, it is a somewhat unrealistic view to believe that I could continue my life without it. As Giesler (2005, p.661) suggests, today’s consumers ‘live and move and have our being in the midst of our technologies’ (Giesler, 2005, p.661).

What is important is the reflection on what kind of person I became in the absence of my ICT. A posthumanist point of view is that no longer is our body tied to ‘nature’ but it is now subject to technological modification by the devices that we use. No longer is the human nature of talking to people face-to-face necessarily the default action; through the use of phones and laptops we have become technologically modified to use other means. In one of my diary entries I wrote:

*‘So normally where I would phone my friend Kristen’*

*‘These are the times when I wish I had a phone so irritating not knowing where he is or how long he is going to be.’*

These statement shows my personal modification by technology and my reliance on devices. Pepperell (2003) argues that change is something that has occurred within humanity over a period of years and we are constantly striving to improve all the technology around us, which has lead to what, I believe, is this posthuman state that I live in. I can not exclusively return to a position of humanity because my life is so embedded within ICT that I would never be able to function in the way I do now without it. Recalling Haraway, I am a modern day cyborg;

*‘Facebook for me ties my two worlds together not just by having my Greek and English friends on the same network which helps me remain in contact with them, but also by tying into my physical existence and so today emotionally I’m missing being able to use it.’*

Through the experiment, I temporarily stepped outside an order of information and communication technology to consider the (im)possibility of a return to the lived experience of humanity from a condition of post-humanity. Through the development of, and reliance on, these information and communication technologies, many people have come to live in a world where ‘tethered to technology, we are shaken when that world “unplugged” does not signify, does not satisfy’ (Turkle, 2011, p. 11).

**CONCLUSION**

This study set out to contribute to the arena of consumer research with regards to consumption habits and behaviours around information and communication technology. In the arena of marketing and consumer research it is increasingly evident that in order to improve and progress as a discipline, technology needs to be focused on and approached in a manner which ‘reflects its ubiquity, its deeper symbolic and aesthetic dimensions’ (Campbell, O’Driscoll and Saren, 2010, p.86) and how fundamentally it transforms the humanness and human-centred approaches to researching the world. Thus it is clear to see that posthumanism is essential to theorising humanness in an epoch that is observing the integration of new technologies in all areas of life (Campbell, O’Driscoll and Saren, 2010).

By recognising and relating theories of posthumanism modes of existence to the field of consumer research, interesting discussion can be provoked because it allows the opportunity to explore the possibility of theorising technology as separate to human nature, or as fundamentally part of it. Giesler and Venkatesh (2005) continue to argue that in order for the field of consumer culture to develop and improve the discipline should be acknowledged as posthuman, a ‘hybrid marketplace matrix’ that no longer separates technologies and humans.

Through the use of subjective personal introspection, I was able to observe and retrieve a considerably richer and deeper data set, which reflected my own personal, lived experience of stepping outside an order of information and communication technology. In the absence of my information and communication technology I found myself increasingly performing activities, rituals and customs that I adapted to as a result of the experiment. For me, by far the biggest positive outcome was my renewed satisfaction with face-to-face communication, which in turn led to what I feel were better relationships with those close to me.

Both McLuhan (1964) and Miller (2010) agree that although technologies extend our human capabilities they do also oppress us. The view that I had towards my information and communication technological consumption prior to the experiment and the view I hold now are very different. Upon reflection I allowed my information and communication technologies to oppress me, never really believing or seeing how far they had become embedded in my life.

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