Does Your Smartphone Make You Unhappy?
The Effects of Restricting Digital & Social Media

Presenter: Lisa Walsh
Co-Authors: Annie Regan, Karynna Okabe-Miayamoto, & Sonja Lyubomirsky
University of California, Riverside

INTRO
• Some correlational research suggests screen time negatively impacts well-being (Twenge et al., 2018), while other work argues the effects are small and unnoteworthy (Orben & Przybylski, 2019).
• A “shortitudinal” experiment may help disentangle correlation from causation and better elucidate the strength and direction of effects.

METHOD
• N = 338 Gen Z participants (M_age = 19.4; 78.1% female)
• Participants were randomly assigned to 1 of 4 conditions:

Study Timeline:
- Day 1 (in-lab): Consent, Demographics, Outcome measures, Condition instructions, Iphone Screenshots
- Day 8-10 (in-lab): Outcome measures, Report on activities, Iphone Screenshots, Debriefing

Preregistered Hypotheses:
- H1: Digital Diet > Controls
- H2: Social Diet > Controls

RESULTS
- **H1**: Digital Diet participants successfully reduced their smartphone time, relative to controls (partial r = -.57, p < .001; M = -115 minutes/day). Restricting digital media significantly improved life satisfaction, mindful attention, autonomy, competence, loneliness, self-esteem, and stress.
- **H2**: Social Diet participants successfully reduced their social media time (partial r = -.66, p < .001; M = -68 minutes/day). Restricting social media only significantly improved mindful attention, relative to controls.

Restricting smartphone use provided several psychological benefits, while restricting social media use provided few benefits.