



APPLYING THE ACT MATRIX TO TECHNOLOGY OVERUSE

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST



Disclaimer

I have no financial conflicts of interest with any subject that I discuss in this presentation.



Disclosure

I have personal conflicts of interest.

- I want you to think I'm smart.
- I want you to think I'm funny.
- I want you to think I'm an effective therapist.
- I want you to think I'm an effective presenter.

OBJECTIVES

1. Participants will be able to discuss the utility of applying a technology overuse label to an individual's experience.
2. Participants will be able to identify the three main discrimination tasks of the ACT Matrix.
3. Participants will be able to apply the ACT Matrix in formulating clinical situations.

The image features a blue gradient background with white circuit-like lines in the corners. These lines consist of straight paths that branch out and terminate in small circles, resembling a network or data flow diagram. The lines are positioned in the top-left, top-right, bottom-left, and bottom-right corners, framing the central text.

TECHNOLOGY OVERUSE

BUT WHAT IS TECHNOLOGY OVERUSE?

tech•no•logy over•use: \tek'nɒlədʒi ɔʊvər'juːz\ *n* the overuse of technology.



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Excessive Technology Use

Virtual Reality Addiction

Internet Gaming Disorder

Internet Addiction

Problematic Smartphone Use

Excessive Internet Use

Problematic Internet Use

Gaming Disorder

Technology Addiction

Social Media Addiction

Internet Addiction Disorder

Mobile Addiction

Behavioral Addiction

Tech Overuse

Communication Addiction Disorder

Internet Use Disorder

Computer Addiction

*names not drawn to scale



Photo by [Ivan Jevtic](#) on [Unsplash](#)

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

What's in a name? That which we call a
rose

By any other name would smell as
sweet;

William Shakespeare

Romeo & Juliet

PERHAPS A NAME BRINGS ITS OWN “SWEETNESS”

- Labels can carry expectations of behavior.
- Labels can bring along rules about what you should or should not do, can or cannot do.
- And yet, without a label, you would not have known what I was going to talk about today.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

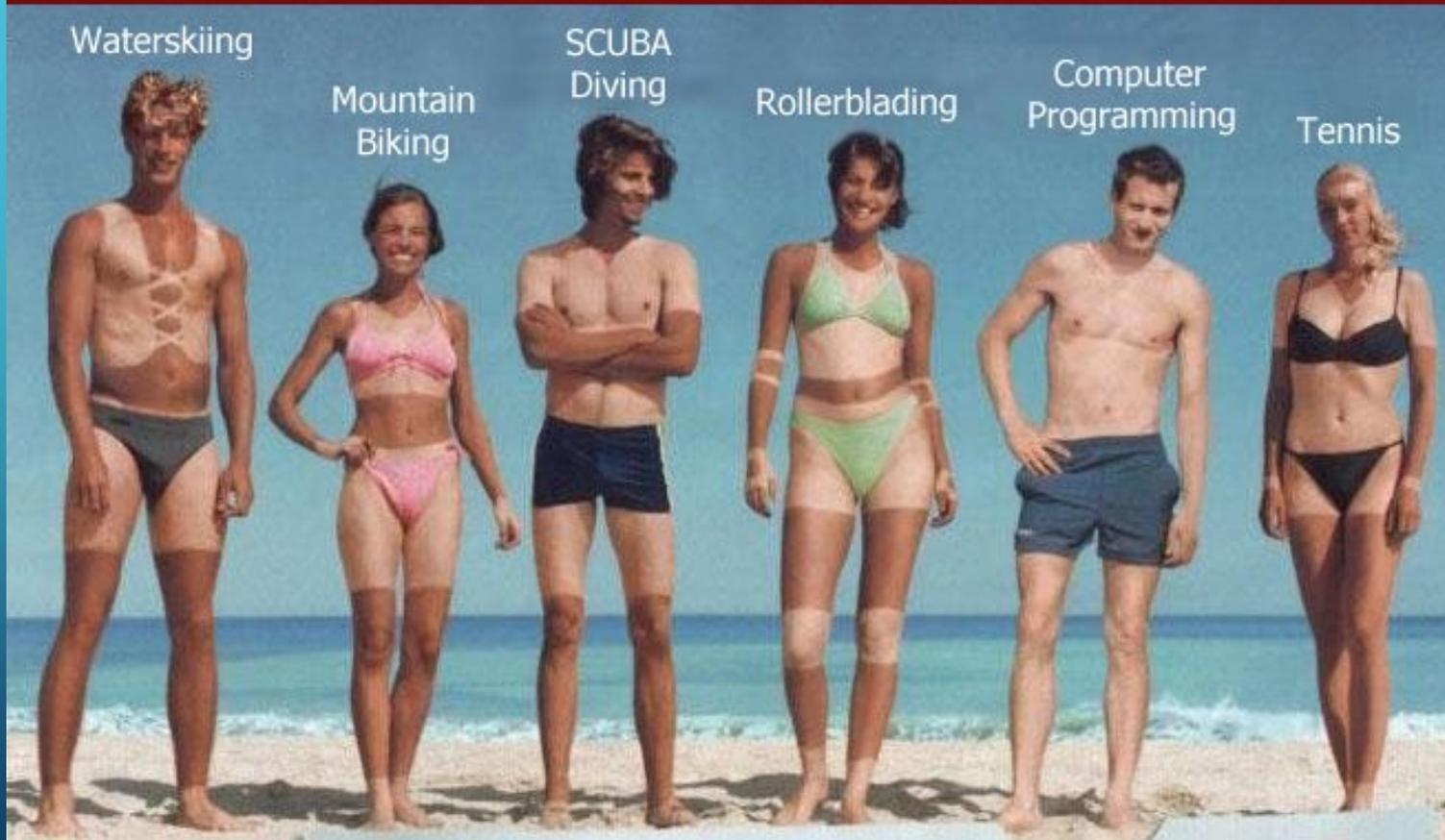
- Perhaps taking labels lightly is the most effective way?
- If they bring you closer to something you want in life, they're useful?
- Perhaps asking your clients what the label means to them when they use it?

THE STIGMA OF TECHNOLOGY OVERUSE



THE STIGMA OF TECHNOLOGY OVERUSE

Tan Lines From Typical Summer Activities



PERHAPS THE STIGMA IS CHANGING?



Photo by [Florian Olivo](#) on [Unsplash](#)

PERHAPS THE STIGMA IS CHANGING?



<https://365thingsinhouston.com/2020/03/23/family-friendly-virtual-events-for-kids-museum-diy-workshops-activities-coronavirus-2020/>



OVERUSE BEHAVIORS =
LACK OF WILLPOWER,
MORAL FAILURE

Photo by [Erik Mclean](#) on [Unsplash](#)

YA GOT TROUBLE, RIGHT HERE IN RIVER CITY!



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Music_Man_\(1962_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Music_Man_(1962_film))

THE RISK TO CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS

- There are ways a society becomes concerned about the impact of new media on children and adolescents.
 - And not just a modern Western society either.
- These concerns tend to repeat themselves as new media appear.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781118783764.wbieme0134>

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1985.tb02238.x>

PERHAPS THE STORY IS CHANGING?

- “We are changed as technology offers us substitutes for connecting with each other face-to-face.”
- “Yet, suddenly, in the half-light of virtual community, we may feel utterly alone. As we distribute ourselves, we may abandon ourselves.”

Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*, 2012



<https://www.basicbooks.com/titles/sherry-turkle/alone-together/9780465093656/>

PERHAPS THE STORY IS CHANGING?

- “I think that this reveals the screen-time issue as a misplaced anxiety,” Ms. Turkle said. “Now, forced to be alone but wanting to be together, so many are discovering what screen time should be.”
- Sherry Turkle, quoted in *Coronavirus Ended the Screen-Time Debate. Screens Won*. NY Times, March 31, 2020



<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/31/technology/coronavirus-screen-time.html>

AND YET PEOPLE SUFFER: DISTRACTION

SPOTLIGHT FOLLOW-UP

A nurse's aide plays video games while a veteran dies at Bedford VA hospital

By **Andrea Estes** Globe Staff, October 17, 2017, 9:24 a.m.



<https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2017/10/17/nurse-aide-plays-video-games-while-vietnam-veteran-dies-bedford-medical-center/lsWg0TU12q0mSoxgsa5eFM/story.html>

AND YET PEOPLE SUFFER: ISOLATION

The New York Times Magazine

<https://nyti.ms/35YV1qK>

Can You Really Be Addicted to Video Games?

The latest research suggests it's not far-fetched at all — especially when you consider all the societal and cultural factors that make today's games so attractive.

By Ferris Jabr

Published Oct. 22, 2019 Updated Oct. 23, 2019

Charlie Bracke can't remember a time when he wasn't into video games. When he was 5, he loved playing Wolfenstein 3D, a crude, cartoonish computer game in which a player tries to escape a Nazi prison by navigating virtual labyrinths while mowing down enemies. In his teenage years, he became obsessed with more sophisticated shooters and a new generation of online games that allowed thousands of players to inhabit sprawling fantasy worlds. Ultima Online, World of Warcraft, The Elder Scrolls — he would spend as much as 12 hours a day in these imaginary realms, building cities and fortifications, fighting in epic battles and hunting for treasure.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/22/magazine/can-you-really-be-addicted-to-video-games.html>



SOMETIMES IT'S ADULTS

- “I’m not doing what I want to do with my life.”
- “I’m too distracted.”
- “I’m failing college.”
- “I’m lonely.”

Photo by [Grzegorz Walczak](#) on [Unsplash](#)



SOMETIMES IT'S PARENTS

- “They is not doing well in school.”
- “They is socially isolated.”
- “They get really angry when I try to take the tablet away from them.”
- “I think they just need more self-confidence.”

Photo by [Annie Spratt](#) on [Unsplash](#)



BUT HOW ABOUT HER PARENTS?

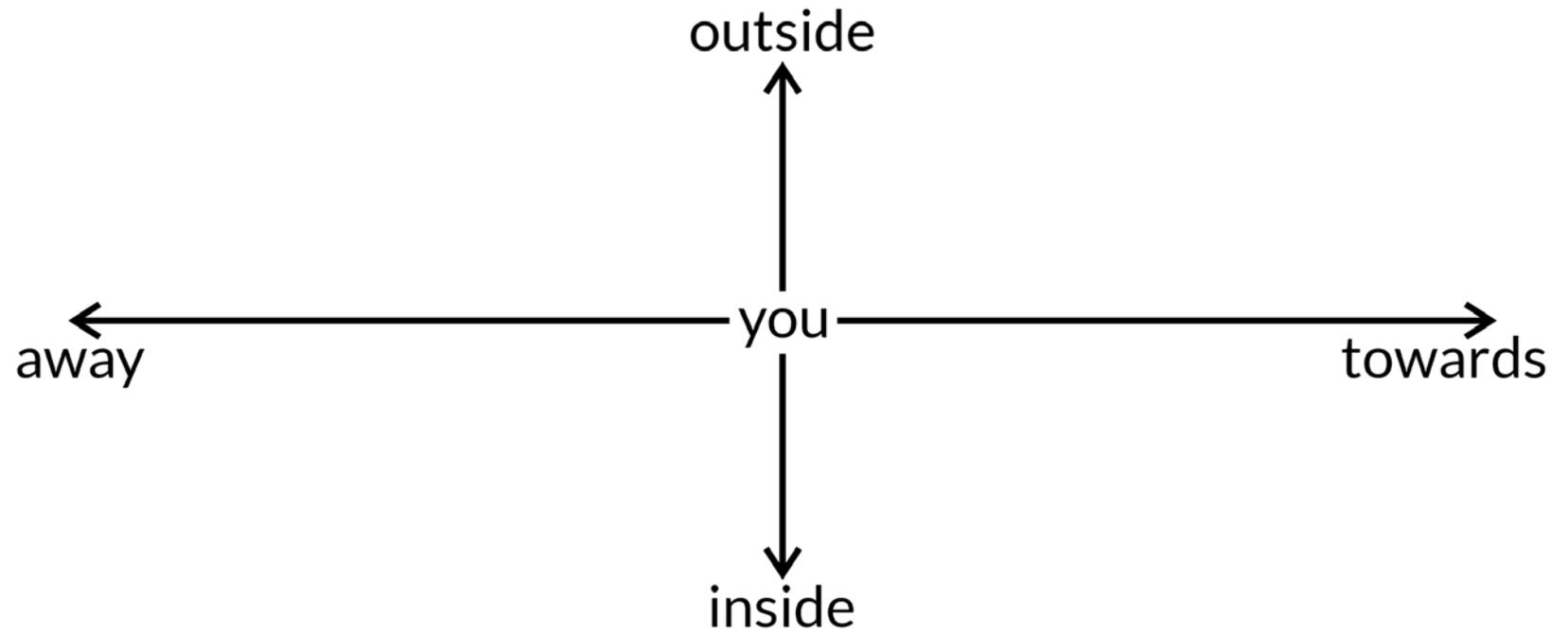
- “She wouldn’t let anyone touch the tab[let], she held it like it’s her best friend. I saw a future systems engineer, or maybe a web developer - time will tell.”
- Victor Nnakwe
- Benue, Gboko, Nigeria

Photo by [Victor Nnakwe](#) on [Unsplash](#)

WHAT I WANTED TO SHARE WITH YOU

- There are various labels in the area of mental health and technology use.
 - Labels can leverage vast association networks to bring ideas together effectively.
 - Labels can limit or alter an individual's behavior.
- Society's view on technology use might be changing.
- The label of technology overuse will probably continue to have stigma.
 - Lack of control, drive, willpower.
- Some people don't like how they're living their life, and their technology use can be a big part of their life.

THE ACT MATRIX



WHAT IS THE ACT MATRIX?

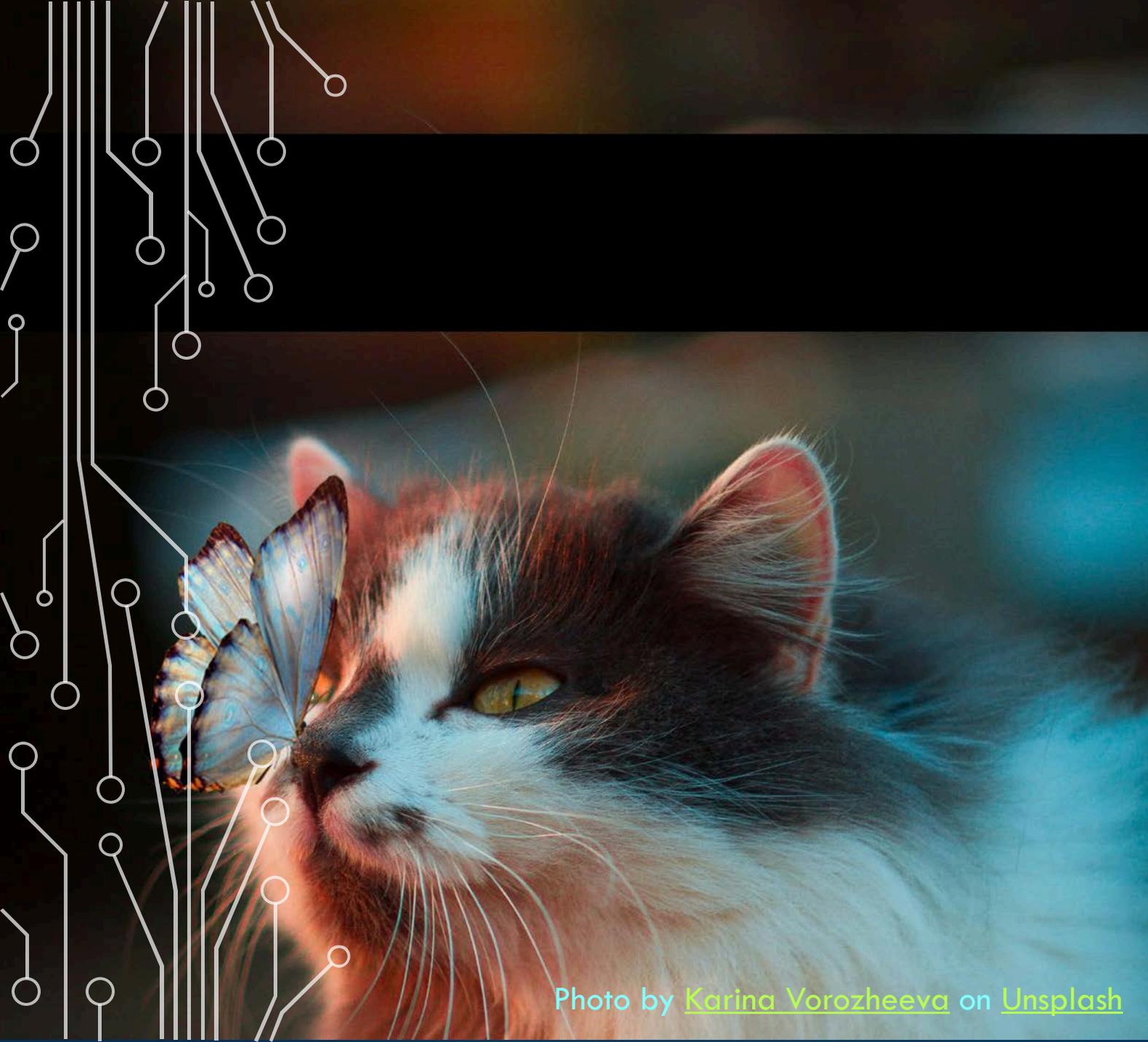
- It's a diagram about noticing.
- It's an activity that can be done jointly with your client(s).
- It's a way to draw out and emphasize certain discrimination tasks that you wish to share with your client(s).
- It was co-developed by Kevin Polk, Mark Webster, and Jerold Hambright.

WHAT'S A DISCRIMINATION TASK?

- Discrimination - the ability to perceive and respond to differences among stimuli.



<https://apnews.com/1f590e25decb448b83f2c9ea737aa858>



IS THIS
A CAT OR A DOG?

Photo by [Karina Vorozheeva](#) on [Unsplash](#)

IS THIS A CAT OR A DOG?

Her.- do you have a dog or a cat?
me.- I don't know.



<https://twitter.com/1evilidiot/status/794613309613821952>



DISCRIMINATION TASKS OF THE ACT MATRIX

#1: Towards or Away





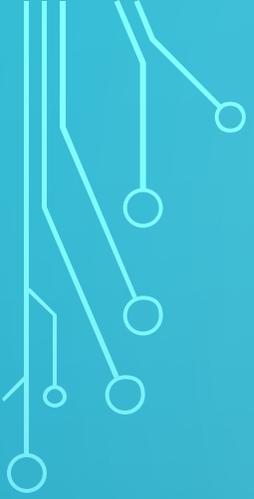
DISCRIMINATION TASKS OF THE ACT MATRIX

#2: Inside You or Outside You



DISCRIMINATION TASKS OF THE ACT MATRIX

#2, Continued: Experiencing or Doing



DISCRIMINATION TASKS OF THE ACT MATRIX

#3: Intellectual or Experiential Exercise





THE ACT MATRIX: EXAMPLE

Photo by [Nicole Wilcox](#) on [Unsplash](#)

A MINDFULNESS TOOL?

- It can help us notice internal experiences in the past.
- It can help us notice what we did when we experienced them.
- The expectation is that this practice will increase both noticing behaviors in the future.

A FORMULATION TOOL?

- It can help us notice sequences of stimulus, and response, and stimulus, and response, etc.
- It can help us notice the utility of our behaviors over time.
 - Both in the short term and in the long term.
- It can transform the stimulus function of internal stimuli, allowing for more flexible responses in the future.

TRY IT YOURSELF: TEN-METER TOWER



<https://www.nytimes.com/video/opinion/10000004882589/ten-meter-tower.html>

WHAT'S THE EMPIRICAL SUPPORT?

- Very deep literature for Discrimination Learning
- For the ACT Matrix, empirical support is in its infancy
- 1 small 2019 study from Iran for treating IBS using the ACT Matrix.
 - <https://doi.org/10.3889/oamjms.2019.076>
- 2 2017 RCT studies from US of a pilot ACT matrix app.
 - <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcbs.2017.05.003>
 - <https://doi.org/10.1177/0145445517748561>
- 1 small 2015 dissertation from US of a group-based ACT Matrix intervention.
 - <https://search.proquest.com/openview/65a743dfd99187e6d394b204db9f1cb4/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>

CULTURAL AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS?

- The ACT Matrix, when done experientially, feels highly idiographic.
 - It is specific to the individual across from you, at this moment.
 - The client's learning history contains their cultural experiences.
- The biggest challenge is to not sort for the client.
 - They don't get the chance to practice sorting.
 - You can let your learning history and cultural experiences impose upon them.

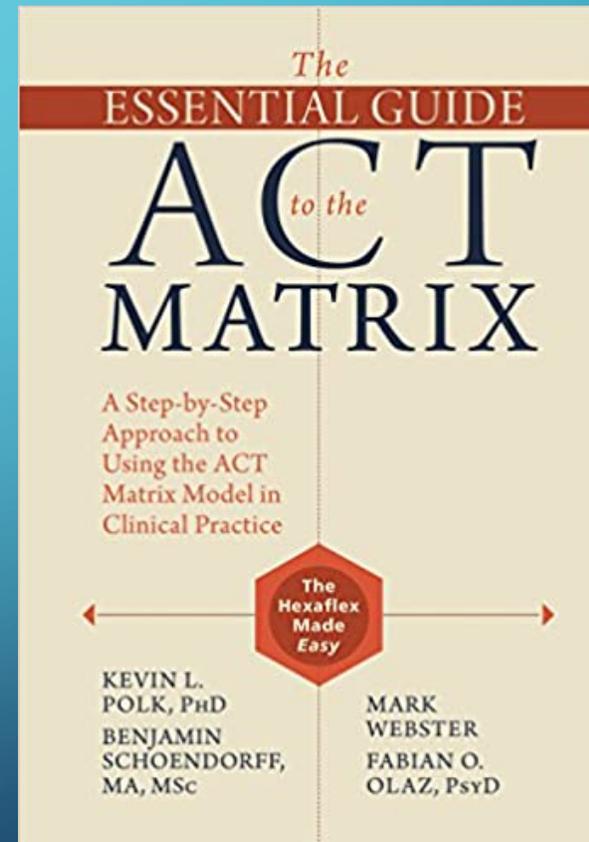
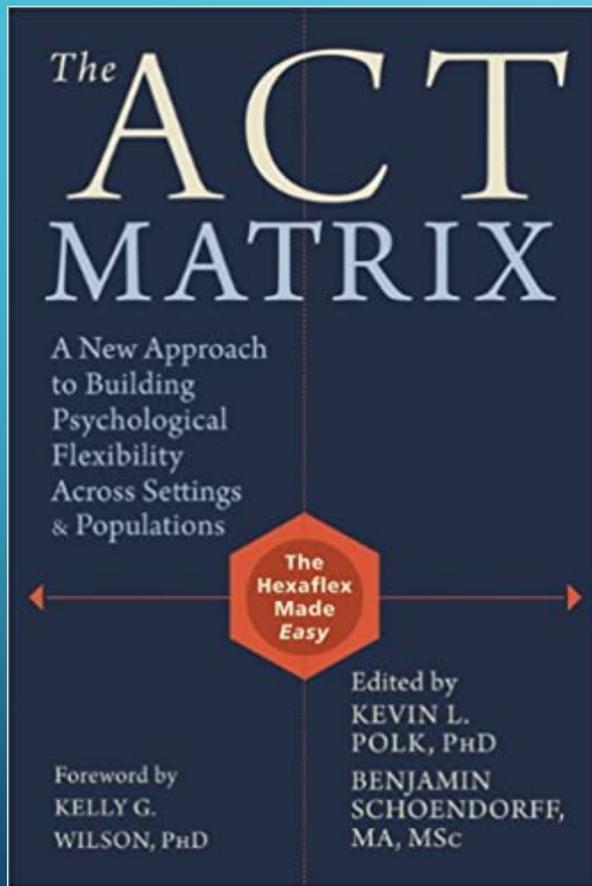
HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO TECHNOLOGY OVERUSE?

- If technological devices are highly salient stimuli, they may function to draw our attention from other stimuli from within and without.
- If they can draw our attention like that, we may learn to use technology to get away from unwanted internal stimuli.
- Avoiding a lot can get us out of touch with whether what we're doing is "working" for us in the big picture.
- Avoiding also takes up time that would be spent doing other things that might be more meaningful.

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO TECHNOLOGY OVERUSE?

- The ACT Matrix is designed to slow down this process of avoidance and to practice noticing our experiences and what we are doing in response to them.
- This practice can open the door to more varied, flexible behavior that might be in the service of more meaningful goals.
- These new behaviors might be using technology, as well ... just with a different function.

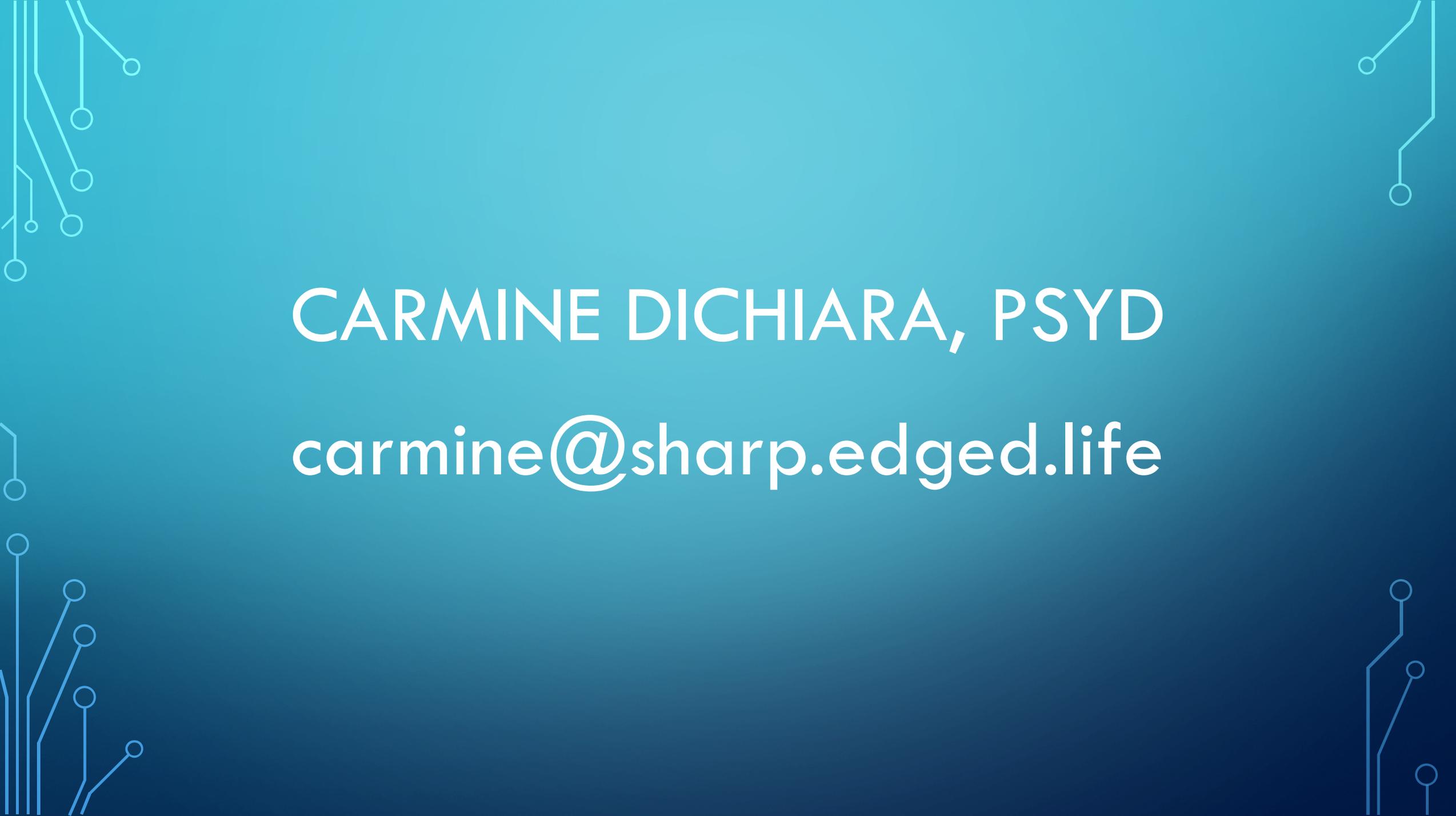
HOW DO I LEARN MORE?



The image features a teal-to-blue gradient background with decorative circuit-like lines in the corners. The text is centered and reads:

CARMINE'S
MAGIC
NUMBER

75

The background is a gradient of blue, darker at the bottom. In the corners, there are decorative white line-art patterns resembling circuit traces or neural connections, with small circles at the end of the lines.

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