INTRODUCTION

The Still Face Paradigm (SFP)

- The SFP (Tronick et al., 1978) was designed to examine infant responses to social interaction cues by a parent, consisting of three phases: Free Play (FP), Still Face (SF), and Reunion (RU).
- The SFP is characterized by a decrease in positive affect and gaze, and an increase in negative affect during SF, with some recovery seen during RU (Mesman et al., 2009).
- Children with temperamental negative affect during SF show less recovery during RU (Mesman et al., 1998; Mesman et al., 2009).

Mobile Device Use

- When parents use mobile devices in front of children, the parent is physically present but relatively distracted and unresponsive, analogous to the key components of SF.
- Increased mobile device use has been shown to be associated with increased anxiety (Reid & Reid, 2007; Sapacz, Rockman, & Clark, 2016).
- Using a cell phone as a metaphor for reduced parental interaction and withdrawn behavior can be used to predict child behaviors during the SFP.

AIMS

1. Establish whether a modified SFP that incorporates maternal mobile device use can serve as an analog to the original SFP.
2. Investigate how individual differences in child temperament and maternal emotional well-being can be used to predict child behaviors during the SFP.

METHOD

Participants

- Fifty-three children (27 female) ages 7.20 to 23.60 months (M = 15.17, SD = 4.75) participated in a modified Still Face Paradigm with their mothers.

Materials and Procedure

- Questionnaires
  - Mobile Device Use: Self-report of parental mobile device use (daily hours of device use in front of family including child).
  - The State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI; Spielberger, 1983): self-report measure of parent trait anxiety.
  - Infant Behavior Questionnaire (IBQ; Rothbart, 1981): parent report measure of child temperament for children aged 2-12 months.

The Modified Still Face Paradigm (SFP; Tronick et al., 1978)

- Behaviors performed by at least 25% of children at least one phase were selected for analyses (negative affect, positive affect, toy engagement, engagement with mother, social bid, room exploration).
- For each child, average scores were computed for each behavior within each phase (FP, SF, RU).
- Reliability for 3 reliable coders was computed using Cohen’s kappa, and ranged from .71 to .96 (M = .85, SD = .03).

RESULTS

- To examine differences among the FP, SF, and RU phases, repeated-measures ANOVAs were conducted for each child behavior.
- Mirroring the effects of the traditional SFP, children showed more negative affect and less positive affect during SF versus FP and RU.
- Children also showed more toy engagement in FP than in SF or RU, and more engagement with mother during FP and RU than SF.
- Children showed the most social bids during SF and more room exploration in SF than RU.

DISCUSSION

- Maternal and child behavior during SFP
  - Linear regressions were conducted: 1st step = age in months; 2nd step = maternal trait anxiety; DV = child behavior during SFP.
  - Greater maternal trait anxiety predicted greater engagement between child and mother during the SF despite instructions to refrain from interaction, and greater toy engagement during RU.

REFERENCES