Conner Hepting

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Critical Reflection #2

In *Alone Together*, Sherry Turkle addresses how the constant use of technology in our society has affected the way humans, not just strangers, interact with one another. She discusses how we are tethered to our cellphones and no longer have real conversations, but just type out short heartless messages to attempt to stay in touch. Not as often do we call or meet up with people to really catch up, but instead we expect short messages, Facebook posts, and other online profiles to do this for us, according to Turkle. Another downfall of current technology that Turkle brings up is the ability of kids to be independent. She argues that in the development of children, autonomy and strong personal boundaries are a good sign of maturity. However, in the world of constantly being connected, parents and friends expect an answer from somebody almost as soon as a message or call is sent. Once a call is missed or a text ignored, everyone, especially parents, become worried something is wrong. She also argues that this ongoing connection makes it hard for people to fully experience emotions because as soon as it starts, they have to send it out to the world for comments. Finally, Turkle points out that social media and our constant reliance on it has led us to simplify the ways we express ourselves and force us to conform to the pressures of the giant audience of social media platforms. Through these arguments and others, Turkle establishes that she believes the internet has taken over the world to the point where it is no longer only helping us, but also hurting us.

After reading chapters eight and nine of *Alone Together*, I still was not completely sure where my views on Turkle’s argument stood. I agreed with many of her arguments about how technology has hurt us, but at the same time I believe she failed to bring up many of the way’s technology has helped us to better connect. I agree with her statement that we are tethered to our cellphones and technology, and that more often than not we fail to have long conversations with friends, but instead just quickly chat in short messages. However, I feel like these short messages are better than nothing. In my experience at college for the first couple of months, I found that when one of my best friends from high school reached out in a short message, it cheered me up. I have not seen these friends for over two months, when before I saw them every day, so one short message is enough to make me happy. One argument of Turkle’s I completely agree with is that technology has made it hard for kids to grow up with independence. As I have grown up, with a smart phone, I constantly have to let my mom know everything I am doing. If I don’t, she panics, and I get in trouble. In no means am I mad at my mom for this because it is just the way our constant access to technology and communication has made us. The last argument I truly agree with is that social media platforms have forced people to simplify the way they express themselves. I believe that the majority of the people in the world try to be someone who they are not on their social media and that you cannot tell who someone really is. Finally, the main dispute I have with Turkle’s argument is that she fails to discuss all of the benefits of the easy communication associated with new technology. For example, I have no related family that lives close to me, so the only way I can stay in touch with them is through texts or phone calls, however we both are really busy, so instead of having long conversations, we have short conversations through text more occasionally. This same scenario could apply to children with divorced parents or siblings in college, who they don’t see as much. Hopefully Turkle addresses these scenarios later in the book, but in the two chapters we read, I felt she only focused on negatives of technology and communication, when there are also many positives. In conclusion, I partially agree with Turkle’s arguments about the way technology is utilized, but I also believe that she fails to recognize all of the good technology has brought to communication among people.