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Critical Reflection #2: Are we "Alone Together?"

In *Alone Together*, Turkle seeks to communicate the relationship between technology and modern society, as the use of electronic devices and social media platforms continues to rapidly advance and ultimately serves as an integral aspect of the world we live in. Turkle delves into both the positive aspects of the expansion of technology, mostly in terms of convenience and the pleasures of carrying memories on hand, as well as the thought-provoking concerns about the simultaneous sense of connection and disconnection technology brings about. In a society with rampant use of technology, "being alone can seem like a precondition for being together," as isolation grants us the focus to contact others and get messages across through the means of our devices. This twisted communication is a prime example of the perplexing ways in which technology is molding the fundamentals of human interaction, and thus shaping human nature as a whole to what best suits technological advancement.

I am in full agreement with the concerns that Turkle addresses about the consequences of having our realities so tightly bound, and essentially intertwined with technology, particularly regarding the constraints it places upon the beauty of real life. For instance, Turkle refers to a personal example in which her daughter was unable to experience the "displacement" that travel entails, or should entail, as a result of being electronically connected to home. Turkle contrasts this to her own experience of traveling to Paris as a teenager, emphasizing the "thrill of disconnection" she was grateful to have felt, and thus worrying that her daughter would be

unable to understand such distatchment. I can fully relate to this, as I have also found that my travel experiences have been undermined by a constant reminder of the happenings at home, essentially limiting my ability to submerge myself into the new location and fully appreciate the exciting shift in surroundings since there is still such awareness of elsewhere. This is merely an instance of a much larger concern regarding the impacts of technology; the internal attachment that our devices provide provokes an external detachment from the world.

Furthermore, Turkle stresses that the urge to stay connected, as a result of the strong presence of technology in today's society, ends up serving as a detriment due to the "compulsions" it brings about. For instance, she finds herself checking her emails before going to bed every night and after waking up every morning, despite the stress and unhappiness that this practice ensues. In this way, Turkle presents checking messages as an addiction of sorts, as she realizes that this habit is unhealthy but nonetheless allows it to persist. I agree with this idea, as I frequently find excessive use of technology to correlate with addictive behaviors. This is supported by the sentiment of being "glued to your phone"; one cannot help but keep their eyes peeled to their device and is hence experiencing an addiction. I find this concept to be very troubling, especially because I see it everywhere I turn. The amount of time that people, especially peers in my generation, spend on their phones just by habit is very concerning, particularly when considering the negative impacts of excessive screen time, such as an inherent disconnect. People might be physically in each other's presence, but if they are all in their own separate worlds on their phones, then are they really together?

Overall, I find Turkle's concerns in *Alone Together* to have complete merit, as the growth of technology has dramatically changed the ways in which we communicate with each other, and

ultimately the ways in which we go about living our lives. In my opinion, this is especially

troubling in terms of the disconnect it elicits and the addictive tendencies it precipitates, and I

think that Turkle is right in addressing these issues despite the overwhelming consensus,

particularly from the youth, that technology is beneficial in more aspects than not. Due to the fact

that these adolescents are now growing up with the perks of advanced technology, it is a given

that technology will continue to grow rapidly as time progresses. However, I think that it is

important to look critically at its consequences and work to embrace human interaction so that

we can truly be together, rather than "alone together."