

Contemporary technology has revolutionized media essay

[History](#), [Revolution](#)



Dr. Joshua Prenosil English 15015 February 2013 Contemporary technology has revolutionized the modern world's tradition of social interaction and communication. It has created a global platform where people can share their thoughts, ideas, and knowledge, forming new social groups and connections. In *Here Comes Everybody*, Clay Shirky argues that our modern technological society is able to communicate easier due to advancements in technology that have improved society's means of fighting for a common cause. He claims that society is not just the product of its individual members, but also the product of its groups (14). In this case, it was a woman named Ivanna who left her phone in a New York taxi. A young teenager by the name of Sasha finds the lost phone and decides to keep it. After several attempts to coax the teenager into returning the phone, Ivanna's friend, Evan, seeks support from the millions of users on the Internet. With Evan and his worldwide audience as backup, the NYPD arrested Sasha and the phone was retrieved. A miniscule problem escalated into a well-known problem due to the popularity and disapproval of millions of people that access the website where the situation was announced to the world. Yet this is only the beginning. Without the large group of people supporting his cause, Evan would have never recovered the phone for Ivanna. As Shirky writes, "It's unlikely that Evan could have achieved what he did even five years ago, and inconceivable that he could have achieved it ten years ago." (Shirky, 11). When we change the way we communicate, we change society itself (17). This collaboration of both technology and socialization has come to our advantage. Our new social media and networking allows us to come together as one- a virtual global society. This

global society shares and spreads knowledge as it continually grows day by day. Similarly to Shirky, David Weinberger's *Everything is Miscellaneous* emphasizes the power of the group. Weinberger speaks of 'forming groups that create a local culture.' (Weinberger, 20). This local culture employs "social expertise, by which the connections among people help guide what the group learns and knows." (20). He exemplifies this by using the online encyclopedia, Wikipedia. All around the world, people collaborate to write and edit articles on this highly successful virtual databank. Its success can be contributed to the global community in itself. Weinberger writes, "Wikipedia is to a large degree the product of a community, not just disconnected individuals." (24). This new society that we have gained unleashes knowledge into the global community to be accessed and found. Knowledge isn't in our heads, but between us (28), between each and every group and network that we have made. We have become part of a modern social group created through technological advancements and achievements. In today's modern world, social lives revolve around technology. In *Alone Together*, Sherry Turkle discusses society's new relationship with technology rather than people. In today's modern world, social lives revolve around technology. Turkle believes that this new 'distraction' is detracting from the meaning of actual life (17). Instead of calling a friend on the phone, texting has become prevalent and preferred, exemplifying the movement towards virtual interactions. Technology has evolved to interacting with other online lives without actual human contact. Turkle speaks about *Second Life*, a virtual world where you can create your own life, complete with a character, house, family, etc. and socialize with other people. She says that it is a

substitution that puts the 'real on the run'. People can hide from the worries and concerns of reality behind a virtual life and avatar. They can pretend to have the lives that they have always wanted. This concept is exemplified by Second Lifers who "create their avatar to be richer, thinner, and more successful than the creator behind the avatar actually is" (1). People have found a greater comfort with virtual reality than with actual reality. They are able to accomplish unattainable dreams and become different personalities. This leads to Turkle saying that people think humans make too many demands and disappoint whereas robots are safer (10). She points out that those who believe in having a relationship with a robot or machine prefer a no risk relationship (8) because they are able to walk away and unplug 'whenever' (10). As long as the technology is able to portray some sort of emotion, it is alive enough. This creates a sense of realism in the object and allows a sort of relationship to form. It sets in place the principle that if it makes you love it, and if you feel it loves you in return, it is alive enough (31). Turkle demonstrates this by giving a Furby, a robotic toy that mimics emotions, to different children and observing the results. One of the children affectionately speaks of the relationship, saying "I love my Furby because it loves me"(41). If their beloved Furby breaks, the child would not want another because their own Furby is irreplaceable (41). They even believe that hurting the Furby in any way, shape or form is intolerable and that it can be killed this way (43). This relates to Turkle's belief that the Furbies were 'alive enough' to make the children believe that it had emotions. These 'emotions' led others to believe that relationships with robots to be more practical. Turkle interviews an elderly man who has had various issues with

women. He said that he would rather be in a relationship with a robot because they have less needs and he would be able to emotionally satisfy them (65). Turkle connects this to the conclusion that humans feel that they can have a more intimate relationship with a robot than a human (8). Similarly, Joseph Weizenbaum created a computer program, ELIZA, which mimicked the dialogue of a psychoanalyst and asked his students to talk to it. After several lines of conversation, they started to turn it into more of an interactive diary (24). They became caught up in ELIZA, disclosing secrets and issues that they wouldn't dare tell an actual human (24). As Turkle writes, we are lonely but fearful of intimacy (1). Old-school friendships and social lives have been reborn through these new technological advancements- technology can be both an expert resource and a companion (52). Turkle believes that these new digital connections "offer an illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship." (1). Through Turkle's eyes, today's modern technology may offer a new intimate relationship- at a cost. Our current society has changed drastically compared to our old ways of life, all due to these advanced and modern ways of socializing and connecting. Globally, people are finding connections to each other through technology, whether it is through social media or networking sites. I believe that both Shirky and Weinberger's assessments of technology are valid. Shirky's main point is that with technology as a modern communicative tool, we are able to achieve what would have been impossible merely ten years before. A few years ago, communication revolved around e-mailing and telephone calls, usually socializing with someone that you were already acquainted with. In modern times, we are able to reach across the globe and

connect with people who we may have never met without the use of technological connections. This new 'global society' allows humankind to come together as one and set the standards of moral and ethical beliefs. It also leads me to believe that as our world becomes more advanced, our society must evolve as well. Therefore, technology is exceptionally helpful to our society into evolving as a higher, more advanced and knowledgeable race. As Weinberger states, "knowledge isn't in our heads, but between us." (28). Technology allows us to unite as a global force and unleash our newfound knowledge in a way that was not possible in the past. Contrary to Turkle, I do not believe that technology weakens or disrupts any new relationships or friendships we may make through the advancements of technology. Although we may be naïve to technology's powers and digital social assets it provides, we are intelligent enough to know what is alive, and what is a mere attempt at recreating life. As with any great power, comes responsibility. If we are to use a great resource such as modern technology, we should use it to help progress the human race and advance it towards success. As contemporary technology revolutionizes the modern world and social traditions that we once took sacred, may our rebirthed society strengthen together as a whole. Technology has digitally transformed our modern society, providing millions of connections across the world. This has created a global platform where others can network and socialize to share their thoughts, ideas, and knowledge. Society is not just the product of its individual members, but also the product of its groups (Shirky, 17), correlating to the fact that intelligence is shared between each and every one of us (Weinberger, 28). Therefore, by uniting through technology, the

human race will become a diverse network of intelligence and communication. Contemporary technology will not only strengthen relationships between individual humans, but also between entire nations. With the advancement of modern technology, we will go forth and prosper.