

# internet as social structure

## chris wood, 2017

Technology is seductive when what it offers meets our human vulnerabilities.

Turkle, *Alone Together*, 2013

25% of teens see their friends in person every day  
55% of teens text their friends every day  
57% of teens have made friends online<sup>1</sup>

62% of Americans get news from social media<sup>2</sup>

88% of Americans use the internet  
77% own a smartphone  
[92% of 18-29yr olds]  
73% have broadband at home  
69% use social media  
[86% 18-29yr olds]<sup>3</sup>

The internet and wireless technologies are the predominant social structures of modern American society. In a society where 55% of teens text their friends everyday compared to 25% seeing their friends every day, 69% of all Americans use social media (86% of 18-29 year olds), and 62% of Americans get news from social media: we are normalizing to new arenas and forms of social interaction. Founded as a way for Cold War supercomputers to communicate between Los Angeles and Palo Alto, the internet's primary function has remained that of "connection".

"People love their new technologies of connection." (Turkle 152) According to

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<sup>1</sup> Amanda Lenhart. "Teens, Technology and Friendships." *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech*. 06 Aug. 2015. 22 Mar. 2017. <<http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/08/06/teens-technology-and-friendships/>>.

<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey Gottfried, and Elisa Shearer. "News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2016." *Pew Research Center's Journalism Project*. 26 May 2016. 22 Mar. 2017. <<http://www.journalism.org/2016/05/26/news-use-across-social-media-platforms-2016/>>.

<sup>3</sup> Aaron Smith. "Record Shares of Americans Now Own Smartphones, Have Home Broadband." *Pew Research Center*. 12 Jan. 2017. 22 Mar. 2017. <<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/01/12/evolution-of-technology/>>.

Alexa.com, the three most visited websites in 2016 among Americans are Google, YouTube, and Facebook. Seek, consume, and connect. Of the three, Facebook sees the most average daily time spent on the sight at 13:25, second only to Reddit - #5 on the list - at 14:05 daily.<sup>4</sup> (At the time of writing; notice that Alexa.com updates these statistics on a daily and monthly basis.)

Social Media isn't just an at-home practice. Today nearly two thirds of all Americans own a smartphone, and 19% of all Americans say they rely to some degree on their smartphones for access to the internet.<sup>5</sup> There are 1.15 billion daily active users on Facebook as of 02/17 (23% increase year-over-year).<sup>6</sup> When you're on a train, at a coffee shop, even at the park: faces aren't drifting and meeting but rather looking down being dramatically lit. With these tendencies, shared public places are "no longer a communal space but a place of social collection: people come together but do not speak to each other." (Turkle, *Alone Together*, 155).

The modern prominence and platform of Social media has revolutionized human interaction. It has given parents a closer regulation over their children, it has given lovers a place to date, it has given outcasts communities, and it has given communities voices. But among all of this, it has changed the way that we communicate and connect.

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<sup>4</sup> "Top Sites in United States." *Top Sites in United States - Alexa*. N.d. 22 Mar. 2017. <<http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/US>>.

<sup>5</sup> Aaron Smith. "U.S. Smartphone Use in 2015." *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech*. 01 Apr. 2015. 24 Mar. 2017. <<http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/04/01/us-smartphone-use-in-2015/>>.

<sup>6</sup> "Top 20 Facebook Statistics - Updated January 2017." *Zephoria Inc*. 07 Mar. 2017. 24 Mar. 2017. <<https://zephoria.com/top-15-valuable-facebook-statistics/>>.