How Technology Cultivates Social Isolation

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**Prewriting**

**What is your narrowed *topic*? Be detailed in your answer. You can use any of the versions you’ve developed for prior assignments.**

My topic is Technology and Social Isolation. My narrowed topic and research question is: How has technology impacted and changed the social capacity of its users?

**Who is your primary *audience* or reader? *Why*? Be detailed in your answer about your audience.**

My primary audience will be all readers across various countries in which technologies are deeply integrated into the social aspects of daily life, particularly the United States. In this country, even young children and teenagers conduct a majority of their social interactions through use of technologies, which can have a profound effect on their social development altogether. Attitudes and values regarding this matter are significantly different in the U.S. when compared to other countries, which is why I aim to inform this primary audience of the issues presented by their choice to use technologies in the capacity that they do.

**In a sentence or short paragraph, what is your *thesis statement*, including your angle? Write what will appear in your essay.**

My point is that technology has made its users more socially isolated due to their dependence on and preference for it. Technology use has cultivated a loss of social interaction skills amongst its users that negatively impacts the health of the persons and thus the society as whole.

**What topic sentences will you use as the foundation of your communication? (If necessary, add more points.)**

* Technologies are powerful tools that can potentially be of great benefit and convenience.
* Technologies are changing the ways that people are interacting with and interpreting the world around them.
* Technologies have become so deeply integrated into our daily lives to the point that they have become intrusive, overbearing, and distracting.
* Peoples’ dependence on and preference for technologies causes them to forgo traditional interactions, which leads to social isolationism.

**What *method of organization and development* will you use to develop your paragraphs?**

I will try and stick to a problem/solution organizational pattern, in which I present a topic and then proceed to explain it. Sometimes the theme or topic of the paragraph may directly be a problem that I detail or try and provide evidence on (I cannot provide a direct solution; I will merely try and inform), and others I will try and present a situation that is not necessarily a problem to begin with, but will detail how it could potentially become a problem in regards to my paper topic. Overall, presenting focused topic ideas and then going into further detail to show how each topic has an important and relevant place in the structure and flow of the paper will be a method I feel will serve the paper well. It will hopefully have almost a cause and effect type of feel, along with problem/solution (inform) elements blended in as well.

* **Introduction:**
  + Technology is a part of almost everything a majority of us do on a daily basis. Even in a country like Albania, 49% of the country’s population used the Internet in some capacity in 2012 (Cenameri, 2013). While some may view this as a welcomed and convenient way to stay connected, its widespread integration has really become more of an intrusion that is prying us away from reality. Technology has made its users more socially isolated due to their dependence on it and has cultivated a loss of social interaction skills that negatively impacts the health of the persons and the society as whole. People have become preoccupied and distracted by their preference for communication via technologies, which has caused a change for the worse in the way users choose to form relationships and conduct their daily lives.
* **Body:**
  + Technologies are powerful tools that can potentially be of great benefit and convenience. They can help connect us to others far away, both for personal and business use. They can help vastly speed up processes. They are designed to be tools for us to use for these specific reasons. Everything about technologies, particularly the use of the Internet (in many different capacities) is about gaining instant access to what you need, when you need it. It provides a world of information, right at your fingertips. But perhaps this ease of access is altering the way humans choose to carry themselves socially.
  + Technologies are changing the ways that people are interacting with and interpreting the world around them. In current day, we are constantly seeing an integration of technologies into all facets of daily life. This integration is often aimed at evolving or enhancing the way we conduct daily tasks, such as learning and/or conducting business affairs. Children now grow up using and being taught via technologies, which has a significant impact on their perception of themselves and their interactions with others. Technology use must be monitored carefully from an early age or an adolescent may run the risk of becoming addicted to technologies, as well as becoming detached from reality. By using technologies, people are placing themselves into a situation in which human nature may ultimately get the best of them. It’s how we choose to use technologies that determines their effectiveness, or can instead shape unhealthy habits.
  + Technologies have become so deeply integrated into our daily lives to the point that they have become intrusive, overbearing, and distracting. Everywhere we go there are TVs, radios, and cellphones. What these technologies do is cause the user to detach themselves from what is going on around them in order to focus on the “content” that is being provided to them through these mediums. People now have so many other platforms to take up their time that the idea of conversation is being killed. Technology provides a constant need for distraction that turns them more into timewasters instead of the timesavers they are supposed to be.
  + Peoples’ dependence on and preference for technologies causes them to forgo traditional interactions, which leads to social isolationism. Many people will acknowledge that face-to-face communication is more helpful and meaningful than communication via technologies. Many will also openly admit they prefer methods of communication via ICT. This is contradictory and creates an unhealthy cycle in which the person relies on technologies to communicate, which directly causes them to experience loss of sleep, neglect of responsibilities, and increased stress. They then turn to technologies to seek support, and the cycle repeats itself. Their preference for these forms of communication stems from their ability to control how and when the communication happens. The ease and comfort that technology provides causes its users to choose them above all else, which leads to users partaking in less face-to-face communication, thus causing them to become socially isolated.
* **Conclusion:**
  + I will conclude my essay with a proposition – a call to realization and action on the part of the reader. I want them to feel informed and be capable of interpreting how the ideas I presented are affecting their own lives, and the changes they can make to live a more healthy and meaningful life.
  + I propose that self-realization of technology intrusion and dependence can make users more selective about how to balance and manage their lives. Self-awareness is the first step to any type of change, and if people care to preserve and maintain a high level of social skillsets and interactions they would do well to make a proactive effort to change their newly formed, modern-day habits. This would lead to a much healthier and more meaningful life, as well as a much stronger and more tight-knit society.

How Technology Cultivates Social Isolation

Technology is a part of almost everything a majority of us do on a daily basis. Even in a country like Albania, 49% of the country’s population used the Internet in some capacity in 2012 (Cenameri, 2013). While some may view this as a welcomed and convenient way to stay connected, its widespread integration has really become more of an intrusion that is prying us away from reality. Technology has made its users more socially isolated due to their dependence on it and has cultivated a loss of social interaction skills that negatively impacts the health of the persons and the society as whole. People have become preoccupied and distracted by their preference for communication via technologies, which has caused a change for the worse in the way users choose to form relationships and conduct their daily lives.

The changing psyche and attitudes of today’s societies can largely be attributed to the devices we insert into our lives. These devices and technologies are becoming the predominant factors in how we conduct ourselves on a daily basis. In my own experiences, I have seen firsthand how the appeal and convenience of technologies can glue you to them, and how this effect can cause one to lose sight of what is around them. Through research and studies conducted by scholars on the matter, as well as personal opinion and experiences of some other authors as well as myself, I hope to shed some light on the matter of technology taking control of our lives, and the way we are viewing and conducting social interactions. It is only once you become self-aware that you can truly set yourself free from all that which you are allowing to rule your life.

Technologies are powerful tools that can potentially be of great benefit and convenience. They can help connect us to others far away both for personal and business uses by allowing processes to be vastly sped up, and also provide more accessibility to a larger audience. Technologies are designed to be tools for us to use to increase our efficiency and expand our horizons. Everything about technologies, particularly the use of the Internet is about gaining instant access to what you need, when you need it. They provide a world of information, right at your fingertips. But perhaps this ease of access is altering the way humans choose to carry themselves socially.

This notion of “always on, right at your fingertips” is highlighted by cell phones in particular. Vroon (2009) states that mobile phones were originally intended as devices that were meant to help you in a rough situation or an emergency. Now, everywhere you go you see people constantly on their phones, and generally not for productivity purposes. Cell phone use, as one example, is changing the ways that people communicate with each other. Instead of using them as emergency devices, people use them as entertainment devices. When people are using them for communication purposes, it is often done in a non-engaging matter, often times through text messaging. The fact that this technology is “always on, right at your fingertips” creates little effort on behalf of the user which causes them to resort to conducting a large part of their communication via these types of methods. This type of non-engaging communication does nothing to help build the social interaction skills of its users.

Technologies are changing the ways that people are interacting with and interpreting the world around them. In current day, we are constantly seeing an integration of technologies into all facets of daily life. This integration is often aimed at evolving or enhancing the way we conduct daily tasks, such as learning and/or conducting business affairs. Children now grow up using and being taught via technologies, which has a significant impact on their perception of themselves and their interactions with others. Recently in my home county of Los Angeles there was rollout of a 1 billion dollar plan that aims to provide every teacher and student with an iPad that is meant to enhance and change the ways they conduct classes and learn information. This type of integration that introduces technologies into the classroom is just an expansion of what is already happening in the home. According to Cenameri (2013), “77% of 13-16 year olds and 38% of 9-12 year olds in the European Union have a profile on a social networking site” (p. 571).

While it has been acknowledged that technologies do have the potential to be powerful tools for learning, technology use must be monitored carefully from an early age or an adolescent may run the risk of becoming addicted to technologies, causing them to become socially isolated as well as becoming detached from reality. By using technologies, people are placing themselves into a situation in which human nature may ultimately get the best of them. It’s how we choose to use technologies that determines their effectiveness, or can instead shape unhealthy habits.

Technologies have become so deeply integrated into our daily lives to the point that they have become intrusive, overbearing, and distracting. Everywhere we go there are TVs, radios, computers and cell phones. What these technologies do is cause the user to detach themselves from what is going on around them in order to focus on the “content” that is being provided to them through these mediums. People now have so many other platforms to take up their time that the idea of conversation is being killed.

Technologies require some form of commitment of the users’ senses in order for the user to interact with them. Some, such as the radio, require only auditory senses. As technology advanced we got the television which requires both auditory and visual senses. Now, we have videogames that “require a complete immersion in an artificial world for hours on end and allow for no interpersonal communication while playing” (Cutchen, 2009, p.10). Technologies create a constant need for distraction that turns them more into timewasters instead of the timesavers they are supposed to be.

Peoples’ dependence on and preference for technologies causes them to forgo traditional interactions, which leads to social isolationism. Gordon (1990) presents the notion of “cocooning” in which people choose to stay close to home and not interact very much with the outside world. Technology encourages this behavior because people now feel they have access to a majority of what they need, right in their own homes. Opportunities now exist that allow people to have a bevy of entertainment options at their disposal, right from home. This accessibility alters social preferences and habits, and now causes people to make decisions like watching a movie on demand at home instead of going out to a public theater. Opportunities for social interactions are quickly dwindling due to these choices.

Figure 1: Proposed Student ICT-Use Cycle



*Figure 1:* ICT-use cycle demonstrates how communication via information and communication technologies impacts tests subjects’ (college students in this case) capabilities, causing an increase in their perceived levels of stress. They then seek social support through communication via ICT use. Source: “Information and Communication Technology: Affects on U.S. College Students” by M. Massimini and M. Peterson, 2009, *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, *3*(1), p. 8.

In the study conducted by Massimini and Peterson (2009), it was found that a majority of test subjects openly admitted they prefer methods of communication via information and communication technologies (ICT). However, most of these same subjects also acknowledged that face-to-face communication is more helpful and meaningful than communication via technologies. This is contradictory and creates an unhealthy cycle, as shown in Figure 1, in which Massimini and Peterson (2009) found the person relies on technologies to communicate, which directly causes them to experience loss of sleep, neglect of responsibilities, and increased stress. They then turn to technologies to seek support, and the cycle repeats itself. Their preference for these forms of communication stems from their ability to control how and when the communication happens. The ease and comfort that technology provides causes its users to choose them above all else, which leads to users partaking in less face-to-face communication, thus causing them to become socially isolated.

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