

be exploring carefully if we wish to make sense of our lives today. These writers discover meanings that may surprise you in the many pastimes, entertainments, and guilty pleasures that tempt us every day. When scholars study what we do for fun—enjoying online avatars, movies, and glossy advertising, to name just a few of the pleasures analyzed in these texts—we learn how every cultural artifact, no matter how seemingly insignificant, carries meaning that shapes our lives in often quite significant ways.

In this chapter, you will be invited to consider very different perspectives about the effects of online culture on our identities. Sherry Turkle suggests that there are clear downsides to our “tethered” or “collaborative” selves, particularly on social media. Jane McGonigal offers a different perspective on the problem-solving potential of collective game playing, which might offer inspiration for solving real-life challenges, too. Where would you chime into this complex conversation?

Some of the authors in this chapter focus specifically on television and films, such as Joni Adamson, who reveals the surprising popularity of the film *Avatar* among some indigenous environmental activists. Ken Gillam and Shannon R. Wooden examine unexpected role models for a new kind of masculinity in Pixar films, while bell hooks notes that films and television shows may not be so forward-thinking when it comes to depictions of poverty. Jean Kilbourne also examines the ways media can reinforce damaging stereotypes that limit the ways we see both women and men. What solutions do these writers offer?

The readings in this chapter acknowledge the positive potential of media culture, but they also help us understand that the past is always with us in our concerns for the present and hopes for the future. Whether you see media today as the end of culture as we knew it, the same old stuff, or something entirely new—or perhaps all three—these readings raise provocative questions about the significance of our “just-for-fun” pastimes.

 Visit macmillanhigher.com/frominquiry3e to view documentary videos from The Representation Project that explore how the media shapes our expectations of femininity and masculinity.

SHERRY TURKLE

Growing Up Tethered

Sherry Turkle is a professor in the Program in Science, Technology, and Society at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), where she also directs the MIT Initiative on Technology and Self. In her research and writing, Turkle focuses on people's subjective experiences with technology, and she has published many books and articles on this rich topic, both for scholarly and popular audiences. She is a frequent media commentator on the intersections of technology, media, psychology, and sociology, on programs that include NPR, *Nightline*, and *The Colbert Report*. Turkle gave

a TED talk in 2012 titled, “Connected, but Alone?,” which indicates one of her concerns about the effects of screen culture.

This piece comes from Turkle's 2011 book *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*, from a chapter titled, “Growing Up Tethered.” What do her book and chapter titles suggest about her perspective on our use of technology? You might pause after reading the first five paragraphs to reflect on the conversations she reports having with teenagers, and her evaluation. Is it fair to call this generation a “tethered” one? What problems does Turkle find in not being able to separate from one's parents, and from one's friends?

As you read, weigh Turkle's description of this new way of being (what she calls the “tethered” or “collaborative self”) against her analysis of this media-moderated behavior as either a “pathology” or as just a new norm—or perhaps both. (See paras. 22 to 26 in particular.) Turkle raises some different theories of the self in paragraphs 29 and 30. Slow down and be sure you understand the ideas she attributes to Erik Erikson, Jay Lifton, and her own theory of the narcissistic self. To what extent do her examples and explanations support this claim?

In her sections titled “The Avatar of Me” and “Presentation Anxiety,” Turkle offers some extended examples of the ways we self-consciously craft our public personas on social media, whether through games like the Sims or in profiles on Facebook. Evaluate your own earliest—and then later—experiences with Facebook or other social media sites that require a kind of crafting of online identity. We suspect you could have some lively discussions with your classmates (or friends and family outside of your class) about the good and bad and stress-producing aspects of this form of media. How would you respond to Turkle's claims about the benefits versus the deficits of being a “tethered” or “collaborative” self? (And would you respond differently if you were speaking to her *in person* versus via text, tweet, or on another social media platform?)

Roman, eighteen, admits that he texts while driving and he is not going to stop. “I know I should, but it's not going to happen. If I get a Facebook message or something posted on my wall . . . I have to see it. I have to.” I am speaking with him and ten of his senior classmates at the Cranston School, a private urban coeducational high school in Connecticut. His friends admonish him, but then several admit to the same behavior. Why do they text while driving? Their reasons are not reasons; they simply express a need to connect. “I interrupt a call even if the new call says ‘unknown’ as an identifier—I just have to know who it is. So I'll cut off a friend for an ‘unknown,’” says Maury. “I need to know who wanted to connect. . . . And if I hear my phone, I have to answer it. I don't have a choice. I have to know who it is, what they are calling for.” Marilyn adds, “I keep the sound on when I drive. When a text comes in, I have to look. No matter what. Fortunately, my phone shows me the text as a pop up right up front . . . so I don't have to do too much looking while I'm driving.”