Outline for Paper:

Prompt: Respond to Turkle's call to action to "reclaim conversation" (352). Is this something you think 21st century readers would want to, or could, do? How so?

Tentative Thesis – I agree with Sherry Turkle's argument that there is an obvious flight from conversation that is being amplified by people's inability to foster empathy, however I disagree to the extent to which she paints technological conversations as being void of connection.

When it comes to her call to action, the help of older generations is crucial as 21st century readers would be unable "reclaim conversation" due to a lack of realization to the presence of the problem.

Body Paragraph Ideas:

- What is Turkle's definition of conversation and empathy?
- Align myself with the problem; I do agree that there is an issue with a flight from conversation
- Complicate the idea: acknowledge Turkle's possible bias. I see an issue, but I also believe that conversations via technology can also foster some sort of connection
- Is a call to action really that easy? I don't think 21st century readers wouldn't want to fix this problem; I believe there is a lack of realization that this is a problem at all
- Analyzing the call to action; I agree it needs to be done by older generations and those who know how to communicate effectively. 21st century readers couldn't do it on their own due that lack of realization of a problem and the idea of listening and attention being skills that are taught

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<div align="center">(Title)</div>

  Do you check your phone at the dinner table? Engage in "phubbing"? Glance at your phone immediately when you hear the ring of a notification? Technology consumes the lives of most people, and it is becoming evident that its presence is hurting the nature of face-to-face conversation. "The Empathy Diaries" written by Sherry Turkle, PhD in sociology from Harvard University, explores this recent crisis coined as the "flight from conversation" (344). Through a well-crafted essay, Turkle argues that there is a degradation of genuine conversation in the recent

generation that is caused from an increase focus of technological conversation. This lack of in-person conversation has obvious, tangible, negatives effects on youth and their ability to self-reflect and feel empathy towards others. The exigence of this piece stems from a middle school dean to asking Turkle to meet with faculty regarding concerns of students' abilities to form friendships. I agree with Turkle's argument that there is clear flight from conversation that is having detrimental effects on children's abilities to develop necessary social skills, however it seems as though Turkle's inherent bias undermines the connective power that a technological conversation can have. In addition, when it comes to her ultimate call to action, the help of older generations is crucial as 21st century readers would be unable "reclaim conversation" due to a lack of realization to the presence of the problem.

> **Commented [NK1]:** This is a good start to your thesis, but it feels a bit like a continuation of a previous point than a claim.

Especially to the current generation, in-person interactions are viewed as awkward and uncomfortable, yet Turkle explains that it is the unpredictable nature of an in-person conversation that allows one to develop crucial social skills, such as empathy. Phones have become an outlet to avoid interactions. When sitting in a waiting room, walking past someone on the sidewalk, or waiting for a class to start, it has become one's initial reaction to glance at their phone aimlessly, in hopes of avoiding eye contact or awkward small talk. When elaborating on this idea of phones being a way to hide from others, Turkle writes, "It all adds up to a flight from conversation—at least from conversation that is open-ended and spontaneous, conversation in which we play with ideas, in which we allow ourselves to be fully present and vulnerable. Yet, these are the conversations where empathy and intimacy flourish and social action gains strength" (344). As Turkle alludes, conversations via technology are easy: you have time to craft every response, you can choose your level of engagement, and they avoid any effort required in real conversation such as eye-contact, reading body language, and generating quick responses. One of Turkle's teenage interviewees put it best: "'On computers, if things are unpredictable, it's in a predictable way'" (346). However, there is a clear danger with being accustomed to this type of communication, we become unable to take part in the in-person counterpart. As Turkle highlighted, if we don't constantly engage in real conversation and lack ample practice, we become undeveloped in the skills they provide like empathy and intimacy, which results in an inability to foster genuine connections with others.

> **Commented [NK2]:** This is a very good paragraph and it carries your point well, but I feel like you may be relying on Turkle to much, I want to hear your take on these topics.

Turkle does appreciate the benefits technological communication can have, especially in situations of distance, however her generational bias seems to undermine the connection that can be produced from an over-the-phone conversation. When describing text threads she shared with her daughter who lives across the country from her, Turkle writes:

> All of a sudden, with no warning, on my phone, in my hand, there will be a reference to a book or a food or a Halloween costume that reminds me of our intimacy and infuses my day with her presence. This is pleasurable and to be cherished. The problem comes if these "reminders" of intimacy lead us away from intimacy itself (349).

Through the singling out and enunciation of "reminders" in reference to the texts and phone calls she receives from her daughter, Turkle draws a clear contradiction between technological conversation and true intimacy; that the two cannot exist semantically with one another. Yet, I feel that it crucial to examine how Turkle's age may produce bias on this front. Sherry Turkle, age 76, is a part of the "Baby Boomer" generation; she grew up in a time in which the technological conversation we use at ease today was at its very primordial stages and didn't hold a fraction of the value it holds today. However, from a Gen Z perspective, with technology being a fundamental part of my everyday routine and a staple way to communicate, I view technological conversations as holding more power and connection than Turkle likes to admit.

I agree that a conversation over the phone lacks several aspects unique to in person communication, but I disagree in the sense that technological conversations are completely void of intimacy and connection. I acknowledge that I may hold my own personal generational bias and naivety, yet when speaking over the phone there is the capacity for ideas being shared, memories made, and laughs had. These aren't merely reminders. There is intimacy and connection in these conversations. Is it the same as that of a face-to-face conversation? Not necessarily. Yet does it exist and should be acknowledged? Yes. The conversations themselves also hold intimacy and this idea seems to be controversial due to generational bias and the polarizing views of technology that can exist within these groups.

> **Commented [NK3]:** You may be able to sort of clump these two paragraphs together because the second one doesn't really feel like your introducing a new idea, it feels like one idea that's been split in half.

Despite technological conversation having the ability to foster some form of intimacy and connection, it by no means acts as a reasonable alternative to in-person conversation and a newfound reliance on is having detrimental effects on empathy. However, when it comes to addressing the issue of the deterioration of real conversation, it is crucial to employ the aid of older generations and of those who know how to communicate genuinely and effectively as there is an unawareness of the issue in the current generations. Turkle highlights this blindness when she writes, "Without conversation, studies show that we are less empathic, less connected, less creative and fulfilled. We are diminished, in retreat. But to generations that grew using their phones to text and message, *these studies may be describing losses they don't feel.* They didn't grow up with a lot of face-to-face talk" (350). Turkle continues by stating soon after in the text that this group of people "needs to be persuaded that a flight from conversation suggests a problem and not an evolution" (350). In simpler terms, it's a near impossible feat to help those who don't know they need help. Therefore, the first step in mending conversation is convincing 21st century readers that a problem exists, and this must come from an outside perspective who can recognize this issue.

> **Commented [NK4]:** Good job over all, the main things to focus on is solidifying your thesis statement into more of a claim. You also did well with keeping a decent balance between the "they say" and "I say"

The next step relies on the modeling and

"It is not enough to ask your children to put away their phones. You have to model this behavior and put away *your* phone. If children don't learn how to listen, to stand up for themselves and negotiate with others in classrooms or at family dinner, when will they learn the give-and-take that is necessary for good relationships or, for that matter, for the debate of citizens in a democracy? Reclaiming conversation begins with the acknowledgment that speaking and listening with attention are skills. They can be taught" (350).

With the proper help from older generations, 21st century readers can be made aware of the problem and gain the proper skills to engage in face-to-face conversation.