"Simple recipe for chocolate chip cookies." "What is the first law of thermodynamics?" "Restaurants near me." All of these phrases are in my recent internet search history. With the click of a button, I have access to an unlimited amount of information. The presence of the internet is an integral piece of the daily lives of most. Yet, there is longstanding controversy whether the existence and use of the internet is enhancing or harming human behavior. On one hand, many people view the internet as a tool. For example, Kevin Kelly, co-founded of *Wired* magazine, claims that the internet is a "wilderness" (5) that should be explored for all its beauty and practical uses in his article "Technophilia." On the other hand, skeptics are cautious of technology and the internet as they take a look into how it is affecting human behavior outside the online realm. Sherry Turkle, PhD in sociology from Harvard University highlights an opposing perspective in her essay "The Empathy Diaries" when explaining a recent issue in the current generation that she claims as the "flight from conversation" (344). Turkle argues that the newfound devotion to the internet seen in the current generation has led to the degradation of genuine conversation. I agree that internet is beneficial in the sense that the boundless knowledge it holds has increased human efficiency and individual power, however a reliance and devotion to the internet is causing us to lose characteristics that make us uniquely human, such as our intelligence and ability to connect with others.

Before diving deeply into the exploration of the internet's beneficial nature in conversation with how it is physically changing human behavior, it is first crucial to analyze the properties of technology that make it so compelling and attractive to the human gaze. The internet is constantly evolving to get more human-like and its this anthromorphism that we as humans love and crave. Apple is constantly updating Siri to have smoother voice modulation and you can even change its accent within your settings. ChatGPT uses algorithms to mimic human conversation and appropriate responses to questions and statements. We feel emotional connections toward the internet when it exhibits these human-esque qualities, and we have such a deep affinity for it as it lacks all the effort required in connecting with another human being. Kelly highlights this theme by describing his own personal love for the internet. Kelly writes, "[The internet] is a steadfast benefactor, always there. I caress it with my figety fingers; it yields up my desires, like a lover. Secret knowledge? Here. Predictions of what is to come? Here. Maps to hidden places? Here. Rarely does it fail to please..." (5). Through the personification of the internet, Kelly depicts it as the perfect companion that is able to satisfy his needs while not needing to give it anything in return, a quality that would be required in real human connection. Shelly Turkle illudes to this theme of the internet being a model human companion in her own writing when highlighting the predictability of the web. When quoting a teenage, also referred to as

Commented [NK1]: I like that you showed their views on the topic up front while introducing who they are, rather than only introducing them and then showing their views later on.

Commented [NK2]: Feels a little drawn out

Commented [NK3]: Maybe say "when he writes" saying Kelly again so soon feels a little repetitive

Commented [NK4]: Only need Sherry's name once, also misspelled

a digital native, Turkle writes, "'On computers, if things are unpredictable, it's in a predictable way'" (346). Turkle continues by stating:

> "...computers offer the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship and then, as the programs got really good, the illusion of friendship without the demands of intimacy" (346).

Although Turkle complicates Kelly by deeming this companionship as illusory, both authors acknowledge this intimate companionship that exist between man and the internet. Through a personal anecdote, Kelly describes himself as immersed in this companionship with the web, whereas Shelly explains that this one sided "perfect" relationship is why the internet is so compelling to the human eye. The internet is the ultimate giver. It readily satisfies our immediate needs whether it be the answer to a question, a laugh, or just some stimulation, yet requires no emotional effort from its user, making its existence so enthralling.

An intimate connection with the internet has provided humans with various benefits, especially regarding efficiency and connectivity. The vast nature of the internet allows us to have access to a practically unlimited amount of knowledge in the palm of our hands and the ability to connect with others anytime, anywhere. Research has become exponentially faster as we can now bypass tedious tasks such as using the Dewey Decimal system to find and read a library book or doing all calculations out by hand. In addition, distance no longer plays such a serious role in communication. Everyone is a text, call, facetime, or Zoom meeting away from one another. Kelly expands on this idea of the internet being a boundless storehouse of information by claiming that having access to such a tool gives himself, the user, a sense of power. Kelly writes, "It knows so much. It has insulated its tendrils of connection into everything, everywhere. The net is now vastly wider than me, wider than I can imagine, so in this way, while I am in it, it makes me bigger too" (5). I can align myself with Kelly's perspective of feeling powerful and bigger than myself. when I am engaged in my intimate relationship with the web. The ease at which I can learn information and navigate the internet makes me feel so connected to it and its infinite amount of knowledge that I view it as my own. Because the web can answer any question posed, so in turn can I. Anything I am curious about can found. I have an infinite arsenal at my disposal. When I allow myself to fall deeply into my connection with the web, I do transcend into something bigger than myself.

Shelly Turkle acknowledges this argument that the internet can bring its user of sense of personal power, seen when she writes, "Virtual space is a place to explore the self" (345), however she complicates the conversation by claiming that a reliance on this picture-perfect relationship with the internet deteriorates human intelligence and our

ability to genuinely connect with others. When highlighting why the current generations struggles to engage in real in-person conversation and exhibit empathy she explains that, "Real people, with their unpredictable ways, can seem difficult to contend with after one has spent a stretch in simulation". She continues by stating soon after that, "...face-to-face, people ask for things that computers never do. With people, things go best if you pay close attention and know how to put yourself in someone else's shoes. Real people demand responses to what they are feeling. And not just any response" (346). However, when it comes time to engage in in-person connection, we are unable to do it effectively as we lack the emotional intelligence and social skills to do so. Can we blame ourselves? Why would we put in the time and effort to learn and practice these skills when we have a tool at our disposal that allows us to get everything want without the input of much effort at all? Despite his love for his relationship with the web, Kelly doesn't fully disregard this perspective of the internet degenerating human intelligence. When addressing skeptics of technophilia, Kelly quotes computer scientist Jaron Lanier states, "

By devoting our time and attention to this relationship with the web, we are losing the qualities that make us uniquely human and this lack of intelligence, both practically and emotionally, ultimately degrades the real relationships with the people in our lives.