

Sherry Turkle

Director, MIT Initiative on Technology and Self

Background

- B.A. in Social Studies at Harvard
- PhD in Sociology and Personality at Harvard
- Focuses research on psychoanalysis and human-technology interaction
- Expert in internet psychology and cyber behavior

Important Publications

- **The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit (1984)** – Technology affects our awareness of ourselves, of one another, and of our relationship with the world
- **Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet (1995)** – Emergence of the culture of simulation
- **Relational Artifacts with Children and Elders: The Complexities of Cybercompanionship (2006)** – Understanding the meaning of human connections and emotional needs with robots
- **Evocative Objects: Things we Think With (2007)** – Understanding the connection we have with the everyday objects that are in our lives
- **Alone Together (2011)** – Being aware that technology is all around us, but not letting it overpower human interaction

Who Am We? – Wired, 1996

- What does it mean to be alive: “Children today contemplate machines they believe to be intelligent and conscious yet not alive.”
- Need to understand what is reality
 - Life online is serious play
 - “Computers are not just changing our lives but changing ourselves.”
- Ability to play with identity
 - Being more yourself when behind virtual masks
 - Ability to turn on different parts of the mind and highlight the best parts of your identity



“Human relationships are rich and they're messy and they're demanding. And we clean them up with technology. Texting, email, posting, all of these things let us present the self as we want to be. We get to edit, and that means we get to delete, and that means we get to retouch, the face, the voice, the flesh, the body -- not too little, not too much, just right.”

Related Thinkers

Andy Clark – Contradictory to Sherry Turkle, Clark focuses on how our technology is inseparable from who we are and how we think with Extended Theory of Mind

Edwin Hutchins – Focuses on Distributed Cognition, the human and computer are treated as equal parts of the system so that the computer is just as important the person, which Sherry Turkle may argue against

Terry Winograd – Professor Emeritus of Computer Science at Stanford University wrote “From Computing Machinery to Interaction Design” and calls upon virtual worlds and how “real life is just one more window.”

References

<http://www.mit.edu/~sturkle/>

<http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/4.01/turkle.html>