

The role of mass media in shaping youth essay example

[Technology](#), [Internet](#)



In today's world, mass media pervades every aspect of life, from smartphones to 24 hour news stations. Every single human need for information or entertainment can be accessed with the push of a button, which creates a culture of immediacy that some people believe threatens societal development. However, it can be said that the Internet provides a bastion of information and communication that is unprecedented at any other point in history. This is found most clearly in the advent of social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter - these are hubs of information and modes of communication between millions of individuals at a time. The immediate thoughts, the hopes and dreams, and the political beliefs of millions of people are instantly at one's fingertips. Because of these abilities, mass media is incredibly important in the positions of younger generations in fostering communication and media literacy.

The iPhone generation has created a culture in which no one need ever leave their mobile phone or laptop. Everything can be done with the simplest action on a phone, from contacting nearly anyone you can in multiple ways (speaking, texting, IMing, even through webcam) to checking your bank account or looking up information, according to Barnes (2006). With this in mind, people are able to be more informed than ever before. Personalized blogs and social networks, as well as sites like Facebook, allow people to manufacture their own content and exercise their own creative muscles, becoming their own authors of culture.

As a consequence of this media-savvy culture, people read fewer books on the whole. While many people portray this as a bad thing, citing a potential lack of experience with the written word which can stunt language

development and communication, this could not be further from the truth. In fact, children actually write more now with the constant typing of the Internet culture – “ Teenagers today read and write for fun; it's part of their social lives” (Goldwasser, 2010). Thanks to instant messaging, blogging, and social media, the written word is a much larger part of their social lives, and as such they have a greater exposure to it. Though some can claim this might dilute language due to new words being formed, and typos being potentially more prevalent, the sheer amount of correctly proofread content on the Internet means that people are given access to a greater amount of immediate professional content than ever before. The immediacy of social media means that people have much easier access to news, and are able to report it themselves in an articulate way. Someone can read a news story from CNN. com, get the full story from other news websites and blogs, as well as Twitter coverage from people who are at the site of the story, and even offer their own perspective for the world to read and absorb. “ The Internet has turned teenagers into honest documentarians of their own lives -- reporters embedded in their homes, their schools, their own heads” (Goldwasser).

Today’s electronic age has made it much easier to make younger people more socially aware; Twitter, Facebook, the news and other mass media have facilitated groups with the ability to assemble and organize large protests across the country. In the case of a Jena, Louisiana murder wherein six black teenagers were charged with the attempted murder of a white student (whom they had just beaten), many gathered to protest what was, in their mind, an overly harsh charge fueled by racial tensions. This issue had

become “viral”; in other words, social media and the Internet had caught onto it, making people around the country and the world aware of it and willing to protest. Thusly, a small town issue suddenly was thrust into the national spotlight, drawing thousands of protestors to the issue and highlighting the effect mass media has in facilitating protest (Wilson, 2007). Some claim that the Internet culture makes people even more alienated from themselves, due to the fact that it is much more easy and convenient to respond to people via email and smartphones. Even in mixed company, people tend to take out their phones and check them in lieu of communicating face-to-face with others – “when technology brings us to the point where we're used to sharing thoughts and feelings instantaneously, it can lead to a new dependence” (Goldwasser). Barnes (2006) also takes issue with the potential for mass media and social media to sacrifice our privacy. However, people still have the choice to have face-to-face conversations with people, and are able to be perpetually present in each other's lives – no amount of technology will restrict that. In fact, email, text messaging and instant messaging act as a means to provide more opportunities to find more people, make more friends, and even find romance. Rather than replacing our normal means for social lives, it enables us to simply have (and know) more than we do now.

In conclusion, the new nature of media today creates positive social development in the citizens of our culture, creating more media-literate, intelligent and skilled youth who can navigate a more complex and immediate level of information and entertainment. Social networking sites permit the aggregation of incredible amounts of data and news, feeding the

interests and politics of their peers into easily-assimilated nuggets of information. It also allows youth to organize and become more socially aware. Despite the arguments that many people are becoming more and more dependent on the Internet, and that this is a bad thing, the advantages to the technology for younger people are too numerous to ignore.

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