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COMM 302

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Class Debate: Is New Media Good or Bad?

My position: New Media is a positive force for the individual as well as society due to higher level of interactivity as well as creating and sustaining beneficial international relationships that are good for our economic growth.

New media technologies, as first developed & emerged in the late 1980’s/early 1990’s, which include but not limited to the Internet, social media websites, music download sites, electronic interactive games, etc. possess superiorly positive effects on civilization as opposed to the sole use of “old media” in order to gain information. Although old media, which includes print newspapers, magazines, radio, etc. is still relevant in today’s progressive technology-oriented world, but does not fulfill the same roles that new media tools serve. According to McQuail’s thesis (2010), there are many life-enriching benefits to these innovative new media tools, including the shift from old media’s absolute control over content with the consumer. It is also referred to as “one man’s vision, or the opposite of interactive social media,” by The Economist’s Tom Standage in a report on Media Agenda Talk in 2012.

This transfer of media content power to the consumer, or the “Information Society Theory” as stated by McQuail, advances to a “new kind of society distinct from mass society,” promoting active individual free thought and opinion, as opposed to the idea of old media’s passive audience. New media’s discussion boards, broadcasts, & online news/advertising is widely accepted with interest and optimistic approach on an international scale. In a social media statistical study conducted in 2012 by the Huffington Post, it was reported that there are roughly 850 million active users on Facebook alone, with the US accounting for 27% of all social media website users. In addition, the Post reported that in 2012, the “Castle in the Sky” television screening made for the busiest record ever on Twitter, with 25, 088 tweets per second. This demonstrates a high volume of the consistent spread of new media acceptance on an international scale.

New Media is good also because it promotes and stimulates interactive conversation among users online, which according to Poster (1999) “providing for instantaneous global contact and linking the modern subject to a network.” This serves the emanate desire of “connection” among (most) people throughout their busy, hectic, and sometimes lonely days. Poster’s reference to new media’s role in creating and sustaining beneficial international relationships is crucial to many business’ growth on a global level. In concordance with this assertion that new media is good, Livingstone (1995) emphasizes that the innovative qualities in mass communication expands upon the inherently unlimited span of content, scope of audience reach, and world-wide communication context in which incorporates both old media tools along with new media tools, or “extension, rather than the replacement” of old media use.

In their dissertation & media research text, in 2009, Christians, McQuail, & Nordenstreng stipulated that new media provides many benefits to society, such as providing vital information about events, stimulate counsel/advice, and promote the acceptance of diverse political views. In agreement with McQuail’s viewpoint on the positive role of new media, Christians, et al also lists that new media serves as a “two-way channel between citizens and the government,” and also acts as a critic “watchdog” to hold the government’s media presence and voice accountable.

Baym, (2006), in his Handbook of New Media, conducted a study that showed that Internet users tended to be more politically informed and aware of current events. He found that “many communities are strengthened through online interaction, such as health support groups and minority group discussion boards.” This ethnographic study also indicated that diverse interactions are developed though the world wide web, providing for emotional support and other useful resources in these relationships, encouraging the idea of “close-knit connectedness” and communication among family members & friends. From Baym’s studies, he deducted that interactive Net use has replaced “passive” television (and old media tool) watching and that this “Net generation” may be more creative, literate, and socially skilled. In conclusion, new media is inherently good due to the fact that it instills a new level of interactivity among society as well as creates and sustains beneficial international relationships among society.

**Rebuttal Argument**

With the further development of new media’s website anonymity protection, among many benefits it aids in teacher and student relationships because it encourages honest communication & questions that can be answered because of internet privacy options. In 2009, Koolstra and Mark Bos’s online new media article asserted that as opposed to “old media,” new media technology endorses higher levels of interactivity among people, in agreement with Roger & Kincaid’s prediction in 1981 that interactive communities will result in better mutual understanding due to the fact that the communication process is more open and direct, encouraging individual thought and processing. Heeter, 1989, also argued that this interactivity “forces” people to actively engage in seeking and processing new information, resulting in improved retainment of facts and news.

In the Huffington Post study as mentioned before, more than 1 million other websites have integrated and partnered with Facebook in various ways. This has led to the successful growth of millions of business in our communities. One fun fact: Obama’s victory Facebook posting was the most liked photo on Facebook in 2012, with over 4 million likes. People are engaged and are able to express their political opinions without consequence. Another big advantage of New Media’s goodness, is that it creates ready access for all who have a voice, undetermined by money or power restrictions. This new technology is not changing any idea of our freedom-because freedom of communication already exists. There is also increased privacy settings in regards to online user profiles, at the individual’s discretion.

To reiterate what was stated before, in Livingstone’s article in 1995, new media communication is good, not bad, because it flows freely from the source, instead of old media’s one-way “top to down” information. According to Livingstone, the government does not control the internet in a hierarchical way; there is greater equality in communication flow for both the sender and the receiver.

In regards to the identity/integration argument, new media’s tools no longer are held to pre-existing social identities & relationships as old media practices did. In addition, new media promotes a wider diversity approach with an expanded opportunity for user participation (going to old media’s passive audience as opposed to new media’s active audience). According to McQuail’s article, “the problem lies not in the nature of technology, but in the continuing material barriers to access.” Basically, new media is inherently good because it provides society many positive relationship and intellect enhancing qualities such as allowance for personalization, expansion of thoughts/opinions, political reformation, and higher interactivity among users. Last but not least, new media is good because it has created a higher level of “media richness” which has involved more of the human senses and provided more insight.

I leave you with this last statistic: in The Guardian newspaper’s research in 2012, according to the Higher Education Statistics Agency, in the last 5 years alone, the number of students enrolled in new media courses grew from 13,600 to 26.700, which is a 51% increase. Education is power, and people are staying informed about our world on an international scale by using new media’s positive tools.