

Jamaal Thompson
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Professor Rodwell

Why Your Identity Speaks Volume

Let's say I'm on Instagram and I see someone post themselves living the lifestyle I wish I had, would I want to be in their position? The answer is yes because it's what I'm viewing at that specific timeline. But we never know the full truth of how they obtained that lifestyle or even if it's a stunt for a couple of views. Before we get into the idea of how the media contributes to our identity, let's talk about the significance of media. Media can be based on many things, such as newspapers, billboards, social media, music and many more. According to the internet, media is a form of mass communication towards an individual or a group of people. ("Media Definition & Meaning." *Dictionary.com*,). We do that in different ways by musicians sending a message with their songs, newspapers informing us about events going on in our environment and social media, where we find content and entertainment from people all around the world. Some of us, including myself, invest our time in social media, especially on TikTok which is an intriguing app where people find different things that play out in our society. Either fake or real they provide a source of entertainment which can tend to become distracting. We end up relying and depending on social media which connects to our identity because we choose to follow those trends other than making decisions for ourselves. Now don't get me wrong, it isn't a problem to want to do the newest TikTok dance or Philly goat hip shake because it's fun. But when it comes to the point where you allow TikTok to think for you, then your identity is becoming a detriment to who you are as a person. Identity is a main factor in our everyday lives because it is a representation of who we are, our ethnic background and the environment we grew up in. Factors that contribute to my identity is the environment that I am in, the people I surround myself with, and my behavior by allowing me to get an understanding of how positive and deleterious my community is and how I want to separate myself from a toxic environment and create a space of peace and tranquility. Media plays a role in that by providing a versatile source of amusement and envy through events I view on social media.

Media connects to my environment because it allows me to gain more knowledge on what goes on in my surroundings and my community. I can understand what structures my society and influenced by the events either good or bad. I live in East Flatbush, Brooklyn, New York and you know what, in my opinion I find that to be one of the most peaceful places in the borough of Brooklyn. There's always something that goes on in New York, so you must keep the citizen app just in case because you never know if something is occurring right around you and you don't want to indulge in that. I remember when I was heading to city college when I saw this homeless lady beg for some money so she could buy some food to eat and it bothered me because of the way she was approaching people compared to the others who had shared their talent either through music, dancing or sharing a life story. Instead, she came and pressed so many people, mainly white people and avoided the black people. Then as she was leaving the vicinity, she cursed out a black guy for just looking at her and not having the decency to give her any cash and asked, "how can we help you if you don't want to attempt to help yourself." That is

how my environment is, we have the mentality and the idea to help ourselves but why don't we do it? The answer is simple because some of us rely on technology to do the work for us. There are times where I get distracted, and I tend to keep my eyes focused on what I see on the internet compared to keeping my eye on what will benefit me long term. There are detrimental effects to being on social media but there are also positive effects. We can gain sources of information that the news channels won't provide so it allows us to comprehend what occurs and brings us closer to create a form of justice. Some of the negative effects the media has on my environment is it creates controversy with one other leading to drama and tension. I would know, I was one of them. My middle school years my peers and I would post subs on the internet about others, but it wasn't directed it was always some form of general statement, but we know who we were referring to. I was young and immature, so my mindset was filled with what I saw others doing and I was never the type to beef with one, so I was just testing my waters. The reason that is a problem today is because that escalates to cyberbullying, making people insecure and have negative thoughts about themselves and it's not okay to judge one for what you think you know about them. The impact social media had on me was that I indulged myself in a toxic environment and participated in actions that I normally wouldn't. My mentality shifted as I grew up because I gained more wisdom and became more socially aware of my society. I live in an environment that has beneficial opportunities but is more crucial due to the toxic surroundings that surface such as the media and I didn't want to be a part of that. My identity consists of peace and a creator of comfort, and I realized that as I grew older and became wiser about the friends I wanted to surround myself with. My next topic about my identity is my friends and the people I chose to be around.

Media connects to my friends and the people that I surround myself with by allowing me to connect with them and ensure that they are a good influence for me and my success. Whether they have the same mentality as me and invested in the same ambitions as me. Media helps me get faster access to them and become closer with them over time. See who they're as person, what they post and how they represent themselves. I had a friend in 8th grade. We clicked as soon as we became friends, and it was crazy because we almost looked the same with similar last names. He had the mentality that I had, and I introduced him to my friend group, and he introduced me to his so we all just collaborated. I realized later 8th grade year that his friend group played a lot of gang related music which made me question his priorities when it came to his education and future goals. Furthermore, High school started, and his vibe changed significantly. He started hanging around the wrong crowds and only approaching us when it pertained to his benefit. I didn't think anything of it because I knew that time would come where people would change as they grew older but for him it was more negative than positive. As time progressed, he only hit me up if he ever wanted something and tried to get with my ex. This shows how the people you hang around with will have an impact on you and who you are as a person. The songs he listened to, the activities he participated in are all forms of media and has an impact on him. I have positive moments too. My best friend for almost my whole life has been there since birth and hasn't switched up since. We fought when we were younger because we were so active, but we always managed to resolve a situation through communication and perseverance. He lived across the street from me and is one of the realest on my team. I could go on and on and on, but the overall message is that media plays a huge role in the people that you surround yourself around and the traits you pick up. If you surround yourself around 100 gangbangers, you are going to get adapted to their lifestyle compared to if you surround yourself

around 100 rich guys you are more likely to live up there to lifestyle. Hanging around him had a severe impact on my identity because it shows one's true intentions and that people try to be discreet, but their actions always catch up with them in the long run. I became more socially aware on the people I hang with and still working on those habits.

Media connects with my education because it allows me to gain easier access to get my work done and find cheat codes to getting answers faster. During quarantine, the majority of my class members were exhausted because they couldn't understand the concept of work through a screen and needed physical help. On the other hand, I was able to comprehend the information being given to me and on top of that I would use my phone as a resource to assist me with my work. I found that to be an easy access to get my work done. I would use a calculator or if I felt lazy, I would use photo math to provide my answers for me. Later, as my 11th grade year started, I was still stuck on the mentality that I could rely on those resources which had a negative impact on my 1st semester. I got good grades, but I didn't feel responsible for obtaining those grades and felt pity because I know that the internet helped me when I know I could've done it on my own. I took accountability for those actions and decided to let go of that bad habit. In this moment, I realized I shouldn't allow TikTok or the media to think for us and we must think for ourselves. I read an article by Sherry Turkle titled, "*How Computers Change the Way We Think*", and she named an anecdote of her experience with students at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and how students were too dependent on the calculator to assist them with their work. She stated that, "The professors insisted that that required students to maintain a mental sense of scale, whereas those who relied on calculators made frequent errors in orders of magnitude. Additionally, the students with calculators had lost their ability to do "back of the envelope" calculations, and with that, an intuitive feel for the material." (Turkle) This shows the impact that some people are too dependent on the media to provide answers they can find on their own and how some teens in particular have lazy habits which we need to break out of including myself, because in the long run we can't rely on the media to help us with everything and we will have to be accountable for our own actions.

In conclusion, everyone has a factor that contributes to their identity and what makes us different from others but because we're different is what makes us unique and one formation. My environment, friends and education are all factors that contribute to who I am as a person today and what makes Jamaal, Jamaal. Even though we all carry different traits we are all the same. No skin color, no ethnic background, no size will change that. At the end of the day, we aren't defined by who we are by our outward appearance, we are defined by how we portray ourselves and inner core. That is what makes our identity so precious.

References:

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