

UNDERSTANDING ENGAGEMENT:
EXPLORING HOW YOUNG NON-PROFESSIONAL
JOURNALISTS THINK ABOUT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

A Thesis

presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School
at the University of Missouri-Columbia

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

EMILIE STIGLIANI

Dr. Timothy Vos, Thesis Advisor

MAY 2013

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

UNDERSTANDING ENGAGEMENT:
EXPLORING HOW YOUNG NON-PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS
THINK ABOUT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

presented by Emilie Stigliani,

a candidate for the degree of master of journalism,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

Professor Margaret Duffy

Professor Joy Mayer

Professor Mitchell McKinney

Professor Timothy Vos

Thank you to my family,
especially Claire Stigliani

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Professor Vos for his guidance throughout this process as well as professors Duffy, Mayer and McKinney for contributing their expertise.

Also thank you to all the inspiring young people who made this study possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	II
ABSTRACT	IV
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	4
3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS	13
4. METHODS	15
5. ANALYSIS	23
6. DISCUSSION	48
REFERENCES	56

UNDERSTANDING ENGAGEMENT:
EXPLORING HOW YOUNG NON-PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS THINK
ABOUT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Emilie Stigliani

Tim Vos, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

This study explores the understanding young citizen journalists have of civic engagement. It is based upon 10 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with youth and community media participants, ages 18 to 25. Those interviews, which were analyzed using the constant comparative method, revealed that participants saw their journalistic work an act of civic engagement, despite being uncertain of the concrete benefits it provided to society. Also, the results showed that the youth and community media programs in which the participants took part did not serve to draw participants into political and geographic community engagement. However, the citizen journalism these young people performed did help them enter into public life and establish connections with adults as well as their peers. Through these connections with others, the participants demonstrated a deep understanding of how they fit into the fabric of society and how their interests related to those of others. They preferred to act on issues important to their lives on a small scale through networks of people who shared their concerns. Future research might explore the relationship between youth and the lack of engagement in geographic communities as opposed to their increased identification with interest-based communities.

Introduction

Presidential election campaigns spur discussions about civic engagement, such as participation in voting, volunteering and contributing to community and political debates. Although there have been signs of improvement in recent years, many youth activists have been particularly concerned about the lack of engagement among America's youngest voters. In recent elections, politicians have made direct appeals to these voters and taken time to address their interests in special debates. MTV has also devoted considerable energy to finding new ways to promote the youth vote; in December 2011, the channel announced that it would retire its 20-year-old election season campaign "Choose or Lose" in an effort to let young people know that voting is not the only way to effect change (Stelter, 2011).

While there are other measures of civic engagement, voting statistics offer a glimpse into young people's involvement in the political process. Although overall voter turnout held steady from 1974 to 2010, it has been approximately 25 percent lower for citizens ages 18 to 29 than for citizens age 30 and older (CIRCLE). In the 2010 election, the youngest voting bloc, ages 18 to 29, made up 21.7 percent of the electorate but only cast 10.4 percent of the vote. According to a July 2012 Gallup poll, only 58 percent of registered voters ages 18 to 29 said they would "definitely vote" in the 2012 election (Jones, 2012). This was 20 percent lower than that age group's response for the 2008 election and at least 20 percent lower than the older respondents.

Some government officials have also expressed concern about young people's disengagement. In August 2011, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced

plans to spend \$130 million on providing programs to engage thousands of young black and Latino men who are disengaged from the city's "civic, educational and economic life" (Barbaro & Santos, 2011). Bloomberg's plan to engage disenfranchised young New Yorkers and the adoption of MTV's new slogan represent some approaches to encouraging young people's civic participation. Although Bloomberg's program targets young minorities and MTV targets a broader youth audience, their goals are similar.

Researchers have also contributed their opinions on this topic by exploring what sorts of programs prove helpful to developing young active participants in society. Based on studies involving American and Australian youth, Print (2007) concludes that schools need to make greater efforts to incorporate civic education into curriculums and that civic engagement is most effectively taught through participation in activities such as school elections, newspapers and debates. He does, however, note that the effectiveness of school-based programs is often limited by their lack of impact upon "the world of adult citizenship" (p.340). While schools often have difficulty creating experiences that allow students to impact the adult world, many community and youth media organizations train young people in reporting skills and provide them with a publication outlet that reach a wider audience. Such media programs provide young people with citizen journalism tool belts, which can be as basic as capturing breaking news on a camera to as involved as creating a documentary film.

This study explores the relationship between youth and community media participants and civic engagement. It looks at how young people's involvement in media impacts understanding of and connection to the adult world of citizenship. The research is based upon the concepts of young people, citizen journalism and civic engagement.

Young people are defined as 18 to 25 years old, which complements Robinson and Deshano's 2011 study where they interviewed 26-to-65-year-old citizen journalists about civic engagement. Citizen journalism is defined as the non-professional practice of reporting news, and this study is concerned with acts of civic engagement such as volunteering and participation in political and public events as well as the less commonly recognized values of consideration and courtesy for others (Rheingold, p. 112; Erentaite et al., 2012; Harp et al., 2010; Robinson & Deshano, 2011; Yang, 2009; Liu & Hanauer, 2011).

The findings of this study build upon previous mass media research on citizen journalists' understandings of civic engagement as well as research from the field of social work on effective frameworks for developing civic engagement in young people. Findings are based upon in-depth interviews with 10 young people who participated in youth and community media programs. While this study explores a gap in citizen journalism research (very few studies focus on the young citizen journalist), it also provides general insight for youth activists, politicians, teachers and community leaders on the issue of engaging young citizens.

Literature Review

Journalism in a Republican Democracy

In many respects, the American government was conceived as a republican democracy where all citizens have an equal right to participate in the political, economic and educational systems. Baker (2002) describes republican democracies, in contrast to liberal democracies, as more focused on the collective public good. This emphasis on the collective good is important because it allows for the development of systems and ideas that benefit the majority. Liu and Hanauer (2011) argue that humans have gotten as far as they have not because of individualism but because of social ties and connections—citing developments in sciences, technology and economy. They suggest that Americans need to have more consideration for the broader community in order to further the country's progress.

Turner (2000) offers his own explanation as to why America's republican democracy has weakened. He writes the traditional roles that bring people into citizenship have dissolved. The prevalence of soldiers, workers and parents is changing in modern globalized societies and so are the ways in which people build connections and ties with one another. He notes that a phone conversation is not as strong a connection as an in-person conversation. He says that this is not all negative, because these looser connections allow people to be more fluid and adaptable in a society that demands it.

Baker explains that civic journalism—with its goal of helping achieve consensus—has a role to play in establishing a healthy republican democracy. Christians et al. (2009) touch on the same point in writing that journalism can play a facilitative role

within democratic societies, where the work of journalists promotes discussions that lead to communal consensus. They write that this sort of journalism is “deliberately practiced as a means of improving the quality of public life and contributing to deliberative forms of democracy as opposed to procedural and constitutional liberalism” (p. 126). While other forms of journalism emphasize the individual goals and agendas, civic journalism and facilitative journalism take part in public deliberations necessary to the health of a republican democracy.

This does not mean that civic or facilitative journalism ignores individual interests. Instead, this form of journalism expands issues to encompass a broader view of how the pursuit of individual interests will affect others and the community as a whole. Christians et al. write, “[Individual rights and interests] are treated as subordinate to a larger good, which itself must not be manifested by decree but developed by way of public communication” (p. 126). While this sort of journalism does favor the common good over individual interests, it does not impinge upon freedom by concealing or ignoring information. It presents the facts and highlights the best course of collective action. Facilitative journalism is not agenda-free, but its agenda resides with the majority rather than special interest groups. Of course the risk of having an agenda of consensus can lead journalists to try to find consensus where there is none (Baker, 2002), but the risks of biases infecting news coverage are not unique to facilitative and civic journalism.

Objective Journalism Versus Citizen Journalism

Not all journalists are civically engaged. In fact, the ideal of journalistic objectivity can actually discourage engagement. Cohen (1992) writes, “And most unfortunate of all, objective reporting has denied journalists of their citizenship; as

disinterested observers, as impartial reporters, journalists are expected to be morally disengaged and politically inactive,” (p. 181). Soffer (2009) refutes this idea by asserting that journalists can occupy an objective position, or a dialogic position, in which they talk to the public and play roles in their community’s social and political processes.

Proponents of the public journalism movement generally agree with Soffer that journalists have a role to play in engaging citizens in community deliberations (Rosen, 1993; Merritt, 1995).

Still, critics of public journalism cling to the merits of objectivity, pointing out that journalists best serve the public by providing accurate, balanced news coverage (Ryan, 2001). Even some traditional news organizations that embraced the public journalism movement of the ‘90s have, for the most part, abandoned those programs (Nip, 2008). However, recent research shows that 14 to 19 year olds expressed skepticism of “objective” traditional news sources and put more trust in the news provided by family, friends and social networks (Marchi, 2012). The research also suggests that teens are not disinterested in current events, rather they want more substantial discussion of those events and are less likely to believe in news that is presented with just one “objective” point of view (p. 258).

Citizen journalists and civic engagement.

Citizen journalism can be described most simply as the non-professional practice of journalism. Although the concept becomes more nuanced as researchers debate what kinds of online activities qualify as citizen journalism and whether those activities must be entirely independent of traditional news organizations (Friedland, 1996; Goode, 2009; Robinson & Deshano, 2011), this study will focus on young citizen journalists carrying

out reporting practices. Nip (2006) and Rheingold (2008) both describe those practices. Nip does so in more general terms saying citizen journalists take responsibility for “gathering content, visioning, producing and publishing the news product” (p. 218) and asserts that professional journalists can only be involved in the news production process if they are participating in a non-professional capacity. Rheingold says that the umbrella of citizen journalism includes ‘reporting news’, ‘investigative blogging’, ‘hyperlocal journalism’ and ‘digital storytelling’ (p. 112). He offers examples of such activities as taking cameraphone pictures of breaking news events, scanning documents and reporting on the findings, reporting on local events and making podcasts and videos of oral histories and interviews. This study operationally defines the concept of citizen journalism as non-professional journalistic activities such as ‘reporting news’, ‘investigative blogging’, ‘hyperlocal journalism’ and ‘digital storytelling’ (Rheingold, p. 112). The news content produced could include video, radio, graphics and writing which is aired, broadcast or published in print and online.

Some researchers include citizen journalism as an act of civic engagement (Goode, 2009; Rheingold, 2008; Nip, 2006). For other researchers, civic engagement comprises activities such as voting, volunteering and participating in community organizations and political events (Erentaite et al., 2012; Harp et al., 2010; Robinson & Deshano, 2011; Yang, 2009). Research also suggests that the level of civic engagement correlates with the size of a person’s city, their employment status, and whether they own a home and attend church (Shah et al., 2001). Also, the work of lobbyists effects the participation of citizens in society. When lobbyists take over the work of citizen participation, the citizens feel manipulated rather than empowered (Skocpol, 1997).

Yang (2009) says that civic action reaps individual benefits as it “fosters life satisfaction, welfare, and personal health” (p.29). Erentaite et al. (2012) and Khan and Reinoso (2008) say civic activities effect improvements or positive changes in society. Liu and Hanauer (2011) describe citizenship as not just acts but also in terms of a mindset of seeing problems and issues as something that everyone has a stake in. They go on to say that civic engagement also involves having consideration and courtesy for others, and small acts of kindness are manifestations of citizenship. These concepts of citizenship and civic engagement are important to this study’s exploration of the civic attitudes and beliefs of those who practice citizen journalism. This study refers to civic engagement as acts of volunteering, voting, fundraising and contributing to public discussions as well as having consideration and courtesy for others.

Research suggests a positive relationship between citizen journalism and civic engagement. Fanselow (2008) looks at organizations that introduced blogs as a tool to help communities working to address difficult public issues such as poverty. The citizens used the blogs to report on the discussions and projects taking place in their communities. The blogs allowed the organizations’ staffs to examine the progress citizens were making without inserting themselves into the deliberations. Examples like this one show how reporting on issues and news empowers citizens to enact changes within their communities.

Citizen journalism readers.

Although research supports the idea that citizen journalism may increase the journalist’s community engagement, evidence suggests that this engagement does not extend to its readers (Nip, 2006; Massey, 1998). However, Kaufhold, Valenzuela, and De

Züniga (2010) did find that people's trust in citizen journalism "positively moderated the association between citizen news media use and online political participation," while trust in traditional media "negatively moderated the relationship between professional news media use and political knowledge" (p. 520). Also, McKinney and Banwart's (2005) study of the 2004 Rock the Vote/CNN presidential debate event, which was designed specifically to address the concerns of young adults and allowed the audience (both in person and online) to participate by asking questions directly to the candidates, suggested some increased level of youth engagement when compared to regular debates. But, there was no way to attribute the small jump in young voter participation to the event. Without strong evidence of a relationship between citizen journalism consumption and civic engagement, this study focuses on the citizen journalists themselves.

Young citizen journalists.

Robinson and Deshano (2011) interviewed citizen journalists, ages 26 to 65, in Madison, Wisconsin, about their level of engagement and empowerment. Interviewees reported that their journalistic work—writing and posting stories online—helped them feel stronger social ties to the community and also made them more concerned about community issues. This resulted in greater participation in public events and more frequent communication with neighbors. Those citizen journalists also reported feeling more empowered as well as feeling strengthened ties to their communities.

While Robinson and Deshano's study is concerned with the civic engagement of mature populations, Bennett discusses his concerns about younger populations. He says that youth civic engagement trends are "troubling" and the result of "poor civic education, and cultural forces that work against democratic participation." He goes on to

discuss a survey of 18 to 25 year olds, which shows declines in “face-to-face, local participation,” “election-related participation and protest,” “interest in the news and public affairs,” and “trust for other people” (p. 5). Rheingold’s (2008) discussion of techniques for teaching young people participatory media that promotes civic engagement suggests the topic of youth media and civic participation requires further exploration.

Researchers in the field of social work have performed more conclusive studies about the sorts of activities, both journalistic in nature and otherwise, that are linked with increased civic engagement among young people. Grant et al. (2009) conducted a study of 33 participants, ages 15 to 21, involved in a program that taught photography as a means for encouraging civic engagement. The program, which did offer participants a stipend, taught young people to use cameras to photograph community issues and asked them to reflect on their work. Researchers found no overall increase in positive feelings toward civic engagement, yet there was a ‘significant’ increase among 18 to 21 year olds. Aside from the fact that the participants were paid, the work they performed was similar to the work of citizen journalists in the documentation of issues and reflection upon them. The effectiveness of increasing positive feelings about civic engagement among the older participants suggested that the 18 to 25 year olds who were interviewed for this study would experience the same increase in positive attitudes toward civic engagement and therefore be more likely to perform civic activities.

The age range of what researchers categorize as young people or youth varies. Rheingold (2008) references a 2005-2006 MTV survey on young people and civic engagement. The survey sample included people ages 12 to 24. Rheingold also discusses

Toronto-based online youth-run webzine *Five Minutes to Midnight* where all the staff and even the directors are under 20 years old. In discussing youth disinterest in government, Bennett (2008) cites a survey of women ages 18 to 24 where only 17 percent reported following government news; this is in comparison to almost 50 percent of women over 50 who reported doing so. He also mentions a survey on civic engagement among U.S. youth, which included young people ages 18 to 25.

There are facets of youth civic engagement programs that have proven empirically effective (Richards-Schuster and Dobbie, 2011; Pearrow 2008). Richards-Schuster and Dobbie list four measures that are related to determining the effectiveness of a program: (1) providing a work or classroom space and roles for youth, (2) the involvement of ‘adult allies’, (3) providing training in community action and (4) promoting the practice of ‘action and reflection’ (p. 242). Pearrow advocates using similar measures as a framework for examining youth empowerment programs. The dimensions she suggests are ‘safe and supportive environments’, ‘meaningful participation’, ‘shared power’, ‘critical reflection’, ‘sociopolitical change goals’ and ‘individual- and community-level oriented’ (p. 522). This framework applies to many youth and community media programs that train young citizen journalists. Many such organizations provide a place for young people to work as journalists alongside adult allies. Therefore, youth media programs were expected to foster the same results as programs focused directly on civic engagement.

This study set out to explore how, if at all, community and youth media programs foster and develop young people’s understanding of civic engagement. Considering the real world impact that these media programs offer to participants, as opposed to limited

coverage and readership of most scholastic media programs, the findings were expected to demonstrate that the participants would appreciate the importance of participating in society and that this appreciation would motivate them to contribute their part in both politics and community efforts. It was also expected that these participants would think of their journalistic work in a facilitative framework as a civic contribution.

Research Questions

This study seeks to explore the understanding of civic engagement on the part of young community and youth media participants. Therefore, participants were interviewed and online content about the youth media organizations that provided the participants' training were analyzed for evidence of Richards-Schuster and Dobbie's (2011) list of program features that have proven effective in promoting civic engagement among young people. These features include evidence that the program provides a physical place and roles for youth, involves 'adult allies', provides training in community action and promotes action and reflection. The organizations' online content were used to answer:

RQ1: What features, if any, attributed to programs successful in teaching young people civic engagement are present in youth media organizations' program descriptions?

This information was taken into account during the participants' interviews.

The interview portion of the study, which explored the existence and the nature of the relationship between citizen journalism and civic engagement among young people, directly addressed the following research questions:

RQ2: How do young citizen journalists understand citizen journalism?

RQ3: How do young citizen journalists more broadly understand civic engagement?

Research questions two and three guided the line of interview questions that were asked.

In analyzing the participants' answers, the relationship between young people's community and youth media participation and their civic engagement was mapped. In the process of analyzing the data, the following research questions were explored:

RQ4: How do the young citizen journalists' understandings of civic engagement map onto their understandings of citizen journalism, or vice versa?

RQ5: To what extent do the young citizen journalists make a connection between their journalism and civic engagement?

These questions became a lens through which the analysis was approached. By mapping participants' descriptions onto one another, the theoretical and conceptual connections between community and youth media programs and civic engagement emerged. These conclusions were also informed by the attributes of effective civic engagement programs present in the online content associated with the youth media programs.

Methods

These research questions were explored through the use of qualitative interviews and textual analysis. The goal of the questions was to achieve an understanding of the participants' perspectives, which is best suited for qualitative research (Christians & Carey, 1989; Jankowski & Wester, 1991; Jensen, 1991; Silverman, 2010). Interviews and texts were gathered for the purposes of analyzing language. This sort of discursive analysis is one method employed by qualitative researchers to achieve deeper understanding (Jensen, 1991). Such analysis illuminated individual interpretations and understandings of citizen journalism and civic engagement.

Researchers of the qualitative tradition are also interested in exploring the quality of the "socially constructed nature of reality" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; p. 13). Citizen journalism and civic engagement are socially constructed concepts. Therefore, the connection between these concepts is more suited for qualitative exploration than quantitative measure.

The study also relied on textual analysis to inform the interpretation of the participants' responses. In doing so, it uses methodological triangulation in which multiple research methods are used to explore a single subject (Jankowski & Wester, 1991). Triangulation strengthens qualitative research and helps achieve a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being explored (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Christians & Carey, 1989).

The study's sample included citizen journalists who are 18 to 25 years old and have participated in a youth or community media organization. The study defined those

citizen journalists as non-profession journalists who performed activities such as ‘reporting news,’ ‘investigative blogging,’ ‘hyperlocal journalism’ and ‘digital storytelling’ (Rheingold, 2008, p. 112). The news content they produced included online memorials, print magazines, radio, documentaries and investigative articles. Young people in this study were operationally defined as 18 to 25 years old. This age range was consistent with other studies on young people and civic engagement (Bennett, 2008; Rheingold, 2008). The high end of the age range also picks up where Robinson and Deshano’s study of 26 to 65 year olds left off. By excluding those younger than 18, the study focuses on young people who can vote and therefore have full legal access to participation in civic life.

This sample of participants had the ability to speak from their own experiences about their thoughts and views on citizen journalism and civic engagement. Interview subjects should be experts in the area a researcher is trying to learn about (Johnson & Weller, 2002). Although Johnson and Weller suggest researchers interview participants with one year of full-time experience or three years of part-time experience in the area being studied (p. 497), in most cases the experience of this study’s participants was shorter. This study’s participants had between six months and three years of part-time experience; and the majority had one to two years of experience. All participants had completed their particular program’s training and continued to participate in media production afterwards.

The participants were selected based on their affiliation with youth and community media organizations. Selecting participants within a social network should yield informed participants (Johnson, 1990). This study avoided interviews with the

leaders of youth and community media organizations because Johnson warns that selecting participants based upon their leadership status does not always prove as informative as individuals with informal roles. Because of this study's focus on young people's understandings of citizen journalism and civic engagement, it made sense to interview the participants themselves.

Participants were recruited for this study through the "snowball" method. Johnson writes that this method is effective in recruiting participants from a community because it helps the researcher establish credibility among the group. Although this study was not focused on a geographic community, the youth and community media organizations did represent a special interest group. Recruitment began with contacting non-profit youth and community media organizations. Some of the programs initially contacted included:

- Children's Press Line (www.cplmedia.org)
- Downtown Community Television Center (www.dctvny.org)
- LA Youth/ Youth News Service (www.layouth.com)
- Global Action Project (global-action.org)
- Youth Channel (www.youthchannel.org)
- Youth Communication (www.youthcomm.org)
- 911 Media Arts Center (www.911media.org)
- Appalachian Media Institute (www.appalshop.org/ami)
- Bay Area Video Coalition (<http://www.bavc.org/>)
- Youth Radio (www.youthradio.org)
- Educational Video Center (www.evc.org)
- Blunt Youth Radio Project (www.bluntradio.org)

- Columba Access Television (columbiaaccess.tv)

All these programs directly train young people in media production. For example, the Blunt Youth Radio Project produces a radio show that is staffed by high school age youth in Portland, Maine. Participants are trained in all aspects of radio production including reporting, editing and engineering (“Blunt | Home,” n.d.). Recruitment began with contacting the organizations and asking if any of their participants (ages 18 to 25) would be willing to take part in the study. From those initial contacts, program organizers recommended their own young journalists as well as other programs that might have young people who met the study’s requirements. In the end, 10 participants were recruited from six different programs.

Once the participants were identified, online content about those six youth and community media programs was gathered. The content was used for textual analysis, in which a researcher studies writings and interprets their meanings (McKee, 2003). The texts were interpreted through the framework Richards-Schuster and Dobbie (2011) describe as features of effective youth civic engagement programs. This framework asserts that effective programs provide a physical place and roles for youth, involve ‘adult allies’, provide training in community action and promote action and reflection. This step answered the first research question: *What features, if any, attributed to programs successful in teaching young people civic engagement are present in youth media organizations’ missions?*

The participant interviews were conducted in a qualitative, in-depth, semi-structured format over the seven-week period of Feb. 14 to April 3, 2013. The in-depth interview method had produced interesting results in a similar study undertaken by

Robinson and Deshano (2011). Their study explored whether online citizen journalists in Madison, Wisconsin, were “attaining feelings of belonging associated with their community’s physical-realm.” The semi-structured format was the preferred method because it allowed the researcher to elicit the experiences and thoughts of the participants while incorporating some basic structure — a roadmap of questions that guided the interview. With this loose structure, the researcher could more easily draw comparisons and extract themes than if an open-ended interview technique had been used (Johnson & Weller, 2002, p. 499). Whenever possible, the interviews were done in person, and they lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes. The interviews began with basic questions about the participant’s youth or community media experience, specifically how he/she learned journalistic skills and what reporting experiences were memorable. These broad questions establish focus and built rapport (Johnson & Weller, 2002, p. 497; Whyte, 1982, p. 113). After establishing a level of comfort and trust, the interviews explored the informants understanding of citizen journalism and civic engagement more deeply.

The interview began with questions that addressed the research question: *How do young citizen journalists understand citizen journalism?*

Some questions were:

- What got you interested in (youth media organization’s name)?
- Tell me about a (youth media organization’s name) experience (story, interview, etc.) you found memorable?
- How has your (youth media organization’s name) experience affected you personally?

- What, if anything, have you learned about the way the world around you works through your experience with (youth media organization's name)?
- What are the most important ideas/thoughts that you take away from your (youth media organization's name) experiences?
- How, if at all, do those ideas/thoughts relate to your life beyond (youth media organization's name)?
- Do you consider yourself a journalist? If yes, why? If no, what do you consider your work and why is that not journalism?

Then, the interview shifted to exploring the research question: *How do young citizen journalists understand civic engagement more broadly?*

Some questions were:

- What, if anything, have you learned about your role in community or society through your (youth media organization's name) experience?
- What do you think about your role in community or society?
- What, if anything, have you learned about the way community or society works through your (youth media organization's name) experience?
- What issues in community or society most concern you? How do you think they can be resolved?

All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Those recordings and transcriptions were stored on the researcher's personal computer, which required a password to access.

Then, using the constant comparative method, the interview transcriptions were coded, drawing out key concepts and categories. Constant comparative method combines the practice of systematically coding data that is pertinent to the topic of study and then

generating theoretical ideas. This method can be used for analysis of newly collected data or previously written texts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Glaser and Strauss outline four steps for undertaking the constant comparative method. They involve “comparing incidents applicable to each category,” “integrating categories and their properties,” “delimiting the theory” and “writing the theory” (p. 105).

The constant comparative method was employed by reading the transcribed interviews and then noting categories in the margins. Each category was compared with all the previous ones. By comparing each category to previous ones the research continues to challenge each category, which helps eliminate biases (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). In following the process described by Glaser and Strauss (1967), categories and concepts emerged. The coding took place at two separate points during the study. The first seven interviews were coded around the week of March 4. The final three interviews were then conducted with particular attention given to exploring the main themes that had emerged in the first round of coding. Those final interviews were coded in the days immediately following the final April 3 interview.

While the constant comparative method leads to theory building, this study did not set out to establish a theory based on causal relationships. The goal of this study was to build upon previous research about the topic of young citizen journalists and civic engagement and to make a more general contribution to the body of human knowledge. This study was intended to be instructive to both academics studying journalism and political science as well as practitioners who teach young people journalism skills and work to involve them in civic life.

Once the categories and concepts had been established, they were used to answer the final two research questions: *How do the young citizen journalists' understandings of civic engagement map onto their understandings of citizen journalism, or vice versa?* and *To what extent do the young citizen journalists make a connection between journalism and civic engagement?* These questions explored the sort of connection that young citizen journalists made between their work and civic engagement and whether they, themselves, were aware of those connections.

Analysis

The Organizations

What features, if any, attributed to programs successful in teaching young people civic engagement are present in youth media organizations' missions, goals and visions?

The 10 young people interviewed for this study participated in six youth or community media programs: Blunt Youth Radio Project, Spy Hop Productions, AmeriCorps's West Virginia Uncovered, Student Press Law Center (SPLC), Verde Magazine and Columbia Access Television (CAT). All programs except for CAT work specifically with high school- and college-aged individuals. These programs are geographically scattered throughout the country. They also offer a range of technical skills. Blunt Youth Radio and West Virginia Uncovered are based in the eastern U.S. Blunt operates a youth-run radio program out of Portland, Maine. The West Virginia Uncovered Faces of the Mine project was a collaboration between West Virginia University's journalism school and AmeriCorps. The project consisted of a multi-media memorial for the Upper Big Branch Mine disaster. SPLC, based in Arlington, Virginia, works nationally to provide legal assistance to student journalists and spearheads free press projects. Columbia Access Television operates in Columbia, Missouri, and provides training and equipment for video production. Spy Hop Productions offers documentary and broadcast video training to young people in Salt Lake City, Utah. Finally, Palo Alto High School's award-winning Verde Magazine publishes print and online news coverage of the San Francisco Bay Area. SPLC is the longest-running program, founded in 1974,

and West Virginia Uncovered is the newest, starting in 2008. The other programs started between the mid-90s and mid-2000s.

Of these organizations, the descriptions of Spy Hop Productions and SPLC contained the most features associated with successful youth civic engagement programs. Both discuss the creation of roles for youth. Spy Hop's 2011-2012 Evaluation Report identifies one of the organization's goals as promoting "[p]ositive identity included being aware of one's own talents and skills and a belief in one's own abilities" (MEMconsultants, pp. 3-4). The evaluation also says that students reported increased confidence as a result of their participation with Spy Hop. SPLC's website also describes its mission of empowering young people. It says, "The SPLC will: Create greater awareness of, and protection for, the rights of students to gather and distribute news and commentary" (Student Press Law Center). Although both groups address youth empowerment, Spy Hop focuses on personal development, while SPLC promotes young people's public role through legal and journalistic empowerment.

Both organizations also describe the involvement of adult allies. In line with its advocacy of young people's legal rights, SPLC provides students with access to journalists, attorneys and communication specialists who are committed to helping young people request documents and "use their voice to influence public policy" (Student Press Law Center). Spy Hop allies are described as providing support as young people develop their voice and acquire skills in creative technologies. Beyond teaching specific skills, mentorship is explicitly named: "Spy Hop instructors provide youth regular contact with supportive adults" (MEMconsultants, p. 4). The organizations both possess attributes of

civic engagement programs, but they target different aspects of youth development—personal identity and public voice.

The program attribute of providing training in community action presents itself in program descriptions of Spy Hop and SPLC. The organizations tie young people's participation in media production to civic involvement. The Spy Hop evaluation says, "[The organization] encourages students to see the connections between their use of media and their ability to promote social good in the communities to which they belong" (MEMconsultants, p. 4). Similarly, the SPLC's website says, "The Student Press Law Center will use the law to help students of all ages meaningfully participate in civic life and learn essential skills, ethics and values through the vehicle of journalism" (Student Press Law Center). However, the programs differ in the types of civic involvement they emphasize. One of Spy Hop's guiding values is, "Commitment to our own small community has the ability to create social change in the larger communities around us" (MEMconsultants, p. 5). This grass roots approach of creating small-scale social changes in hopes that they will eventually lead to larger transformations is different than the involvement SPLC describes. The SPLC website says that the program provides "training and opportunities for students to use their voices to influence public policy" (Student Press Law Center). These two approaches outline two avenues of engagement—grassroots organizing and political involvement.

Spy Hop's program descriptions touched on two attributes of civic engagement programs that SPCL's descriptions did not. For one, Spy Hop discussed its provision of a physical place for young people. It explicitly states that the program strives to provide participants with a safe and welcoming environment where young people can participate

in programming (MEMconsultants, p. 3). SPLC's website made no mention of physical space, which is understandable considering the national scope of the organization's work. Another attribute present in Spy Hop literature but not in SPLC's is the promotion of action and reflection. One of Spy Hop's guiding values is "When Spy Hop students gain digital media knowledge, they are empowered to move from being a passive consumer of media to an active and engaged producer" (MEMconsultants, p. 5). Spy Hop's concept of an engaged producer implies that the program encourages participants to carefully consider the projects they undertake, combining reflection and action.

Blunt Radio, West Virginia Uncovered, CAT and Verde's websites offered less description of the programs' missions. Blunt and Verde descriptions alluded to the creation of roles for youth. Blunt Radio is labeled "youth produced" (Blunt Youth Radio Project, MySpace) and outlines the skills it teaches participants—reporting, hosting, and broadcast engineering (Jud, E.). Also highlighting youth leadership, the Verde website's masthead says, "Palo Alto High School's student-led news magazine" (Verde Magazine). Blunt and CAT websites also mention the material aspects of their programs. The CAT website describes the equipment made available to its participants and Blunt mentions that the show is produced in the University of Southern Maine's community radio station WMPG (Blunt Youth Radio Project, *MySpace*). Only Verde's webpage mentions the involvement of an adult ally, advisor Paul Kandell. But Blunt, West Virginia Uncovered and CAT websites describe attributes of providing training in community action. The Blunt website tells perspective participants that they will learn to "[m]ake a positive difference in your community" (Jud, E.) and the CAT website says the organization is "working to educate and empower the community" (Columbia Access Television, Inc.).

The West Virginia Uncovered website describes how its participants work in remote areas with community newspaper staffs to create digital stories. This collaboration alludes to efforts at fostering community involvement. AmeriCorps, a West Virginia Uncovered project partner, supports programs that promote civic engagement. While less literature existed on the missions and goals of these four programs, each website contained at least one attribute of programs successful in promoting civic engagement among young people.

Young Media Participants on Citizen Journalism

How do young citizen journalists understand citizen journalism?

The young people who participated in this study expressed a complex understanding of their involvement in media production. The two most salient categories were personal development and interpersonal connection. The personal development that participants noted related to increased confidence as well as improved organizational and critical thinking skills. Participants also often referred to the interpersonal connections such as meeting people who belonged to groups to which they might not otherwise have been exposed and having deep, honest conversations about topics usually avoided. Other concepts such as adult allies, interpersonal differences and professional development relate to the two main concepts.

Media involvement and personal development.

Although the participants credited their programs with teaching technical and professional skills such as video and radio production and interviewing techniques, they emphasized the programs' influences on their personal development. In reference to personal development, participants repeatedly related their involvement in media

programs with increased confidence. This increase also relates to the programs' attributes of providing roles for young people. Of the four organizations' websites that made mention of such an attribute, only the SPLC's participant did not mention increased confidence.

One Blunt participant made special mention of the program providing roles for young people. She spoke of Blunt participants' involvement with the Portland area community radio station, WMPG, where the show is produced. Blunt participants were involved in the station's regular on-air fundraising drives. She said, "[M]y Dad didn't think that was something we should be involved in. [...] But, I appreciated that we were treated like members of the radio station, and like we got the same IDs as them." A former Verde participant also spoke of the empowerment he felt when he stood in front of his peers and led discussions of what stories they would pursue in the next magazine issue. He said, "Being able to have a lot of that control and leadership, which to me was unlike any other class I'd had." Both examples illustrate that when given a role with real responsibilities, young people find the involvement meaningful and appreciate the chance to contribute.

Spy Hop, Verde, and Blunt participants all credited their respective programs with helping them overcome shyness, communicate more directly and remain calm in uncomfortable situations. A Spy Hop participant said that she used to be very quiet but gained confidence as she learned to pitch stories. She said, "I got really confident in what I do. And like, not afraid to speak my mind about what I think or what I want." Her story pitch was chosen as one of the documentary projects that Spy Hop undertook. A former Blunt participant echoed this point when she described her self-assurance in calling

people she doesn't know and asking for what she wants. Being a more direct communicator also came up in an interview with a current Blunt participant. She spoke about how her program director taught her to address sensitive topics in the reporting process. She said, "[I]t's okay for things to get emotional and it's okay for them to cry or for you to cry. It's okay and you can get through it." She went on to explain that this had happened during an interview she conducted with a reformed bully. Although she said she knew professional journalists are not supposed to get emotionally involved, she believed the emotion enhanced her radio story. This ability to be emotionally present and also remain cognizant of the story production demonstrates a confidence and maturity that is rooted in experience.

In almost all the interviews, participants talked about the positive influence of supportive adults they had met through their media programs and reporting experiences. This ties into the framework for successful youth civic engagement programs used in answering the first research question. Although adult allies were only mentioned in the texts associated with Spy Hop and SPLC, the participants in other programs told of the positive influence adult staff members had on their work as well as their lives. The Verde participant spoke about the support that he felt from adult advisors and, for the most part, the school administration in pursuing controversial stories such as using public sex offender databases to make people aware of whom their neighbors were. Although the magazine staff eventually decided against pursuing the story due to safety concerns for the reporters, he said, "It was that sort of talk and those ideas about pushing boundaries like reporting on what might be relevant to us that was really, really, I think,

encouraged.” Those allies seemed to energize the participants’ interest and commitment to reporting.

Most participants credited their program staff members with their acquisition of new reporting skills. However, Blunt participants all described the personal as well as reportorial influence the program’s founder and director Claire Holman had on their lives. All three participants interviewed in this study said that she was concerned not just with the show’s production, but also with providing young people with “a whole new tool belt” as one participant described it by the time they moved on. Another participant said that Holman helped her make an educated decision about where to attend college by calculating how long it would take to pay off her student loans for different schools she was considering.

Participants also spoke of receiving support from adults beyond their program’s staff. The Spy Hop participant talked about inspiration she found in spending time with children’s therapists while making a documentary on the prevalence of Asperger’s syndrome in Utah. A Blunt participant told of the help and acceptance she received from professional journalists while covering a political event. She said, “They were just like really welcoming. And they were like get up close to [the stage] or you can plug your mic in here so you can get audio of his speech.” This participant was particularly touched by the fact that the other journalists took time to help her even though they had deadlines to meet. These experiences of adults going above and beyond their duty made participants feel particularly supported and accepted.

In discussing personal development, three participants highlighted their acquisition of critical thinking skills. A Blunt participant summarized an important lesson

he learned as “don’t cut off the President.” He told of producing a radio show on the night Barack Obama won the 2008 election. As the participant was airing the President’s acceptance speech, he realized that the show’s airtime was coming to an end, and he needed to run the credits. Before he could switch off the speech, the producer told him to let it play to the end. The participant said:

I think [...] part of that is there are some things that are so important, they don’t need to fit into a perfect radio time slot to be aired. We just need to play them. And that can get blown up into a real world thing about life too that there are some things you just need to give the time to even if you think that your schedule’s too busy.

A Verde participant also credited his journalism experience with developing his critical thinking skills. He said it taught him how to explore an issue qualitatively through anecdotes and quotes. He said that this provided him with one way to get at truth and also primed him for the quantitative research that he learned about in college.

A CAT participant discussed how her curiosity has grown over the course of her involvement with the program. She said, “I think [the program’s] encouraging me to get beyond my personal projects and to get beyond my personal interests.” Before becoming involved with the organization, she said that she had never thought about making a full-length documentary. Now she is entertaining the idea. A SPLC participant credited her involvement with the organization as well as her other journalistic experience with developing her curiosity.

I was always a curious person [...] but I wouldn't stop to actually think to ask somebody about something I noticed and thought was weird. Now, even in my private life I'll go ahead and ask somebody something I've been wondering.

This statement signals increased confidence and curiosity—both components of personal development.

Verde and Blunt participants also offered several examples of how their involvement in media production has increased organizational skills and enhanced their educational experience. One Blunt participant described how conducting interviews with public officials taught her to plan ahead. She said, “You know, like calling important people in the community, which is kind of like a scary thing for a teen to do. [...] Blunt has given me the tools to do so. [...] I need to do so-and-so by this week. And [...] I need to get the questions done by this time.” The same participant also described how a radio piece she did on the effects of fireworks tied into a presentation she did for her chemistry class. She said, “[I]t just added an extra something to my PowerPoint. And my teacher was thrilled and it really engaged my classmates.” The multidisciplinary connection this participant made between her radio show and her schoolwork also alludes to the critical thinking skills described earlier.

Although participants recognized the journalistic precedence of keeping one's private life and reporting separate, some described experiences where those two intersected as personally satisfying and journalistically productive. These instances empowered the participants to play the role of investigator in their own lives, which gave them the confidence to ask questions they might not otherwise have been comfortable

asking. One Blunt participant described interviewing her father about a period of time when he was homeless.

I don't know if I would have had that conversation really otherwise. [...] I just felt really comfortable with a mic [...] and I just felt really empowered because I was able to share my story and my dad's and like I'm sure other people listening could connect.

This confidence that came from having a microphone in her hand illustrates the power of providing young people with a role in public life.

While all participants noted the confidence and empowerment they felt when given such a role, most of them hesitated to actually call themselves journalists. Although she was working on making a short documentary film, the CAT participant expressed the confusion about her role. She said, "I consider myself more of a storyteller than a journalist and I know those can be sort of the same thing." Those who admitted to being journalists did so with hesitation. The West Virginia Uncovered participant said:

I think I do consider myself a journalist, but I also think that the concept of that is changing. I would consider myself a documentary journalist in that I like to spend time on a story. [...] But [...] that's not where the jobs are. The jobs are quick hitting sorts of things where you're a jack-of-all-trades almost. And in that way, I don't consider myself a journalist in that sense.

This inability to define themselves as journalists is also tied to their status as students. A Blunt and CAT participant both spoke about still having a great deal to learn before they could become full fledged journalists instead of students journalists or storytellers. Those participants who confidently defined themselves as journalists related this definition to

publishing or airing their work with professional news outlets. The SPLC participant said, “I’ve been published and I’ve been paid for my work that’s published, I guess that would qualify me as a journalist.” While all participants spoke of feeling empowered through the experience of reporting, for most that empowerment depended on the security of carrying a microphone, the support of an adult or the professional publication of their work.

However, a Blunt participant illustrated another avenue to empowerment—recognition of the participant’s role by the subject of a story. He told of the first time he was sent out with a microphone to ask people on the street a question and record their answers. He remembered being afraid until a homeless man walked up to him and asked what the question was. He concluded, “I’m not sure why he did or what he was thinking. But when he said that I was able to launch into my script and from there I had no discomfort approaching people for the rest of that day.” This small moment of attention and care served as a public affirmation of the role that participant was enacting. The participant listed this as one of his most memorable experiences with Blunt.

Media involvement and interpersonal connection.

The second most salient category to emerge was interpersonal connection. Relating to others, meaningful interactions and learning about differences characterized this category. For the most part, participants emphasized the pleasure of finding common ground with those different from themselves. One participant provided the exception in talking about his surprise at encountering people from his own peer group who held very different beliefs from his own. The discoveries of differences as well as commonalities are part of getting to know new people.

Verde, Blunt, Spy Hop, West Virginia Uncovered and CAT participants all discussed how their involvement in media production helped them to relate to others. Blunt participants talked about their collaboration with Long Creek Youth Development Center, a facility that houses juvenile offenders. The participants expressed an appreciation for the opportunity to interact with this marginalized group. A CAT participant described how her exposure to other participants and the staff challenged her stereotypes of people involved in film production. She said, “[T]hey’re strange to me and they’re foreign to me but they’re really kind.” She went on to describe how at first she felt out of place in the way she was dressed and her knowledge of film but was put at ease by her peers’ helpfulness and willingness to share expertise. A Verde participant spoke about the experience of relying on a team to complete all the parts involved in the production of the magazine.

A handful of participants mentioned conversations and interactions with their own interview subjects and their peers in the youth media program as the most memorable part of their experience. One Blunt participant spoke of how a conversation with the guests she brought in to discuss AIDS continued long after the show stopped airing. A CAT participant told of a conversation about faith that occurred with some peers while they waited for a workshop to start. And a West Virginia Uncovered participant remembered how the families of the miners who had died in the Upper Big Branch Mine disaster drove long distances to attend a workshop teaching how to use the online memorial she and her peers had designed. She was surprised by the efforts the families made to attend the workshop and their outpouring of appreciation. She went on to describe how her group was one of the few media outlets allowed to attend the unveiling

of a physical memorial on the one-year anniversary of the disaster. She said, “[A] lot of the people recognized us. We knew a lot of the families very personally. They sort of let us into their lives the way that they didn’t let most members of the press into their lives.” These heartwarming examples illustrate the interpersonal connections that marked many of the youth media participants’ experiences.

However, not all interactions were easy. Some participants described realizing they were more different from others than they had previously believed. A Blunt participant, who self-identified as a liberal, recalled driving to another part of the state to interview attendees at a Sarah Palin rally.

[I]t was my first experience of covering a story [...] that I actually disagreed with.

That I didn’t just not enjoy but that actually made me uncomfortable to make.

[...] And for that, that day has always stuck out for me as well.

Later in the interview, he noted his surprise at discovering that people his own age held very divergent views from his own.

You know, I’d heard people on TV, I’d heard people on radio speak in support of Sarah Palin. But I’d never stood next to somebody my own age and heard them tell me why they support Sarah Palin’s family values and all that.

This example was one illustration of how a reporting experience highlighted interpersonal differences rather than bringing about a sense of solidarity.

The West Virginia Uncovered participant also mentioned learning about the differences between her own way of life and the people living in mining towns where she was reporting. However, these differences were bridged as she got to know the communities over the course of a year.

I learned a lot more about them—the people that are there, the mentality of mining communities, the sort of fear that families have and miners have every day that they’re going in. And so I’ve learned, I think, a lot of empathy. I had more empathy for it after this project.

This comment grasps the complexity of interacting with people who possess alternate worldviews. The participant discovered empathy while still acknowledging differences. This perspective resurfaced in interviews with many of the older participants in this study.

Young Media Participants on Civic Engagement

How do young citizen journalists understand civic engagement more broadly?

The participants in this study tended to explain civic engagement through a grassroots framework. Many participants emphasized the importance of striking a balance between working with others and acting as an individual. Some participants described their involvement in journalism as an act of civic engagement. However, the importance participants assigned to community involvement was complicated by their frustrations with deliberation, political cynicism and distrust of mainstream media. While participants believed that they should contribute to community, most felt unsure that those contributions would actually make a difference.

Grassroots involvement vs. political involvement.

Participants tended to discuss solutions to community or societal issues in terms of grassroots actions such as planning events, riding public transportation or buying locally grown foods. A former Blunt participant who was passionate about bringing more women into science- and math-related careers spoke about being part of a group that

raised money to bring local grade-school girls to her college for a day of science activities. She and her group offered the event for free so that it would be accessible to all girls. She said, “So I definitely think on a grassroots level. [...] And, you know, we don’t campaign to our political leaders necessarily to change [the low number of women represented in math and science careers], we just invited local schools.” After expressing her concerns about reproductive rights, environmental degradation and homelessness, another Blunt participant said, “[T]hey’re kind of big issues to tackle, but when you take it on sort of a smaller scale, just looking at it in the community, you can get something out of it.” While thinking about issues on a more manageable scale, participants noted different civic acts such as volunteering, buying locally grown foods or utilizing public transportation that could be taken.

Several participants viewed their journalistic work as a form of civic involvement to begin addressing societal issues. An SPLC participant described her motivations for her work reporting on poor and marginalized communities.

I don’t really think [my work’s] gonna have an effect, but I feel like it’s important that we sort of like recognize those people, like you sort of have to work to get their voice into the public forum because it gets drowned out or ignored pretty easily. So then that’s an impulse I have for stories I’m working on right now.

Several participants reiterated this sense of journalistic duty despite uncertainty of the work’s impact. Journalism became viewed as a kind of civic act done on behalf of the community.

While the participants expressed an appreciation for the importance of community engagement, unreliable geographic ties complicated their involvement. A West Virginia

Uncovered participant said that she struggled with the fact that she loved her state and would like to help the communities, but she also had the desire to live in China and the American North West. This was representative of the transitory lives many participants said they expected to lead. Most went or planned to go somewhere for college. They expected to move again for a job. One Blunt participant also stated that his mobility has a direct impact on his level of concern for and involvement in local issues. The participant, who was a junior in college, said he was more concerned about wars and global warming because community issues were “either fixable or I’m leaving in a year and a half.”

Although the participants’ transitory lifestyles deterred them from involvement in local communities, most participants referenced interest-based communities to which they voluntarily contributed time and effort. The SPLC participant expressed a passion for press freedom and watchdog journalism and said she has spent her free time working for watchdog groups. She said, “All I’m doing is like updating spreadsheets, which is boring. But even if I don’t actually enjoy the work then I just try to think about at least the group is good.” This example demonstrates a willingness to contribute to a communal effort, but common interests and beliefs define the community rather than location.

Bureaucracies and cynicism.

Participants expressed frustrations with the American political process and mainstream media coverage. Two most commonly mentioned reasons that these young people believed the political process to be ineffective had to do with partisanship and corruption. They also criticized the mainstream media for its complacency and failure to raise awareness about social problems. Although many of the participants said they had

an understanding of the way government works and decisions get made, they were more hopeful about tackling problems outside of the political systems.

Several participants pointed to the unwillingness of Democrats and Republicans to compromise as the main reason the political system was rendered ineffective. One Blunt participant said that he learned about partisanship while reporting a story at a Sarah Palin rally. He was shocked to meet people his own age who held extremely different beliefs.

What am I supposed to say to somebody who thinks that the earth is 2000 years old to convince them that we need to give more tax dollars to the carbon offset stuff, especially when that person probably doesn't believe in tax dollars either? This sort of bipartisan disagreement about fundamental issues may explain the participants' preference to work for change through issue-based groups.

Another Blunt participant spoke of the difficulty she had getting Republican candidates and their representatives to come on the radio show:

And sometimes it's frustrating because I never could, the entire time I was political coordinator, I never could get anyone from the Republican party to talk to us. And I kind of learned that we're by no means who they're trying to talk to and who they're trying to get their votes from.

This participant demonstrated a good deal of knowledge about politics, but said that she now prefers to work for societal changes through her involvement with small non-governmental organizations.

This frustration with America's partisan system was accompanied by a lack of trust in the politicians themselves. The SPLC participant attributed her distrust of

politicians to the investigative journalism she does. She conceded that her feelings about public officials could be defined as cynical because she believes that what public officials say at press conferences does not necessarily correspond with their actions. She added, “And I guess that I don’t think of that as cynical totally because I think it’s true. So I guess I think of that as realistic more than anything.” A West Virginia Uncovered participant noted that West Virginia politicians align themselves with the mining industry rather than looking out for the health of the community and the environment. She said, “Even the Democrats have to bow to mining pressures in this state.” This distrust of politicians, along with disillusionment in the bipartisan system, suggests that young people see something broken about the American political process. It is yet another reason young people prefer to focus their energies outside the political process to influence changes in society.

Along with suggesting that the political process has gone awry, participants implicated mainstream media for not doing enough to hold officials accountable. A former Blunt participant said that he contemplated giving up on a career in journalism after a reporting internship with a major news organization in Washington D.C.

[A]fter spending two months just watching these senators be buffoons and trying to write scripts on a deadline and all that kind of stuff, I just didn’t want anything to do with it. And subsequently I realized that maybe I didn’t want to do political journalism, not journalism as a whole.

This participant expressed frustration with the energy and resources used to report on a political process that was not serving the citizens.

Another aspect of the participants' disillusionment with mainstream media had to do with the professional journalistic value of objectivity. The same Blunt participant gave another example from his time interning in Washington. He described being assigned to cover a forcible home eviction. He witnessed a women being dragged from her house and officers beating the Occupy protesters who were sitting out front:

All I could do was hold up my microphone in their face and then play it at the end of the day. And the other way to say that is, 'And I was the one that got it on air.' You know you can tell that story either way, but definitely [...] I was thinking, 'I wish I had sat down with them.'

The West Virginia Uncovered participant also raised the same issue by describing the mainstream media parachuting in to cover the Upper Big Branch Mine disaster and then leaving. Both participants found the detached relationships professional journalists have with their subjects to be problematic.

All the participants acknowledged the importance of community involvement and showed a willingness to contribute to efforts that did not provide them with direct gains. However, the participants were less interested in traditional acts of civic engagement such as voting or attending City Hall meetings and expressed frustration with the political process and distrust of government and the mainstream media. Also, the transitory nature of their lives made them less invested in geographic communities both in terms of grassroots and political involvement. Despite being uncertain of the effectiveness of such efforts, participants described a preference for working with small issue-based communities to address the problems their generation expects to inherit.

Civic Engagement Informed by Citizen Journalism

How do the young citizen journalists' understandings of civic engagement map onto their understandings of citizen journalism, or vice versa?

and

To what extent do the young citizen journalists make a connection between journalism and civic engagement?

A former Verde participant credited his experience working on the magazine as influential to how he thinks about affecting social change:

[W]e definitely had stories we would have loved to do, but it just wasn't practical. So we started to sort of reverse engineer the stories and see what we can have access to and what we could offer our unique perspectives on. And then go from there to be able to do it.

He connected this experience to the way he approaches community involvement as well as his job of providing analytics for a nonprofit. The lesson of staying focused on what is achievable within a small group is an element of grassroots activism.

While this Verde participant along with other participants discussed how journalism shaped the way they approached community engagement, many also expressed doubt that the journalistic work they produced through their media programs would itself have much impact on society. That pessimism seems to result from a disconnection between the media programs' messages of youth and citizen empowerment and the real world experiences of the participants.

This tension was particularly notable among participants whose programs championed media production as a means to personal development. In explaining one of

the program's most valuable lessons, a Spy Hop participant said, "[D]espite the fact that I'm just a teenager, I still have a voice so that I can present an idea that they're gonna look at and think about and they can respond to." This statement corresponds with Spy Hop's stated mission of empowering young people, but the participant was not able to offer examples of a time when community members listened and responded to her concerns.

Blunt participants expressed an understanding of the conflict between their program's promotion of youth empowerment and the participants' age and social position. One former participant acknowledged that her radio stories were not always taken seriously and, therefore, did not achieve the impact she had hoped for. She said, "People think it's great when you are involved in something but they also kind of think it's cute."

Another Blunt participant remarked on the nature of the comments that adults made when they called into the radio:

I'm not sure if we ever really got a lot of feedback that was beyond, you know, parents will always call in or teachers, or whatever. You'll probably monthly get one call that's not, "Oh, I don't have anything to say about your show, but I just wanted to say that what you guys are doing is so great. It's so great to hear kids like you talking about what's really important to them." (*Mimicked in a patronizing tone.*)

Later, this participant hinted cautious optimism that even if no real dialogue is sparked from young citizen journalists' reporting efforts, at least they get practice articulating

their ideas and will be prepared for a time when adults really do engage in discussion with them.

Through reporting, young journalists acquire knowledge and expertise about social issues, but the general public fails to meaningfully include them in deliberations. However, part of the problem may lie with the young citizen journalists as well. As journalists, they have control over how an interview is conducted or an issue is presented. But when they take on the role of participant rather than investigator, they may not be as interested in contributing to the slow and sometimes frustrating process of community deliberations. A Blunt participant who lived in a college student-housing cooperative that used a deliberative dialogue to make decisions said:

[I]t's all process oriented. And there's really long debates, and there's really long discussions, and you have to participate, and you have to vote. And all of sudden dinner goes from being a pleasant thing with people who you like to being a drawn out debate with people you now disagree with about how local our sugar or honey should be.

While this participant described his impatience with communal debates among the people he lives with, most participants did express a willingness to participate in tedious tasks for interest- or cause-based communities.

Citizen journalism programs as cause-based communities.

Many of the participants described their peers and the staff at their respective media programs as a community with which they were involved. They also described a willingness to contribute to their media program's community without reaping direct

personal gains. One participant said that she learned about how communities come together and support one another through her involvement with Blunt radio:

[W]e all depended on each other. Like, there was this one show where my friend was going to host the show but she could never come to the planning meetings. So I planned the show and then she hosted it.

This willingness to support a media program peer reemerged in an interview with a CAT participant. She said that more than producing news content, she functioned within the program as an “encourager.” She said, “You know, like, it’s helping that creative energy stay renewed and I think that’s why it’s a necessary thing. And then, it’s...if everyone was working on their own projects, then there would be no community.” Both participants demonstrated a high level of consideration for the collective good of their media programs’ communities.

The connections with peers also informed some participants’ idealism. A Blunt participant expressed hopefulness about creating change in society because the collective power of young people in media programs:

My role is just to voice what I feel even though I’m just one person, one that’s paired with, you know, a dozen other voices, or a hundred other voices. It amounts up to something. [...] I don’t know, like it is kind of a crazy idea, but it could start something.

Belief in the power of young people’s voices in concert with each other was a common thought expressed among participants even though they said that they were often blocked out of discussions or ignored.

Participants also described discovering a feeling of community with the subjects of their reporting projects and, in one case, this led to strengthening ties to geographic community. A West Virginia Uncovered participant credited the reporting process with instilling in her a feeling of solidarity with the state's mining communities. She said, "[M]ining communities are very insular. It's hard to crack the shell, but once you're there, they're so loving and they would do anything for you. And I think that was something that was illustrated to me through that project." She described this experience as informing her desire to eventually return to West Virginia and contribute to the advancement of mining communities. The social ties participants formed with their program peers and reporting subjects motivated their willingness and desire to become involved in solving issues through interest groups and, in this one instance, geographic communities.

Discussion

The young people interviewed in this study, along with the rest of American youth, face political, economic and geographic uncertainties. As citizen journalism participants, these young people also chose to be involved in work that is evolving and not clearly defined. Their non-professional statuses as well as their age made them further question the journalistic tenet of objectivity. Some, more than others, struggled with the desire to express solidarity with the subjects they interviewed and to be active in the issues they covered. Most of this study's participants said they were compelled to become citizen journalists for idealistic reasons and the belief that this work was a kind of civic duty. Although it seemed that they would be more politically engaged than their non-journalist counterparts, they, too, were disinterested in the American political process. The disinterest these participants expressed was rooted in distrust for politicians, frustration with partisanship and feeling marginalized from the adult world.

Overall, it seemed that the youth and community media programs in which these young people participated created an environment that research suggested could promote young people's civic engagement. This study was conducted from the perspective that increasing young people's civic engagement is a good and desirable endeavor. Most of the programs from which participants were recruited worked to empower young people to become investigators in their own lives and their communities. The participants were provided with equipment and the support and guidance of adults. Many of the adults encouraged participants to reflect on their communities and to explore issues that were relevant to them.

While this environment and the adult supporters promoted the personal development and interpersonal connections among participants, these program features were surprisingly ineffective at tying these participants to their geographic communities or increasing their trust in the media and involvement in the political process. Instead, the young people described how their journalism experiences led them to distrust politics and the media even more because they were made aware of corruption and complacency in both institutions. The result was that the young people's journalism experience influenced them to think about issues outside of politics and to look at them on a smaller scale that they could address directly.

Also surprising was the fact these young people's involvement in youth and community media did not, for the most part, seem to promote stronger ties with their geographic communities. This may be due in part to the fact that despite having access—over the airwaves, on community television stations, through circulated print publications and online—to the broader geographic community, the participants expressed frustration with not being taken seriously by the greater community. Their endeavors were often met with patronizing encouragement rather than engaged discussion.

Still, the participants demonstrated idealism in their desire to be taken seriously and to be involved in creating a better world. The way that the majority of these young people determined to be most effective was through collaboration with interest-based communities, and their youth media programs often included as one such community. The sorts of communities they described being involved with were made up of like-minded people who had the same careers, hobbies, faith and values. They found these

like-minded communities through social networks, in schools and at churches. Through these communities, they sought solutions to problems involving environment, gender inequalities, press freedom, religious fanaticism and partisanship.

The understanding that the participants had of community involvement certainly ties into the goals and descriptions of the youth and community media programs in which they participated. Programs such as Spy Hop, Blunt and CAT specifically discuss working to engage participants in their communities of Salt Lake City, Utah; Portland, Maine and Columbia, Missouri, respectively. However, the participants' interviews offered little support for the programs' efficacies in promoting ties to geographic communities. Also, the SPLC website discussed working to encourage participants to influence public policy, which implies some level of engagement with politicians and bureaucrats. Again, the participant interviewed expressed a greater interest in supporting non-profit organizations than becoming involved with policymakers. While the programs seem effective in promoting their participants' curiosity and involvement in public life, the participants chose to enact their involvement in more informal ways than the programs' descriptions envision. The participants are more likely to engage in addressing public issues through non-political organizations with online communities rather than next-door neighbors.

Conclusion

This study set out to explain how 18-to-25-year-old youth and community media participants understood the connection between their journalistic work and civic engagement. The study was informed by previous research about the topic of young citizen journalists and civic engagement. The goal was to make a general contribution to the body of human knowledge that could be instructive to academics studying journalism and political science as well as practitioners working on engaging young people in society.

For those interested in the academic study of journalism and political science, this study establishes that young community and youth media participants understand the importance of engaging in public life and are actively engaged in working with others on issues of importance to them. While this population's engagement is encouraging, those studying political science should note that there is still a high distrust of politicians and a deep frustration with the lack of dialogue and compromise between the political parties of this country. Also, greater efforts should be made on the part of politicians to include young people in general discussions and debates. The young people interviewed repeatedly spoke about the empowerment they felt when they were invited to participate in adult work and discussions as equals. While making efforts to set up special political events specifically for young people demonstrates efforts on the part of politicians to be accessible to younger constituents, this continues to marginalize young people's concerns and voices from the overall political debate.

Based on the findings of this study, practitioners who work to engage young people in public life might consider focusing their efforts on providing young people with even more adult allies and practical skills, such as reporting, rather than pushing some of the more theoretical approaches that Richards-Schuster and Dobbie (2011) enumerate, which involve providing training in community action and promoting the ideas of action and reflection. The participants interviewed expressed frustration with the contradictory messages of empowerment their programs taught and their actual ability to have an impact on political discussions and debates. Also, it seems that the nature of journalistic work inherently leads to reflection. Participants in programs, such as Blunt, that did not specifically set out to get participants to reflect on the meaning of their work demonstrated a high level of understanding about the work they did and what it meant to the greater fabric of society. Rather than spending time discussing engagement, participants credited the support of adult allies and their roles as citizen journalists with galvanizing their enthusiasm to participate in public life.

The findings did provide insights on how young media participants understand their work and their involvement in community. They revealed that the participants saw their journalistic work as an act of civic engagement, despite being uncertain of the concrete benefits it provided to society. Also, the results showed that the media programs did not serve to draw participants into political and geographic community engagement, as Robinson and Deshano's (2011) study on older citizen journalists suggested they might. That study established a causal relationship between citizen journalism and higher levels of participation in geographic communities and politics. This study found that the citizen journalism practiced by young people promoted the personal development of the

participants as well as influenced the participants' preference for approaching societal issues on a small scale. However, instead of approaching those small-scale issues through their geographic communities and political processes, participants chose to work with groups that shared common interests, one of those groups being the media programs themselves.

This study supports the connection that Fanselow (2008) establishes between citizen journalism and engagement. The citizen journalism these young people performed helped them enter into public life and establish connections with adults as well as with their peers. Supporting Goode (2009), Rheingold (2008) and Nip's (2006) research, this study's participants also mentioned understanding their journalism as a civic act. This understanding supports a less traditional and evolving definition of civic engagement that emphasizes small-scale actions by interest-based communities rather than participating in government and political processes. Through connection with other citizens, the young participants seemed to understand how they fit into the fabric of society and how their interests related to others. It seems that the work these young citizen journalists performed serves as an antidote to the individualism that Liu and Hanauer (2011) describe as permeating American society. Through reporting and connecting with others from diverse backgrounds, these young people demonstrated an understanding of how their own self-interest is inextricably linked with the overall health of society.

These conclusions were derived from the coded analysis of 10 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with young community and youth media participants from across the country as well as online textual descriptions of the six programs in which the

participants took part. One of the limitations of the study was that there was the large discrepancy in the amount of textual information offered on the different programs' websites. Some offered detailed descriptions of the goals for the program while others did not. While some participants described attributes of their programs that were consistent with the framework for successful promotion of civic engagement among young people, in some cases those attributes were not mentioned on the programs' websites. This lack of written information limited the findings section on some organizations. Another limitation was the length of experience on the part of the participants. Because of the participants' ages, several did not meet the recommended three years of part-time experience, which would ensure their expertise. This lack of long-term experience was somewhat counteracted by the fact that all the participants had completed their program's training and had continued to participate afterward.

Future research that builds on this study could explore the relationship between youth and the lack of engagement in geographic communities as opposed to this phenomenon being associated with an ideological shift in the way that people understand community. Considering the fact that many of the participants in this study felt marginalized from the adult world despite being able to share their work with the broader community through radio, television, online and print circulation, it would be interesting to explore the extent to which scholastic journalism programs' advancement of civic engagement is actually limited by their lack of impact upon "the world of adult citizenship" (Print, 2007, p.340).

In conclusion, participants possessed an innate understanding that they had a role to play in health and progress of society, and demonstrated a desire to fulfill that role.

The participants endeavored to do their part by volunteering their time to help with projects for which they saw no direct reward, such as organizing spreadsheets for organizations that promote press freedom and organizing free programs to help girls develop confidence in their math and science abilities. In this way, the participants shared their vision of a better world and engaged in making their vision a reality.

References

- Baker, C.E. (2002). *Media, Markets, and Democracy*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Barbaro, M., & Santos, F. (2011, Aug. 3). Bloomberg to Use Own Funds in Plan to Aid Minority Youth. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/04/nyregion/new-york-plan-will-aim-to-lift-minority-youth.html>
- Bennett, W. Lance. (2008). Changing Citizenship in the Digital Age. Bennett, W.L. (Ed.), *Civic Life Online: Learning How Digital Media Can Engage Youth* (pp. 1-24). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Blunt Home. (n.d.). *Blunt Youth Radio Project*. Retrieved April 22, 2012, from <http://www.bluntradio.org/>
- Blunt Youth Radio Project. (n.d.). *Myspace*. Retrieved March 16, 2013, from <http://www.myspace.com/bluntradio>
- Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) Staff. (2011). *The Youth Vote in 2010: Final Estimates Based on Census Data*. Retrieved from www.civicyouth.org
- Christians, C.G., & Carey, J.W. (1989). The Logic and Aims of Qualitative Research. In G.H.I. Stempel & B.H. Westley (Eds.), *Research Methods in Mass Communication* (pp. 354-374). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Christians, C.G., Glasser, T.L., McQual, D., Nordenstreng, K., & White, R.A. (2009). *Normative theories of the media: Journalism in democratic societies*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Cohen, E. D. (1992). Objectivity and News Reporting. *Philosophical Issues in Journalism* (pp. 156-185). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Columbia Access Television, Inc. (2010). About CAT. In *Columbia Access Television*. Retrieved March 20, 2013, from <http://columbiaaccess.tv/about>
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (1990). Grounded Theory Research: Procedures, Canons, and Evaluative Criteria. *Qualitative Sociology* 13(1), 3-21.

- Corporation for National & Community Service. (2013). About AmeriCorps. In *AmeriCorps*. Retrieved March 16, 2013, from <http://www.americorps.gov/about/ac/history.asp>
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2008). Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research. *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* (pp. 1-45). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Erentaite, R., Zukauskienė, R., Beyers, W., & Pilkauskaitė-Valickienė, R. (2012). Is news media related to civic engagement? The Effects of Interest in and Discussions About the News Media on Current and Future Civic Engagement of Adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*, *35*, 587–597.
- Fanselow, J. (2008). Community blogging: The New Wave of Citizen Journalism. *National Civic Review*, *97*(4), 24–29.
- Friedland, L. A. (1996). Bringing the News Back Home: Public Journalism and Rebuilding Local Communities. *National Civic Review*, *85*(3), 45.
- Glaser, & Strauss. (1967). The Constant Comparative Method of Qualitative Analysis. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (pp. 101-115). Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Goode, L. (2009). Social News, Citizen Journalism and Democracy. *New Media & Society*, *11*(8), 1287–1305.
- Gant, L.M., Shimshock, K., Allen-Meares, P., Smith, L., Miller, P., Hollingsworth, L.A. & Shanks, T. (2009). Effects of Photovoice: Civic Engagement Among Older Youth in Urban Communities. *Journal of Community Practice*, *17*(4), 358-376.
- Harp, D., Bachmann, I., Cantrell Rosas-Moreno, T., & Loke, J. (2010). Wave of Hope: African American Youth Use Media and Engage More Civically, Politically Than Whites. *The Howard Journal of Communication*, *21*, 224-246.
- Jankowski, N.W., & Wester, F. (1991). The Qualitative Tradition in Social Science Inquiry: Contributions to Mass Communication Research. *A Handbook of Qualitative Methodologies for Mass Communication Research* (pp. 44-74). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Jensen, K.B. (1991). Humanistic Scholarship as Qualitative Science: Contributions to Mass Communication Research. *A Handbook of Qualitative Methodologies for Mass Communication Research* (pp. 17-43). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Johnson, J.C., (1990). *Selecting Ethnographic Informants*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

- Johnson & Weller. (2002). Elicitation Techniques for Interviewing. In J.F. Gubrium & J.A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of Interview Research: Context & Method* (pp. 491-514). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Jones, J., (2012, July 13). Young U.S. Voters' Turnout Intentions Lagging. *Gallup*. Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/155711/young-voters-turnout-intentions-lagging.aspx>
- Jud, E. (n.d.). Home. In *Blunt Youth Radio Project*. Retrieved March 16, 2013, from <http://www.bluntradioradio.org>
- Kaufhold, K., Valenzuela, S., & De Züniga, H. G. (2010). Citizen Journalism and Democracy: How User-generated News Use Relates to Political Knowledge and Participation. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 87(3/4), 515–529.
- Khan, M., & Reinoso, Y. (2008). We Welcome You to Invite US to the Field. *Youth Media Reporter* 6, 254-257.
- Liu, E., & Hanauer, N. (2011). *The Gardens of Democracy: A New American Story of Citizenship, the Economy, and the Role of Government*. Seattle, WA: Sasquatch Books.
- Marchi, R. (2012). With Facebook, Blogs, and Fake News, Teens Reject Journalistic “Objectivity.” *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 36(3), 246–262.
- Massey, B. L. (1998). Civic Journalism and Nonelite Sourcing: Making Routine Newswork of Community Connectedness. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 75(2), 394–407.
- McKee, A. (2003). What is textual analysis?. *Textual Analysis* (pp. 1-33). London: Sage.
- McKinney, M. S., & Banwart, M. C. (2005). Rocking the Youth Vote Through Debate: Examining the Effects of a Citizen Versus Journalist Controlled Debate on Civic Engagement. *Journalism Studies*, 6(2), 153–163.
- MEMconsultants. (2013). *Spy Hop Evaluation Report*. Retrieved March 16, 2013, from http://spyhop.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/2011-2012SpyHop_EvaluationReport.pdf
- Merritt, D. (1995). *Public journalism and public life: Why telling the news is not enough*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Nip, J. Y. M. (2006). Exploring the Second Phase of Public Journalism. *Journalism Studies*, 7(2), 212-236.

- Nip, J. Y. M. (2008). The Last Days of Civic Journalism. *Journalism Practice*, 2, 179-196.
- Pearrow, M. M., (2008). A Critical Examination of an Urban Based Youth Empowerment Strategy: The Teen Empowerment Program. *Journal of Community Practice*, 16(4), 509-525.
- Print, M. (2007). Citizenship Education and Youth Participation in Democracy. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 55(3), 325-345.
- Rheingold, H. (2008). "Using Participatory Media and Public Voice to Encourage Civic Engagement." Bennett, W.L. (Ed.), *Civic Life Online: Learning How Digital Media Can Engage Youth*. (pp. 97-118). The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Richards-Schuster, K. & Dobbie, D. (2011). Tagging Walls and Planting Seeds: Creating Spaces for Youth Civic Action, *Journal of Community Practice*, 19(3), 234-251.
- Robinson, S., & Deshano, C. (2011). Citizen Journalists and Their Third Places. *Journalism Studies*, 12, 642-657.
- Rosen, J. (1993). Beyond objectivity: It Is a Myth, an Important one, but Often Crippling and It Needs To Be Replaced with a More Inspiring Concept. *Nieman Reports*, 47(4), 48-53.
- Ryan, M. (2001). Journalistic Ethics, Objectivity, Existential Journalism, Standpoint Epistemology, and Public Journalism. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 16(1), 3-22.
- Shah, D., McLeod J.M., & Yoon, S. (2001). Communication, Context and Community: An Exploration of Print, Broadcast, and Internet Influences. *Communication Research*, 28(4), 464-506.
- Silverman, D. (2010). What You Can (and Can't) Do With Qualitative Research. *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook* (pp. 5-15). London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Skocpol, T. (1997). The Tocqueville Problem: Civic Engagement in American Democracy. *Social Science History*, 21(4), 455-479.
- Soffer, O. (2009). The Competing Ideals of Objectivity and Dialogue in American Journalism. *Journalism*, 10(4), 473-491.

- Stelter, B. (2011, Dec. 18). MTV Drops “Choose or Lose” Campaign Season Slogan. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/19/business/media/mtv-drops-choose-or-lose-campaign-season-slogan.html>
- Student Press Law Center. (2013). Mission and Vision. In *Student Press Law Center*. Retrieved March 18, 2013 from <http://www.splc.org/aboutus/mission.asp>
- Turner, B.S. (2000). “Liberal Citizenship and Cosmopolitan Virtue.” In A. Vandenberg (Ed.), *Citizenship and Democracy in a Global Era* (pp. 18-32). New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press.
- Verde Magazine. (n.d.). About Verde Magazine. In *Verde Magazine*. Retrieved March 26, 2013 from <http://verdemagazine.com/about-verde-magazine/>
- West Virginia University. (2013). About the Project. In *West Virginia Uncovered*. Retrieved March 16, 2013 from <http://wvuncovered.wvu.edu/about>
- Yang, J. (2009). The Role of New Media Tools in Young Adult’s Engagement. *Journal of New Communications Research*, 4(1), 29-46.