Chapter 6
Youth Engagement in the Era of New Media

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ABSTRACT

Contextualized within the popularity of new media, youth engagement is a very important concept in the practice of public involvement. Guided by the current literature on youth engagement and media studies, this chapter examines the key engagement-related notions involving youth and media usage. Being informed by a variety of case studies on youth engagement through the use of media within various contexts globally, the chapter discusses the opportunities and challenges of engaging youth through media usage. The specific notions covered in this chapter include: 1) the role of "hybrid" media in youth engagement; 2) "intersectionality" illustrating the diversity of youth populations and their media usage; 3) meaning-making through media usage among youth; and 4) building global social relationships and social and cultural capital through youth's media usage. Importantly, the use of new media can be seen as a means of reclaiming and reshaping the ways in which youth are engaged, as key meaning-making processes, to address personal, social, and cultural issues.

INTRODUCTION

Occasioned by the rise of new media, engaging youth in the practice of public involvement presents both opportunities and challenges in our increasingly global society. Guided by the current literature on youth engagement and media studies, this chapter will examine the key engagement-related concepts involving youth and media usage. By combining practice-based accounts with theoretical insights, the chapter will provide critical analyses and interpretations of empirical data from local/regional, national, and international case studies on youth engagement through the use of media. Specifically, attention will be given to how new and traditional media is being applied to youth engagement in international socio-political contexts. Broadly, the chapter will discuss the opportunities and challenges of engaging youth through media usage.

A key argument emphasized in this chapter is that hybrid forms of communications through digital and social media, face-to-face interactions, and traditional media can promote youth engagement, in which relationship-building (both within youth and between youth and adults) is a critical concept. Another main argument is that appreciation of the diversity of youth populations and their media usage from an intersectional perspective is essential to better understand the ways in which youth are engaged via media that can provide meaning-making, for example, on identity and cultural issues. Briefly, an intersectional framework addresses the complex ways in which the *key axes of power* in society (e.g., gender, race/ ethnicity, class, ability, sexual orientation) intersect with each other (Crenshaw, 1995; Garnets, 2002; Iglesias & Cormier, 2002). In addition, the chapter suggests that youth engagement through media usage can help build global social relationships and social capital and can facilitate a youth-led transformation of our society to address social justice issues. Importantly, such multi-media usage can provide youth with creative outlets for civic engagement, community connections, and meaning-making within their lives.

In particular, this chapter posits that meaningful youth engagement is a key concept for both positive youth development (PYD; Alicea et al., 2012; Delgado, 2002; Lind, 2008) and social justice youth development (SJYD; Cammarota, 2011; Gharabaghi & Anderson-Nathe, 2012; Ross, 2011) and facilitates social/system change to more effectively support youth (Blanchet-Cohen & Salazar, 2009; Davidson et al., 2010; Yohalem & Martin, 2007; Wexler et al., 2009). Indeed, the integration of PYD and SJYD is proposed applicable to the use of hybrid forms of communications to promote youth engagement and development by appreciating the diversity of youth populations and their media usage (from an intersectional perspective), and by promoting meaning-making and social capital, and to facilitate a youth-led/ guided transformation of our society to address social justice issues. Importantly, the power of youth in social change should not be underestimated, and this role can be effectively promoted by the use of hybrid forms of communications for youth engagement.

Accordingly, the chapter will address such concepts as "intersectionality," "meaning-making," and "global social relationships and social and cultural capital" to appreciate the diversity in the types and forms of youth engagement through media usage. Before describing each of these key concepts, the chapter will begin with summarizing a framework of PYD and SJYD and then providing insights into the role of various forms of media in youth engagement broadly.

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT (PYD) AND SOCIAL JUSTICE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT (SJYD)

Youth's media usage is seen as a key youth-engagement activity, which has significant implications for youth development (Conner & Slattery, 2014; Dedman, 2011; Garcia et al., 2015; Kahne et al., 2012). Two of the most popular concepts concerning youth development include positive youth development (PYD; Alicea et al., 2012; Delgado, 2002; Lind, 2008) and social justice youth development (SJYD; Cammarota, 2011; Gharabaghi & Anderson-Nathe, 2012; Ross, 2011). First, PYD seeks to promote a variety of developmental competencies that young people need at individual, social, and system levels to become productive, contributing members of society (Alicea et al., 2012; Ersing, 2009; Lind, 2008; Yohalem & Martin, 2007). Rather than a pathological focus, PYD adopts a holistic view of development, giving attention to youth's physical, personal, social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual development, and emphasizes the strengths, resources, and potentials of youth (Alicea et al., 2012; Ersing, 2009; Lind, 2008; Yohalem & Martin, 2007).

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