Chapter 38
Meaningful Youth Engagement Through Media Usage

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ABSTRACT

Guided by the literature on youth engagement and media studies globally, this conceptual article examines the key engagement-related notions involving youth and media usage. A central argument of the article is that meaningful youth engagement can be considered a key concept in describing youth's use of hybrid media that reflects the diversity of youth populations and their media usage. Specifically, such media-involved youth engagement can be seen as an important meaning-making activity within youth's lives that can potentially build social and cultural capital, including through social relationships and youth-led political activism. Aligned theoretically with positive youth development (PYD) and social justice youth development (SJYD) frameworks, this article suggests that youth's hybrid media usage can be seen as a meaningful youth-engagement activity that can provide opportunities to promote skills/ competences leading to positive development, and to address human rights and other social justice issues in an empowered, meaningful way.

INTRODUCTION

Occasioned by the rise of new media, engaging youth in the practice of civic involvement has important implications in our increasingly global society. Guided by the current literature on youth engagement and media studies, this paper examines the key engagement-related concepts involving youth and media usage. In particular, the paper provides critical analyses and interpretations of the outcomes/learnings from local, regional, national, and international case studies on youth engagement through the use of media. Specifically, attention is given to how new and traditional media is being applied to youth engagement in international socio-cultural contexts.

A key argument emphasized in this paper 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 paper suggests that youth engagement through media usage can help build global social relationships and social and cultural 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.

Furthermore, this paper 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 and cultural 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 paper addresses 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 paper begins 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).

Second, SJYD involves youth's awareness of their personal potential, community responsibility, and broader humanity, and the engagement in social justice activities that counter oppressive conditions (Cam-

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