

Public Abstract

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Title:Understanding Engagement:

Exploring How Young Non-professional Journalists Think About Civic Engagement

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.