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Abstract

This article explores how social media use in formal and informal learning spaces can support the development of digital citizenship for secondary school students. As students increasingly spend large amounts of time online (e.g., an average of six hours of screen time per day, excluding school and homework), it is critical that they are developing skills enabling them to find, evaluate, and share information responsibly, engage in constructive conversation with others from diverse backgrounds, and to ensure their online participation is safe, ethical, and legal. And, yet, in spite of the importance of students learning these skills, opportunities for digital citizenship in formal and informal learning spaces have lagged behind our ideals. The article provides a conceptual analysis of civic engagement as digital citizenship and considers how digital media applications can support citizenship education in middle- and high-school grades. Then, empirical research is provided that demonstrates how high school students develop digital citizenship practices through out-of-school practices. Finally, this article suggests that both dimensions of digital citizenship (i.e., in-school, traditional citizenship education and out-of-school activities aimed at civic engagement) can be integrated through a social media-facilitated curriculum. Finally, recommendations for teaching and learning through social media are offered to educators, community members, practitioners, parents, and others.

Keywords

Digital citizenship, Social media, Educational technology

Disciplines

Curriculum and Social Inquiry | Educational Technology | Higher Education | Instructional Media Design | Online and Distance Education

Comments

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Digital Citizenship with Social Media: Participatory Practices of Teaching and Learning in Secondary Education

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how social media use in formal and informal learning spaces can support the development of digital citizenship for secondary school students. As students increasingly spend large amounts of time online (e.g., an average of six hours of screen time per day, excluding school and homework), it is critical that they are developing skills enabling them to find, evaluate, and share information responsibly, engage in constructive conversation with others from diverse backgrounds, and to ensure their online participation is safe, ethical, and legal. And, yet, in spite of the importance of students learning these skills, opportunities for digital citizenship in formal and informal learning spaces have lagged behind our ideals. The article provides a conceptual analysis of civic engagement as digital citizenship and considers how digital media applications can support citizenship education in middle- and high-school grades. Then, empirical research is provided that demonstrates how high school students develop digital citizenship practices through out-of-school practices. Finally, this article suggests that both dimensions of digital citizenship (i.e., in-school, traditional citizenship education and out-of-school activities aimed at civic engagement) can be integrated through a social media-facilitated curriculum. Finally, recommendations for teaching and learning through social media are offered to educators, community members, practitioners, parents, and others.

Keywords

Digital Citizenship; Social Media, Educational Technology

The Perception of Internet Risks and the Need for Digital Citizenship

Digital citizenship is once again in the news, as parents, teachers, administrators and schools embrace the notion of teaching students about media literacy and safe and responsible internet use. Recently, spurred by the perceived dangers of online life, including cyberbullying, sexting, harmful contact, and other psychological or physical threats, states such as Washington, California, Texas and others have proposed or passed legislation calling for formal education that instructs students about how to use information technology effectively in order to maintain student safety, privacy, and health and well-being. While internet researchers instruct us to value the benefits from internet use (Livingstone & Brake, 2010), sensational stories are often quite persuasive, such as the Slenderman story. In 2014, two 12-year old girls lured a friend into the rural Wisconsin forest, stabbing her 19 times in an attempt to impress Slenderman, a fictitious character who appears online and in internet memes (Gretter, in press). The girls were taken in by Slenderman's persuasive online presence, and according to authorities, convinced his followers they needed to kill somebody in order to earn his respect. Fortunately, the victim survived the brutal attack, though the dangers of life online were again exposed.

Sensational (if truthful) accounts such as these contribute to the need to teach K-12 students the media literacy skills that will keep them safe online. Washington's proposal was supported by Common Sense Media, which is one of the leaders in the field, providing 76% of all public schools in the U.S. with digital citizenship curricula. This popular digital citizenship package teaches students a variety of topics, including internet safety, privacy and security, information literacy, and cyberbullying and digital drama (www.commonsense.org). The risks to young people are real, even if most adolescents will thankfully never find themselves trying to appease a character like Slenderman. Livingstone and Brake reported that 72% of young people in the U.S.

aged 12-17 had been bullied in the past year (2010, p. 4), suggesting the need for young people to learn effective strategies to remain safe online.

While recognizing the value of these programs and curricula, we suggest that there is a need for digital citizenship curricula to emphasize the real-life experience, values, and personal interests and engagements of young people themselves. Influenced by scholars from political science, communication, and education (Bennett, 2008; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012; Freelon et al, 2016; Greenhow et al, 2009) who recognize how networked communications technology (e.g., social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, and others) supports new forms of citizenship that are increasingly participatory, driven by expressions of identities, and linked to changing conceptions of literacy, we see the need for a new model of digital citizenship enabled by the affordances of social media.

This paper contributes to a growing field of research that seeks to explore the dimensions and possibilities of young people's digital citizenship facilitated by digital and social media. To that end, it suggests two important contributions: one, a connection between out-of-school social media practices with in-school traditional citizenship curricula, organizations, and models of community change; two, it seeks to leverage the affordances of social media (i.e., its very socialness) to suggest a model that validates, and perhaps even prioritizes, the social values and identities of young people as they develop citizenship practices. That is, that as young people develop their own political networks & followers, attend social protests on livestream (#StandWithWendy), and contribute to community service projects (i.e., raising money for community issues), they are participating in a new form of digital citizenship enacted through digital (e.g., social) media activities informed by social values and identities (Gleason, 2016a).

Toward a Model of Social Media-Enabled Digital Citizenship

Digital citizenship is a concept that includes a range of theoretical conceptions, from those that emphasize the technological aspect, while others investigate the affordances of digital media to suggest new forms of citizenship. Scholars in a range of fields, including education, communications, and political science, have proposed a number of different conceptions of digital citizenship. We present some popular ones before explaining our own notion of digital citizenship, and how it can be developed among secondary students through the use of digital and social media.

First, there is the normative perspective, which proposes that digital citizenship is “the norms of appropriate, responsible technology use” (Ribble, 2017, np). The normative perspective emphasizes that students understand the “rights and responsibilities” of being a digital citizen, which includes acting “in ways that are safe, legal, and ethical” (ISTE, 2016). Digital citizenship is developed as teachers instruct students about a range of digital practices, including how to access digital media, how to follow copyright and other laws, and how to improve security measures. Researchers have proposed developing the concept of digital citizenship to increase respect and support finding that “youth who are proactively respectful and supportive online” are not only less likely to harass others, but also more likely to intervene when it does occur (Jones & Mitchell, 2016, p. 12).

Second is an approach that theorizes digital citizenship as “the capacity to participate in society online” (Mossberger, 2009). Mossberger and colleagues have examined the factors that support participation online, finding that those with regular (e.g., “frequent”) access to the internet, coupled with media and information literacy skills to “find, comprehend, evaluate and apply” this information (Mossberger et al, 2012, p. 2496), have access to greater social benefits. Digital citizenship is a precursor to political participation; the more access that one has to online information and services, the more likely they will benefit from this increased participation. As more young people “do politics online” (e.g., by finding, evaluating, and applying information), they increase their political knowledge, engagement with politics, and political participation (Mossberger, 2012).

Third is a perspective that there is a strong relationship between participation online and digital citizenship (Jenkins & Carpentier, 2013). Full participation in society demands proficiency in digital media, specifically the ability to produce, collaborate, share, and critique media using current and emerging technologies (Reilly et al, 2012; Jenkins & Carpentier, 2013; Hobbs et al, 2013; Mason & Metzger, 2012). Hobbs suggested that digital citizenship includes reading, writing, and engaging in dialogue that contributes to democratic discussion, made possible through digital media: “New forms of civic learning...focus on producing information that is created and shared by peers, learning to use...digital and social media, and participating in peer-centered special interest groups” (2013, p. 232).

Finally, scholars from communications and political science have suggested that as a result of networked technologies and changing social, political, cultural and economic structures and practices, young people are developing new forms of citizenship (Bennett, 2008; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Kahne et al, 2012). Bennett proposed two forms of citizenship: dutiful and actualizing. Dutiful citizenship is predicated on civic responsibility, membership in civic organizations, and reflects a hierarchical style of both information dissemination and possibilities for leadership. In this model, students develop citizenship through voting, writing letters to the editor (or their local politician), or belonging to the local Kiwanis club. On the other hand, actualizing citizenship is predicated on “looser personal engagement with peer networks...that crowd source information and organize civic action using social technologies that maximize individual expression” (Bennett et al, 2012, p. 839). Bennett’s broader conception of citizenship centers young people’s expressive actions, often in digital (or social) media, that suggest particular values.

Recently, scholars have investigated the dynamic ways that social media may support political engagement by creating opportunities for young people to become socialized to concepts of citizenship (Xenos, Vromen, & Loader, 2014). Xenos et al found that, across the United States, the UK, and Australia, young people’s social media practices supported political engagement, with “digital citizenship” type activities (i.e., discussion of civics topics) supporting individual and collective political engagement (2014, p. 11). Couldry et al (2014) have proposed that social media facilitates civic engagement by creating opportunities for communities to share stories that ultimately create trust, build connection, and suggest a vision for community development.

Our conception of digital citizenship is informed by synthesizing a number of these theoretical points, and yet we also suggest that ours offers a unique contribution to the field. We propose a model of digital citizenship that is student-centered (e.g., as opposed to teacher-directed),

emphasizes participation via strategic creation, curation, and circulation (e.g., rather than passive acquisition of information), and grounded in the authentic, sociocultural practices of young people (e.g., rather than normative uses of technology). We theorize a strong relationship between new literacies practices (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011), identity development and expression, and the development of digital citizenship. For example, as young people use the microblog and social network site Twitter to organize for community efforts, mobilize followers around an emerging social protest, and document social protest movements in real time, they may be developing Twitter literacy, or Twitteracy (Gleason, 2012). This literacy, conceptualized as the ability to make informed decisions about how, and when, to participate on Twitter, develops through teenagers' participatory play with digital media (Gleason, 2016a). Further, their participation in teenage Twitter demonstrates personal commitments (i.e., to feminist activism) that emerge as catalysts for a wide range of possibilities for teaching and learning.

This article contributes to an emerging research field within education that suggests that young people's social media activity can support the development of digital citizenship (Greenhow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2009; Krutka, 2014; Keller, 2015). We conceptualize social media broadly, as platforms that allow people to create, share, and follow other users (Obar et al, 2012), including social network sites such as Facebook, the social network/microblog Twitter, image sharing platforms such as Instagram, and video sharing platforms such as YouTube and Snapchat. This paper explores the concept of a social media-enabled digital citizenship approach that leverages young people's personal interests and engagements, what we conceptualize as commitments, in the service of individual and community-oriented participatory practices of teaching and learning. These activities blend offline and online action, in-school and out-of-school practices, representing what scholars have called "connected methods" (Leander & McKim, 2003) and "connective action" (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

Digital media has spurred material, social, technical, and cultural changes that have resulted, scholars argued, in a broader conception of what citizenship is, young people's development of citizenship practices, and how these changes may result in the possibility of greater connection between young people's authentic, personally meaningful activities and traditional approaches to citizenship and civic engagement (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Kahne et al, 2012; Freelon et al, 2016; Gleason, 2013; von Gillern & Gallagher, 2016). In this paper we utilize the affordances of digital and social media, notably their participatory, engaging, connected logics, as impetus for a rich, dynamic, citizenship curricula. While acknowledging differences between offline and online practices, this work draws on both as spaces of generative for the development of digital citizenship. Using both conceptual understandings and empirical research that demonstrate young people's opportunities and commitments to civic engagement, we propose a social-media enabled approach to digital citizenship that integrates formal, in-school curricula with out-of-school, youth unsanctioned practices.

The Digital Citizen Goes to School: Digital Media for Civic Engagement

Teaching civics and promoting civic engagement have long been goals in education (Krutka, 2014). In recent years, the National Council for the Social Studies (2013) reaffirmed the value and dedication of civic engagement through producing the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework, which calls on and prepares educators to help students to succeed in these areas in their lives. Furthermore, the C3 Framework recognizes the importance of preparing students to

use technology to succeed academically and in life more broadly. This aligns with the Common Core English Language Arts Standards that recognize the value of developing students' ability to engage in electronic communication and utilize digital and multimodal resources to communicate ideas (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

These ideas and standards complement the concept of digital citizenship, which has also been highlighted by the standards for students created by International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) and provide reasons for educators from across disciplines to engage their students in activities that promote civic engagement and digital citizenship (International Society for Technology in Education, 2016). There are multiple ways for educators to help students develop their abilities to effectively engage in digital communication through in-class activities and activities that bridge students' in-school learning and out-of-school experiences.

In this article, we discuss three notable ways for these learning experiences to unfold. First, we will conceptually discuss how students can create digital research projects, such as public service announcements (PSAs), that investigate issues that matter to them and their communities, raise awareness, and advocate for their beliefs with broader communities through social media. Second, we conceptualize and illustrate opportunities for students to investigate issues, prepare arguments, and connect with publicly elected officials with numerous goals in mind including:

- developing an understanding of the political process
- creating powerful and persuasive media
- participating in political processes
- connecting personal commitments and interests to systems, cultures, and histories
- influencing legislation

Third, we will present empirical data to illustrate how students' participatory practices of teenage Twitter suggest the development of important digital citizenship practices (i.e., creating and sharing political information, participating in social protest, and volunteering for a worthwhile community cause). All of these activities align with digital citizenship and represent ways that teachers can help empower students to develop critical thinking abilities, enhance digital communication skills, and influence their communities by connecting their in-school learning with their out-of-school civic participation.

Public Service Announcements

The first example that illustrates how teachers can promote digital citizenship and connect students to their communities is a public service announcement (PSA, see Figure 1). While opportunities exist at the elementary level, we focus on secondary students, as these activities may be more appropriate for older students and better aligned with curricula. Creating public service announcements is a way for students to identify an important issue, research that issue and its relevance for the community, and then prepare a persuasive form of media that can impact a community's perceptions and actions (Selfe & Selfe, 2008), presenting an opportunity for students to develop civic engagement. PSAs can cover a wide variety of topics, ranging from projects focused at the local level to the global, including political, environmental, social issues, and more. The PSA example in this article (see Figure 1) illustrates how students can use free

infographic creation tools to convey important information and statistics related to food loss and waste around the world. (Note: this infographic was created with Canva, but other useful infographic creating platforms include Easel.Ly, Piktochart, and Venngage.)

In order to prepare a PSA, educators can guide students in a few ways. First, educators can help students learn what PSAs are and their potential value for influencing attitudes and behaviors. Second, students can examine a range of PSAs to determine their characteristics, and what leads some to be more effective than others. Third, teachers can provide opportunities for students to brainstorm and choose potential PSA topics that are relevant to them or their communities, as well as select goals for their PSA, such as influencing their communities' attitudes, actions, or both. After choosing topics and selecting goals, students can create, collaborate, and revise their PSAs.

FOOD WASTE

A GLOBAL ISSUE

1/3 of Total Global Food Production is Lost or Wasted



Food Loss & Waste

=

\$680 Billion
in Industrialized Countries

\$ & **\$**
\$310 Billion
in Developing Countries

95-115 kg of food per capita are wasted in Europe and North America Each Year

6-11 kg the per capita food waste for people in sub-Saharan Africa, south, and south-east Asia



Be Conscious of Food Waste.
Just **1/4** of food that is currently lost or wasted could feed over **800 million people.**

You can learn more from the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
<http://www.fao.org/save-food/resources/keyfindings/en/>

Figure 1. Example of Public Service Announcement Created with Canva

In our own experiences teaching educational technology courses to preservice secondary educators at a large public university, we have had fruitful experiences providing opportunities for our students to create their own PSAs.

The PSAs they created varied, ranging from a humorous PSA on the dangers of walking while texting, to a serious PSA focused on prevention and treatment of sexual assault. Our students were empowered to create PSAs on topics that exhibited their personal interests, commitments, and agency. The preservice teachers recognized the activity as valuable and most showed interest in facilitating similar activities in their classrooms as a way for students to critically investigate a topic, create persuasive media, and share with their peers or broader communities.

Instructor and students need to determine the best way to disseminate their PSA, considering which audience is most appropriate (i.e., classroom, school, or community at large), and balancing students' need for privacy with opportunities for "real world" publication and dissemination. YouTube, SnapChat, Tumblr, Twitter, and Facebook are all viable audiences, but each platform has its own opportunities for publishing and implications in regards to audience reach and impact. Publishing in these venues allows students to share viewpoints that are valuable to them and validate their lived experiences. Posting anonymously online is an option to help maintain student privacy, as is sharing through a formal learning management system (such as Blackboard, Edmodo, or Canvas).

Social media can be an effective way for students to spread their ideas as a digital citizen through civic participation. Ultimately, creating PSAs can be a relatively simple activity that can help students develop their ability to communicate social and political messages in ways that promote civic participation and aligns with digital citizenship. The methods for organizing PSA creation activities will vary from context to context, as will the format of the PSAs and the methods for distribution. In short, students can learn valuable forms of civic participation and engage with various communities as a digital citizen.

Contacting Elected Officials

Teachers can also help students develop communication and research skills through activities that connect them with elected officials. While there are a variety of methods that accomplish this, the website democracy.io makes it easy for students to contact their representatives. This website allows individuals to enter their address (see Figure 2), which then automatically populates their elected representatives in the U.S. congress and senate (see Figure 3). Users can then type messages (see Figure 4) that will automatically be sent to their elected officials. This is a "quick and easy" way of engaging in civic participation that helps students understand ways that they and their communities can utilize to share their concerns and hopefully, effect change.

It is also important for educators to help students create well-reasoned, articulate arguments to support or oppose a specific position or policy, which requires investigating current issues and legislation, and carefully constructing informative and persuasive writing. While valuable for one individual to contact their representatives to advocate for or against a particular policy, there is often strength in numbers. Students can use the affordances of social media to amplify their message, communicate quickly, and to set the stage for continued conversation with desired audiences (Obar et al, 2012). While requiring students to contact their representatives and advocate for or against specific positions and legislation may not always be appropriate in the

classroom, teachers can still empower students to thoughtfully and critically develop coherent and well-supported arguments to share with their representatives outside of school in ways that help students bridge their in-school experiences with their out-of-school civic participation and digital citizenship.

Our examples of creating and distributing PSAs using social media and contacting representatives have been influenced by our conceptual understandings of civic engagement and digital citizenship, as well as our experiences working with preservice secondary educators. Valuable opportunities exist for secondary educators to prepare students to research critical issues, produce persuasive digital media, and strategically distribute their products through social media. Our conceptualizations of civic engagement and digital citizenship are also guided by findings from the first author that suggest a high level of engagement on social media with topics related to citizenship, including: community service projects, feminist advocacy (i.e., what one participant called “fourth wave activism”), and advocacy for increasing school funding, which we will examine next.



Figure 2. Screenshot of Democracy.IO Website, Example 1

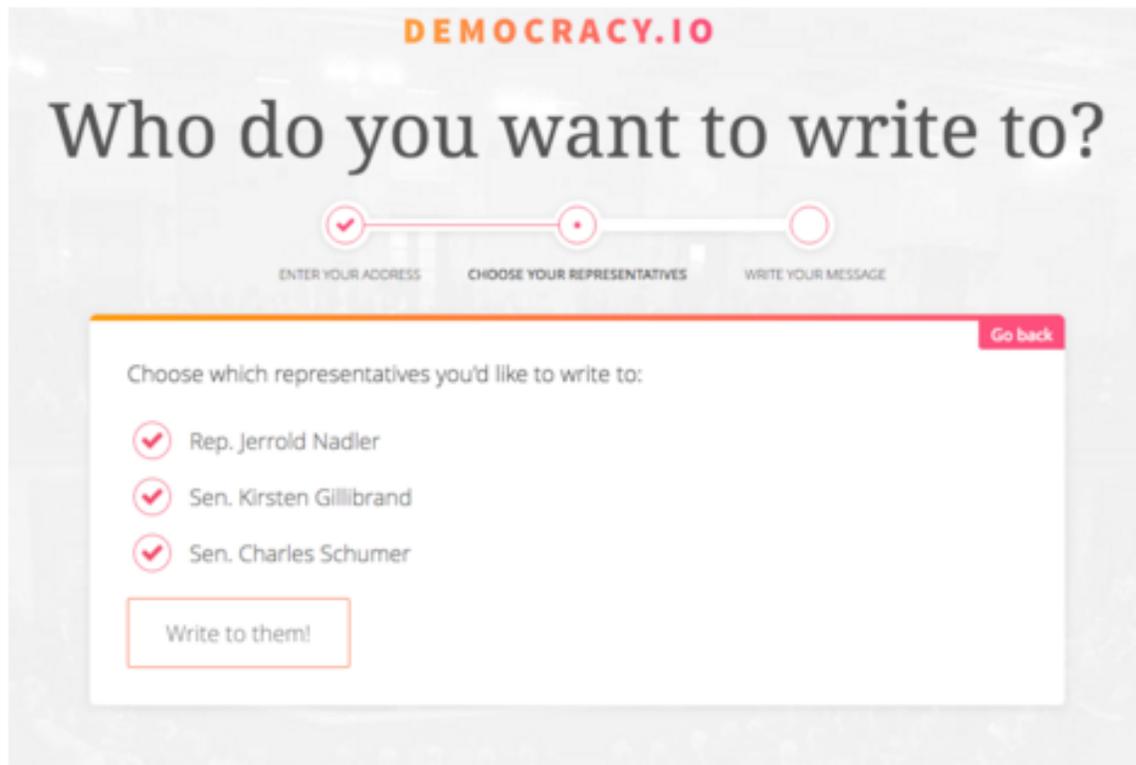


Figure 3. Screenshot of Democracy.IO Website, Example 2

Figure 4. Screenshot of Democracy.IO Website, Example 3

Digital Citizenship in Teenage Twitter

This section reports findings from a two-year research study that explored how adolescents’ participatory practices of teaching and learning in teenage Twitter (e.g., for a more in-depth discussion of this study, see Gleason, 2016b). Twitter is a popular microblog and social network site, used by over 50 percent of young people aged 16-17 (Zickuhr & Rainie, 2014), that enables users to post 140 character messages (tweets), share them (retweets), and follow other users. Research from a pilot study with five adolescent Twitter users suggested that young people are skilled in creating multimedia compositions that use specific language and literate practices to dialogue (and persuade) their peers (Gleason, 2016). In order to maintain privacy for participants (who were minors when they consented to participate in the study), I have changed slightly the language used in tweets. I intend for this change to maintain the meaning(s) of the tweets, while making it difficult to discern the author of the tweets using internet search functions

Following approval of the research study by institutional review board, three participants, all highly active (e.g. daily) users of Twitter, consented to the study and were enrolled in the study in March 2013. They were all at least 17 years old at the time of enrollment, identified as White, and in high school; two were juniors (i.e., Ryan and Lori), and one (i.e., Lucy) was a senior. Participants reported that their socioeconomic status was upper middle class. Twitter data was collected both progressively and regressively (e.g., progressively for a period of roughly two years, and regressively to when they started using Twitter). Conceptually, this study aligns with educational research that investigates how adolescents from “elite” communities develop citizenship practices rooted in social justice (Swalwell, 2013; Goodman, 2011).

All three participants demonstrated a commitment to contributing information on topics related to becoming a digital citizen, conceived broadly as relating to civic engagement. Ryan, Lucy, and Lori engaged in a number of practices on Twitter related to contributing information, including posting or sharing information (e.g., often about politics, civic engagement, or citizenship), and/or commenting on others’ posts. Since the data collection period included the run-up to the 2012 U.S. presidential election, there was a corresponding interest in the number of election-related tweets. For example, Ryan retweeted information about how the Affordable Care Act provided birth control “without co-pays or deductibles...potentially saving women hundreds of dollars per year” (@TheDemocrats, 10/21/12). Lucy shared “breaking news” from a legitimate political source that reported how Republican candidate Mitt Romney, following tradition of US candidates running for the highest office, planned to release his 2011 taxes (@ThinkProgress, 9/21/12). Lori contributed information explaining Obama’s position on women’s health: “I don’t think any male politician should be making health care decisions for women” (@BarackObama 10/25/12).

The presidential campaign captivated the interest of three participants, and one way they engaged with matters of citizenship (including issues about health care, public education, and national security) was by participating in conversation during the presidential debates. Participants expressed their commitment for an “open exchange,” such as when Lucy urged Governor Romney to “let her speak,” suggesting that this indicated his lack of “respect” for women matched by his “policies.” (10/16/12). Lucy suggested an interest in joining the larger conversation about the debates through her use of the hashtag #debates2012.

In addition to being engaged with politics, such as political campaigns, elections, and dominant political parties (e.g., Democrats and Republicans), participants engaged in matters broadly conceived as digital citizenship, such as engaging with more broad social issues. In 2013, a widely-debated issue was gay marriage. Here, participants shared a variety of information about gay marriage, generally corresponding with young people’s overall support of gay marriage, with roughly 60 percent of those under age 35 (the closest age grouping) supporting it. Lori retweeted Obama’s position, “Same sex couples should be able to get married” (3/26/13), while Ryan shared a post from an NBC News report on Hawaii’s legalization of same sex marriage in November, 2013. For her part, Lucy shared a thoughtful post entitled “Supreme Court Gay Marriage: Is Marriage Equality Really the Last Civil Rights Struggle” (@mic, 5/31/13) that investigated the “limits” of marriage equality.

In addition to sharing information from multiple sources, livetweeting “just in time” events such as presidential debates, and commenting on important social issues such as gay marriage through

teenage Twitter, all three participants developed practices relating to digital citizenship through “connective action” (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012) that integrated in-school and out-of-school opportunities for teaching and learning, and online civic education with offline public practices. Participants’ out-of-school practices in teenage Twitter strongly suggest the possibility of complementing student’s in-school civic engagement, such as the ones described above. The process of selecting a topic for a public service announcement could be aided by looking for evidence of young people’s engagement in public issues in teenage Twitter.

For example, Ryan, who described himself as “obsessed with politics,” participated in a number of connective activities, both online and offline, related to advocating for increased funding for his school district. Town residents rejected a proposed tax increase to fully fund educational offerings, resulting in what he called cuts to “ALL extracurriculars/clubs, all non-varsity sports, the Gifted and Talented program, Science Research, full-day kindergarten, as well as raising class sizes astronomically.” Online, Ryan mobilized support for a tax increase through writing an editorial in the town newspaper, starting a petition for additional federal aid on the White House website (since taken down), raising awareness through a number of tweets on this topic, and publicizing the efforts in his personal forum on the question-and-answer platform Ask.com. Offline, Ryan travelled to his state legislature to protest school budget cuts and to ask for “our fair share.” The group successfully petitioned the state capital, resulting in two million dollars in funding for the town. In addition, Ryan developed his digital citizenship through mobilizing resources via Twitter in advance of a speech to his local school board, who called it “articulate” and “civil.” Ryan’s hard work contributed to the successful passage of the school budget.

Meanwhile, Lori also participated in connective activities, posting or sharing 53 tweets about her school community’s Relay for Life over two years. These tweets were diverse, from cut-and-dry fundraising requests (i.e., the same message repeated, with only the @ name changed), to Instagram images of relay participants, to sharing logistical information (e.g., with time and place) about the Relay itself. In addition to posting context-dependent information with the appropriate hashtag, Lori retweeted peers, the high school principal, and even the soccer coach. Beyond the informational tweets, the tweets that Lori shared suggested the possibility that the explicit purpose of the Relay for Life initiated new dynamics among participants-- a sense of excitement, possibility, and momentum toward participation. For example, Lori retweeted one of her friends, who called the event “amazing” and noted that she was “proud” of participants and donors who “supported” them. Another friend called the event “astonishing” and reported feeling “blessed” as a result. The soccer coach posted a picture of an adult getting “pie’d” (e.g., hit in the face with pie) as a fundraising activity, and exclaimed “I can’t believe I’m missing this!”

Lucy also developed an intersectional feminist activity through participation in #StandWithWendy. A state senator from Texas, Wendy Davis, completed a 13-hour filibuster to prevent a vote on a bill that would deny access to reproductive care. The hashtag #StandWithWendy was created to organize against the legislation, and Davis found a troop of willing fans, including activists, politicians (including President Barack Obama), and everyday women-- in short, what Davis called her “feminist army.” In an interview, Lucy told me that participating in this social protest “was a way of engaging in action.”

Discussion

This article suggests that the development of a social media-enabled digital citizenship approach requires the integration of two critical elements: first, the use of a curricula that provides opportunities for secondary students to develop understanding of citizenship and civic education through the use of digital media applications, software, and games. Digital media offers an engaging way for young people to learn about significant dimensions of citizenship and civic education while lowering barriers to participation. For example, while many young people may not run for political office, volunteer for a politician, or even vote, they can still develop competencies and connections through digital media. Second, the use of social media (e.g., Twitter) is a way for young people to develop their competencies of digital citizenship through producing, sharing, and discussing information related to politics. Empirical findings highlighted young people's diverse activities online and offline, from livetweeting political protest, to participating in community service projects, to mobilizing support for equitable school funding.

Through these online and offline activities, young people demonstrated their interest in participating in connective actions (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012) that benefitted their communities (e.g., school, town, state, and imagined) as well as being personally enjoyable and pleasurable. This suggests the need for an integrated social media approach for digital citizenship, the beginnings of which we will sketch below.

Our social media digital citizenship approach can be utilized in a number of ways. We have demonstrated three ways in this article: 1) creating and distributing PSAs, 2) contacting representatives, and 3) communicating values and enacting commitments through Twitter. Creating and distributing PSAs illustrates the potential for secondary educators to help students develop their ability to create persuasive media that can influence a community's attitudes and behaviors. Contacting representatives provides students an opportunity for student civic engagement in which they learn how to develop and communicate effective political arguments. Finally, connecting young people's commitments to participatory action with formal curricula of civic education provides teachers with an opportunity to center young people's experiences, culture, and lives online.

Together, these elements offer new possibilities for secondary students to use digital media to participate in civic life, offers teachers a chance to become a co-learner alongside students in a process of creative digital play (Henricksen et al, 2016), and presents opportunity for students, teachers, community members, administrators, and parents to make student learning visible (Hattie & Yates, 2013). Using the affordances of social media for sharing, lowering barriers to participation, and flattening traditional hierarchies through activities like the ones described in this article, educators can prepare students for civic engagement and provide opportunities for their students to develop digital citizenship skills by providing relevant learning experiences in the classroom that can be utilized outside of school for their personal and political goals in life.

An important dimension of a social media digital citizenship approach involves a deliberate, pedagogical centering of student interests, competencies, and assets, conceptualized as commitments (Gleason, submitted). Over a two-year period of teenage Twitter, young people engaged with a number of different topical attractions including social conflict; friendship maintenance; recreational activities (e.g., concerts, sporting events); work (e.g., part-time jobs);

academic challenges and successes; relationship initiation, development, and termination; and many more. While they were energized with the vital life stuff of teenage Twitter, taking an interest in the dynamic trending topics on Twitter, over time some of these interests stabilized. Informed by notions of connection to shared public values (Bennett, 2008), we conceptualize commitments as more substantive than affinities (Gee, 2005), involving a moral component, and strongly related to the concomitant intertwining nature of identity development and expression of values.

Here we are moved by a radical vision of how commitment is intertwined with individual and collective action, emotion, and connection: “We have to recognize that there cannot be relationships unless there is commitment, unless there is loyalty, unless there is love, patience, persistence” (West, 2009). Commitments can be thought of as simultaneously both individual and collective, mediated through sociotechnical practices inherently social (e.g., the hashtag), and informed by larger histories, practices, and systems of oppression (Holland & Lave, 2009). As a heuristic for interpreting how social media enables (or does not enable) digital citizenship, commitments suggest expanding researchers’ interpretative gaze beyond mere individual action to examine the relational aspects, dimensions, and practices at play as young people participate, make meaning, and align with particular identities facilitated through creating PSAs, contacting representatives, and utilizing Twitter and other social media platforms for influencing the attitudes and actions of various communities.

Centering young people’s commitments, such as Lucy’s commitment to intersectional feminist activism, suggests the promise and transformative potential of using social media to support digital citizenship. Consider Lucy’s participation in #StandWithWendy, a protest against the current trend of limiting women’s reproductive healthcare options. Over a period of about six hours, Lucy tweeted or retweeted 65 posts related to Senate Bill 5, the proposal to limit women’s access to abortion centers in Texas. These included an “explainer” article from the Washington Post providing background and context about #SB5; a link to the livestream where almost 200,000 people stayed up until midnight to watch a filibuster; Lucy’s livetweet of key statements (e.g., Senator Leticia Van de Putte’s question: “At what point must a female senator raise her hand or her voice to be heard over the male colleagues in the room?”), and critiques over the bill’s eventual passing. Throughout 65 tweets, Lucy shared information, contributed opinions (i.e., her own, and other people’s), and highlighted connections to other spaces of digital citizenship (links to Tumblr, YouTube livestreams, and Planned Parenthood sites). Through it all, she demonstrated agency and received recognition from her followers for her commitment to feminist activism; one of her tweets (“hey y’all, this is fourth wave activism. Activism through social media. There would not be 190,000 viewers otherwise. #StandWithWendy”) was retweeted 10 times and favorited twice.

Viewing Lucy’s commitment to feminist activism as a significant component of digital citizenship allows teachers and researchers to build upon student experience, language (and literacies), and culture (Bartolome, 1994). In addition, it clearly offers the possibility for a variety of curricular connections, such as to public health, philosophy (feminist and otherwise), public policy, reproductive science, economics, the history of social protest, the use of media for organization and social mobilization, and countless others. Focusing on the topic of reproductive health could begin with a comparison of health care across the United States, investigating the relationship between what is deemed “essential” health care and what is excluded. From there,

learners could explore the economics of healthcare, the biology of reproductive health, and even how social movements have pushed for increased health coverage, care, and liberty.

Conclusion

Digital citizenship manifests itself in many ways. While many young people are savvy at communicating their values and influencing the attitudes and behaviors of their peers with social media, secondary educators also have a role and opportunity to help their students develop skills that enhance students' ability to identify problems, create persuasive media, and strategically distribute this media to their peers and communities. This article focused on political opportunities for digital citizenship, as the political represents valuable topics and opportunities for engagement, but digital citizenship is at its core a social endeavor and can incorporate a wide variety of both social and political topics and activities. These represent valuable opportunities for both educators to help students develop valuable digital citizenship skills and bridge in-school learning with the students' out-of-school interests, values, and commitments. While requiring students to distribute PSAs, contact representatives, or engage in politically-centered Twitter activities may not always be appropriate in the classroom itself, educators can prepare students for such activities in the classroom and help them conceptualize methods and opportunities for these and other forms of civic participation that can be used for out-of-school activities and experiences.

Participants' out-of-school, authentic (e.g., "unsanctioned") civic education activities spur us to take seriously young people's motivations, engagements, and desires for public participation as suggestive of their interest in a new kind of digital citizenship. Their practices of sharing information and opinions about relevant topics (e.g., gay marriage) indicate a desire to contribute to, and inform, public dialogue. For example, Lucy's commitment to feminist activism demonstrates how young people use the sociotechnical affordances of social media to develop digital citizenship. Lucy's engaged participation suggests a way forward: engaged participation, centered on young people's authentic commitments to shared values, that open up the possibility of educational experiments that begin with student experience, language and literacy practices, and cultures.

Innovative, secondary school teachers responsible for teaching digital citizenship (e.g., social studies, history, civics, and language arts educators) should consider integrating social media as a way to develop learning networks that connects students' offline and online civic engagement activities with formal citizenship curricula. In this vision of a social media-enabled digital citizenship approach, the sociotechnical affordances of Twitter (e.g., ability to participate in "real time" political action organized around hashtags) lower barriers to participation while allowing students to develop important new literacies (Gleason, 2016; Greenhow & Gleason, 2012).

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