Digital civic engagement by young people

Acknowledgements

Contents

Synopsis

Many of today's youth take to digital spaces to develop their civic identities and express political stances in creative ways, claiming agency that may not be afforded to them in traditional civic spaces. The key difference between civic engagement by youth today and older, more traditional forms of action is the availability of digital technology, which provides a low-barrier-to-entry canvas for young people to create content that is potentially vastly scalable. Here's what else we know:

01
Data from 11 countries show that between 43 and 64 per cent of 9 to 17-year-olds look for news online, while 12 to 27 per cent of children discuss political problems online.

02
In the contexts of widespread digital access, digital civic engagement by youth may be more equitable than traditional forms of civic engagement

03
Young people are less invested in 'dutiful' citizenship acts, favouring personalised engagement through digital networking, self-expression, protests and volunteerism.

04
They use humour, memes, satire and other acts of engaging with or remixing popular culture as important tactics in the repertoire of digital civic engagement.

05
Civic engagement by adolescents educates and exposes them to civic issues at an early age and contributes to a sense of socio-political empowerment.

06
Which digital platforms young people choose to use for civic engagement depend on the range of functions and features offered by these platforms.

07
Young people who engage in digital participatory politics are much more likely to engage in 'real' offline political participation such as voting.

08
Active enablers of digital civic engagement by youth include equitable access to technology and digital skills, civic education, and existence of civic space for activism.

09
Key deterrents to civic engagement are: lack of trust in the internet due to high prevalence of false news and misinformation, declining trust in political processes, harassment and trolling, data breaches, and digital surveillance.

KEY TAKEAWAYS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Account
for blended contexts. Digital engagement is contiguous with, complementary to, and inseparable from offline engagement.

Appreciate
youth creation of varied content: videos, memes, artwork and blogs.

Appraise
local context to better understand the scale, content and platforms young people use.

Consider
how digital civic engagement can drive youth participation in more traditional forms of civic engagement.

Consider
the risks of digital civic engagement by youth.

Promote and support civic education and development of digital literacies and skills.

Introduction

A teenage boy in a Brazilian favela circulates a selfie on social media that highlights drug-related violence in his community.[1] Catalyzed by the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter, at least 2,800 public protests to date have demanded attention to police brutality against African Americans.[2] A trans teen learns a new, liberating vocabulary to articulate their identity and finds emotional support through online interactions with 'strangers' — precisely those whom young people are instructed to avoid online.[3] Organized over social media, hundreds of thousands of young people around the world take to the street in a synchronized 'climate strike' to demand government action on climate change.[4]

Digital civic engagement by youth can look like any of the above; it can include digital instances of more conventional hallmarks of civic engagement, such as reading and circulating news, writing emails to an elected representative or community organization (or interacting with them on social media), or belonging to a campus or community group online. Yet, growing up with low-barrier-to-entry digital media creation and editing tools, many of today's youth also take to digital venues to develop their civic identities and express political stances in creative ways, such as with videos, memes and artwork[5] to claim agency that may not be afforded to them in traditional civic spaces and reimagine the concept of 'the political' writ large.

> ...many of today's youth also take to digital venues ... to claim agency that may not be afforded to them in traditional civic spaces and reimagine the concept of 'the political' writ large.

1 Nemer and Freeman, 2015.
2 Elephrame, 2020.
3 Dame 2016.
4 Sengupta 2019.
5 Jenkins et al 2016.

Aim and approach

As academics and practitioners theorize new ways to understand and evaluate these kinds of digital civic engagement, this paper aims to compile evidence and explain available analytical frameworks to help UNICEF understand this rapidly emerging area of adolescent engagement.

This analysis presents an overview of relevant research literature across the topic of digital civic engagement by young people. The core questions it endeavours to answer are:

1. What do we mean by digital civic engagement by young people?
2. What are the dominant platforms used by young people for digital civic engagement around the world?
3. What do we know about the nature and consequences of digital civic engagement by young people?
4. What are key enablers or constraints to digital civic engagement by young people?
5. What compelling examples are there of digital civic engagement by young people?
6. What are key considerations for organizations seeking to partner in digital civic engagement with young people?

The paper purposefully focuses on instances of spontaneous civic engagement in which adolescents and young people themselves seek to participate and look for the tools and means to do so. This paper does not focus on adolescent and youth engagement cultivated by UNICEF or similar organizations, in which young people are scaffolded into the activities by adults. The authors note that this is a somewhat false dichotomy as different types of involvement already co-exist in this sphere. Our focus on 'organic' digital mobilization of young people presents an opportunity for UNICEF to simultaneously learn of emerging trends in digital engagement for social change, and the issues children and young people care about, and to understand what we as an organization can learn from contemporary civic engagement and social movements as we develop our own priorities for youth participation. Maintaining a distinction between 'spontaneous' and 'cultivated' engagement is not sustainable beyond the limits of a rapid scoping exercise such as this.

This analysis is meant as an introduction to and summary of broad themes across published academic literature as well as reports from polling organizations on this topic. It is important to note that this is not an exhaustive meta-review of all existing research studies on this issue and largely avoids private sector market research. The paper does not provide an evaluation or analysis of the effects of young people's digital civic participation, nor does it make programmatic recommendations or report on specific stakeholders' efforts in this area. In keeping with UNICEF's commitment to gender-disaggregated data, gender-specific data is reported when indicated in the research; when aggregated, the source publication has presented only gender-aggregate data.

> Our focus on 'organic' digital mobilization of young people presents an opportunity for UNICEF to simultaneously learn of emerging trends in digital engagement for social change…

What do we mean by digital civic engagement by young people?

...digital media allow a degree of agency previously unexperienced...

Today, young people's civic engagement is inseparable from the digital media landscape, and research suggests that older frames which view the 'online' and 'offline' as entirely separate experiences are inaccurate for today's youth.[6] Fundamentally different from broadcast, print, or cinematic media, today's digital media afford what have been called 'participatory cultures'. In other words, digital media allow a degree of agency previously unexperienced, together with the ease for an 'audience' to author, remix and remake popular culture themselves. In turn, these new versions can spread across distributed internet networks in a peer-to-peer flow (as opposed to a centralized mode of cultural production such as a TV station or newspaper press) and at great potential scale.[7]

Our approach in this paper borrows from this understanding of digital participatory culture while also heeding recent critiques that underscore the persistence of capital, labour, and power imbalances that surround digital participatory cultures (especially regarding private sector ownership and control of digital platforms and users' data).[8] It is a core tenet of this paper that we cannot fully understand the contours of digital civic engagement by young people without also paying attention to the context of the media ecosystems involved (see section 4).

BOX: DEFINITIONS

Civic engagement is defined by UNICEF as: "individual or collective actions in which people participate to improve the well-being of communities or society in general".[9] This has traditionally taken the form of actions such as voting, attending community meetings or functions, contacting public officials, attending protests, signing petitions, or writing articles about one's community. There is a robust debate as to whether this suite of activities may be too narrow in terms of what is considered 'civic engagement', especially in the digital era and from a youth perspective.[10] Others advocate for a focus on the everyday life practices of 'cultural citizenship' that range from affective bonding to strategic consumption.[11] Still others challenge the voice and participation-oriented focus of these perspectives and advocate for practices of active and empathetic listening as a necessary component of the civic sphere.[12]

---

6   Nakamura, 2002; Cohen and Kahne, 2012.
7   Jenkins, Ford and Green, 2013.
8   Couldry and Mejias, 2014; Langley and Leyshon, 2016.
9   Forthcoming UNICEF guidelines
10 Bennett, 2008.
11 Burgess et al, 2006.
12 Couldry, 2009.

Digital civic engagement by youth refers to civic engagement activities specifically done by young people and involving digital media of some kind. We have, when data is available, focused this analysis primarily on data on individuals under the age of 18 (adolescents, ages 10–18). The definition of 'youth' varies across research. Some studies cited here focus on 'teens' (ages 13–17), and others adopt a definition of 'youth' that ranges into young adulthood (for example, ages 15–24). Specificity about age cohort when discussing digital civic engagement by youth is important because use patterns and styles of engagement for different cohorts may vary greatly. Throughout, we summarize research data on any of these subgroupings, indicating ages accordingly.

Digital citizenship has been defined as "the ability to participate in society online", including an understanding of digital citizens as people who "use technology frequently, […] for political information to fulfill their civic duty, and who use technology at work for economic gain".[13] Other definitions emphasize the quality or character of online participation, including "safe and responsible behavior online … comprising the concepts of responsibility, rights, safety, and security".[14] 'Digital citizenship' may be thought of as a combination of digital civic engagement and respectful digital deliberative practices.[15]

> Digital literacy is necessary to enact digital citizenship.

Digital literacy has been defined for youth as "the knowledge, skills and attitudes that allow children to flourish and thrive in an increasingly global digital world, being both safe and empowered, in ways that are appropriate to their age and local cultures and contexts."[16] Digital literacy is necessary to enact digital citizenship. In other words, 'digital civic engagement' as explored here is a repertoire of practice that falls under 'digital citizenship' and that assumes and requires 'digital literacy' in order to happen.

FOCUS QUESTION: WHY IS DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT BY YOUTH IMPORTANT?

Over the last several decades, young peoples' participation in traditional measures of civic engagement in wealthy democracies, such as voting and political party affiliation (in the case of young adults), has been steadily declining.[17] In the European Union, voting is in overall decline but this is especially true for young people aged 18 to 24, whose voter turnout is nearly 20 percentage points lower than the voting population as a whole.[18] In the United States, young peoples' (18–29 years) trust in government institutions declined significantly from 2010 to 2014,[19] with only 20 per cent expressing trust in the federal government in 2014 versus 29 per cent in 2010; similar trends applied to the United States Supreme Court, Congress, the President, the military, and the United Nations. And while low levels of trust in institutions actually increase partisanship in older cohorts, they have the opposite effect on young people.[20]

13   Mossberger, Tolbert and McNeal, 2007.
14   Jones and Mitchell, 2016.
15   The term 'digital citizenship' has come under some scrutiny for a potentially uncritical use of the term 'citizen', possibly ignoring or even reinforcing structures of power that dismiss the civic contributions, or ignore the contexts and needs, of immigrants, refugees, undocumented people, and the incarcerated. See Vargas and Jenkins, 2016.
16   Nacimbeni and Vosloo, 2019.
17   Xenos, Vromen and Loader, 2014; Barrett and Pachi, 2019.
18   Fieldhouse, Tranmer and Russell, 2007.
19   Della Volpe, 2014.
20   Shea, 2015.

"Friday used to be ordinary"

In 2018, Ugandan teen Leah Namugerwa learned of Swedish teen Greta Thunberg's Friday school strikes to protest against her government's inaction on climate change. Inspired, Leah went online to learn more and — aged 14 years old — started her own version of the global youth Fridays for Future climate strike in Kampala in 2019. She told one news outlet, explaining her exasperation in terms of a lack of attention to the problem, "I noticed adults were not willing to offer leadership and I chose to volunteer myself."[1] As she picketed, bewildered adults looked on from the road; her first significant protest was blocked by the authorities, but she continued. In her latest action, she led a team of youth to clean plastic from the shores of Lake Victoria, which she documented to her almost 10,000 Twitter followers. She is now part of the global Fridays for Future movement, which has motivated millions of people around the world to direct action, demanding attention to and solutions for climate change. This is an example of what we know about peer networks as well as the blended nature of offline and online spaces (see section 3 and section 5).

This is not due to general apathy; rather, research suggests that young people today approach the concept of citizenship differently than their predecessors. They are less invested in 'dutiful' citizenship acts, such as voting, favouring instead a "personalized politics of expressive engagement" such as digital networking, self-expression, protests and volunteerism.[21] Research in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia finds that social media use strengthens the relationship between these moments of 'self-actualising' citizenship and political engagement — in other words, social media may be the catalyst for political engagement between the self and the broader civic sphere.

However, this specific literature[22] is heavily concentrated on wealthy democracies and the narrative of a turn toward a politics of 'self-actualisation' may not be the case in other countries. For example, researchers in Mexico found that a history of extreme disenfranchisement from government, which ranked at the bottom of 18 Latin American countries in terms of citizens' satisfaction with democracy, led to almost 87 per cent of youth saying they would never engage in political discussions on social media and only 36.4 per cent reporting that they follow the news.[23] In contrast, researchers found that Egyptian youth's extreme disenfranchisement during Hosni Mubarak's authoritarian rule actually fueled the creation of robust, collective, youth-led alternative civic engagement organizations.[24] Clearly, more global perspective in research is needed to flesh out this narrative.

Nevertheless, young people globally are turning to new, digitally-mediated forms of civic engagement that are more difficult for tools such as traditional polling to measure and may be less analytically straightforward — for example, acts of 'participatory politics' such as youth creating and circulating photos, memes and videos to their networks.[25] A 2018 survey across 14 countries concluded that young people aged 18 to 29 are more likely to participate in political discussions online than older adults. The same study found that social network site usage — which skews younger and more educated than non-users — was positively correlated with respondents' likelihood to take political action across all the issues studied.[26] In addition, instead of engaging in isolated, discrete events or practices, young people are adopting a repertoire approach to civic engagement that blends an array of digital and 'real life' actions in a cumulative and recursive fashion.[27]

Civic engagement by adolescents is particularly important because: 1) education in and exposure to civic issues at an early age is foundational to creating future engaged civic actors; and 2) a sense of sociopolitical empowerment is associated with young people's self-esteem and well-being.[28] There is also a documented direct link between internet use by young people, generally, and civic engagement. Digital civic engagement by youth is therefore an intriguing area of study for those interested in civic engagement because it relates to both traditional measures of civic engagement among young people and their incredibly robust and engaged online practices.

---

1   Earth Day Network, 2019.

21   Bennett, Freelon and Wells, 2010.
22   Xenos, Vronen and Loader 2014.
23   Uribe, 2017.
24   Abdou and Skalli 2017.
25   Keller, 2012.
26   Wike and Castillo, 2018.
27   Middaugh, Clark and Ballard, 2017.
28   Middaugh, Clark and Ballard, 2017; Metzger et al., 2019.

What are the dominant platforms used by young people for digital civic engagement around the world?

While researchers have developed robust conceptual frameworks for thinking about and evaluating digital civic engagement by youth (see *Box: Two useful analytical frameworks*, below), actual figures on usage habits, platforms and tools, demographics of participation, and content are scarce. This is possibly a function of the fast-moving nature of digital media and their evolution as well as of the in-group/coded nature of much digital civic exchange among young people. To our knowledge, no global comparative, quantitative study of specific digital platform choice and usage by adolescents — or even young people, generally — exists in academic research. Thus, it is not possible to arrive at definitive global comparative trends for their choice of platform, or purpose of use, and we caution readers to avoid assuming that patterns of platform use or even tools for access, such as phones, are in any way similar from context to context (see section 5 and *Snapshot: Girls, mobile phones and morals*).

There is piecemeal platform-comparative quantitative research on youth digital tool and platform choice, though it focuses mostly on wealthy countries. For example, a 2018 report in the US found that Snapchat and YouTube are the social media that adolescents aged 13 to 17 'use the most'.[29] Girls are more likely than boys to say Snapchat is the platform they use most often (42 per cent vs 29 per cent), while boys are more likely to prefer YouTube as their main platform (39 per cent vs 25 per cent).[30] In contrast, adults in the US most often list Facebook as the social media platform that they have used, and still use, most often.[31] Globally, we know that, as of 2019, adults in 11 emerging economies worldwide (Colombia, India, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, Philippines, South Africa, Tunisia, Venezuela and Vietnam,) are most likely to use Facebook (median 62 per cent) and WhatsApp (median 42 per cent) as social media or messaging platforms.[32] In South Korea, nearly 100 per cent of mobile messaging users use the messaging app KakaoTalk, with Facebook Messenger a distant second at 26.9 per cent.[33] In China, a vast domestic tech sector

29   Anderson and Jiang, 2018.
30   Ibid.
31   Perrin and Anderson, 2019.
32   Silver et al., 2019.
33   Statista, 2019.

is dominated by Sina Weibo, similar to Twitter, but with almost 100 million more users, and WeChat, the country's most popular messaging app, with one billion active users monthly.[34] Though much user-generated political content on Weibo is censored, recent literature reveals that there is still strong civic engagement on the platform related to significant events.[35] However, if the above difference between adolescents and adults in the US is an indication, adolescent platform preferences in other countries — such as the youth-oriented surge in popularity of China's Douyin (known as TikTok outside China) — may be quite different as well. The majority of TikTok's users are young people: 66 per cent of worldwide users are under 30 years old and in the US, 60 per cent of monthly active users are 16 to 24 years old.[36]

Rather than rely on any static census of platform choice, which evolves quickly among young people and is difficult to predict, it may be useful for UNICEF and similar organizations to think about youth platform choice in terms of 'affordance', or the range of options for use made possible by the platform's features and design. For example, as early as 2014 youth protestors in Hong Kong used WhatsApp to quickly spread the word about demonstrations and police whereabouts; the app affords easy deletion of message histories and exiting of groups in case phones are seized and, similar to Telegram, uses encryption technology for its messages.[37] However, as protests intensified, mobile internet access was restricted/reduced, and protesters turned to the messaging app Bridgefy, which connects users from phone to phone in a local "mesh network" via Bluetooth and thus does not require an internet connection.[38] These strategies were quickly copied globally, including in protests in India in late 2019.[39]

While an evaluation of purpose-built cultivated civic engagement platforms from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that several have been developed to fill specific needs, such as countering misinformation through verification tools or civic hackathons. One such example is Amnesty International's Amnesty Decoders, a "crowd-sourced microtasking" platform that asks volunteers to help analyze media such as satellite images to determine the locations of missile strikes in Syria, for example. More research is needed to understand the advantages and pitfalls for NGOs in using existing communications tools for cultivated youth civic engagement versus building them anew. For example, one researcher found that an NGO working to support youth in the slums of Nairobi, Kenya, effectively used an array of WhatsApp groups to remind their constituents to vote and channel feelings of anger or disenfranchisement into civic action.[40]

> ...mobile internet access was restricted/reduced, and protesters turned to the messaging app Bridgefy, which connects users ... via Bluetooth and thus does not require an internet connection.

34   Ren, 2018.
35   Chen, 2014.
36   MediaKix, 2019.
37   Chen, Law and Purnell, 2014.
38   Koetsier, 2019.
39   Purohit, 2019.
40   Mjwara, 2018.

What do we know about the nature of digital civic engagement by young people?

To date, there have been relatively few studies that aim to quantify the types and characteristics of young people's digital civic engagement on a representative scale. This is probably due to a number of factors: the speed at which the digital landscape evolves, the idiosyncratic nature of digital circulations among youth, and the general difficulty in conducting research with youth both from an institutional and access perspective. Accordingly, the majority of the research in this area concentrates on qualitative, single cases of youth-oriented online groups or movements (several are outlined throughout this paper). However, we do know several things:

- **Children around the world use the internet to seek news.** A recent global study examined internet use among 9–17 year olds in 11 countries: Albania, Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Ghana, Italy, Montenegro, the Philippines, South Africa and Uruguay.[41] The study found that between 43 and 64 per cent of children looked for news online. Unsurprisingly, this percentage increased in older cohorts amounting to almost 75–80 per cent in some countries (Italy, Montenegro and Uruguay).

- **Some children discuss political problems with other people online.** The aforementioned global study[42] asked children whether they discuss political and social problems with others online and whether they get involved online in a campaign or a protest. Overall, between 12 and 27 per cent of respondents said they discussed political problems with other people online, varying somewhat between the countries. In general, about 19 per cent discussed problems, and about 13 per cent were involved in a campaign or protest. As might be expected, children become more political and engaged in social issues and problems as they reach older adolescence (15–17-years old). These numbers align with a 2012 study of young people aged 15 to 25 in the United States, which found that 16 per cent commented on a news story or blog post about a political campaign, candidate or issue, and 17 per cent forwarded or posted someone else's political commentary.[43] However, to fully grasp the scope of young people's digital civic engagement, we need more studies worldwide to include questions that recognize the immense variety of interaction possible in the digital space, from commenting, to posting a video, to even circulating satirical content.

41   Global Kids Online, 2019. While the study was done in 11 countries, Chile data was excluded from this paper due to challenges of comparability.
42   Global Kids Online, 2019.
43   Cohen and Kahne, 2012.

Tiktok, eyelashes, and human rights

In late 2019, 17-year-old Feroza Aziz, from New Jersey in the United States posted a short video to TikTok which called attention to the incarceration of Uighur Muslims in China. The video, in which Aziz spoke directly to the camera, started, "Hi guys, I'm going to teach you guys how to get long lashes." After a few seconds of using an eyelash curler, Aziz says, "Use your phone that you're using right now to search up what's happening in China, how they're getting concentration camps, throwing innocent Muslims in there." The video received almost 500,000 likes on the platform before TikTok temporarily suspended her account, ostensibly for using an image of Osama Bin Laden in a previous post to call attention to negative stereotypes around Muslims in the US. Aziz's tactic, of visual and auditory dissociation (she never once stops curling her lashes as she talks, so any censor who may be scanning visually without audio would never know her true message) was a low-tech way of "hacking" the platform to evade state surveillance and supports what we know about young peoples' demonstrated affinity networking, also when seeking news online.[1]

- **There is some evidence that digital civic engagement by youth may be more equitable than traditional forms of civic engagement** but this may only be in contexts of widespread digital access. One study of young people aged 16 to 29 in Australia, the US, and UK found that social media use may be "softening patterns of political inequality" regarding the long-standing observation that higher socioeconomic status is correlated with higher political engagement.[44] Additionally, the aforementioned 2012 US study found that engagement in participatory politics was generally equitably distributed across different racial and ethnic groups — a sharp contrast to traditional activities such as voting.[45] As a point of contrast, while researchers in Mexico found a clear connection between online and offline political participation among wealthy college students in Mexico City who had near universal internet access, the picture across the country was quite different: only 28.5 per cent of Mexican youth are able to connect to digital platforms from their homes, and only 69.5 per cent possess competency in internet use.[46]

  The Global Kids Online study found that, among the 11 countries studied, the differences between boys and girls were negligible, though this study did not include children who did not have access to the internet. One study in Indonesia found that young Muslim women are joining groups on social media, particularly Instagram, for community and expression as an alternative public sphere, especially since it may not be acceptable for them to engage in the public "street politics" of young men.[47] While these findings, taken together, suggest that online digital civic engagement may be more equitable for young people than traditional engagement, we must note that the picture may be very different in countries where equitable access is not guaranteed — for example, where girls have difficulty accessing the internet due to social norms and where any social and civic engagement of girls is actively discouraged (see _Snapshot: Girls, mobile phones and morals_). The results also do not take into account the extent to which the civic space of a country is open and empowering for young people.

- **Digital civic engagement by young people is positively correlated to offline youth political participation.** In contrast to the assumption that youth online 'clicktivism' is irrelevant to 'real' offline political participation, research finds that youth who engage in digital participatory politics are much more likely to engage in institutional politics such as voting.[48] For example, one study of youth aged from 12 to 17 in five East Asian cities found a positive correlation between internet use and participation in civic acts such as campus activities and community service.[49] Another study found that social media use among young people aged 16 to 29 in the US, UK and Australia was positively related to offline political engagement.[50] In the US, young people aged 15 to 25 who engaged in at least one act of participatory politics were almost twice as likely to report voting in 2010 as those who did not.[51]

---

1   For more information, see Zhong, 2019.

44   Xenos, Vromen and Loader, 2014.
45   Cohen and Kahne, 2012.
46   Rocha et al 2017.
47   Yue, Nekmat and Beta, 2019.
48   Cohen and Kahne, 2012.
49   Lin et al., 2010.
50   Xenos, Vronen and Loader, 2014.
51   Cohen and Kahne, 2012.

National Coming-Out-of-the-Shadows Week

In 2011, the National Coming Out of the Shadows Week was a youth-organized social media campaign in which undocumented young people in the United States took to platforms like YouTube to post video testimonials about their lives and experiences. Known as DREAMers, in reference to a legislative act that would give residency status to undocumented people who entered the US as minors, these youth translated their online experiences into on-the-ground civic action, organizing the DREAMing Out Loud! symposium in 2011, taking part in direct action by entering an office of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency and being handcuffed, founding an organization called DreamActivist. org, among many other actions. These youth changed the discourse around undocumented people in the US which resulted in real policy change: in 2012, President Obama announced that his administration would stop deporting young undocumented students who met certain criteria, and the DACA programme ('deferred action for childhood arrivals) was instituted, allowing undocumented people who immigrated to the US under the age of 16, and who do not have a criminal record, to apply for 'deferred removal' from the country. This example aligns with what we know about 'self-actualising' activism, taking it a step further and effecting instrumental change (see *Box: Two useful analytical frameworks*).[1]

- **Online youth participation, even when not explicitly political in nature is correlated to higher political engagement, online and off.** Youth digital participation in peer-centred, interest-driven spaces — where young people bond over shared non-political interests such as fandom spaces and other 'affinity networks',[52] — is directly correlated to higher political engagement, online and off.[53] A Swedish study of youth aged 13 to 17 found that involvement in creating user-generated content such as described above was a strong predictor of political participation.[54] Researchers believe this is due to heavy peer and near-peer engagement. An example of these ostensibly non-political peer-oriented interest-driven spaces evolving into political engagement is the fan activist group the 'Harry Potter Alliance'. Originally born out of fandom, this group activates members around instrumentalist goals for policy changes on immigration, climate change and education.[55] However, networks that are purely friendship-driven (meaning those that usually engage only people that youth already know from immediate life contexts) are not conducive to civic engagement.[56]

- **Humour, memes, satire and other acts of engaging with or remixing popular culture are important tactics in the repertoire of digital civic engagement by youth.** One study of over 1,000 youth-generated creative artifacts in response to the 2016 US presidential election found that youth rely heavily on 'distributed creativity', or online creative practices in participatory spaces to claim agency with regard to the political process, provide peers with social support (or distraction), and reimagine the concept of 'the political' writ large — an example of participatory politics.[57] Young people in the Japanese youth movement SEALD (Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy), established out of a response to the Fukushima nuclear disaster, adopted hip-hop cadences in their protest chants in front of the National Diet — protests which gathered between 30,000 and 120,000 people. They captured these chants on video which were then remixed and uploaded to YouTube, challenging notions that this generation of Japanese youth is an apathetic 'Loss Generation'.[58] These can be important moments of claiming of 'voice'. (See *Box: Two useful analytical frameworks*.)

FOCUS QUESTION: IS LIKING A POST, CIRCULATING A MEME, OR CHANGING ONE'S PROFILE PICTURE IN SERVICE OF A CAUSE REALLY AN INSTANCE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

It is tempting to dismiss some digital participatory acts as 'clicktivism', a pejorative term for casual, throwaway digital 'activism'. In response, researchers have recently developed robust frameworks and vocabularies to evaluate youth digital participatory endeavours (see *Box: Two useful analytical frameworks* for details). Changing one's Facebook profile picture to support a cause, for example, is quite different to voting, attending a protest, or volunteering in one's community. However, rather than dismiss the first as a meaningless symbolic

---

1   For more detail, see Jenkins et al., 2016.

52   Ito et al., 2019.
53   Kahne, Lee and Feezell, 2013.
54   Östman, 2012.
55   Jenkins, 2012.
56   Kahne, Lee and Feezell, 2013.
57   Kligler and Literat, 2018.
58   Joo, 2018.

act, it is more useful to understand these moments of youth digital civic participation on an interrelated spectrum with other acts, and as part of a process.

These symbolic digital participatory acts can be thought of as moments of claiming or expressing 'voice', whereas others are more geared toward achieving a particular kind of 'instrumental' change, such as passing a law.[59] Though it may be easy to regard acts of voice as trivial and disconnected from instrumental ends, in fact, for youth, these acts may be especially important moments of digital civic engagement.[60] Youth by definition have a more restrictive institutional presence in their lives than adults, be it formal schooling or family structure or sets of laws or restrictions that expire upon majority — a state that has been described as "marked by being institutionally positioned in subordinate roles."[61] Thus, acts of voice are crucial for young people in articulating their position with respect to civic institutions. In fact, using voice as an act of expression can be thought of as a first step toward instrumental civics.[62]

In fact, using voice as an act of expression can be thought of as a first step toward instrumental civics.

59   Zuckerman, 2014.
60   Cho, 2018.
61   Kligler and Literat, 2018.
62   Zuckerman, 2014.

What are key enablers or constraints to digital civic engagement by young people?

While many things can determine whether and to what extent young people are engaging in civic issues online, key enablers of such activities are: equitable access to technology, civic education and open civic space.

Equitable access to technology and digital skills: Digital civic engagement presupposes access to and ability to use digital technologies. However, previous UNICEF studies have found that the availability of broadband network coverage, ownership of digital devices and the ability to access and benefit from the internet are important factors which can determine youth engagement online.[63] Physical barriers brought about by poor infrastructure, geographical location or cost of connectivity, technological barriers brought about by access only to low functionality mobile devices, and social barriers such as the global digital gender gap[64] must be overcome to ensure that adolescents and youth have opportunities for digital engagement.

Alongside equitable access are the requisite digital literacy and skills required to safely and meaningfully engage online (and increasingly, offline). A recent UNICEF study outlined that "digital literacy goes beyond technical know-how. It refers to the knowledge, skills and attitudes that allow children and adolescents to be both safe and empowered in an increasingly digital world. This encompasses their play, participation, socializing and learning through digital technologies … [and varies] according to children's age, local culture and context."[65] Other studies have shown that the more time children and adolescents spend engaging in a range of activities online, the higher the level of skills they acquire, which enables them to engage in a broad array of creative and participatory activities.[66] However, they also encounter more risks, such as harassment and trolling, discussed below.

Civic education: Formal civic education in schools is an important step in creating awareness of children's rights as citizens and of the possibilities for action in the civic space. The 2016 International Civic and Citizenship Education Study, which surveyed 94,000 children aged 13.5 years and above shows similar trends in the 24 countries involved.[67]

---

63   UNICEF, 2018.
64   OECD, 2018.
65   Nascimbeni and Vosloo, 2019.
66   Global Kids Online, 2019.
67   Schulz et al., 2016.

Two-thirds of students in the study reported learning a moderate to large extent about how to protect the environment through civics-oriented education, and half reported similar levels of learning about international political issues through civic education in school. These higher levels of civic learning were consistently positively associated with students' interest in political and social issues.[68]

Digital technologies play a growing role in civic education. A recent global study found that "children value technology as a way to research the issues their communities face, to be informed about events and issues, to gather data, to share views and experiences with others …".[69] This, and other phenomena that have come about in the digital age, such as misinformation online or 'fake news' are giving rise to corresponding updates to the skills transferred in civic education. The same 2018 review of US civic education showed that 40 out of 42 states provided additional courses such as news media literacy as part of civic education.[70]

Civic space for activism: Accessible and inclusive civic space is vital for adolescents and youth to feel able to take part in social movements for change. However, the well documented phenomenon of shrinking civic space sees increasing threats and restrictions to civic freedoms, including internationally guaranteed freedoms to facilitate participation in democratic processes.[71] In 2019, Freedom House declared the 13th consecutive year of decline in global freedoms through reduced civil liberties[72] and the 2018 State of Civil Society Report identifies 109 countries with closed, repressed or obstructed civic space through monitoring and detention of journalists and activists, censorship, protest disruptions or prevention, harassment, intimidation and legislative restrictions.[73]

At the same time, digital technology plays an active role in creating civic space for youth. The use of social media for civic engagement has been referred to as "a game-changer for youth" by enabling them to "bypass adult structures and speak to the masses".[74] While youth engagement in political activism is often siloed to youth initiatives — poster competitions, separate platforms and so on — digital media have afforded more weight to youth opinions in broader social movements. However, the potential for digital technology to simultaneously impinge on civic freedoms must also be considered (see _Data and surveillance_ below).

While the very existence of digital technologies is a key enabler of youth civic engagement, the same technologies and platforms may be significant deterrents or barriers to civic engagement.

Lack of trust: One of the potential barriers to digital civic engagement is lack of trust (among/by young people) — both trust in digital platforms and the internet in general as an open, transparent and neutral conduit for expression and trust in (digitalised) political processes. According to the CIGI-Ipsos 2019 survey of internet security and trust, social media companies were one of the leading sources of user distrust

SNAPSHOT

Girls, mobile phones and morals

In a global study of girls' mobile phone use, researchers found that boys around the world are almost 1.5 times as likely to own a mobile phone than girls (excluding the United States, where 99 per cent of girls own their own mobile phone). Boys are also more likely to own a smartphone than girls, and they are more likely to use phones to send text messages, play games, watch videos, use mobile banking, do homework, and use the dictionary with them.[1] Intense social pressures circulate around girls' use of mobile phones, often including strict moral judgments. For example, 'Grace', a 15-year-old girl from Malawi whose parents prohibit her from using a mobile phone, recounted to researchers that she has heard that girls get pregnant because of mobile phones, contract sexually transmitted infections because of them, or use mobile phones for prostitution. Nevertheless, the same study found that girls navigate these beliefs and other barriers to access — such as cost — through a variety of ways, including borrowing. This complex gendered cultural landscape around mobile phone use challenges the findings that digital participation may be a more equitable avenue of opportunity and urges context specificity as well as gender disaggregation of data in further research (see section 5).

1   Vodafone Foundation and GirlEffect, 2018.

68   Ibid.
69   Third, 2019.
70   Hansen et al., 2018.
71   UN Human Rights Council, 2016.
72   Freedom House, 2019.
73   CIVICUS, 2018.
74   South, 2018.

in the internet, second only to cybercriminals.[75] This mistrust in social media expands to the lack of trust in the news media; Madden, Lenhart and Fontaine (2017) found that teens and young adults across the United States had low levels of trust in information found on social media and needed to use different strategies to verify and clarify stories they cared about. On average only about 50 per cent of children from the Global Kids Online study (2019) find it easy to verify if the information they encounter online is true; this could be due to the low level of digital skills, but also to the fact that it is becoming increasingly difficult to detect true from false, fake from real, information from misinformation. Likewise, the US 'Youth and Participatory Politics' study found a significant need for assisting youth in their ability to verify information on social media.[76]

Harassment and trolling: The same tools that digital activists use to express themselves can be used against them to silence, intimidate and distort their message. Bullying, harassment and trolling against young activists online does not happen only by their peers. Youth activists are often victims of harassment by adults or bots created by adults. Many teen climate activists are subjected to this harassment that can sometimes amount to racist comments and death threats (Johnson, 2019). If teens want their message to be heard by adults, not only by their peers, they are more likely to use platforms designed primarily for adult users (for example, Twitter) that do not systematically censor trolling and abusive or hate speech. A report in 2018 by Amnesty International found that Twitter can be a particularly toxic place for female politicians, journalists, activists, bloggers, writers, comedians or ordinary users in the US and UK.[77] In addition to restrictions on mobile phone ownership and cultural norms, female activists are disproportionally attacked online — or 'trolled' — with sexualized threats, purportedly intended to intimidate and prevent women activists from speaking out online.[78]

Data and surveillance: Finally, through every act of expression online, indelible traces of information about a person are generated, which can be used, analysed, stored and sold by unintended parties.[79] This is particularly problematic when such data are collected from a child or an adolescent, as their digital footprint follows them into adulthood even though their attitudes, preferences and identity may change over time. Private companies regularly collect data from children, often in violation of existing laws and regulation. In 2019 TikTok was fined USD 5.7 million by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) over the illegal collection of data from children under the age of 13; data was collected without parental consent which was against the US Children's Online Privacy Protection Act rules.[80]

In addition to the threat of misuse of children's data by the private sector, governments also interfere with children's right to freedom of expression by closely monitoring their online activities and building their own profile of the child's civic engagement. Freedom House has noted similar restrictions of digital rights impacting freedom of expression, including increased surveillance and legal prosecution of

75   CIGI, 2019.
76   Cohen and Kahne.
77   Amnesty International, 2018.
78   OHCHR, 2018, 2019.
79   Nyst, 2018.
80   PYMNTS, 2019.

internet behaviour.[81] Indeed, it is noted that smartphones and computers form part of the infrastructure with which governments and third parties attempt to limit political participation.[82] This evidence of surveillance and associated uncertainty of freedom of expression online is leading many activists — including children and youth — to seek alternative digital platforms such as Crabgrass, Diaspora or even the dark web.

> In some instances, the internet itself, in providing space for expression, is considered to present an unacceptable challenge to government authority.

In some instances, the internet itself, in providing space for expression, is considered to present an unacceptable challenge to government authority. An intentional disruption of internet or electronic communications by governments (or an internet shutdown) aims to silence voices of specific populations or within certain locations, and to prevent online protests from spilling into the streets. Access Now documented 196 cases of internet shutdowns in 2018.[83]

BOX: TWO USEFUL ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORKS

Because much of today's digital civic engagement by youth looks very different from traditional forms of civic engagement, we require new ways of thinking about this concept — including measuring and evaluating it. In addition to potentially ignoring or missing youth civic activity without the correct tools and vocabulary to understand it, there is also the potential of overemphasizing certain examples, spaces and cases as emblematic of an entire population. Indeed, work on 'participatory cultures' and 'participatory politics' has been critiqued for being too optimistic in its zeal to highlight exemplary 'new' cases of digital civic participation by young people.[84] How do we think about the shape and quality of digital civic engagement by youth in a systematic way?

Building a vocabulary: aims, actors, contexts and intensities
It can sometimes be difficult to describe and conceptualize digital civic engagement by youth. This framework can act as a starting point, giving us useful terms to discuss and potentially evaluate instances of digital civic engagement by youth. It involves four axes, each with different dimensions:[85]

- Aims, or the purpose or goal of an instance of digital participation, can be understood as either individualist or collectivist; for claiming of voice or for actual instrumentalist change in the world; and process-focused (in which the experience of participation itself is a goal) or product-focused, such as lobbying for a new piece of legislation.

- Actors refers to the people involved in participation, and its dimensions include individual versus collective, and homogenous versus diverse.

- Contexts refers to the setting of participation, virtual or real-world, and can be evaluated as either institutional or informal and bottom-up versus top-down.

81   Freedom House, 2018.
82   TacticalTech, 2019.
83   Access Now, 2018.
84   Cammaerts, 2008; Couldry and Jenkins, 2014.
85   Literat et al. 2018.

- Intensities refers to the quality and scope of participation, and can be executory (young people carry out the directives of others) or structural (young people are involved in the design of the project or initiative), and minimalist, characterized by less youth involvement and a greater imbalance of power, versus maximalist, or high youth involvement and a more egalitarian involving of youth participants at all levels.

It is important to note that these dimensions are spectra and any particular instance of digital civic engagement by youth may exist in multiple spaces on these spectra.

An analytical tool: voice/instrumental and thick/thin
Some participatory acts are geared toward claiming or expressing 'voice', such as posting on social media or wearing a badge in public, and some are more geared towards effecting a particular kind of instrumental change goal such as passing a law or persuading a person or institution.[86] Additionally, these acts can be understood across a second simultaneous axis, as being either 'thick' or 'thin': "[this] refers to what's asked of you as a participant in a civic act: do we need your feet or your head? In thin forms of engagement, your job is simply to show up … In thick engagement, your job is to figure out what needs to be done."[87] 'Thin' acts of voice, are often targeted by critical observers of youth digital cultures as being ineffectual;[88] however, as outlined above, research shows they may actually be quite important for digital civic engagement when viewed as part of a broader repertoire and also over time as being moments of evolution in a young person's civic engagement.
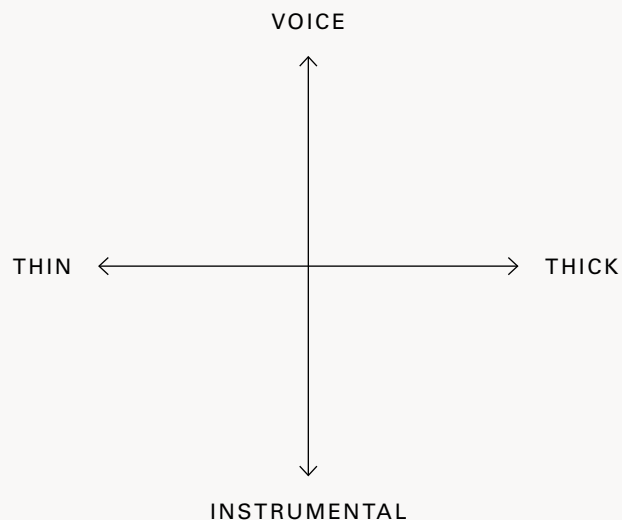
> 'Thin' acts of voice, are often targeted by critical observers of youth digital cultures as being ineffectual; however, … they may actually be quite important for digital civic engagement when viewed as part of a broader repertoire…

Figure 1: Axes of participatory civics, adapted from _New Media, New Civics?_ (Zuckerman, 2014).

86   Zuckerman,2014.
87   Ibid.
88   Gladwell, 2010.

What compelling examples are there of digital civic engagement by young people?

The examples shown in Snapshots throughout the text are intended to show the speed, range, spheres, effectiveness and self-affirming power of digital engagement for young people. The positivity and fluidity of their engagement can translate into new contexts and situations — local, national, international. In _Friday used to be ordinary_, we highlight the reach of digital platforms to galvanize young people's activism and participation, facilitating the extension and localisation of activist movements into different contexts and at different levels. In _National Coming-Out-of-the-Shadows Week_, we see the inspirational and self-actualising potential of digital civic engagement to create positive and affirming spaces for young people as individuals to engage in direct action for change.

We also show examples of how adolescents and young people start to navigate the political and social norms which shape their digital civic engagement. In _Tiktok, eyelashes and human rights_, we show some young people's nuanced understanding of digital media and their ability to use it in creative — and contentious — ways to send a message. Finally, in _Girls, mobile phones and morals_, we highlight the complex social contexts to be navigated by adolescents and young people to be able to participate in the spaces created by ubiquitous digital media. These snapshots are by no means exhaustive but serve as a glimpse of the myriad and multifaceted relationships young people are developing with digital media for civic engagement.

What are key considerations for those seeking to partner in digital civic engagement with young people?

Based on our review of the research literature in this field, we propose that policymakers, organizations working with children and youth, or anyone else interested in trying to understand digital civic engagement by youth and create more opportunities to engage youth this way, adhere to the following precepts:

Take into account blended contexts. Any policy initiative that aims to address or incorporate digital civic engagement by youth should view digital modes of engagement as contiguous with, complementary to, and inseparable from offline engagement. For today's youth, this is a false dichotomy. In 2014, as the #BlackLivesMatter movement emerged, popular social network Tumblr was referred to as a "kind of a gateway drug for activism", referring to its role in connecting people who feel strongly about race or LGBTQIA rights and who then stay engaged in that issue area on or offline.[89] One useful way to think about this relationship is to consider digital interventions as part of a broad repertoire of civic engagement practices, in which even minor moments of claiming voice may lead to more instrumental action.

Understand the primacy of affinity networks. The literature strongly concludes that digital social interaction by youth that is not explicitly political in nature, but that coheres around a set of youth interests (such as fan-based alliances mentioned above or other forms of popular culture), is a strong predictor of civic engagement. It is useful to remember that youth find inspiration to act in the world via their peers, and that a vibrant digital exchange around seemingly non-political issues can be a direct gateway to participation in civic life more generally.

Appreciate youth creation of varied content. The key difference between digital civic engagement by youth today and older forms of action is the availability of digital technology that provides a low-barrier-to-entry canvas for youth to create content that is potentially vastly

> Any policy initiative that aims to address or incorporate digital civic engagement by youth should view digital modes of engagement as contiguous with, complementary to, and inseparable from offline engagement. For today's youth, this is a false dichotomy.

89   Safronova, 2014.

scalable. For young people today, creating and sharing content — especially humorous content — is an inherent part of how they communicate. Engagement endeavours by organizations could be better framed by learning from youth-led modes of creation and sharing.

Stay appraised of local specificity. While the technology and platforms youth use may appear similar across the globe, we cannot assume that the same platforms are used in the same ways or at the same scale in different regions. Furthermore, careful attention should be paid to global variations in terms of gender and civic space when planning engagement efforts in order to prevent those efforts from replicating existing power dynamics.

Promote and support civic education and development of digital literacies and skills. As our analysis has shown, just because children and young people use the internet daily they are not necessarily engaging in civic activities online. Lack of digital skills and literacies, including critical thinking and ability to use digital platforms for creative impression, can prevent young people from participating. Likewise, their participation can also be hindered by the lack of a civic education that promotes engagement in community life and fosters the desire among young people to make a difference in their environment through political or non-political processes. It is important therefore to invest in fostering the development of these skills, including the development of different forms of media expression.

> The passion and activism displayed by youth in digital civic engagement activities could be channeled into supporting youth participation in more traditional forms of civic engagement, such as voting or joining community organizations.

Consider how digital civic engagement by youth can drive youth participation in more traditional forms of civic engagement. The passion and activism displayed by youth in digital civic engagement activities could be channeled into supporting youth participation in more traditional forms of civic engagement, such as voting or joining community organizations. We do not recommend thinking of these different practices as oppositional. Rather, as in the case with a youth-oriented NGO in Nairobi that used WhatsApp groups to encourage voting, we encourage organizations to make informed connections between digital and traditional civic practices.[90]

Consider the risks of digital civic engagement by youth. As in offline civic engagement, youth civic participation takes place in both child and adult spaces online. This means children and young people are exposed to online harassment, surveillance, data capture and misinformation — in some cases, disproportionately so. Where organizations seek to support 'organic' youth digital civic participation, or to facilitate more intentional digital mobilization of young people, potential exposure to harm must be taken into account.

90   Mjwara, 2018.

Conclusion

Though the current research outlines broad characteristics in digital civic engagement of young people, there are still many unanswered questions, specifically with regard to young people who do not live in wealthy democracies. These gaps range from questions about understanding the platforms young people use to the nature and impact of their engagement. Those agencies and organizations that wish to support youth civic participation will not only need to understand how youth chooses to engage in a given context but also to what extent the prevailing political, social, economic or environmental situation of a country spurs them into action or deters them from participating. In other words, in order to support children and young people to participate in civic life through online engagement, we need to understand what they care about and what motivates them to speak out. In turn, we need to better understand whether current support to youth civic engagement — digital, blended, or offline — properly reflects these motivations. Finally, we cannot choose to support young people in their quest for online political or civic expression, without paying attention to the context of the digital media ecosystem, including the opportunities and risks involved.

Works Cited

20 TikTok Statistics Marketers Need To Know: TikTok Demographics & Key Data. (2019, December 13). *Mediakix*. https://mediakix.com/blog/top-tik-tok-statistics-demographics/

Abdou, E.D. and Skalli, L.H. (2017). Egyptian Youth-led Civil Society Organizations: Alternative Spaces for Civic Engagement? *What Politics?*, 75–94. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004356368_006

Access Now (2019). State of Internet Shutdowns. Retrieved from: https://www.accessnow.org/the-state-of-internet-shutdowns-in-2018/

Amnesty International (2019). Large-scale Investigations Powered by Thousands of Digital Volunteers Worldwide, Citizen Evidence Lab. https://citizenevidence.org/2019/12/11/large-scale-investigations-powered-by-thousands-of-digital-volunteers-worldwide/

Amnesty International (2018). Toxic Twitter: A Toxic Place for Women. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2018/03/online-violence-against-women-chapter-1/

Anderson, M. and Jiang, J. (2018). Teens, Social Media & Technology 2018. Retrieved 17 October, 2019, from Pew Research Center: Internet & Technology website: https://www.pewinternet.org/2018/05/31/teens-social-media-technology-2018/

Barrett, M. and Pachi, D. (2019). *Youth Civic and Political Engagement*, Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429025570

Bennett, W.L. (2008). Changing Citizenship in the Digital Age. In W.L. Bennett (ed.), *Civic Life Online: Learning How Digital Media Can Engage Youth* (pp. 1–24), MIT Press.

Bennett, W.L., Freelon, D. and Wells, C. (2010). Changing Citizen Identity and the Rise of a Participatory Media Culture. In L.R. Sherrod, J. Torney-Purta and C.A. Flanagan (eds.), *Handbook of Research on Civic Engagement in Youth* (p. 393–423), John Wiley & Sons.

Buckingham, D. (2010). Defining Digital Literacy. In B. Bachmair (ed.), *Medienbildung in neuen Kulturräumen: Die deutschprachige und britische Diskussion* (pp. 59–71). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-92133-4_4

Burgess, J. E., Foth, M., & Klaebe, H. G. (2006). *Everyday Creativity as Civic Engagement: A Cultural Citizenship View of New Media.* Communications Policy & Research Forum, Sydney. https://eprints.qut.edu.au/5056/

Cammaerts, B. (2008). Critiques on the Participatory Potentials of Web 2.0. *Communication, Culture and Critique*, 1(4), 358–377. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-9137.2008.00028.x

Chen, W. (2014). Taking Stock, Moving Forward: The internet, social networks and civic engagement in Chinese societies. *Information, Communication and Society*, 17(1), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2013.857425

Chen, T.-P., Law, F. and Purnell, N. (2014, October 9). Apps Speed Up, and Often Muddle, Hong Kong Protesters' Messages, *Wall Street Journal*. https://www.wsj.com/articles/whatsapp-key-to-quickly-rallying-protesters-in-hong-kong-but-groups-struggle-to-stay-on-message-1412878808

Cho, A. (2018). Disruptive Joy: #BlackOutDay's Affirmative Resonances. In Z. Papacharissi (ed.), *A Networked Self and Love* (pp. 189–201), Routledge.

CIGI/Center for International Governance Innovation (2019). CIGI-Ipsos Global Survey on Internet Security and Trust. Data retrieved from: https://www.cigionline.org/internet-survey-2019

CIVICUS, State of Civil Society Report (2019). Year in Review, Top Ten Trends. Retrieved from: https://www.civicus.org/documents/reports-and-publications/SOCS/2018/socs-2018-overview_top-ten-trends.pdf

Cohen, C. J. and Kahne, J. (2012). Participatory Politics: New Media and Youth Political Action. Retrieved from: https://dmlhub.net/publications/participatory-politics-new-media-and-youth-political-action-6ca85d2f-2387-4529-a282-1b198f6457d1/index.html

Couldry, N. (2009). Rethinking the Politics of Voice, *Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 23(4): 579–82.

Couldry, N. and Jenkins, H. (2014). Participations: Dialogues on the Participatory Promise of Contemporary Culture and Politics, *International Journal of Communication*, 8, 1107–1112.

Couldry, N. and Mejias, U. A. (2018). Data Colonialism: Rethinking Big Data's Relation to the Contemporary Subject, Television & New Media. https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476418796632

Dame, A. (2016). Making a Name for Yourself: Tagging as Transgender Ontological Practice on Tumblr. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 33(1), 23–37. https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2015.1130846

Della Volpe, J. (2014). "Know Your Customer": Key Findings and Insights from our Survey of Young Americans' Attitudes Toward Politics and Public Service. Harvard Public Opinion Project.

Earth Day Network (2019). School Strike for Climate: A Day in the Life of Ugandan Student Striker Leah Namugerwa. Retrieved November 28, 2019, from: https://www.earthday.org/2019/06/06/school-strike-for-climate-a-day-in-the-life-of-fridays-for-future-uganda-student-striker-leah-namugerwa/

Elephrame (n.d.). At least 2,810 Black Lives Matter protests and other demonstrations have been held in the past 2,029 days. Retrieved 3 February 2020 from Elephrame website: https://elephrame.com/textbook/BLM/

Fieldhouse, E., Tranmer, M. and Russell, A. (2007). Something about Young People or Something about Elections? Electoral Participation of Young People in Europe: Evidence from a Multilevel Analysis of the European Social Survey. *European Journal of Political Research*, 46(6), 797–822. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2007.00713.x

Freedom House (2019). Freedom in the World, 2019. https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Feb2019_FH_FITW_2019_Report_ForWeb-compressed.pdf

Gladwell, M. (2010). Small Change. New Yorker. Retrieved from: https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/10/04/small-change-malcolm-gladwell

Global Kids Online (2019). Global Kids Online: Comparative Report, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti. https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/GKO%20LAYOUT%20MAIN%20REPORT.pdf

Hansen, M., Levesque, E., Valant, J., Quintero, D., (2018). The 2018 Brown Center Report on American Education: How Well are American Students Learning?, The Brown Center on Education Policy, Brookings Institute

Itō, M., Martin, C., Pfister, R.C., Rafalow, M.H., Tekinbaş, K.S. and Wortman, A. (2019). *Affinity Online: How Connection and Shared Interest Fuel Learning*. New York University Press.

Jenkins, H. (2012). "Cultural Acupuncture": Fan Activism and the Harry Potter Alliance. *Transformative Works and Cultures*, 10. https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2012.0305

Jenkins, H., Ford, S. and Green, J. (2013). Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture. New York University Press.

Jenkins, H., Shresthova, S., Gamber-Thompson, L., Kligler-Vilenchik, N., Zimmerman, A.M. and Soep, E. (2016). By Any Media Necessary: The New Youth Activism. New York University Press.

Johnson, M. (2019). Teenage Climate Activists Are Getting Harassed Online. *The Hill*. Retrieved from: https://thehill.com/homenews/news/463075-teenage-climate-activists-are-getting-harassed-online-report

Jones, L.M. and Mitchell, K.J. (2016). Defining and Measuring Youth Digital Citizenship, *New Media & Society*, 18(9), 2063–2079. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444815577797

Joo, Y. (2018). Same Despair But Different Hope: Youth Activism in East Asia and Contentious Politics, *Development and Society*, 47(3), 401–422. https://doi.org/10.2307/26506192

Kahne, J., Lee, N.-J. and Feezell, J.T. (2013). The Civic and Political Significance of Online Participatory Cultures among Youth Transitioning to Adulthood. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 10(1), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/19331681.2012.701109

Keller, J.M. (2012). Virtual Feminisms. I*nformation, Communication & Society*, 15(3), 429–447. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2011.642890

Kligler-Vilenchik, N. and Literat, I. (2018). Distributed Creativity as Political Expression: Youth Responses to the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election in Online Affinity Networks. *Journal of Communication*, 68(1), 75–97. https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqx005

Koetsier, J. (2019). Hong Kong Protestors Using Mesh Messaging App China Can't Block: Usage Up 3685%. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnkoetsier/2019/09/02/hong-kong-protestors-using-mesh-messaging-app-china-cant-block-usage-up-3685/

Langley, P. and Leyshon, A. (2016). Platform Capitalism: The Intermediation and Capitalisation of Digital Economic Circulation. *Finance and Society*. Retrieved from: http://financeandsociety.ed.ac.uk/ojs-images/financeandsociety/FS_EarlyView_LangleyLeyshon.pdf

Lin, W.-Y., Hope Cheong, P., Kim, Y.-C. and Jung, J.-Y. (2010). Becoming Citizens: Youths' Civic Uses of New Media in Five Digital Cities in East Asia, *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 25(6), 839–857. https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558410371125

Literat, I., Kligler-Vilenchik, N., Brough, M., & Blum-Ross, A. (2018). Analyzing youth digital participation: Aims, actors, contexts and intensities. *The Information Society*, 34(4), 261–273. https://doi.org/10.1080/01972243.2018.1463333

Madden, M. , Lenhart, A. and Fontaine, C. (2017). How Youth Navigate the News Landscape, *Data&Society*. https://kf-site-production.s3.amazonaws.com/publications/pdfs/000/000/230/original/Youth_News.pdf

Metzger, A., Ferris, K.A. and Oosterhoff, B. (2019). Adolescents' Civic Engagement: Concordant and Longitudinal Associations among Civic Beliefs and Civic Involvement, *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 29(4), 879–896. https://doi.org/10.1111/jora.12423

Middaugh, E., Clark, L.S. and Ballard, P.J. (2017). Digital Media, Participatory Politics, and Positive Youth Development. *Pediatrics*, 140 (Supplement 2), S127–S131. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2016-1758Q

Mjwara, N. (2018). Kenyan Youth Civic Engagement and ICTs [Master's Thesis]. The American University of Paris.

Mossberger, K., Tolbert, C.J. and McNeal, R.S. (2007). *Digital Citizenship: The Internet, Society, and Participation*, MIT Press.

Nakamura, L. (2002). *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet*, Routledge.

Nascimbeni, F. and Vosloo, S. (2019). *Digital Literacy for Children: Exploring Definitions and Frameworks*. UNICEF Office of Global Insight and Policy.

Nemer, D. and Freeman, G. (2015). Selfies| Empowering the Marginalized: Rethinking Selfies in the Slums of Brazil, *International Journal of Communication*, 9.

Nyst, C. (2013). Two Sides of the Same Coin – The Right to Privacy and Freedom of Expression, *Privacy International*. https://privacyinternational.org/blog/1111/two-sides-same-coin-right-privacy-and-freedom-expression

OECD/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2018). Bridging the Digital Gender Divide: Include, Upskill, Innovate. http://www.oecd.org/internet/bridging-the-digital-gender-divide.pdf

OHCHR/Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2018). The Impact of Online Violence on Women Human Rights Defenders and Women's Organisations, Statement by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, 38th session of the Human Rights Council. https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=23238&LangID=E

Östman, J. (2012). Information, Expression, Participation: How Involvement in User-generated Content Relates to Democratic Engagement among Young People, *New Media & Society*, 14(6), 1004–1021. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444812438212

Perrin, A. and Anderson, M. (n.d.). Share of U.S. adults using social media, including Facebook, is mostly unchanged since 2018. Retrieved October 17, 2019, from Pew Research Center website: https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/10/share-of-u-s-adults-using-social-media-including-facebook-is-mostly-unchanged-since-2018/

Purohit, K. (2019). WhatsApp to Bridgefy, What Hong Kong Taught India's Leaderless Protesters, *South China Morning Post*. https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3042633/whatsapp-bridgefy-what-hong-kong-taught-indias-leaderless

PYMNTS (02.27.2019). FTC Fines TikTok $5.7M Over Alleged Child Data Collection. Retrieved from: https://www.pymnts.com/news/security-and-risk/2019/tiktok-fine-ftc-child-data-collection

Reichert, F. and Torney-Purta, J. (2019). A Cross-national Comparison of Teachers' Beliefs about the Aims of Civic Education in 12 Countries: A Person-centered Analysis, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 77: 112–125, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.09.005

Ren, Y. (2018). Know Your Chinese Social Media, *New York Times*. Retrieved from: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/19/fashion/china-social-media-weibo-wechat.html

Rocha, M.E.M., Gutiérrez, E.O. and Cortés, G.U. (2017). Youth and Political Participation. #Yosoy132 and the Struggle for Freedom of Expression in Mexico. *Comunicación y Sociedad*, 30(1), 87–103.

Safronova, V. (2014). Millennials and the Age of Tumblr Activism. *New York Times*. Retrieved from: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/21/style/millennials-and-the-age-of-tumblr-activism.html

Schulz, W., Ainley, J., Fraillon, J., Losito, B., Agrusti, G. and Friedman, T. (2016), Becoming Citizens in a Changing World: IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study, 2016 International Report.

Sengupta. (2019). Protesting Climate Change, Young People Take to Streets in a Global Strike, *New York Times*. Retrieved from: https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/20/climate/global-climate-strike.html

Shea, D.M. (2015). Young Voters, Declining Trust and the Limits of "Service Politics", *The Forum*, 13(3), 459–479. https://doi.org/10.1515/for-2015-0036

Silver, L., Smith, A., Johnson, C., Jiang, J., Anderson, M. and Rainie, L. (2019). Mobile Connectivity in Emerging Economies. Retrieved October 17, 2019, from Pew Research Center: Internet & Technology website: https://www.pewinternet.org/2019/03/07/mobile-connectivity-in-emerging-economies/

South, J. (2018). Civic Engagement Goes Viral When Young Voices Turn to Social Media, Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE) / Medium. Retrieved from: https://medium.com/office-of-citizen/civic-engagement-goes-viral-when-young-voices-turn-to-social-media-ea57ed0c5d65

Statista (2019). South Korea: Most Used Mobile Messaging Apps 2019. Retrieved 27 November 2019 from Statista website: https://www.statista.com/statistics/980547/south-korea-most-used-messaging-apps/

TacticalTech (2019). Shrinking Digital Space: A Digital Perspective. Retrieved November 20, 2019 from: https://ourdataourselves.tacticaltech.org/posts/shrinking-civil-space-a-digital-perspective/

Third, A., Conrad, D., Moody, L. and McDonald, K. (2020). Digital Media and Adolescent Engagement for Social and Behavioural Change: A Rapid Evidence Review (UNICEF/Western Sydney University).

UN Human Rights Council (2016). Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association. Retrieved from: https://undocs.org/A/74/349

UNICEF (2018). Policy Guide on Children and Digital Connectivity. (internal)

Uribe, M.T. (2017). Exploring Youth Civic Engagement and Disengagement in Mexico. In C. Broom (ed.), *Youth Civic Engagement in a Globalized World: Citizenship Education in Comparative Perspective* (pp. 145–159), Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-56533-4_8

Vargas, J.A. and Jenkins, H. (2016). Digital Dreamers: Jose Antonio Vargas talks with Henry Jenkins. Retrieved October 19, 2019, from #2016DML website: https://dml2016.dmlhub.net/live/index.html

Vodafone Foundation and GirlEffect (2018). Real girls, real lives, connected: A global study of girls' access and usage of mobile, told through 3000 voices. https://www.girlsandmobile.org/

Warren, A.M., Sulaiman, A., and Jaafar, N.I. (2014). Social Media Effects on Fostering Online Civic Engagement and Building Citizen Trust and Trust in Institutions, *Government Information Quarterly*, 31(2), 291–301. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2013.11.007

Wike, R. and Castillo, A. (2018). Many around the World Are Disengaged from Politics, Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project. Retrieved from: https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2018/10/17/international-political-engagement/

Xenos, M.A., Vromen, A. and Loader, B.D. (2014). The Great Equalizer? Patterns of Social Media Use and Youth Political Engagement in Three Advanced Democracies. In B.D. Loader, A. Vromen and M. Xenos (eds.), *The Networked Young Citizen: Social Media, Political Participation and Civic Engagement*, Routledge.

Yue, A., Nekmat, E. and Beta, A.R. (2019). Digital Literacy Through Digital Citizenship: Online Civic Participation and Public Opinion Evaluation of Youth Minorities in Southeast Asia. *Media and Communication*, 7(2), 100–114.

Zhong, R. (2019). TikTok Blocks Teen Who Posted About China's Detention Camps, *New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/26/technology/tiktok-muslims-censorship.html

Zuckerman, E. (2014). New Media, New Civics? *Policy & Internet*, 6(2), 151–168. https://doi.org/10.1002/1944-2866.POI360

This document is interactive and designed for digital viewing.

Please consider the environment and refrain from printing.