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What is This?

High school journalism and the making of young citizens

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Abstract

This article examines how involvement in high school journalism contributes to socialization into citizenship and, most crucially, to the development of a collective sensibility. Recent work by W Lance Bennett (2008), Zukin and his colleagues (2006), and Sara-Ellen Amster (2006) provides an interpretive lens for considering young people's experiences with journalism and with citizenship. Interviews with 45 high school journalists from 19 different schools are analyzed, highlighting emerging definitions of citizenship as reflected in how young people discuss their work as student journalists. The study suggests that participation in the culture of high school journalism can provide young people with opportunities to develop the skills and experiences necessary for civic engagement, including the experience of collective decision-making. This study also argues that some young people come to understand the costs of engaged citizenship after negative experiences with their school's administration, as such experiences reveal differing understandings of the roles of authority, journalism, and collective responsibility within the high school community that its high school journalism is meant to serve.

Keywords

collective decision-making, collective identity, citizenship, civic education, engaged citizenship, interview-based methods, qualitative research, scholastic journalism

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Introduction

Researchers have long been interested in what compels and equips adolescents for participation in civic life. Verba et al. (1995) have argued that young people must possess four basic skills to become civically involved: skills in critical thinking, communication, organization, and in collective decision-making. Researchers in communication have been especially concerned with the development of critical thinking and communication skills, and previous research has found that students who are encouraged to publish their ideas develop stronger writing skills than their peers (Dvorak, 1988, 1989; Dvorak et al., 1994; Freedom Forum, 1994).

Yet norms of citizenship are undergoing changes, and it may be that possessing basic civic skills is no longer enough to lead to civic engagement. Perhaps in the past, as Zukin et al. (2006) have argued, it was possible to think of citizenship as a 'duty' that included voting, abiding by laws, regularly consuming the news, and participating in the armed services if needed. Yet the definition of citizenship now needs to be extended to also include engagement in activities such as volunteering in one's community, or participating in protests, environmental activities, boycotts, and civil court cases (Dalton, 2007; Schudson, 1999; Zukin et al., 2006). Thus, engagement in activities of citizenship now seems to come about at least as much from a desire for self-actualization, self-fulfillment, and personal expression as from a sense of duty (Bennett, 2008).

To what extent does high school journalism help to socialize young people into this type of what Bennett (2008) calls 'self-actualizing' citizenship? To address this question, we begin by reviewing the current research on citizenship and socialization. We then consider high school journalism and its anticipated role in this socialization process. Employing categories that relate to changing notions of citizenship as an interpretive lens, we consider how young people discuss their experiences with high school journalism. We suggest that in their discussions of journalism, many of the high school journalists interviewed do articulate ideas consistent with the emergent concept of 'actualized' citizenship, although some express ideas that are a combination of the 'actualized' and 'duty-bound' citizen, and a few make little reference to citizenship at all.

Because the decline of the 'duty-bound' notion of citizenship signals a decline in the sense of collective concerns and the rise of more individually-centered motivations for civic engagement, we argue that it is now more important than ever for young people to learn about both the benefits and costs of membership in a collective society. We find that participation in high school journalism is one avenue that affords young people a sense of a collective and shared public culture. High school journalism does this by introducing young people to the benefits of empathizing and identifying with others in their community with whom they share few tight bonds, and it can also help them to anticipate the costs that may come with standing up for the rights of disenfranchised members of that community. In this sense, then, high school journalism is well-positioned to afford socialization into the collective concerns that are a vital part of citizenship.

Citizenship and collective identity

Much recent scholarship on citizenship deals with a concern for the erosion of a broadly shared civic culture (Kivisto and Faist, 2007; Putnam, 2000). This has been a concern as it

seems to mark a change from the association-oriented society first celebrated by Tocqueville (1835) as the means of balancing liberty and equality in the then-young democracy of the USA. One of the problems, as Bennett (2008) has pointed out, is that in today's individualistic culture young people need to feel that their civic contributions are making a difference and seek to feel 'self-actualized' as a citizen. This feeling can be encouraged as young people participate in community service or political volunteering, particularly when such actions are broadly defined and are related to the contexts in which they live. When young people have such positive experiences in their early adolescent years, they are more likely to remain civically engaged through young adulthood (Zaff et al., 2003).

Still, there is a downside to relying solely on participation in community activities for socialization into citizenship. Kirlin (2007: 31) argues that the emphasis upon voluntarism might lead people to conclude that 'society's problems are best solved by individuals helping other individuals,' and that therefore 'citizenship does not require government, politics, or social action'. Collective identity, she argues, is what has been waning, and therefore young people need opportunities that foster a sense of belonging to a larger collective in order to fully participate in the demands of citizenship.

Social psychologists studying what motivates active citizenship similarly note that young people need to identify themselves as part of a larger collective. Building on Brewer and Gardner's (1996) argument that there are three basic societal motives (to benefit: one's self , others, and the collective welfare), Funk (1998) found that people who *expressed* what she called 'societal interest,' or a commitment to benefit the collective, were more likely to *engage* in behaviors that would benefit the societal interest than those who did not express such interests. Moreover, Flanagan and Sherrod (1998) found that young people who recognize that they have a 'social contract' with their peers and communities are more willing to contribute.

To have a sense of collective identity is to feel a sense of membership within a group, even as various group identifications can contribute to overlapping or even conflicting collective identities. Collective identities can therefore become politicized when group members sense that their rights are infringed upon, or when an unequal distribution of power results in policies that they believe discriminate against their group's interests (Simon and Klandermans, 2001; Turner et al., 1987). As part of the process of becoming a citizen, therefore, young people need to gain the sense that they share interests with others from various groups. To encourage civic engagement among young people, these and other studies suggest that young people need opportunities to locate themselves within a larger collective or network of collectives to which they can contribute, and participate in collective decision-making. 'We need to train young people to speak together publicly about serious matters,' argues John (2008) in his provocative challenge that we need fewer abstract templates for citizenship and more opportunities for 'deliberating over actual problems and enacting actual solutions' (p. 419). It is this concern for deliberation, solution-finding, and the struggle of collective identity that makes high school journalism – as it relates to citizenship – a worthy topic of study.

Methodology

Data for this study were gathered through interviews and observations that took place between September 2006 and August 2009. Interviewers asked young people about their

experiences in high school journalism and their views of its role in relation to the larger population of their high school. First, we researched and contacted school principals and journalism advisors in a large metropolitan area and in surrounding areas. After receiving an invitation from the journalism advisor and the principal's consent, we visited the schools, observing journalism classes, explaining to student journalists our interest in studying their work, and discussing with them their story assignments. After our presentation, self-selected students and advisors participated in the individual interviews. Focus group respondents also self-selected by attending our focus group that was described in the program guide and that took place at the National High School Press Association Annual Conference. Prior to the interviews and observations, we collected consent forms signed by both the student and their parents or guardians in compliance with the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Because both the individuals and the school program of which they are a part were subject to analysis, our methods were consistent with what media anthropologist Mizuko Ito (2008) has termed 'located studies,' or those projects that explore people engaged in actions individually and collectively in a specific context. For this paper, we interviewed a total of 45 high school journalism students. Thirty-seven of them, three of their parents, and six journalism advisors, were participants at eleven high schools; an additional eight high school journalists from seven different high schools participated in the focus group sessions.

Students interviewed ranged in grade from the ninth to twelfth grade, and in age from 14 to 18. Ten males and 34 females were interviewed. Four student interviewees were Latino, three were biracial (Latino/Caucasian), and one was African American; the rest were Caucasian. The students came from socioeconomic backgrounds ranging from low income to upper-middle class, with the majority from middle-class families.

Findings: High school journalism's role in citizenship

High school journalists explained their participation in and understandings of high school journalism's role in their school communities in differing ways, sometimes drawing upon a duty-bound understanding of the citizen as a law-abiding, voting, taxpayer, at other times offering a 'softer' definition that echoed themes of self-help as offering support for the status quo. Some also articulated a desire to avoid controversy in their reporting, or spoke of no bond between their journalistic efforts and the larger community. A number of students, however, articulated an understanding of the engaged, 'actualized' citizen, envisioning an audience making independent decisions and participating in direct actions that would benefit the overall community. These students saw value in expressing differing world views among a changing community. Some within this latter group also recognized conflicting ideas of community, as well as citizenship, as relevant to tensions with their school's administration and various constituents. Their senses of high school journalism's role in relation to collective identity, and their own experiences of citizenship, were directly affected as a result.

The unengaged citizen journalists

Several students found their participation in high school journalism to be a source of personal fulfillment. Some students did not articulate a connection between

self-fulfillment and the larger group of constituents ostensibly served by their efforts, however. For example, Becca, a 16-year-old Caucasian student from an economically and ethnically diverse school in a Denver suburb, expressed her interest in high school journalism not in terms of community involvement but rather as a vehicle for personal future success: 'I thought that … it would be fun to do journalism … and like, to do PR and help businesses get out there and become big and just, like, to be that successful to me would be really cool'.

Becca seemed to be motivated by self-interest in becoming a successful public relations practitioner and made no mention of her involvement contributing to her school's community. Lila, a 17-year-old upper-middle income student at an urban Denver high school, similarly explained her interest in journalism in relation to personal goals: 'I had always kind of wanted to be known for writing in the school,' she said. For Becca and Lila, being involved in high school journalism seemed to fulfill personal goals; however, both students were participating in journalism programs under advisors with no formal journalism training and little administrative support. This suggests that the advisor's role may be key to fostering an awareness of journalism's connection to community life, an important subject for future research.

Journalism as providing information for a community

The most frequent theme to emerge from the high school journalists' descriptions of their role in the school community was as providers of much-needed information. An example was 16-year-old Malinda, a Caucasian student in a middle income family, whose upper middle class high school was host to a large newspaper staff and an experienced advisor:

> I think that one of the most important things for a journalist to bring to their community is the truth because I know there's been like a lot of stuff about which news sources you can trust, and like which ones are biased one way politically, and I just think it's really important for people within their community to have a source that they don't have to read between the lines, because that's the only way that, you know, you can pick a party or pick a candidate is if you know the truth and not other people's biased opinions.

In this statement, Malinda recognized the importance of being informed in relation to self-governance, invoking older, duty-bound notions of the informed citizen. Her comment that some view news as 'biased one way politically' also recognized changes in the news industry, and audience expectations regarding how and where they might access 'the truth' as it relates to 'people within their community.' Journalism's role required more than providing readers with a view that was 'biased one way politically;' as Malinda explained it also needed to *justify* its views for readers. Mel, an 18-year-old Hispanic student from a lower income urban high school, also recognized the problem of bias, noting that the job of journalism was to help people to know more about issues, 'instead of just choosing a side.' Similarly, Riley, a 17-year-old Caucasian student at an urban high school with a socioeconomically mixed student body and a relatively small journalism program, spoke of the journalist as the 'informer' of the community. She noted, 'if you want to know what's going on, you read the paper, or you read a magazine or something, and that's people's source of information.' Embedded within these notions of the

need for an informed citizenry, therefore, was some criticism of the news industry's capacity for providing the news needed for a changing community.

Some of the students' answers to questions of journalism's importance illustrated a connection they had made between the more abstract notions of an informed collective and a practical desire to give advice or to address what might be viewed as the 'soft news needs' of the high school experience. When 16-year-old Carl was asked about a time he felt he'd done something important as a high school journalist, for instance, he told a story about an article he had written on sports. Carl, a Caucasian student who had been involved in high school journalism at his urban, middle income school for two years, said that he ended the article by weaving in an editorial comment that participation in school sports was one good way for young people to make friends. Carl felt that by providing such advice, he could help others to make a positive decision that would contribute to their own social support network.

Abi, a 17-year-old Hispanic student at the same urban middle income high school, similarly focused on the way she had been able to give others useful advice:

> I did an article on teenage drivers and statistics on accidents, and it was important to me because that's one of my biggest [concerns] is how stupid[ly] people drive. [There are] teenagers out there getting killed [because they're driving] 80 mph on ice. And [so it] was important to show, you know, my opinion on it and to inform people of how many teenagers are getting killed.

Abi's exhortation was less direct than Carl's, as she hoped that students themselves would draw the connection between the statistics on student deaths and the 'stupid' ways in which young people sometimes drive. In this example, Abi expressed her view that relating information relevant to people's lives would promote positive, law-abiding decision making, benefiting all members within the collective society of high school and the community.

Malinda, who had spoken of journalism's role in informing the community, mentioned a point-counterpoint opinion editorial that she'd participated in as a particularly meaningful experience for her:

> I'm definitely a gay rights advocate, and that was definitely the most important story for me personally because I felt that it was actually about something important. It was an opinion article I wrote, and then another girl wrote the opposite opinion. I'd be talking to my friends, and they would come up to me and say, 'Oh my God, you're really opinionated, but I really liked your article.' I talked to people on the staff, and they said they heard people talking about it, too.

Malinda's participation in journalism had moved beyond dispensing 'the truth', opting instead to voice her concern for gay rights, an issue as important and controversial in high school communities as in the broader society.

Kelly was similarly interested in her school newspaper's role in shaping public opinion about issues that affected her high school and community. A Caucasian junior at an urban high school with a student body of mixed socioeconomic status, Kelly was proud of the way in which her writing raised questions about the extent of gang-related violence in her school and community. She noted that her topic was a risky proposition, as it could result in more violence or even make her a target for violence. Yet she

wanted to publish stories on that topic despite the risks because, as she said, 'publishing things in the newspaper would help people realize how stupid it all really is … It's an unnecessary loss of life.' Through the paper, therefore, Kelly was not only expressing her views but, as was the case with other students, felt she was taking a stand about something she believed was important for the collective welfare of her school and community.

Like Carl the sports writer and Abi the writer on traffic safety, Kelly and Malinda were interested in informing their peers about issues they believed were important in their collective lives as high school students. Yet in focusing on gay rights and gang violence, Kelly and Malinda took more personal risks than Carl and Abi, taking on topics and articulating positions bound to be unpopular with some readers and possibly teachers and school administrators, as well.

Journalism and self-actualization

Some students articulated journalism's informational purpose more clearly in relation to the *audience*'s need for self-fulfillment and self-actualization. Julia, a middle income student of eastern European decent who attended a racially and economically diverse school in a Denver suburb, noted that she believed journalism's importance rested in its ability to expand the readers' understanding of other cultures so as to better understand themselves and their own life experiences:

> it's good for the media (to help us gain an understanding of other cultures and religious traditions) because of all the war that's going on and stuff. [The war] has so much to do with religion and different cultures, and so I think that it helps you understand what you think compared to everybody else.

Julia's comments reflect a desire to connect one's personal needs to 'understand what you think' with the information made available through journalism, thereby reflecting a sense in which news can enrich understanding and personal fulfillment. Moreover, as a member of what she viewed as a new and underrepresented constituency within her high school, she was concerned that her view was represented, and that the values and needs of differing, non-dominant groups were recognized and affirmed.

Another student drew a clear correlation between the idea of finding a 'voice' within the community and taking a stand. Eighteen-year-old Brad, a student of a middle income Caucasian family who had been on his large suburban high school's newspaper staff for only a year, said:

> The most important story that I've done is probably one on anti-American sentiment. This is high school journalism, and we typically don't do a whole lot of what most people would consider like, very pressing and important issues, but this whole thing, I mean, just trying to get people to understand (why) people hate us around the world (is important for the future) … so when this next future generation is moving into a leadership position, perhaps you know, we can work to change things a little bit.

Brad was interested in helping his fellow students to consider perspectives that might be part of an unfamiliar worldview, one outside their immediate frame of reference. He was

proud to have played a role in helping his peers to gain greater understanding and, like Julia, he spoke of the connection between being informed and the need for people to appreciate the limitations of their own worldviews.

High school journalism and collective identity

In many cases, involvement in high school journalism gave students opportunities to come to know and appreciate others within their school community. Missy, a junior from a large high school newspaper in Seattle, noted that she was introduced to a number of people and associations in her school through her work with the paper. 'Just being in journalism makes you recognize … that there are so many more students than just like the football team and the cheerleaders.' Narissa, a sophomore from a small town in the Midwest, agreed: 'Yeah, like when I interview people, then I want to join their club,' she said. Narissa's enthusiasm extended beyond an outsider's curiosity as she was able to in a sense become an embedded reporter within the many organizations of which she wasn't a part. Missy gave another example of the collective nature of her school's paper when she was asked about how she felt that their paper served her school's community:

> I mean, every week you get a lot of stories that are just like, this is what's happening. But I think that once in a while you get that one story that's like fantastic. You just know that like when that paper comes out and everyone's talking about it, that's when you know like you have an impact. I think it brings people closer together.

Missy expressed great pleasure in the fact that her contribution to the paper had made 'an impact' on her school community, and received self-fulfillment from participating in media-making but also vicariously as she saw that others found fulfillment in reading and discussing the expression of collective concerns and memories.

High school journalists felt responsible to report on a variety of activities and interest groups throughout the school community. As Danielle, a 16-year-old from an urban school noted:

> I think it's really important to be able to relate to all the students, and because I'm a white female in a very racially different school, it's important that they understand that I'm not just writing for people of my same race and of my same grade and gender, and so it's pretty important that I speak for everyone.

Sometimes, this sense of duty led high school journalists into controversial areas, as Danielle recounted:

> I wrote a story about teen pregnancy and the teen pregnancy policy [in our school] that had been all over the news. I thought it was really important because it's a problem that students are pretty much expected to be in class the day after they give birth. And that's impossible, and there should be a longer grace period. And it's a very controversial issue, and I thought it was really important because people don't know exactly how it works, and now they do.

Sallie, a 16-year-old from a high school in a small town, also wrote about a program of which she was not personally a part:

> I think the most important thing I wrote about was the alt-ed program here. It's (for) all these kids that would have otherwise dropped out or flunked out of high school and they go to this new program. I did a report on it and I didn't even know what it was when I went in there. When they explained it to me I was like, wow, this is really neat and I want to break some ice with this because you know, no one knows what alt-ed is. It allows them to still graduate and have a future, and I think it is really important that we offer this program here in this tiny little high school that still allows kids to graduate.

'I think you have to kind of portray the views and perspectives of the high school students on any particular issue,' as Miguel, a biracial 17-year-old from an urban school stated. He continued:

> Like if you're doing a story about the new commons building, you have to kind of talk to people and see what they think …. In high school there's not really a newspaper, other than your own, that really gears toward you, and I think that's really important to try to pick out the news that they're most interested in hearing, the news that they want to hear.

Many high school journalists cited respect for others as being of the utmost importance as they sought to describe the significance of their work in relation to their high school community. 'I'd like to think we have a positive impact on the school,' as 17-year-old Nick said of his paper's role in their urban, ethnically diverse school. 'We don't go around just degrading people.'

The engaged citizen and conflicting notions of journalism's role in the community

Sometimes, students learned about journalism's role in the community and the costs to assuming responsibility for societal interests through negative experiences with authority. This came up for Mariana, a Caucasian sophomore from a private school in Texas, who was compelled to write an article upon learning that students in her school were planning to start a gay-straight alliance group. As she relates:

> Our principal got really upset because, well, like I come from a really white-bread town, it's like Stepford, and … he got really upset because it wasn't official yet and I shouldn't have been asking about it. And actually [the principal] doesn't want it to happen … [he wants to hold up giving approval to the club in the hopes that] they just give up and go away.

The principal didn't stop there: 'Now I have to write a retraction saying it wasn't true even though it was true,' Mariana said. When asked whether or not she felt that her paper's role was to help bring to light student interest in starting a group representing a marginalized population in her school, Mariana hesitantly replied:

> Um, I don't know. The principal thinks like that's bad press and we shouldn't [tell those stories]. But I still think like … we probably still should do this so we can get more people involved, because this is a group that's for educating people about what's going on for like gay rights and stuff.

In many ways, Mariana's story illustrates conflicting views journalism's role in relation to community. Mariana's principal felt that highlighting a marginalized group's interests

was 'bad press' for the school, and therefore undermined the interests of the larger school community (and perhaps his own authority within it). Yet Mariana believed that the role of journalism was to give voice to each member of the community, including those who are marginalized. It was impressive that Mariana held to her beliefs, even when the principal later accused her of lying about the club's formation, demanding she print a retraction of a story that was, in fact, accurate. This story also demonstrates that in cases like Mariana's, student journalists are sometimes forced to take a stand regarding their view of community interests – the journalism an engaged citizenship expects and needs – at the risk of personal costs that might result from crossing authority figures with differing views.

A somewhat similar story unfolded in a small town newspaper staff in northern Colorado. In the aftermath of an allegedly gang-related incident, the school's administration instituted a dress code. In response, Margie, a 16-year-old student journalist, wrote an editorial criticizing the administration's focus on dress, arguing that their attentions would be better focused on what, in her view, mattered more to student safety: depression, suicide prevention, and drug counseling, among other things. When the faculty advisor reviewed the article for publication, he raised several issues with his staff:

> I pretty much said, I can see we could get into some hot water on this. We're kind of gunning for the principal here on this one, and the assistant principal. Are you sure you want to do this? I was like, do you feel strongly enough about it? And they said, 'Yeah let's do it. That's how I feel.' So we printed it.

After the article ran, the principal called the author of the editorial into her office. As the advisor described it, the writer left the meeting and went to his office in tears to relate what had happened:

> I felt … that if any sort of criticism was going to be about the paper, that I should have been informed first, and probably should have been present with that reporter, and if anything, it probably should have been a discussion in front of the entire staff, rather than behind closed doors with just the principal and the writer. So I felt that that was intimidation, which was censorship too.

In this case, the advisor eventually played a key role in advocating for the student journalist. 'I asked the principal that if anything happens again, I really want to be informed first and be a part of any conversation between her and a reporter about what's been written or something,' the advisor said. He also contacted the student writer's parents to assure them that he believed that Margie had been wronged. The advisor thereby modeled for the staff his belief that an authority figure is not always right in the exercise of his or her power. In both Mariana's and Margie's cases, the young journalists learned that sometimes journalistic expression is seen as undermining the collective identity (or identities) of the high school.

Discussion

Researchers have argued that there are emotional and deeply contextualized aspects to citizen action, specifically with regard to the motivation to participate in such action (Buckingham, 1999; Bos et al., 2007; Couldry et al., 2007; Sennett, 1977). Based on our research, we similarly conclude that high school journalism experiences may serve less as a location for learning about politics as traditionally conceived, or even as pre-professional preparation for aspiring journalists, and more as an important avenue of socialization into an awareness of one's role within a larger collective. Moreover, participation in high school journalism further socializes young people into an understanding of journalism's role in relation to citizenship within that collective. Whereas much research has focused on how young people gain knowledge about politics as tradition-ally conceived in terms of voting and issues awareness, we believe that this secondary area, focusing on the development of a collective sensibility and journalism's role within it, encompasses an overlooked yet important aspect of how young people develop as citizens (Coleman, 2008; Dvorak, 2002; Montgomery, 2007; Xenos and Foot, 2007).

Students engaged in high school journalism are involved in a process that asks them to consider what issues are of importance, beyond themselves and their immediate friendship networks. The implied audience of their writings may include friends, peers, teachers, school administrators, parents, and/or even the public at large that they do not know. As they express their views on their chosen topics, it's with some or all of these audiences in mind.

And when these teens receive positive (or even negative) feedback, as was often the case, they come to see themselves as *already* members of a larger collective to which they contribute. Sometimes, these contributions are in relation to helping others to be well-informed, law-abiding citizens. At other times, these contributions encourage what Dalton (2007) described as a more engaged form of citizenship that assumes young people can respect differing views and experiences within the community, and can widen their own views so as to participate in direct action or even protest when necessary. When Brad discusses his hopes that an editorial on anti-American sentiment might lead his generation to greater empathy, when Kelly recognizes the risks of writing about gang violence and yet elects to do it anyway for the sake of her community, when Malinda writes an opinionated editorial advocating gay rights, and when Mariana and Margie write stories that are critical of the school's administration, we find a sense of value that is attached to collective processes. When Abi and Carl discuss their stories on avoiding driving drunk and the benefits to participating in high school sports, they too address to a larger collective within which they are participants whose voices and opinions matter.

As is clear from the above examples, although not all young people are able to articu-late the importance of providing certain kinds of information to the larger collective, some in fact are thrust into the process of experiencing the tensions that emerge as a result of differing views regarding the role that high school journalism should play within its community. Should high school journalism tell the stories of those who are at the high school society's margins – even if those expressions might land the school's administra-tion in trouble with its constituents? Yes, according to Mariana, who wrote about the gay-straight alliance. Even if these stories are critical of the school's administration? Yes,

according to Danielle, who criticized what she viewed as a discriminatory policy regarding teens who had recently given birth, and yes, according to Margie, who saw fallacies in her school's dress code. By writing more controversial articles that reflect an assumption of an engaged citizenship, students have opportunities to *experience* themselves as actors within a larger collective, and as contributors to it. When they do their jobs as high school journalists well, despite how their work is received, their motivation to continue participating as members of that collective is strengthened.

Part of the reason that not all young people articulate a collective sensibility and an assumption of an engaged citizenship has to do with the deeply individualistic nature of US society (e.g. Bellah et al., 1985; Rosenthal and Bornholt, 1988; Williamson et al., 2003). Indeed, even civics education textbooks tend to emphasize citizen rights rather than collective obligations (Gonzales et al., 2004). Ideally, as Avery and Simmons (2000-01) have argued, civics education should help students to recognize both the requisite rights *and* responsibilities of democratic citizenship. We are arguing that when high school journalists engage in the process of determining stories that are worth telling and valuable to the collective society of their high school peers, they are developing awareness of a collective welfare, and are participating in constructing a public and collective realm.

High school journalism programs are therefore not only beneficial to student journalists or to the journalism profession, but also serve as a form of civics education that is focused less on the *content* of most civics education programs and more on the *processes* of helping young people to appreciate the value in a collective rather than a solely individualist orientation. In some ways, of course, there are individual benefits to participation in high school journalism, as well. Young people gain a sense of satisfaction when they know that people they care about are reading their words and benefiting from them, and we heard many expressions of student appreciation for positive feedback on their contributions (Atwell, 1998). But we argue that the process of putting one's ideas forward for the sake of others' benefit – or of challenging widely-accepted views – also helps young people to associate value with how the larger society may benefit as well.

Young people who see themselves as actively involved in informing others about politically charged issues play a role in their own civic development, as McDevitt and Chaffee (2002) have argued. Moreover, schools serve as a powerful 'staging ground' for young people, as they are the meeting point between interpersonal networks of families and peer groups (McDevitt and Chaffee, 2002). When young people engage with their peers in sorting out story ideas and considering what matters to a population of which one is a part, they are therefore engaged in a collective activity. In some cases, such as Abi, Carl, Julia, Brad, and others, they are also considering how their own views can help to shape the views, and hence the actions, of others. Thus, whereas McDevitt and Chaffee found that conversations about politics continued beyond the civics classroom into peer groups, this paper observes that participation in the processes of publishing a high school newspaper can similarly spark discussions of politics that extend beyond the classroom – particularly politics as they are more broadly understood to include working out multiple competing interests within the context of a diverse society.

Conclusion

Citizenship begins with a sense of belonging, first in one's immediate life, and then in locales such as the home or school. It is from these bonds that young people move outward to consider themselves in relation to arbitrary power that organizes society, as Barnhurst and Wartella (1998) have argued. Bennett (2008) has similarly argued for the importance of identity in civic action, noting that young people need to engage in citizen actions that enhance their own goals of self-actualization, personal expression, and identity. Of course, all young people want opportunities for self-actualization, personal expression, and individual identity, and most have many opportunities to satisfy those needs through their peer groups with little reference to wider communities. What sets apart those who will become dutiful and/or actualized citizens, we argue, are opportunities for young people to find meaning in seeing themselves as a part of a public that extends beyond their peer groups, to some form of a collective identity. We believe involvement in programs such as high school journalism affords unique and important opportunities for young people to experience collective identity.

As was true with earlier generations, today's young people rely upon mass media to provide them with the means by which they might become informed. Yet, as Bennett (2008) has argued, young people are more likely to be informed in relation to specific events and issues that express their personal values and allow them to express their individuality. By making decisions collectively about what their peers should be informed about, high school journalists participate in not only informing themselves and others, but also in constructing the news relevant to the collective identity of their high school community. As such, they and those who follow their news may find the information shared to be more valuable than that of the mainstream media because it is attached to familiar values and activities from within their own community. To the extent that participants get satisfaction from participating in this construction of the high school community's collective identity, they can be expected to take their participatory actions from high school into their adult lives as citizens.

This article has therefore argued that providing young people with opportunities to experience themselves as a part of a collective is an important aspect of socialization into citizenship, and that high school journalism programs provide an important opportunity in this regard. We found that whereas students articulated the role and importance of journalism in various ways, they almost always discussed their work in high school journalism with a sense of personal purpose and fulfillment, a sense of connection to their larger high school community, and in many cases a concern for how the rights and experiences of those in their community were respectfully addressed. While some students had negative experiences when their ideas of journalism's role conflicted with the ideas of authority figures, these students ultimately learned that they must sometimes take a stand in the face of authority in order to protect what they view as community interests, an idea that is consistent with emergent concepts of the 'self-actualized' and 'engaged' citizen (Bennett, 2008; Dalton, 2007; Zukin et al., 2006).

Through analysis of our findings, we argue that high school journalism programs are worth exploring in more depth and supporting more wholeheartedly, particularly in relation to scholarship that bemoans the low political involvement of young people in the

USA (Astin et al., 1997; Easterlin and Crimmins, 1991; Galston, 1999; Gamson, 1992; Quigley, 1999). Studies of civics education courses consistently find that students who endorse individual rights over collective orientations are less likely to vote or participate in civic activities (Bos et al., 2007). Any process that encourages students to participate in activities that help them to see themselves as part of a larger collective should be encouraged, therefore, since developing a sense of obligations to the collective is vital to democratic participation.

Acknowledgement

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